

WORDS OF the WILD

Vol. XVII, No. 2 August 2014



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

Central Coast Heritage Protection Act introduced

-- by Jim Hines

A large shadow covers the land as a majestic California condor leaps into flight from atop a remote rocky peak in the rugged Sespe Wilderness of the Los Padres National Forest north of Fillmore, CA.

Her flight takes her across great wild lands, home to her recovering species and hundreds of other bird, mammal, plant, fish and reptile species.

Many of these great wild areas over which the condor soars would be given special protected status under new congressional legislation. The Central Coast Heritage Protection Act (H.R. 4685) introduced by Santa Barbara area Congresswoman Lois Capps (D-CA24) will protect over 250,000 acres as federal wilderness lands within the Los Padres National Forest (LPNF) in Ventura, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo

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Happy Birthday Wilderness!

Fifty years ago, on September 3, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Wilderness Act, in the Rose Garden of the White House, surrounded by leaders of the wilderness movement including Mardy Murie and Alice Zahniser, widow of Howard Zahniser, chief author of the Act and its many drafts over eight years of Congressional debates. Howard Zahniser, or "Zahnie", executive secretary of The Wilderness Society, died on May 5, 1964, just four months before final bill signing. Alice Zahniser died early this July, just two months before the 50th anniversary.

At that same Rose Garden session, Johnson signed one other bill that has been vital for land preservation—the Act establishing the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Earlier that summer, on July 2, President Johnson had signed another landmark bill memorable for our society, the Civil Rights Act. The Civil Rights Act honored the freedom and diversity of America's people. And the Wilderness Act valued the freedom and diversity of America's natural heritage. We mark both 50ths now.

As President Johnson signed the Wilderness Act, he said: *"If future generations are to remember us with gratitude rather than contempt, we must leave them a glimpse of the world as it was in the beginning, not just after we got through with it."*

Go forth wildly—Celebrate and promote Wilderness!



photo: www.wilderness.net

San Gabriel Mountains Forever supports new Recreation Area bill

Hopes for wilderness bill to follow

-- by John Monsen

In June, Congresswoman Judy Chu (D-CA27) introduced a San Gabriel National Recreation Area bill, H.R. 4858, in the House of Representatives. The new recreation area would include the San Gabriel Mountains, the San Gabriel River and adjacent river corridors south of the Angeles National Forest, and the Puente Hills wildlife corridor that provides a link with the Cleveland National Forest. The proposed recreation area would cover 615,000 acres of national forest, including the main section of the Angeles Forest east of CA 14 and the San Bernardino Forest west of I-15. An estimated four million visitors a year visit these areas.

H.R. 4858 advances one of the key goals of the San Gabriel Mountains Forever Campaign—establishment of a huge recreation area to serve the urban populations concentrated in the Los Angeles Basin. It does not address the second big goal – protecting wilderness: the campaign supports the designation of 122,000 acres of wilderness and the creation

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Counties, and lands within the Carrizo Plain National Monument in San Luis Obispo County, managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The bill would designate four new wilderness areas and expand eight existing ones

The bill would also protect 160 miles of rivers as part of the national Wild and Scenic Rivers System; these include such wild creeks and rivers as Upper Sespe Creek, noted for a spectacular rock gorge; Matilija Creek, in western Ventura County; and Mono and Indian Creeks, which are valuable habitat for endangered species such as red-legged frogs, arroyo toads, and western pond turtles.

H.R. 4685 would establish two national forest scenic areas: The Black Mountain Scenic Area includes a rare oak savannah habitat for mountain lion, kit foxes and a herd of wild horses.

The beautiful ridgeline with sweeping views of the Pacific Ocean that is the background to the majestic Gaviota Coast would be protected as Condor Ridge Scenic Area, just north of



Overlooking the Sespe Wilderness in Ventura County

Highway 101 near Santa Barbara.

The Condor Trail which traverses the entire LPNF for nearly 400 miles would be designated as Condor National Recreation Trail.

Los Padres and Santa Lucia Chapters worked with Congresswoman Capps' staff to prepare this legislation; the Sierra Club supports HR 4685.

As we all celebrate Wilderness

of 64 miles of Wild & Scenic Rivers. The campaign's wilderness proposal includes additions to the existing San Gabriel, Sheep Mountain, and Cucamonga Wilderness areas plus two new wilderness areas. The two new proposed areas are Condor Peak (18,000 acres) and Castaic Mountains (70,000). Visit <http://www.sangabrielmountains.org/place> for description of the PWAs and Wild & Scenic Rivers.

The San Gabriel Mountains Forever Campaign is working with its legislative champions for introduction of wilderness legislation, perhaps later this year, as a companion to the national recreation area bill. Many of the campaign's proposed wilderness areas feature chaparral ecosystems that have come to be much more appreciated over the last 20 years through the work of Rick Halsey and others.

The new recreation area would have two units with the forests being managed by the Forest Service and the other lands south of the forests managed by the National Park Service. There would be one management plan with NPS being asked to share resources and expertise with the Forest Service to improve recreational and environmental conditions in the forest, most especially in the concentrated use areas along the San Gabriel River. The bill would require an extensive visitor services plan. The Forest Service and NPS would share this effort.

"Representative Chu's legislation is an important step forward in a decades-long effort to preserve open space and increase access to nature across the Southland," said Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA28-Burbank). Schiff and Congressman Tony Cardenas (D-CA29-Sylmar) are cosponsors of the new bill,

50, what would be more fitting than passage of this great wilderness bill: A true celebration of wilderness, of our great wild areas, protecting them for future generations. ♪

(Jim Hines, Ventura, is Los Padres Chapter conservation chair.)



photo: John Morsen

Juana Torres (right) and volunteers on a boundary survey trip in the proposed Condor Peak wilderness (Condor Peak on left).

which includes land in their districts.

The politics of creating a national recreation area here are complex since, in addition to Schiff and Cardenas's districts, the proposed NRA covers significant land in five other congressional districts. And Southern California has hundreds of national recreation area stakeholders with political clout-- including scores of foothill cities, Los Angeles County, water and fire agencies, utilities, chambers of commerce, regional government associations, recreation users and more.

The San Gabriel Mountains Forever Campaign has played an important role in the national recreation area legislative effort, explaining the recreation area concept to stakeholders and soliciting their support. The San Gabriel Mountains Forever coalition gains its strength from a diverse group of partners including the Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, the City Project, PEW Environmental Trusts, Amigos De Los Rios, Council of Mexican Federations (COFEM) and other community, social justice and environmental organizations. Sierra Club's Los Angeles-based national field staffers Nidia Erceg and Fabi Lao work full time on the campaign which also enjoys the support of volunteers from local Sierra Club groups such as the Angeles Chapter's Forest Committee. See an excellent video on the campaign at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duw68wNPqnA>.

One option being advanced by the Sierra Club is to ask the Administration to -- go to page 3, bottom

California honors the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act.

The California state legislature has passed Assembly Concurrent Resolution 90 honoring wilderness on its 50th anniversary. Introduced into the State Assembly by Assembly Member Anthony Rendon (Los Angeles) and after successful passage through the Assembly, into the State Senate by Senator Lois Wolk, the resolution was passed on June 5. The Senate vote count was 31 Ayes, 0 Noes, and 9 No vote recorded. Because ACR 90 was a resolution, not a regular bill, it did not require the governor's signature, but immediately became effective.

The California/Nevada Wilderness Committee thanks Sierra Club California Director Kathryn Phillips for her strong leadership in initiating the state resolution idea and inspiring Mr. Rendon to champion the measure. And kudos to Sierra Club staffer Eddie Moreno for his work with Mr. Rendon's office to advance the resolution in the legislative process.

Los Angeles Wilderness gala

Earth Day in Los Angeles was a big day for Wilderness, as the Angeles Chapter organized a major press event with Mayor Eric Garcetti in the city's huge and wild Griffith Park. Mayor Garcetti presented the Sierra Club Angeles Chapter with a proclamation from the City to mark the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act.

In addition to Sierra Club, many environmental groups turned out,

including Friends of Griffith Park, Breathe L.A., Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife, L.A. River Revitalization and the L.A. Conservation Corps.

Angeles Chapter Chair Carole Mintzer kicked off the Earth Day event, noting how the Wilderness Act melds beautifully with the Sierra Club's mission to protect the planet.

Los Angeles Councilmembers Tom LaBonge and Paul Koretz, U.S. Forest Service's Tom Contreras, supervisor of the Angeles National Forest; Chapter Vice-Chair David Haake, and newly elected Sierra Club Director Dean Wallraff also spoke during the ceremony. Afterward, Tom LaBonge led hikers, including students from the Foshay Learning Center who had listened to the mayor, on a hike up to Mt. Hollywood, the highest point in Griffith Park. Thanks to Los Angeles Sierra Club Director Susana Reyes for leading the event organizing effort with the mayor's office.

More civic honors for Wilderness

In San Diego, both the City and the county honored the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act via separate proclamations. Thanks to the San Diego Chapter for vigorous action.

And, in the City and County of San Francisco, the Board

of Supervisors proclaimed the Wilderness anniversary in their April 29 meeting. Kudos to San Francisco Group conservation chair Karen Babbitt for encouraging Supervisor David Campos to introduce the resolution. And latest news is from the City of Davis, which issued a proclamation on July 15 to honor the Wilderness anniversary.

It's not only California! The Sierra Club's Southern Nevada Group, based in Las Vegas, is working with the Clark County Board of Commissioners for a proclamation commemorating the Wilderness Anniversary from the county—the vote is scheduled for August 19. ☞

-- Vicky Hoover



Los Angeles mayor Eric Garcetti honors wilderness on Earth Day in Los Angeles's Griffith Park

photo: Judy Anderson



San Gabriel Mountains Recreation area bill

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declare the San Gabriel Mountains a National Monument. This might achieve many objectives of a national recreation area with the advantage of not having to pass through Congress. Such a national monument would cover the National Forests land only. Legislation for the river corridors and Puente-Chino Hills, wilderness and Wild & Scenic rivers would still be needed. ☞

John Monsen is a wilderness consultant to the San Gabriel Mountains Forever Campaign and volunteer supporter as Co-Chair of the Angeles Chapter's Forest Committee. He is currently meeting with stakeholders of the Condor Peak PWA to build support for the area. John was formerly on the Sierra Club National Field staff in Los Angeles where he worked on the San Gabriel Mountains Forever Campaign.

The Spiritual Dimensions to Wilderness

Essential in the Past, Obscured in the Present

-- by Fred Krueger



This year America will celebrate fifty years of The Wilderness Act. During this celebration wilderness enthusiasts will extol many reasons for celebrating wilderness, including the benefits for recreation; wildlife habitat; rest and regeneration; and experience of the beauty of the world. They will cite ecological, geological, educational, historical, scientific, and scenic reasons plus a long list of outdoor opportunities, including fishing, hiking, birding and hunting. These are all important, but one huge category has become absent in our modern evaluation of wilderness: the religious and spiritual values of wilderness.

Historically virtually all the world's faith traditions sought out wild places for religious reasons. Sierra Club founder John Muir was eloquent in citing the religious values of wilderness: "The hills and the groves were God's first temples," he wrote. "In our best times, everything turns into religion, all the world seems a church, and the mountains the altars." (*My First Summer in the Sierra*).

Sigurd Olson, a key voice in promoting The Wilderness Act fifty years ago, was the son of a Baptist minister. Olson saw wilderness as a doorway to experience of the sacred. In 1959, he wrote, "The highest use [of wild areas] is the effect these lands have on the spiritual well-being of our people" (*The Conservation Challenge*, 1959). He added, "Wilderness to the people of America is a spiritual necessity, an antidote to the high pressure of modern life.... In wilderness people can find the silence and solitude... that can give them a sense of the sacredness of all." (*Wilderness: America's Living Heritage*, 1965).

Muir and Olson reflect a theme that today is mostly forgotten in wilderness discussion. Yet historical research shows that ALL of the world's major faith traditions recognize an ability to learn spiritual lessons from nature, especially wild places. This recognition gave rise to the concept of nature as a "book" of holy wisdom, filled with spiritual insight.

This ancient premise was abundant in western thought until roughly the 17th

century – the era of the Enlightenment – when scientific knowledge began to ascend in prominence. This change in worldview ushered in a squeeze on traditional religious suppositions about nature. As science and technology continued to rise in importance, society discarded spiritual and religious approaches to the land. Now environmental leaders recognize that we are approaching an end to science's ability to answer the needs of the modern ecological movement. We also recognize that human choices, and therefore values, are at the core of our biggest problems. While science can serve as the eyes of society, the heart nurtures the moral and ethical attitudes that lead to respect for the environment. Science alone cannot touch this deeper dimension of human behavior.

A sense of the sacredness of all

When individuals actually study nature as a framework for spiritual insight, they discover a vast system of spiritual knowledge with similar principles across all peoples and nationalities, regardless of religious tradition. This congruence of awareness and meaning across continents and cultures indicates that universal spiritual-psychic principles fill the world and affirm the intuitions of traditional religion.

On the next page, excerpts from historical religious writing describe nature as a primal "book" of spiritual wisdom. This is not some new glib philosophy. This is the historical witness of people across widely separated and diverse backgrounds who have seen how the energies and life in nature represent a doorway to obtain a spiritual and moral orientation to the world. Nature embodies the energy and consciousness and wisdom of its Maker. This also reflects on why the world's great religions are born out in wilderness, not in the urban centers of philosophical reflection. If this understanding could be amplified, it could lead the way to a deeper respect for the integrity of the planet's native

design. In this way wild places affirm and reflect those principles in religious thought which cultivate a respectful honoring of the earth.

These historical citations represent a stream in religious thought that emphasizes the spiritual value of wild places—a substantial legacy now largely ignored. Nowhere is this loss more evident than in the environmental community, including the Sierra Club. The religious values of wilderness are poorly articulated by academics as well as environmentalists. When environmental groups rely on science divorced from morality, they miss a monumental opportunity to articulate the importance of preserving wild places. An approach including both religious and scientific values would embrace a larger slice of society and bring more citizens, including legislators, into support of legislation to protect wilderness and the whole earth. A few examples remind us of the value of working with religion.

In 1996 when the Endangered Species Act (ESA) was up for reauthorization, Washington environmentalists worried that they did not have the votes to pass new legislation. Religious groups stepped up and called the ESA a modern "Noah's Ark" and this message reverberated across America. Thousands of calls poured into legislators. This religious call clashed with the republican majority, but it resulted in House Speaker Newt Gingrich declaring that his party was "out of position," as he put it, with the environment and the public. Not only did this break the impasse over reauthorization of the Endangered Species Act, it also broke the so-called "Contract with America."

When the Sierra Club in 1999 pushed a bill in Congress calling for an end to commercial logging on national forests,

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barely thirty legislators signed on. But when a few small religious groups lined up in support of this measure, the number of supportive legislators shot up to 119, including republicans. What does this show?

Just a few years ago in West Virginia, environmental groups promoted a new wilderness area in the Monongahela National Forest. They identified areas for federal wilderness status but could not move the state's congressional delegation. However when religious groups made a statement on the spiritual values of this region, the state's congressional delegation took notice and quickly passed legislation to establish the Monongahela Wilderness Area.

Why is it, then, that environmental groups still seem so scared of religion that they ignore religious organizations that could be potent allies in preserving wild areas?

This omission is egregious in the planned national conference on fifty years of the Wilderness Act. There is no panel of religious leaders to speak on the spiritual values of wilderness. After so much history, can't the environmental movement see that issues of wilderness and land are issues of values, morality and ethics, and that ordinary citizens can better understand these things than an approach based on science?

To see more quotes as well as programs dealing with the spiritual values in nature, please visit the websites below:

- * The National Religious Coalition on Creation Care: www.NRCCC.org
- * Christians for the Mountains: www.christiansforthemountains.org
- * University of the South, Sewanee Center for Religion and Environment: www.sewanee.edu/cre/reverence
- * The Orthodox Fellowship of the Transfiguration, Christ in the Wilderness: www.Facebook.com/Christinthewilderness
- * The Wilderness Torah: www.WildernessTorah.org
- * The Book of Nature program: www.BookofNature.org 

(For a fuller version of this essay, go to www.NRCCC.org, section on wilderness.

Fred Krueger Santa Rosa, CA, is executive coordinator of the National Religious Coalition on Creation Care.

The Prophet Job (ca 5th century BCE)

Al Jura, Jordan

Speak to the Earth: But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.

The Bible, Job 12:7-9.

Saint Jerome (347-420)

Illyria, Dalmatia and Egypt

Why the Saints go into Wilderness

The desert fathers and mothers went to wild places to flee the corruption of cities, to wage war with their passions, but especially to encounter the holy.

Chronicle of the Early Church.

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153)

Clairvaux, Medieval France

Believe one who knows: You will find something greater in woods than in books. Trees and stones will teach you that which you can never learn from masters.

The Letters of Bernard 106:107.

Dogen Kigen (1200-1253)

Kyoto, Japan

Comprehending the Universe

The ocean speaks and the mountains have tongues – That is the everyday speech of the Buddha. If you can speak and hear such words, You are one who truly comprehends the universe.

Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi (1207–1273)

Konya, Seljuk Empire, Turkey

The Whole Earth is Filled with Meaning

Earth, and water, fire and air are alive in God... although they appear dead to us. The cosmos becomes a meaningful book and a precious piece of art which manifests the attributes and qualities of its Owner.

A. Schimmel, Poetical Expressions of Rumi, 1992.

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Wittenberg, Germany

The World as a Great Book

All creation is the most beautiful book or Bible, for in it God has described and portrayed Himself. ...God writes the Gospel, not in the Bible alone, but also on trees, and in the flowers and clouds and stars.

Luther's World of Thought, trans.

Bertram, Concordia, 1958, p. 179.

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

The Luminous in Nature

Are not these woods more free from peril than the envious court?

And this our life, exempt from public haunt, Find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,

Sermons in stone, and good in every thing.

"As You Like It".

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-

1882): The Manuscripts of God

And nature, the old nurse, took the child upon her knee,

Saying, "Here is a story book my Father hath writ for thee.

Come, wander with me," she said, "In regions yet untrod,

And read what is still unread in the manuscripts of God."

"The 50th Birthday of Agassiz," excerpt.

George Washington Carver (1864-1943)

The Joy of Reading from God's Creation

As soon as you begin to read the great and loving God out of all the forms of existence He has created, both animate and inanimate, Then you will be able to converse with Him anywhere, everywhere, and at all times. Oh what a fullness of joy will come to you!

George Carver In His Own Words, Gary Kremer, Univ. of Missouri Press, 1987.

Chief Luther Standing Bear (1868-1939)

Oglala Sioux, South Dakota

The World as a Natural Library

Knowledge was inherent in all things. The world was a library and its books were the stones, leaves, grass, brooks and the birds and animals that shared, alike with us, the storms and blessings of the earth.... Bright days and dark days are both expressions of the Great Mystery, and the Indian reveled in being close to the Great Holiness.

Land of the Spotted Eagle, 1933.

Walking Buffalo (1871-1967)

Assiniboine tribe, Alberta, Canada

I turn to the Great Spirit's book which is the whole of his earth. You can read a big part of that book if you study nature.

Walking Buffalo of the Stonies, 1969.

Rabbi Martin Buber (1878-1965)

Vienna and Jerusalem

Nature, as a whole and in all its elements, enunciates something that may be regarded as an indirect self-communication of God to all who are those ready to receive it.

At the Turning, 1952.

John Mohawk (1945-2006)

Cherokee tribe, Cattaraugus, New York

The natural world is our bible. We don't have chapters and verses. We have trees and fish and animals. The creation is the manifestation of energy through matter....

Resurgence, Sept/Oct, Issue 1978.

Amma Sri Karunamayi (b. 1958)

Andra Pradesh, India

All the Spiritual lessons you will ever need can be found in Nature.

Website of The Wellness Institute.

Where the Wild Things Are

Do we really want Google to photo-map the wilderness?

--by Jason Mark

Picture a perfect Southwestern day: The air as clear as gin, the bright blue sky marked only by a few stray clouds. In this spot, the waters of the Colorado River are placid, cool green, with none of the muddy brown foam found in the rapids that, over millennia, have carved out the Grand Canyon. Redwall limestone cliffs stretch high above. They're streaked with desert varnish—the stain left by manganese seeps—and lightly colored with the aquamarine of lichen. Eons of the planet's history are visible from here, whole epochs rendered in the span of a few thousand vertical feet. It's an awesome sight.

Then I move my mouse over the river surface and click on a small circle of white in the water. The scene swirls in fast-forward, and I continue my trip downriver.

I've never rafted the Colorado River through the bottom of the Grand Canyon. My "experience" through that wonder of the world came courtesy of Google Treks, the information company's effort to extend its popular Street View program to some of the world's most remote locations. In place of an oar paddle, I navigated the canyon with a mousepad.

Colorado River Street View, which debuted last month, is part of Google's "quest to map the Earth," as the company explains it in a promotional video. So far Google has also sent explorers to Australia's Great Barrier Reef, Mount Fuji, Volcanoes National Park in Hawaii, the Galapagos Islands, and on a "road to nowhere" in the Canadian Arctic community of Iqaluit. The tech giant promises more to come. It is recruiting



individuals and organizations to take its backpack-mounted camera arrays into the backcountry, and aims to have hundreds of the 360-degree, 15-lens devices in the field within a year. Eventually, the company hopes to deploy its Trekker cams to all of the national parks in the U.S., archaeological sites worldwide, and remote villages that are nearly impossible to reach by automobile.

I agree that a virtual tour of the Grand Canyon is a nifty trick. At the same time, the idea of Google photo-mapping every square foot of the planet it can makes me worried. Do we really need—or want—to have a ground-eye-view map of the entire Earth? And, besides, who gave Google permission for such an all-encompassing endeavor, a map as big as the world?

Google's quest to map the Earth is a classic example of technologists getting excited about the how before having asked the whether and the why. The digital cartographers at Google have proven they can capture and catalogue some of the planet's wildest places. But that leaves unanswered the question of whether they should.

For me, at least, the answer is not so fast. Big Data in the backcountry? No thanks. As a longtime backpacker and wilderness enthusiast, it seems to me that Google Trek poses a real threat to spirit of the wild—that is, the wilderness as a refuge from the strictures of civilization. And as it shrinks the feeling of the wilderness as a place that is away and apart and largely unknown, Google Trek also threatens to undermine the civic value of wilderness. The mere knowledge that there are spots beyond human domination bolsters the ideal of personal liberty—even if that sense of freedom is only inside of our heads.

Making the backcountry

accessible to anyone with an Internet connection tames the wilderness even further. It may be a minor domestication, but it's a domestication nonetheless.

There are likely some real benefits to creating a virtual version of a wilderness trail. The physically disabled, for example, will now have the opportunity to see—in an intimate way that transcends snapshots or video—some incredible wild country. Practitioners in the field of conservation biology may also find some utility in the application. Academic and government wildlife biologists already use trail-cams to monitor the activity of wildlife.

*getting excited about
the how before having asked the
whether and the why*

And then there's the public education angle, which is what motivated groups like American Rivers and Polar Bears International to collaborate with Google. Environmental campaigners figure that giving people a first-person-like glimpse of wild places they would never otherwise visit can help spark political action to protect those places.

I get it. And I'm still skeptical. At best, a virtual tour of the Arctic tundra is going to be little more than a momentary diversion—cat videos for the REI set. At worst, [b]y substituting mediated experience for the visceral experience one feels in the outdoors, this new application could draw us farther from the natural world.

Let's commit, then, to keeping some landscapes undigitized. If nothing else, the great outdoors should be left outside the algorithm. ❧

This article is extracted, with permission, from one that originally appeared in "The American Prospect", (<http://prospect.org>). To read the full article, go to <http://prospect.org/article/where-wild-things-are>.

(Jason Mark is editor of Earth Island Journal - <http://www.earthisland.org/journal/>)



Outings

and Special Events for Wilderness50



September 3 - 6 — Wed–Sat Visions of the Wild, Vallejo

Come take in the big central California Wilderness50 celebration in the heart of historic downtown Vallejo-- the Visions of the Wild Festival features local artwork, author talks, a film series, panel discussions, and field trips highlighting both wilderness and local wildlands. Vallejo is known for its cultural and natural diversity and vibrant arts community. Go to visionsofthewild.org, or on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/VisionsoftheWild>.

September 13 -- Sat Bodie Hills Obsidian Quarry tour

Join BLM Archaeologist Greg Haverstock to visit one of the most significant sources of obsidian in prehistoric California. Learn about obsidian tools and how archaeologists analyze obsidian, Rated easy, with minimal elevation change. Bring binoculars, camera, sun screen, hat, sack lunch, 2-3 liters of water. Long pants and hiking shoes recommended. 2 miles or less walking. High clearance vehicle helpful. For info or to register contact Jeff Hunter at

info@bodiehills.org or (423)322-7866. Meeting time and place on registration.

September 27 -- Sat Walk for the Wild, Claremont

Southern California's biggest celebration of the Wilderness50 anniversary. The Public Lands Day event at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, from 9-4; has both a free Wilderness Fair and the community Walk for the Wild, with registration at \$12. Arts displays, booths, kids games, music, Claremont Craft Ales. <http://www.active.com/claremont-ca/walking/races/walk-for-the-wild-a-50th-anniversary-celebration-of-the-wilderness-act-2014> or <http://www.rsabg.org/events-upcoming>.

October 10 - 12 – Fri-Sun Wilderness Treasures Rendezvous, Red Bluff

Northern California's biggest celebration of the Wilderness50 anniversary. Enjoy the weekend's gala fair at the Tehama County Fairground, with partner exhibits, workshops, equestrian demonstrations, art shows, live music, local food, camping and more See [facebook.com/NorCalWilderness50thCelebration](https://www.facebook.com/NorCalWilderness50thCelebration).

October 25 -- Sat Mt. Biederman Summit hike

A short but steep 3 mile cross-country hike from our trailhead on Hwy 270 (Bodie Rd) to the summit of Mt. Biederman (8962') for grand views of Mono Lake and the Eastern Sierra. Hike leader Jeff Hunter will discuss sage grouse conservation and read from Muir, Leopold and other greats. Bring binoculars, camera, sun screen, hat, sack lunch, 2 liters water. Long pants, boots. Moderately strenuous. Contact Jeff Hunter, see Sept 13. Register with Jeff for meeting info.

Oct 30 - Nov. 1 – Thur-Sat Death Valley Service

Join us for wilderness restoration in this national park. Repair a hiking trail and clean up backcountry debris. 4WD needed. Camping is primitive - bring everything you need, including water. Leader: Kate Allen, kj.allen96@gmail.com, 661-944-4056.

Next Wilderness meeting and CDPA 20th anniversary bash Friday, Oct. 31 - Nov. 2, Mojave National Preserve

The next meeting of the Sierra Club's California/Nevada Wilderness Committee will be more celebratory gathering than meeting--starting evening of Oct 31, joining NPS's celebratory "Mojave Fest" Nov 1 and heading Nov 2 to Mecca Hills Wilderness; continuing as a moving campout in honor of the CA Desert bill AND 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act before ending at the Nov. 8-9 Desert Committee meeting in Saddleback Butte State Park. Join us for one or both weekends plus any in-between time you can; for details as they develop, contact Vicky Hoover: vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org, 415-977-5527; Judy Anderson, anderson-judith@att.net, 818-248-0402; or Pat Flanagan, patflanagan29@gmail.com. And see www.caldesert20.org.



Outing report:

In mid-July CA/NV Wilderness Committee members savored our annual Nevada service trip with wilderness staff of the BLM's Ely office; this year we returned to the Mt Grafton Wilderness and helped rehabilitate two no-longer used former vehicle routes at the wilderness boundary as well as clean up a huge stack of trash, from an old dump site. On Sunday we ambled up to the old Sheep Creek cabin on the east slopes of Mt. Grafton. Three trip members then spent an extra day with BLM range specialist/landscape ecologist Craig Hoover to look at range conditions near the Blue Mass Scenic Area, north of Mt Moriah Wilderness. VNH



After hard work, the Mt Grafton III team honors the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act

Photo: Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights



Kids enjoy a July 12 southern Nevada hike on the Sawmill Loop in the Mt Charleston Wilderness Area north of Las Vegas. Sponsored by Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights and the US Forest Service, the hike was part of a Wilderness50 celebration series that emphasizes getting kids out into nature.

A Feathered River across the Sky: The Passenger Pigeon's Flight to Extinction

by Joel Greenberg

2014, the year of anniversaries, is also the centennial year of the death of the last known passenger pigeon, Martha, in 1914 in the Cincinnati, Ohio, Zoo. Chicago-based naturalist Joel Greenberg uses this anniversary to launch his new book bringing attention to human-caused extinctions.

Greenberg also led in forming Project Passenger Pigeon (<http://passengerpigeon.org/>), a website started to mark the centenary of this extraordinary extinction, promote the conservation of species and habitat, strengthen the relationship between people and nature, and foster the sustainable use of natural resources.

At the start of the 19th century, the passenger pigeon was the most abundant bird in North America, and possibly the world, with a population estimated at five billion or so. These birds did not dwell evenly spread over the landscape but traversed the North American continent in concentrated enormous flocks that literally blocked

out the sun and stretched for sometimes hundreds of miles. One flock in 1866 in southern Ontario was described as being 1 mile (1.5 km) wide and 300 miles (500 km) long, took 14 hours to pass, and held in excess of 3.5 billion birds.

Denizens of the once great deciduous forests of the eastern U.S., passenger pigeons consumed the nuts of these trees, their favorites being beechnuts,

Five billion to zero in less than a hundred years

acorns, and chestnuts. Their droppings could coat everywhere they landed in massively thick layers; they roosted so close together they broke off large tree branches, and birds below were smothered by the press of those above; they stripped bare some planted fields.

Extinction came with stunning rapidity. Michigan was the pigeon's last stronghold; about three million birds were shipped east from there by a single hunter in 1878. Eleven years later, 1889, the species was extinct in that state.

Efforts to maintain a few small flocks of

pigeons in captivity failed.

Greenberg describes in engrossing detail the multitudes, the awe—and even panic—they inspired, the way they were hunted avidly, fiercely, recklessly—becoming in some places a dietary mainstay—then their rapid disappearance. He highlights references to the passenger pigeon in literature.

Why did they go extinct? It appears that to survive they needed to nest in vast colonies. In any case, the fate of the passenger pigeon illustrates a key principle of conservation biology: it may not be necessary to kill the last pair of a species to force it to extinction.

The *New Yorker* magazine in a review of Greenberg's book called the passenger pigeon, "the most famous extinct species since the dodo." http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/books/2014/01/06/140106crbo_books_rosen?currentPage=all. (VNH)

A Feathered River Across the Sky, Bloomsbury USA, New York, 2014; Hardcover, 289 pp. including index. \$26.00, <http://www.bloomsbury.com/us/>. Tel: (212) 419 5300.

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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