

WORDS OF the WILD

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Newsletter of the Sierra Club's California/Nevada Wilderness Committee

WILD 10 welcomes America's 50th Wilderness Anniversary

Californians at global forum in Salamanca, Spain

--by Mike Painter



In early October, California wilderness activists Heather Anderson, Vicky Hoover, and I attended the 10th World Wilderness Congress (Wild10) in Salamanca, Spain. And although the federal government was shut down at the time, several dedicated wilderness staffers from government agencies paid their own way, including Christina Boston, the U.S. Forest Service's California wilderness program manager.

The United States' Wilderness Act of 1964 (whose 50th anniversary next year was the subject of a ten-minute plenary presentation in Salamanca) has served as a model for countries around the world. It has provided a sample legal framework for countries such as Finland to pass their own Wilderness Acts. But more importantly, it has inspired people around the globe to protect wild and natural areas in their own countries. Finally, the Wild Foundation was inspired in the mid-1970s to organize these quadrennial international conferences in locations around the world, bringing together people from many countries—scientists, government officials, conservation groups, students, and interested citizens—working to protect places in their different capacities.

One thing that emerged clearly at Salamanca was that the American concept of Wilderness is unique. Most of the world has

had widespread and continuous human habitation over much of its landscape. In America, our Wilderness Act specifically requires that areas protected be unpopulated and “untrammelled”. (Indigenous people were no longer present on much of the land covered by the Wilderness Act.)

However, particularly in Europe, many rural areas are becoming de-populated as younger people abandon towns and move to cities. This is allowing nature to reclaim the landscape in some places and is providing opportunities for the restoration of wildlife populations, including top-tier predators such as bears and wolves. Thus “wilderness” is often viewed through the prism of wildlife habitat.

“Rewilding Europe” is a movement founded in 2011, with the goal of making more space for wildlife, wilderness and natural processes. The hope is to have 1 million hectares (~2.5 million acres) “re-wilded” by 2020, comprising ten areas. Six programs are already underway--in Western Iberia, the Velebit Mountains in the Balkans, the Danube Delta, the Central Apennines, and both the Eastern and Southern Carpathian Mountains. Proposed areas include the Delta of the Oder River, Laponia in Sweden and Norway, and the Thracian Mountains in Greece and Bulgaria. There is also a goal of bringing back historic

wildlife populations, such as the European bison, Iberian lynx, brown bear, chamois, white-tailed eagle, common crane, and the Peregrine falcon, among many species. Biologists have even begun to back-breed cattle to “recreate” the aurochs, a species of wild cattle which became extinct in 1627.

A common focus worldwide is the need to get younger people out to experience the natural world. The conflict between their absorption with tech gadgets and experiencing nature firsthand was mentioned frequently. (It was, therefore, discouraging to come home to an ad from Toys R

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photo: Mike Painter

Heather Anderson and Vicky Hoover in Salamanca, Spain at the entrance to the WILD 10 Congress auditorium. Can you read the WILD10 slogan: “Por un planeta más salvaje”? (Making the world a wilder place.)

Saving Mono Basin Sage-Grouse

--by Mark Salvo, Defenders of Wildlife

Sage-grouse were once prolific in the West. They were seemingly everywhere in the vast Sagebrush Sea. Lewis and Clark reported seeing the “cock of the plains” on their westward expedition in 1805, and huge flocks of sage-grouse were still described from across the West before the turn of the 20th century. Montana residents reported that “sage grouse were so plentiful that when they got up they darkened the sky.” In Wyoming, sage-grouse were so numerous that people gathered their eggs in spring for table use. In parts of northern Nevada, sage-grouse “clouded the sky”, and boys were able to kill sage-grouse by simply reaching out and hitting them with a stick.

Sage grouse are a striking and charismatic bird that derives its name, food and shelter from the sagebrush on which they depend. The largest grouse in North America, both males and females are a mottled, brownish-gray. White chest feathers and a special headdress distinguish males during the spring breeding season. Males

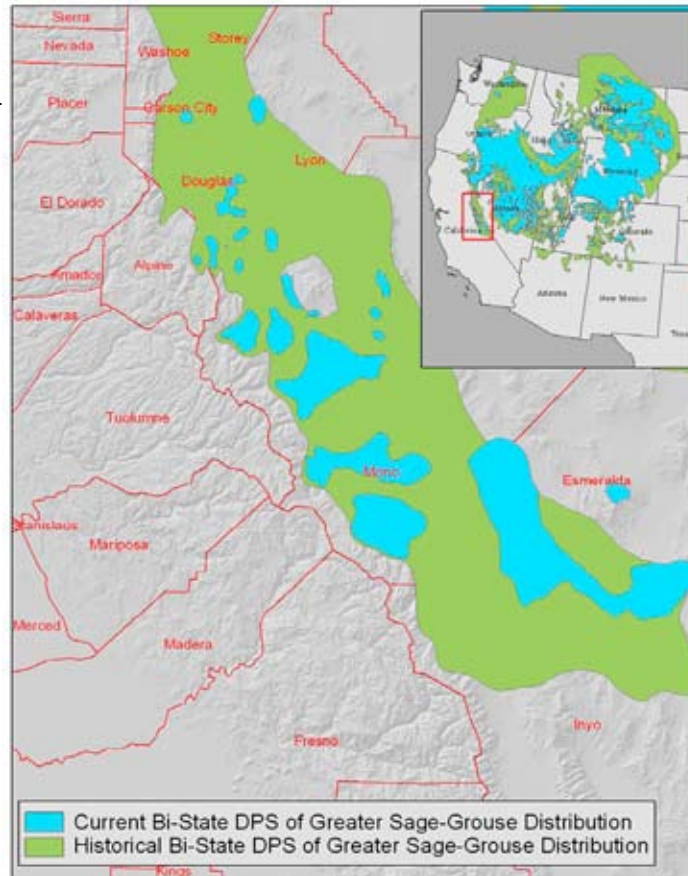
WILD 10 welcomes -- from page 1

Us <<http://tinyurl.com/omjttyo>> glorifying a visit to a toy store over a nature field trip. Author Chris Clarke wrote an interesting online essay <<http://tinyurl.com/lwefj87>> analyzing some of the issues raised for conservationists. He did notice, though, that at least one kid in the commercial “was entranced by a way to see ... nature more clearly” using a telescope.)

Even with the multitude of wildland preservation initiatives underway around the globe, the most exciting aspect of the World Congress was the opportunity to realize that there are many, many people from countries—both developed and developing—all around the world working to ensure that Nature is respected and allowed to function with minimal interference from humans. It was a wonderful experience to meet so many of them. ☺

also have long black tail feathers with white tips, while female tail feathers are mottled black, brown, and white.

Sage-grouse are well known for their courtship displays, which are often described as among the most stirring and colorful natural history pageants in the West. In early spring, at dawn and



Distribution of Sage Grouse Bi-State Distinct Population Segment

often at dusk, sage-grouse congregate on “leks”—ancestral strutting grounds to which the birds return year after year. To attract a hen, cocks strut, fan their tail feathers and swell their breasts to reveal bright yellow air sacs. The combination of wing movements and inflating and deflating air sacs makes an utterly unique “swish-swish-coo-oopointk!”

Historic accounts of sage-grouse abundance are common, and the species’ subsequent decline is well documented. However, even I, after spending more than 15 years researching sage-grouse and advocating for their conservation, was stunned to discover the following

account from Dr. George Bird Grinnell, a prominent early conservationist working in Wyoming in the mid-1800s:

“Looking up from the tent at the edge of the bluff above us, we could see projecting over it the heads of hundreds of the birds, and, as those standing there took flight, others stepped forward to occupy their places. The number of Grouse which flew over the camp reminded me of the old-time flights of Passenger Pigeons that I used to see when I was a boy. Before long, the narrow valley where the water was, was a moving mass of gray. I have no means whatever of estimating the number of birds which I saw, but there must have been thousands of them.”

The comparison of sage-grouse to passenger pigeons is both surprising (passenger pigeons historically numbered in the billions and may have been the most numerous bird species on Earth) and a solemn reminder of the need to protect remaining sage-grouse populations and their habitat.

Next September marks the centenary anniversary of the extinction of the passenger pigeon, a species that was extirpated due to a number of factors, and because our country was without a legal framework to save them.

Fortunately for sage-grouse, Congress learned from the tragedy of the passenger pigeon, Carolina parakeet, heath hen and other species lost to history by enacting the Endangered Species Act to save imperiled plants and animals before it’s too late. This wildly successful law, which marked its own 40th anniversary this year, has saved more than a thousand species from extinction and is supporting their long journey to recovery.

New listing decision from FWS

And now, eleven years after conservationists first petitioned for their protection, there is -- go to page 3

Listing decision for CA/NV distinct population



Sage grouse: -- from page 2
Multiple plans for comment

good news for a unique population of imperiled sage-grouse in California and Nevada. In October, the Fish and Wildlife Service announced dual proposals to list the bi-state distinct population segment (DPS) of greater sage-grouse (commonly known as “Mono Basin sage-grouse”) as threatened under the Endangered Species Act and to designate 1.8 million acres of critical habitat to support the population’s recovery.

The Mono Basin sage-grouse is a genetically unique subpopulation of sage-grouse that inhabits the Mono Basin area of east-central California and western Nevada (hence its moniker). Research indicates that, genetically, this population is so different from other sage-grouse that it could be a separate subspecies.

Aside from their distinct genetic traits, Mono Basin sage-grouse appear and behave as other sage-grouse, and have the same habitat requirements. The Mono Basin population occurs at the periphery of greater sage-grouse range, occupying an especially fragile area of sagebrush steppe. The Mono Basin birds’ isolation, limited range and small population make them particularly vulnerable to habitat disturbances. At present, only about 5,000 Mono Basin sage-grouse remain from a historic population that likely averaged more than twice that

number. Many factors have contributed to this population’s decline, including livestock grazing, invasive species, unnatural fire, mining and off-road vehicle use that degrades sagebrush habitat.

Species listing decisions often generate a lot of (often false) controversy over what species protection could mean for future land use and development, which can distract from the ultimate goal of preventing species extinction. The Mono Basin sage-grouse listing proposal is likely to attract a lot of attention in the coming months. As the proposal proceeds through the administrative process, both advocates and opponents of listing would be wise to remember the important lessons learned from the passenger pigeon. Every species has value and is inextricably connected to our environment. Protecting species like sage-grouse is a gift of biodiversity, beauty and history that we give to future generations, and ourselves.

The National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy

The Fish and Wildlife Service will consider three populations of sage-grouse for listing under the Endangered Species Act. The agency has already proposed to list two populations under the act: the Mono Basin sage-grouse and Gunnison sage-grouse, a separate species of sage-grouse that live in Colorado and Utah. These proposals are under review, and both populations will receive final listing determinations in March 2014.

The third and largest population, the greater sage-grouse, will be considered for listing in 2015. Greater sage-grouse occur in parts of ten western states and in areas valued for oil and gas drilling, livestock grazing, gold mining, coal extraction, off-road vehicle use and other pursuits. Sage-grouse are highly sensitive to disturbance and conserving the species may require curtailing these activities in essential habitat.

As might be expected, federal agencies and western states are concerned about how listing greater sage-grouse might affect future land use and development. They have initiated multiple planning processes to implement additional conservation measures for the grouse in an attempt to avoid the need to protect the species under the ESA. The most important of these is the National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy led by the federal Bureau of Land Management, which administers over half of all remaining occupied habitat. The BLM-led Planning Strategy will produce 15 separate plans that will determine sage-grouse conservation on 60 million acres of federal public lands in the West (www.blm.gov/sagegrouse).

One of the sub-regional planning areas in BLM’s Planning Strategy covers Nevada and northeastern California. This draft plan amendment and environmental impact statement is currently available for public comment (www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/prog/wildlife/greater_sage-grouse.html). The draft proposes to do some good things for sage-grouse, but it would also allow too much grazing, oil and gas development and mining in sage-grouse habitat. Conservationists are encouraged to submit comments on BLM’s plan before the deadline on January 29, 2014.

What You Can do:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is currently accepting comment on its proposed listing and critical habitat designation for the Mono Basin sage-grouse until **December 27, 2013**. The proposals and additional information are posted at www.fws.gov/nevada/nv_species/sage_grouse.html.

The Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management have also drafted a new management strategy for the Mono Basin sage-grouse on public lands. Conservationists are encouraged to review and comment on the new strategy, which is linked from the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest website (www.fs.usda.gov/htnf). The deadline for comments on this draft is also December 27. ↵

(Mark Salvo directs the federal lands program for Defenders of Wildlife in Washington DC. He has worked to conserve sage grouse and their habitat his entire career.)

Tahoe Forest restrictions on off road vehicles upheld Court ruling helps protect against ORV abuse

A U.S. District Court in Sacramento ruled in favor of increased protections for Tahoe National Forest from motorized off-road vehicles. In a lengthy oral ruling delivered from the bench on November 22, Judge John A. Mendez of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California denied a challenge to the forest's plan to limit damages that motor vehicles inflict on the forests.

Earthjustice, representing The Wilderness Society, the Sierra Club, Forest Issues Group, Sierra Foothills Audubon Society, and Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, intervened in defense of the Forest Service's plan for Tahoe National Forest. Earthjustice argued that there is no way to adequately protect a forest while allowing motor vehicles to roam all over the forest with no restrictions or limits.

Plaintiffs against the Forest's efforts to restrain off-road vehicles were a number of off-road groups and individuals, represented by Pacific Legal Foundation.

Under the Forest Service's travel management plan upheld Friday, while much of the forest remains open to motorized vehicles, some especially sensitive parts of the forest are off limits.

Said Earthjustice attorney Greg

Loarie, who argued the case: "This is a good decision that strikes a balance to give Tahoe National Forest some necessary, basic protections. One thing both sides of this case agree on: Tahoe National Forest is a stunning, special place. With millions of people visiting Tahoe National Forest each year and the rapid increase of motor vehicles throughout the forest, we need some basic limits on motor vehicle use to make sure that we don't love this place to death. It's in all of our interests to preserve and protect Tahoe National Forest so that we all can enjoy it."

Karen Schambach of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, commented: "This decision sends a clear message: The days of allowing destruction of our National Forests from uncontrolled and unregulated off-road vehicles are at an end. We all have a right to enjoy our public lands, but no one has a right to destroy them."

The Tahoe National Forest covers lands north and west of the Lake Tahoe area. There, as elsewhere on our public lands, off-road vehicle abuse is a serious threat to the landscape. (National Forest lands within the Lake Tahoe Basin are separately managed a--see Forest Planning article, p. 9.)

-- from press release by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility

Nevadans organize for Wilderness 50th anniversary

Celebrating the monster that lurks in the canyon

-- by Marge Sill

Sierra Club in Reno is working closely with Friends of Nevada Wilderness and is pleased that the sister organization has hired an organizer, Shevawn Van Tobel, who will spend much of her time on organizing events in Nevada for the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act. A Wild and Scenic film festival has already been held in Las Vegas to mark the beginning of this campaign. Friends of Nevada Wilderness held the Film Festival on November 14 in Las Vegas' historic Fifth St. Schoolhouse.

On December 11, a meeting of all who are interested in helping with 50th events is being held at Marge Sill's house in Reno. Among those expecting to attend this organizing gathering are volunteers from Sierra Club, Great

Old Broads for Wilderness, Friends of the Black Rock-High Rock, and other groups-- plus representatives from the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest and from the Nevada state office of the Bureau of Land Management.

The Friends of Nevada Wilderness 2014 calendar celebrates the 50th anniversary with pictures of Nevada wilderness, including the first and only wilderness established by the Wilderness Act in Nevada--the Jarbidge (named for an Indian word which means "monster that lurks in the canyon.")



photo: Mesonika Piecuch

2014: an anniversary year:

including centennial observations of a couple of environmentally significant passages:

- the centennial of the death of Sierra Club founder John Muir on Dec. 24.
- the centenary anniversary of the extinction of the passenger pigeon. Martha, the last passenger pigeon, died in a Cleveland, Ohio, zoo on Sept. 1. (see Sage grouse, p. 2-3)

Illegal dirt bike rider on the PCT in Southern Sierra. The Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) is closed to off-road vehicles along its entire length; it is a trail designed and constructed for use by hikers and horse riders. Certain areas of the PCT have been subject to considerable ORV trespass. A citizens group in Kern County, ORV Watch Kern County, headed by local volunteer Mesonika Piecuch, has documented a number of instances of trespass by dirt bikes on the PCT in the Tehachapi Mountains area of the Southern Sierra. See <http://www.orvwatchkerncounty.com>.

2014 Wolf OR-7 Expedition - Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act

-- by -- by Galeo Saintz



California's unexpected wolf visitor of 2011, the now famous Wolf OR-7 or 'Journey' as some have called him, who covered well over 1,200 miles in his original dispersal from northeast Oregon into northern California, has inspired a small team of adventurers to embark on a unique conservation *journey* in 2014.

The dispersion of wolves is not uncommon, but when a wolf becomes the first of his kind to roam again in old rangelands where wolves have not been seen in close to a century, communities may need to pay attention. It is our responsibility as a greater community to encourage and plan for coexistence with these remarkable predators.

The story of Wolf OR-7 is an epic journey across some of both Oregon and California's iconic landscapes and wilderness areas (see WOW, April 2012). The Wolf OR-7 Expedition planned for May 2014 started out as a small project to bring awareness to communities living along the route taken

by Wolf OR-7, to encourage tolerance for predators and good practices to support coexistence with wild wolves in celebration of the freedom to roam.

Oregonian educator Rachael Pecore teamed up with Wild Peace Alliance founder Galeo Saintz to create an expedition that would approximately retrace the route OR-7 took into California, with the idea to rally conservation groups to show a united front in working towards peace with what are sometimes regarded as 'problem species'.

The route wolf OR-7 took skirted farmlands and developed areas and favored wilderness or protected areas. This realization and the fact that 2014 is the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act turns this expedition into a celebration of why wilderness is important--not only to communities that depend on the important ecological services wilderness delivers but also for its role in preserving important species and ensuring our own on-going connection to the wild.

The expedition seeks endorsement from numerous conservation leaders, including The Wilderness Society, Oregon Wild, and the Pacific Wolf Coalition, among others. The team, consisting of creative writers, storytellers and multimedia producers, is now preparing for the 1,200 mile mountain bike and hiking adventure ahead of them. The team will

deliver a series of educational products from a time-lapse of the expedition, to an e-book and a card game. Social media posts will encourage enthusiasts to follow the expedition come May 2014. They plan storytelling evenings and encounters with school children and local communities along the way. Their fundraising kickstarter campaign will go live in January 2014.

The expedition team is part of the Wild Peace Alliance, a global initiative which brings awareness to human-wildlife conflict zones and works toward peace in wild places and advocates for effective coexistence with wild species.

Follow OR-7 and the expedition at <http://or7expedition.org/>.

(Galeo Saintz, mountain wilderness guide and conservation ecologist, has pioneered conservation-linked long distance trails and is founder of Wild Peace Alliance. See <http://www.wild-peace.org/>.)



Next Wilderness meeting Feb 15-16, 2014, Shoshone

It's the big one of the year: The next meeting of the Sierra Club's California/Nevada Wilderness Committee will take place Saturday and Sunday, February 15-16, 2014. It's our annual joint meeting with the RCC Desert Committee, in Shoshone, CA! Join us for fun, networking, scenic desert surroundings, food, and timely presentations on worthy wildlands topics—including organizing for California & Nevada events for the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act next year. Potluck dinner Sat, camp or other accommodation nearby. All interested wildlands advocates invited. Stay for our service trip with southern NV BLM the following weekend (See outings.) For directions, agenda, etc, contact vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org or Terry Frewin: terrylf@cox.net.

Wilderness Character and the Farallon Islands

San Francisco's own Wilderness -- and anniversaries

--by Nyssa Landres

The Wilderness Act celebrates its 50th anniversary in September 3, 2014. Moreover, 2014 also marks the 40th anniversary of Farallon National Wildlife Refuge being designated as wilderness.

Rocky islands rising vertically out of the ocean do not usually come to mind when we think of wilderness. Yet, the Farallon Islands are congressionally designated as "wilderness," giving the islands the highest level of protection from human impacts and effects of modern civilization. The entire Farallon National Wildlife Refuge, with the exception of Southeast Farallon Island, is designated wilderness.



photo: USEFWS

View from SE Farallon Island of West End Island, part of the Farallon Wilderness Area.

As wilderness, the Farallon Islands have a unique "wilderness character." In fact, all wilderness areas have a "wilderness character" that is unique to each place. In managing wilderness, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service must preserve this character. But what is wilderness character and what does it mean for the Farallon Islands? Wilderness character is a set of tangible measures that make a place unique and special and helps define each wilderness. To measure wilderness character the agencies use five qualities drawn from the definition of wilderness in the Wilderness Act itself. The five qualities are untrammeled, natural, undeveloped, solitude and primitive, unconfined recreation, and other features of value. Together, these qualities are like the personality of a place. Examples of wilderness character include the plants and ani-

mals that live there, the opportunities for solitude, the lack of development, human impacts, and physical resources such as air quality.

As a Wilderness Fellow, I was tasked with defining the wilderness character of the Farallon Islands and establishing a monitoring plan for the future. I spent three months immersing myself in the refuge, discovering and identifying the physical qualities that caused Congress to designate the islands as wilderness. For the Farallon Islands, wilderness character is the wildlife, with the islands' thriving seabird, seal, and sea lion populations whose cacophony echoes around the islands 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. There is no doubt that the ecosystems of the Farallon Islands are intact and thriving with common murre, Brandt's cormorants, northern fur seals, and Steller sea lions.

Another aspect of the Farallons' wilderness character is the lack of development and human presence on the islands. Wilderness areas are places "where man himself is a visitor who does not remain" (as defined by the Wilderness Act), which fits the islands perfectly. Even refuge and Point Blue Conservation Science (formerly PRBO) staff only visit one wilderness island, West End Island, a few times per year. Wilderness areas are also places "affected primarily by the forces of nature" and "without permanent improvement or human habitation." Again, the Farallon Wilderness has no permanent improvements, and the islands are completely shaped by nature. The islands designated as wilderness are literally untouched by human influence, and any previous impacts have been completely reclaimed by the islands.

My Fellowship at the Farallon Islands is part of a national program to

define the wilderness character of wilderness areas managed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. After this year, only three refuges remain to complete their wilderness character baseline assessment and monitoring plan.

It's been an incredible journey to be a part of and working with the Farallon Islands. It has been an amazing experience. Helping land managers understand and monitor the islands within the frame of wilderness will help preserve the unique character of the Farallon Wilderness. This way, the Farallon Wilderness can continue to be a haven for the seabirds and seals that depend on them and be preserved as iconic islands for their unique wilderness character.

The Farallon National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1909 as a "native breeding ground for birds," Farallon NWR lives up to this decree. Half the world's population of Ashy storm-petrels breed here and more than 400 other species of breeding and migrant birds have been tallied. Positioned 28 miles west of San Francisco Bay, the Farallon NWR is an ecosystem rich with marine wildlife. Six species of marine mammals breed or haul-out onto these rocky islands, and its surrounding waters host one of the world's highest concentrations of white sharks.

The San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex

The Farallon Islands are one of several national wildlife refuges in central California that are managed together as the San Francisco Bay Complex of refuges. As the only Wilderness in the Complex, the Farallon Islands may hold the greatest interest for our readers, but the other refuges in the Complex are important and also deserve to be publicized during the special wilderness anniversary year of 2014.

From sand dunes to salt marsh, from rocky, offshore islands to golden beaches, the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex offers a glimpse into the biological wonders of the San Francisco Bay Area. Despite booming industries and growing populations, these -- go to page 7

and the San Francisco Bay Complex of Refuges

--from page 6 National Wildlife Refuges preserve an incredibly complex ecosystem. In addition to the Farallon National Wildlife Refuge, other refuges in the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex include: Antioch Dunes National Wildlife Refuge, Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Ellicott Slough National Wildlife Refuge, Marin Islands National Wildlife Refuge, Salinas River National Wildlife Refuge, and San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Of these, the only refuges that are open to the public are Don Edwards, San Pablo, and Salinas. Antioch is accessible through docent-guided tours the first Saturday of every month.

The other refuges are briefly noted here, with their date of establishment:

Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge (1974):

The largest refuge in the complex, Don Edwards SF Bay NWR in the South Bay was created through the efforts of grass roots organizations. This refuge is vital to millions of shorebirds and waterfowl that winter here each year. Two endangered species that live exclusively in the salt marshes of the San Francisco Bay personify this refuge - the California clapper rail and the salt marsh harvest mouse. Visitors may enjoy this refuge through the visitor center located in Fremont, trails, and its large public use programs.

Antioch Dunes National Wildlife Refuge (1980):

The last remaining riverine sand dunes along the San Joaquin River, Antioch Dunes was the first National Wildlife Refuge created to protect insects and plants. Nowhere else in the world can you find endangered Lange's metalmark butterflies. This 55-acre refuge also protects endangered Contra Costa wallflowers and Antioch Dunes evening primroses.

Salinas River National Wildlife Refuge (1973):

Located on the coast of Monterey Bay, where the Salinas river flows into the ocean, Salinas River

NWR is truly diverse in habitats and species in such a small area. Grasslands, salt marsh, sand dunes, salt ponds and riverine habitats make up this 366-acre refuge that is home to endangered Smith's blue butterflies, western snowy plovers, and California brown pelicans. Another rare species, the black legless lizard, resides beneath a layer of sand.

San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge (1974):

Boasting the largest wintering population of canvasbacks on the west coast, San Pablo Bay NWR provides wintering habitat for millions of shorebirds and waterfowl. This refuge contains the largest remaining contiguous patch of pickleweed-dominated tidal marsh in the northern San Francisco Bay, habitat critical to the endangered California clapper rail and the salt marsh harvest mouse.

Ellicott Slough National Wildlife Refuge (1975):

Created to protect and provide habitat for the endangered Santa Cruz long-toed salamander, Ellicott Slough NWR (near Watsonville south of Santa Cruz) consists of upland habitat-- the summer range of the salamander. Nonnative plants are methodically removed so the salamanders may thrive. The salamander's existence was discovered only in 1954.

Marin Islands National Wildlife Refuge (1992):

The most recent addition to the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex, Marin Islands NWR supports large colonies of great egrets, great blue herons, snowy egrets and black-crowned night herons. This 139-acre refuge also provides vital habitat to other breeding migratory birds, and its surrounding mud flats and waters are used by shorebirds and harbor seals.

(Nyssa Landres is a Wilderness Fellow working with the Fish & Wildlife Service to develop wilderness character monitoring baselines for refuge wilderness islands along the Pacific coast, including the Farallon Islands. She has also worked as a wilderness ranger for the Forest Service and National Park Service in Alaska and Utah.

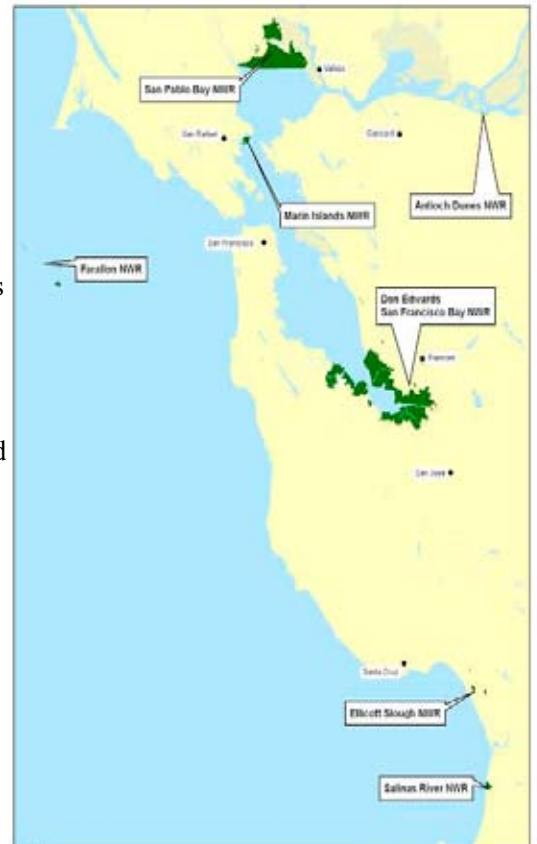


photo USFWS

Common murre nesting on the Farallon National Wildlife Refuge.

Also deserving credit for helping prepare this article for Words of the Wild are Jonathan Shore, Wildlife Refuge Specialist, Farallon National Wildlife Refuge; Anne Morkill, Refuge Complex Manager, San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex; and Carmen Minch, Outdoor Recreation Planner, San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex.

Both Anne Morkill and Jonathan Shore came to the California/Nevada Wilderness Committee's June, 2013 meeting in San Francisco to give participants a presentation on the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex, with special focus on the Farallon Islands.) The previous day, committee members had enjoyed a docent-led hike in the Don Edwards Refuge. ♪





Outings

Support wilderness the Sierra Club way!



--May your trails be crooked, winding, lonesome, dangerous, leading to the most amazing view. May your mountains rise into and above the clouds. Edward Abbey (As seen in Range of Light Group newsletter)

January 12, 2014 – Sun Snowshoe in Bodie Hills

Strenuous 8-10 mi rt, meet 8 am, Mammoth Lakes Union Bank parking lot or 9:15am, Bridgeport Ranger District Office on U.S. 395, then to Aurora Canyon Rd to Potato Peak; pre-registration required, 12 participants max, dress for cold weather. Learn about Bodie Hills preservation campaign, Leader: Jeff Hunter, 760-935-3960, jeff@bodiehills.org.

January 30-February 1 – Thur - Sat Death Valley Wilderness Restoration

Help restore wilderness values in this beautiful desert national park, by picking up plane crash debris in south park area. Meet early Thurs afternoon in Shoshone. Work at crash site thru Sat if needed. Primitive camp Thurs and Fri night, bring all supplies, including water. CNRCC Desert Com. leader Kate Allen kj.allen96@gmail.com, 661-944-4056.

February 8-9 – Sat - Sun Carrizo Plain Winter Escape

Combine a day of service in Carrizo Plain National Monument-- a relatively unknown wild area-- with a day of sight-seeing and/or hiking. The service will be removing or modifying fences to give pronghorn greater mobility; the recreation determined by group. Contact Desert Committee leader: Craig Deutsche, craig.deutsche@gmail.com, 310-477-6670.

February 22 -- Sat Southern NV Wilderness service

A one-day project helping BLM enhance wilderness in or at the edge of one of the new (2002) wilderness areas in southern Nevada managed by the BLM. Option to enjoy the area also on Friday and campout Fri night with Vicky Hoover, contact Vicky to sign up 415-977-5527, Vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org.

February 28 - March 3 – Fri - Mon Death Valley Exploration

Meet Fri at 11 to set up, Hike at 12 noon in Amargosa Canyon. Sat. hike at Natural Bridge and Golden Canyon Camp at Texas Springs in Furnace Creek. Sun to Mesquite Sand Dunes, camp at Stovepipe Wells. Mon hike Mosaic Canyon. Bring own food and water, and start with full tank of gas. Can join for just Sat. & Sun.

Contact leader, Carol Wiley, earthlingwiley2000@yahoo.com, 760-245-8734.

March 15-17 – Sat - Mon Desert service with Needles BLM

Join the wilderness committee's and Mojave Group's annual foray with BLM to enhance one of the desert wildernesses in southeast San Bernardino County. Fun, frolic, food, flowers, and fatigue, if it's hard work. Sometimes is, sometimes not—sign up and see. Exact location tbd. Contact Vicky Hoover tojoin, see Feb 22.

Outings Reports:

Caribou Wilderness Backpack

Over the Labor Day weekend, Marti Weidert led a two-day backpack trip for the Mother Lode Chapter's Shasta Group into the Caribou Wilderness -- adjacent to Lassen Volcanic National Park Wilderness.

photo: Marti Weidert



Backpackers enjoyed good swimming and flat areas next to the lake for setting up camp in this uncrowded wilderness near Redding. The group's initial plan to be out for three days was thwarted

by a rainstorm that chased them out. On the hike, trip members were amazed to see a group of old-growth Western junipers dotting an open slope-- some about five to six feet in diameter and 70 feet tall. Carl Weidert said, "these trees, are the largest Western junipers -- in its Sierra Nevada tree form -- that I've ever seen."

Visit to Granite Chief proposed wilderness addition at Tahoe

Tahoe Area Wilderness Committee chair Fred Roberts reports on a hike the committee led to the proposed Granite Chief Addition just northwest of Lake Tahoe on September 22: "On our way to the trail head at Barker Pass we stopped a few times to see the



photo: Fred Roberts

Granite Chief and September snow

proposed Granite Chief Addition (GCA) from different perspectives.

"The hike began from Barker Pass in about four inches of snow that had fallen the previous day. The Pacific Crest Trail forms the Western Border of the proposed Granite Chief additions. Within about a mile, we were in what appeared to be old-growth hemlock and red fir forests. These forests, with some limbs still snowy, were spectacular. Interesting geology included rocky outcroppings that generated taluses of small puzzle-like rock. Often we were walking across taluses where the puzzle rock made a safe and comfortable trail. In general, the watershed appeared healthy and well forested.

"Hike leader Carly Lober led us to an overlook on the PCT where we were able to see a good portion of the southern half of the GCA. The views on the hike had reinforced our feelings that Granite Chief Addition was wilderness, but we also had concerns about quite a bit of development at the northern edge of GCA - houses and a ski lift area."

August Hike to Armstrong Pass

Fred Roberts also described an earlier Tahoe Area Wilderness Committee hike: "Ten of us made the trek to Armstrong Pass on August 10. It turned out to require about 2.5 miles hiking west along the Tahoe Rim Trail from Armstrong Pass to find a view site for seeing two proposed wilderness areas-- Hell Hole and Trimmer Mountain. The round trip was about 6 miles plus.

"Hell Hole is at the base of a spectacular cliff, which -- go to next page

Lake Tahoe Basin Plan

On November 22 the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (Forest Service lands within the Lake Tahoe Basin) issued a final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) meant to guide Forest management over the next 15 years; the documents are available for the 60-day objection filing period.

While the Forest Service asserts that the plan “reflects many of the ideas and views expressed by members of the public and other agencies and groups”, it definitely does not reflect

the many comments sent by Sierra Club members and other environmentalists urging the agency to recommend one or more roadless areas in the Basin for wilderness. Alternative E, which the agency selected, contains NO wilderness recommendations.

Sierra Club and partner organizations had organized for two years to have many members and other interested citizens attend public meetings in the Tahoe area and submit written comments. (See WOW, April, Aug 2012)

The Club’s California/Nevada Wilderness Team especially seeks roadless areas in each forest to be recommended for wilderness. The Tahoe Area Sierra Club started its own new wilderness committee to focus on potential wilderness areas in the Basin.

The wilderness committee of the Tahoe Area Sierra Club is extremely disappointed with the plan. This group has made a big investment in seeing these proposed wilderness areas in the Tahoe Basin on the ground; Fred Roberts, chair of the Tahoe Area Wilderness Committee, called a committee meeting for mid-December to review the plan and to come up with a response. They will continue to conduct outings into potential wilderness areas. (See p. 8, Outings, for two of their hikes.)

The Forest Service will hold two hour-long webinars to discuss its final management plan for lands in the Lake Tahoe Basin. The first will be on Monday, Dec. 9, 2013, from 5 until 6 p.m., and the second will take place on Tuesday, Jan. 14, 2014, from 2 until 3 p.m. Both webinars will highlight changes from the draft, and outline the rest of the plan revision process with a brief presentation, followed by a question and answer period.

Inyo Draft Assessment is Out

The Inyo National Forest released its Draft assessment for public review on November 18 – with comments accepted until December 16. Sierra

Club’s Sierra Nevada team and partners are studying this assessment now.

The Lake Tahoe Basin Plan was the last one to be prepared under the old 1982 Forest Planning regulations. In 2012, the agency issued new planning regulations, and eight forests around the nation were selected to be first to try out planning under the new regs: three of those being in California -- the Inyo, the Sierra, and the Sequoia – three important Sierra Nevada national forests. (See WOW, Dec. 2012, Apr, Aug 2013)

Under the new rules, there are three major steps in the planning process – assessment, plan development and revision, and monitoring. All three forests are in the “assessment” phase, in which they evaluate forest resources and issues to determine what changes are needed from the previous plan. The individual forest assessments follow a bio-regional assessment by the agency’s regional office in Vallejo, CA for the Sierra Nevada Bio-Region.

The Inyo’s Assessment chapters cover air, soil and water resources, carbon stocks, at-risk species, social and economic conditions, ecosystem services, recreation opportunities and visual (scenic) character, timber, range, wildlife, energy and minerals, cultural resources and areas of Tribal importance, land ownership, land status and zoning, and Designated Areas (such as Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers, and IRAS, (Inventoried Roadless Areas.)

A public meeting to review the Inyo Draft Assessment Report was scheduled for 6 pm, December 5, 2013 at the Supervisor’s Office, 351 Pacu Lane, Bishop CA. A webinar is also scheduled for December 11 at 2 p.m. Please call or email Deb Schweizer (debraaschweizer@fs.fed.us, 760-873-2427) to sign up for the webinar or with questions about the Draft Assessment Report.

Find more info on the Plan Revision at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main>. Give your input by email (comments-pacificsouthwest-inyo@fs.fed.us) or by mail (Forest Plan Revision, Inyo National Forest, 351 Pacu Lane, Suite 200, Bishop, CA 93514).

-- Vicky Hoover



photo: Fred Roberts

Hiking to Tahoe’s Armstrong Pass

⇒ Outings Reports, cont fr. p. 8.

creates a talus feeding broken boulders into what was probably an ancient lake formed at the base of a mountain in a cirque gouged out by ice. The group was able to piece together a plausible story of how glaciation created Hell Hole. The boulder piles bordering the edge of the long marsh/meadows (Hell Hole) are probably remnants of the lateral moraines from glaciation. The cliff and the boulder moraines make Hell Hole rather inaccessible and pristine, and its ruggedness probably prevented any significant logging. The Hell Hole Area appears to function effectively as a watershed. The group felt a wilderness designation for Hell Hole is quite appropriate.

“Thanks to Chapter chair and outings leader David von Seggern for joining us on the hike. He oversaw Carly Lober lead the group, which completes her training to be an outings leader for the Sierra Club. Congratulations Carly!”

California's Monterey Pine Forest --Coastal California's Living Legacy



What do YOU know about California's Monterey pine? (yes, they do grow around Monterey.) Whatever you assume you already know, there is an intriguing new book around to tell you much more--everything imaginable about this symbol of the California coast—a worthwhile addition to anyone's collection of Californiana. The group Monterey Pine Forest Watch, with contributions from many expert local advocates and leadership from Sierra Club Ventana Chapter's own Rita Dalessio, has put together *The Monterey Pine Forest: Coastal California's Living Legacy*.

Although its native range on California's central coast is small, the Monterey pine has been planted for industrial forestry around the world in plantations totaling some 10 million acres. In New Zealand, more than 90 percent of planted forest is in Monterey pine.

But in its wild state, the Monterey pine thriving in its natural home habitat grows with much more variation in shape than in

plantations, much more beauty.

The Monterey area's history is inseparable from this majestic forest. The earliest European explorers called Monterey Bay "the Bay of Pines" (Bahia de pinos.)

Rapid industrialization now threatens remnant native stands. The few remaining undeveloped areas of pine habitat, inland of the coast, such as Pescadero Canyon, Jack Peak County Park and Loma Alta Ridge, need protection from development.

Lovingly created, this charming book features:

- abundant color photos.
- vignettes of wildlife, flora, and other special ecosystem features.
- a discussion of how different population segments—Native Americans, Spanish and Mexicans, poets and artists, natural history specialists--interacted with the Monterey pine over history.
- focus areas for future

conservation, land use and development trends.

- numerous clear maps, including some very detailed ones of individual stands and with clear directions of how to find them.
- appendices with detailed lists of flora and fauna of Monterey Peninsula, of the Año Nuevo, Waddell Valley and Swanton area, and of the Cambria and San Simeon area—southern extension of the habitat.
- index and list of literature cited.

The Monterey Pine Forest: Coastal California's Living Legacy.

187 pp, soft cover, ©2011 by Monterey Pine Forest Watch. \$22 from Pine Nut Press, c/o Monterey Pine Forest Watch, P.O. Box 505, Carmel-By-The-Sea, 93921-0505. ☞

-- reviewed by Vicky Hoover

In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.
-- John Muir

WORDS OF the WILD

The Sierra Club California/Nevada Wilderness Committee, an issue committee of the CA/NV Regional Conservation Committee, advocates for preservation of unroaded, undeveloped public lands in a wild state, through legislation and appropriate management and sponsors stewardship and wilderness study outings.

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FIRST CLASS



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