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# WILDERNESS RECORD

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Red fox

Photo by Art Wolfe, Inc.

## Fish and Wildlife Service designates critical habitat for desert tortoise

By Lucy Rosenau

Under pressure from conservationists, the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) decided in February that the threatened desert tortoise cannot survive unless its habitat, the Mojave Desert of Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah, is protected. In March the agency will designate 6.4 million acres of federal lands, including 4.7 million acres in California alone, as critical habitat for the species. What the designation will mean in terms of how those lands are managed remains to be seen, but the designation is certain to add a new layer of protection to large sections of the Mojave and, in many cases, to lands proposed for wilderness in Senator Feinstein's California Desert Protection Act.

Critical habitat is "the minimal amount of land that the species needs to survive into the future," says Al Pfister of the FWS. To meet its goal of assuring the desert tortoise a 50-50 chance of surviving for the next 500 years, the agency chose the most protective or productive of federal lands within the tortoise's range as critical habitat. Specifically, the agency looked for areas that provide food, water, shelter, breeding sites, and room for growth—what Pfister

calls "your basic sage and creosote landscapes."

Though FWS officials are quick to assert that critical habitat designation does not preclude other uses of the lands, there is no doubt that there will be restrictions. The critical question is just what those restrictions will be and how they will be applied. In California, most of the critical habitat selected by the FWS, more than 3.3 million acres, is now administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Elden Hughes of the Desert Protection League considers the proposed critical habitat designation a good plan. "Its greatest weakness," he says, "is that it relies on the BLM to implement it."

The desert tortoise has been listed as a threatened species since 1990. Though the Endangered Species Act makes it illegal to kill individual members of a threatened species, the law does not necessarily protect the species' habitat from being degraded. Deborah Reames, the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund attorney who represented environmentalists in their efforts to attain critical habitat designation for the tortoise, explains that in the absence of critical habitat designation, the FWS has been focussing only on whether an individual project—a grazing allot-

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## Petition asks Forest Service to protect Sierra's rare carnivores

Fisher, marten, red fox, and wolverine need more habitat to survive

By Sami Yassa

In a major effort to protect the remaining ancient forests in the Sierra Nevada, a coalition of environmental organizations and individuals filed an administrative petition with the Chief of the U. S. Forest Service last month. On February 10, environmentalists demanded that the Forest Service halt logging in old-growth forests, roadless areas, and riparian areas in the national forests of the Sierra until the agency develops a legally acceptable plan to protect a host of species associated with ancient forests. The petition argues that immediate action is necessary to protect furbearing mammals that inhabit the Sierra's old-growth forests: mammals like the Pacific fisher, American marten, Sierra Nevada red fox, and wolverine.

Federal law requires the Forest Service to ensure the viability of these and other species in the national forests. The petition charges that the agency's current management of Sierra Nevada forests—designed to protect another Sierran forest-dependent species, the California spotted owl—is inadequate to protect the four carnivores that are the focus of the petition. The coalition maintains that current management is scientifically indefensible and fails to comply with the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) mandate requiring the agency to ensure viable populations of forest

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## Coalition news

### Monthly Report

One of my dreams is that our development associate Lora is going to be highly successful raising funds for the Coalition so that I can hire some hard workers to save wilderness while I retire to an environmental emeritus niche. Then I can go visit the wilds more frequently, returning from time-to-time to offer sage advice to the diligent staff.

Unfortunately, if the experience of the last few months is typical, the reverse will be true. The more employees we have, the busier my life will become.

Ryan Henson's goal is to be a full-time conservation staffer for the CWC. He already works at least a full day a week, without pay, on a number of issues. This creates *more* work for me, not less.

For example, there is the proposed Yuki Wilderness in eastern Mendocino County. Ryan has adopted this area, the largest unprotected roadless area in the northern Coast Range, which is managed by the U. S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) under the names Eden Valley, Thatcher Ridge, and Elk Creek. Ryan's advocacy resulted in officials from both agencies agreeing to meet with us.

So on a sunny February morning, we headed off to Ukiah along with office dog Inyo (who had been promised a short hike). There we met Willits activist Don Morris; the three of us are among a small number of environmentalists who have actually set foot in this remote wild area. We grabbed a bite to eat and headed over to the BLM office.

Ryan certainly had piqued the interest of the federals. The Mendocino forest supervisor had driven over from Willows. The Covelo district ranger was there. The BLM district manager attended, along with two area managers and a half dozen of their staff. Representative Dan Hamburg had a district worker join the meeting.

We presented our case. The objections were amazingly few. Mostly, the concerns were over manageability; section line boundaries and a private ranch in the heart of the area were red flags to the public servants.

We discussed options and alternative boundaries. I was pleasantly surprised to find the BLM folks sympathetic to wilderness. I think they were surprised to find us willing work for solutions, even

if that meant modifying our proposal. We planned a spring field trip to the area to look at the problems up close.

The Forest Service officers were more aloof—there are trees in part of this proposal. Ryan argued for how these lands should be allocated in the forest plan. The forest supervisor assured him that the "amenities alternative" addressed his concerns. Unfortunately, this is not the alternative preferred by the Forest Service.

But the message was clearly delivered to both agencies. We care about this area. We are monitoring their activities there. And we won't rest until it becomes wilderness.

For more than a decade I have been looking for someone to adopt the Yuki wildlands. Recently, we learned that Norman B. "Ike" Livermore inventoried a 100,000-acre roadless area there in the 1930s. But its future as wilderness remained uncertain until Ryan and others took it on in the 1990s.

Yes, it took a day from my schedule to attend the meeting. And I am sure there will be more meetings to attend, more reports to review, and more comments to write before the Yuki is designated wilderness. Yes, Ryan is creating more work for me. But his work is going to save lands that otherwise might have slipped through the cracks. So I'm really not complaining.

But I do owe Nick Watterson an apology. When I thanked him for his help with our office bookshelves in the February *Record*, I said he attended Colorado State. Not!

Nick is in Colorado Springs at the smaller Colorado College. When asked what's the difference, his dad Jon replied, "about \$4,000."

Hey, I understand how someone can be sensitive about their alma mater. As a U. C. Davis grad, when someone tells me they went to Cal, I always ask "which campus?"

So I hope you accept my atonement, Nick. By the way, I was thinking about painting my house during spring break, and your dad says you have nothing to do, right?

By Jim Eaton

### Peradam supports Coalition's work

In February, the California Wilderness Coalition received a grant of \$2,000 from the Peradam Foundation to support our work with the Wildlands Project developing a wilderness recovery strategy for North America. The CWC will be coordinating the California portion of the project.

The project's vision of a continent of sprawling wilderness areas linked by migration corridors is big, bold, and biocentric. Mapping that vision for California (let alone achieving it) will be an enormous and somewhat daunting job. Peradam's support for this new and vital venture has raised our spirits along with our bank account, and we are grateful for both gifts.



An impromptu contingent from the CWC enjoyed an excursion to Cache Creek Wilderness Study Area in February. The Bureau of Land Management hosts "eagle hikes" on Saturdays during winter, when bald eagles inhabit the area. Call the BLM's Ukiah office at (707) 462-3873 for more information. Photo by Lucy Rosenau

### NCRBP in consonance with CWC

A little group with a long name joined the Coalition last month, and already it is demonstrating that it has a long reach as well. The group is the Northern Coast Range Biodiversity Project (NCRBP; no vowels need apply), and it is headed by our own dynamo-in-residence, Ryan Henson.

Ryan formed the NCRBP in 1992 out of a feeling that the interior Coast Range was being neglected by conservationists and federal agencies alike. In its brief lifetime, the NCRBP already has succeeded in getting cattle removed from a large part of the Middle Fork Eel watershed and has vaulted some long-ignored wildlands, the back-of-beyond 60,000-acre Eden-Thatcher complex, to prominence as the proposed Yuki Wilderness.

You don't have to live in the northern Coast Range to be a member of the NCRBP, but you do have to profess a fondness for chaparral, "topography that only an off-kilter biocentrist could love," Ryan says. And you have to keep the initials straight. If you qualify, you can reach the NCRBP in care of the CWC at 2655 Portage Bay East, Suite 5, Davis, CA 95616.

### Spots on our Record

Two dates were left off the wilderness timeline that appeared in our February issue. On March 13, 1981, the State Parks Commission designated Sheep Canyon Wilderness in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. On April 9, 1982, the Commission designated the Anza-Borrego and Cuyamaca Rancho wildernesses. Our thanks to Jim Trumbly, the former *Wilderness Record* editor who spotted the omission and supplied the dates.

Careful readers will have noted that no date was given for the establishment of Red Buttes Wilderness. The original Red Buttes Wilderness was designated in an Oregon wilderness bill; the California portion of the wilderness was added on the date we gave.

Finally, Candace Cross-Drew, a careful reader, spotted an inconsistency. On page 4 we gave 1893 as the date the Sierra Club was founded, but an article on page 1 had the Sierra Club planting trout in the High Sierra in the 1870s. 1893 is the correct date.

### Wilderness Trivia Quiz Question:

How did the Kings River get its name?

Answer on page 7



## Biological diversity

# Passing time in the Siskiyou

By Steve Marsden

There is this place. It's a mysterious place, where landscapes of red desert are side by side with temperate rain forest, where dense stands of giant old trees are adjacent to open pine savannah carpeted with native bunch grass. Mountains here run primarily east and west in contrast to the north-south orientation typical of most mountain ranges. These mountains are made of rocks so old they are beyond our understanding of time, some more than 200 million years old, cons to the human mind. These old craggies, like the faces of some very old men, are weathered and deeply furrowed; gullies and ravines with steep, nearly vertical walls run in all the directions of the compass. There are many species here, very many.

This place has several names: the Kalmiopsis, the Siskiyou, the Klamath Knot. It is home to the most biologically diverse forest in the western United States and is the most diverse conifer forest in the world. If biodiversity is the hallmark of the tropical rain forest, then surely this is the rain forest of the west, with more than 3,500 different species and subspecies of plants. This is a region of co-evolutionary paradox, where relict endemics make their last stand among rapidly evolving new species. Big and wild and vulnerable, over 300,000 acres of unprotected wilderness straddling the Oregon-California border remains against all the odds of technological consumption.

This place is also called National Forest, so the bulldozers and chainsaws already have taken a grim toll. While much has been lost forever, still more is wanted to feed the voracious appetites of the timber industry. Even though these mountains hold the largest unprotected roadless wilderness on the west coast from the Canadian border to Mexico, this last refuge for a tremendously varied community of life would be gutted under the Clinton administration's proposed Option 9 logging plan. The government does not care at all that according to paleobotanists, the Siskiyou have been continuously vegetated for over 100 million years, isolated from the great lava flows of western North America and repeated ice ages. The ancient forest, memory of an unrepeatably natural history, is being put at risk by the vagaries of political compromise.

Walking along a ridge line through an ancient forest of weeping spruce, Port Orford cedar, and Shasta red fir, I think about this latest plan for the Siskiyou. How can the world not seem turned upside down? In front of me stands a massive weeping spruce, a tree found in only a score of stands in these mountains and nowhere else in the world. As impressive as that individual tree is, consider that the weeping spruce as a species survived the changing of the guard from the age of dinosaurs to the age of mammals.

When reptiles ruled the earth and our antecedents scurried for cover, the Kalmiopsis was an island off the western coast of North America. The Klamath mountains, carried along with the continent, were moving inexorably north. At that time the Klamaths were low, rolling hills and the land was covered by a tropical forest.

The tectonic plate that the offshore island rode ground against the continent and was forced beneath it, or subducted. The island was sheared off its descending plate, resulting in a massive collision between the island and the North American plate. It was the geological equivalent of smashing together two layer cakes, each buckling, twisting, turning on end. Through the fault lines created, other rock from deep within the earth was forced to the surface.

The most unusual of all the different types of intrusive rock was the serpentine-peridotite. Characterized by a high content of heavy metals and low soil fertility, it is a harsh base for plants to adapt to. In the south Kalmiopsis, one of these peridotite intrusions covers over 150 square miles. Known as the Josephine Sheet, it is the world's largest known body of this rock. In a land that receives more than 80 inches of rain a year, this dissected plateau is a red desert. Still unforgiving in its soil chemistry, this area is the site for many of the rare and endangered plants found in the Siskiyou.

As island and continent crashed, a temperate climate was replacing a tropical one.

The seasons became cooler, though mild and moist. By 75 million years ago, the tropical forest had retreated south. In its place grew an evergreen forest; giant redwoods, ancestral cedars, lowland firs, and hemlocks covered the Klamaths and vast stretches of the west. Primitive tailed frogs and giant salamanders lived beneath the towering canopy, archaic rodents called aplodontia chewed sword ferns; to this day, their lives continue much as then. For millennia the mountains were relatively quiet and the wild streams and rivers of the redwood forest eroded the peaks, melted the stone, wore them round.

The regime of seasons we experience in this place now, hot dry summers and mild wet winters, slowly began to intensify about 30 million years ago as a general trend, give or take the occasional ice age or xerothermic period. As the summers grew drier across the inland empire of the west, many species, including Port Orford cedar, Pacific yew, and of course the redwoods, withdrew to the north coast side of the Klamath range, where they continue to thrive today.

Increasingly dry and hot summers resulted in the steady migration of another forest community as the redwoods retreated. Moving north from the Sierra, drought-tolerant and fire-adapted forests of pine mixed with madrones and other broadleaf evergreens, occupying the low and mid-slope elevations. Many of the species associated with this mixed pine forest, such as sugar pine and Jeffrey pine, find in the Klamath mountains their most northern populations, their genetic edge.

At about the same time the pines moved in, the Klamaths began a steady rise yet again, along with the Cascades. Similar mountain building continues today and is evidenced by the deeply-cut river courses.



Red Buttes Wilderness is one of the few protected pieces of the Siskiyou. Photo by John Hart

**When reptiles ruled the earth and our antecedents scurried for cover, the Kalmiopsis was an island off the western coast of North America.**

**The ancient forest, memory of an unrepeatably natural history, is being put at risk by the vagaries of political compromise.**

With the advent of the recent series of ice ages, the northern boreal forest was pushed south. It may appear strange to consider a period that began some 100,000 years ago as recent, but here in these timeless mountains, it is as yesterday morning. Once again a community of life found sanctuary in the convoluted ranges. Here, the ice sheets did not cover the land, glaciers about the peaks were small, and the cold mountain slopes provided the right habitat for spruce, true fir, and lodgepole pine. At the close of the last glacial phase about 12,000 years ago, the boreal forests retreated north. In sites where the microclimate resembles that of the cold latitudes, you can still find relict stands of Alaska yellow cedar, silver fir, and weeping spruce. In the mountain hideaways of the Klamath Province are representatives of every major forest type found in the west.

Most of the Klamaths have been logged now, but not here. The Clinton administration's logging plan, we are told, is based on science. Remarkably, roadless areas were not even considered during the planning. Forest Service scientists never even looked at maps of what roadless wilderness remains. They never gave a thought to starting at the beginning, keeping the last of that memory of 100 million years, even though all the evidence of conservation biology tells even Forest Service scientists that to begin protecting biological

diversity requires leaving alone what little is left. Instead, the Forest Service chose to take up where the agency's immediate past had left off and call it a compromise. So now this rugged world apart from saws and roads faces still another onslaught in the coming year if this Option 9 is to be the final plan.

Steve Marsden is the executive director of the Siskiyou Regional Education Project. A longer version of this article appeared in the Brigid 1994 issue of the Earth First! Journal.

## Wilderness at risk

### Myths about mining

By Chris Carrel

Myths and half-truths abound when the gold mining industry defends its practices and argues against changes to mining laws. In the year and a half I have participated in the fight to reform mining laws, I have become well-acquainted with these arguments. As a public service, I've compiled a list of some of the biggest whoppers and tried to shed a little light on the truth behind these myths.

**Vat leach mining is time-tested and safe.** There are two leaching processes commonly used to extract gold, heap leaching and vat leaching. In heap leaching, cyanide is sprayed on a large heap of crushed ore. The cyanide bonds with particles of gold as it trickles through the heap, and the gold is collected at the bottom for processing. In vat leaching, the ore is crushed to a powder and mixed with cyanide in a series of vats. Mixing ore and cyanide in vats is considerably safer than doing so in the great outdoors with nothing but synthetic liners to separate cyanide from the environment, but vat leaching is neither time-tested nor safe.

Vat leaching still leaves the same major environmental threats that heap leaching does: acid mine drainage (AMD), heavy-metals pollution, habitat destruction, and cyanide leaks and spills. And both methods leave large amounts of toxic waste, called "tailings."

In vat leaching, the ore-bearing rock must be crushed to the consistency of talcum powder before being mixed with cyanide inside the vats. The tailings that result contain cyanide, metals, and often, sulfur-bearing rock, the precursor of AMD. The disposal of this toxic stew is problematic since removing pollutants from the finely ground particles is expensive. The mining industry's general practice has been to place the tailings in an artificial pond, separated from the environment by synthetic and clay liners. The flaw is that tailings remain a toxic threat practically forever, yet the pond is an engineered device of limited duration. The tailings will outlive the container.

Modern cyanide leaching technology has been around for nearly 25 years. But the landscape alteration and waste products of mining are on geologic time, so it is disingenuous to talk about the technology as "time-tested."

**Vat leach mining is a closed system.** Another claim commonly heard about vat leaching is that it is a closed system: The ore is processed within vats, the cyanide is recycled, and the tailings are contained by a liner. You could call this a closed system. You could also call Weyerhaeuser a tree-growing company. The ineffectiveness of current methods of tailings disposal makes any claim of a closed system inherently false. What's more, the tremendous piles of waste rock that are left exposed to the environment often leach AMD and heavy metals.

**Cyanide degrades quickly in the environment.** The industry trots this one out to relax our fears about the cyanide that remains in tailings after the gold has been removed. It is a half-truth. Cyanide does degrade rapidly when exposed to sunlight and oxygen. However, it can and often does persist for long periods in tailings ponds or ground water precisely because those elements that would dissociate it—sunlight and oxygen—are missing. A perfect example of this condition is the abandoned Minnie Mine in Washington's Okanogan National Forest. The mine was abandoned in 1986, yet eight years later the cyanide levels in the holding ponds were still at an astronomical 1,200 parts per million. The cyanide had been locked up in sludge in the pond and isolated from oxygen

and sunlight so that no degradation could occur. Six dead cows are testament to the ability of this cyanide to be released to the environment in lethal fashion after being sequestered for nearly a decade.

The equally disingenuous corollary is: Cyanide is used to "manufacture many products, [such as] jet airplanes and blue jeans . . . and even occurs naturally in the food chain" (from an industry ad) and is therefore safe. It's true that cyanide is used in these products and is found in some degree in the food chain, but it also is irrelevant. Cyanide is used in massive quantities in cyanide-leach mining, and after the gold is extracted, large amounts of cyanide remain in tailings. Once the cyanide trickles down into surface or ground water, it can cause damage to wildlife and yes, humans.

**Cyanide is the biggest threat of gold mining.** On the other hand, while glibly maintaining that cyanide is safe, the industry also focuses on citizen concerns about cyanide because it is among the least of the pollution problems presented by modern industrial gold mining. Pollution from heavy metals and AMD are much more devastating and intractable problems. Serious as cyanide leaks and spills are, it is AMD and the accompanying leaching of metals to surface and ground water that have

caused the most damage from mining. The once-famed Blackfoot River in Montana—described so beautifully in Norman McLean's *A River Runs Through It*—is now virtually dead as a result of decades of acid and metals runoff from mining along the watershed. Cyanide won't kill a river, but AMD and heavy metals will.

**Mining reform will shut the industry down.** This as-

sertion has been made widely and repeatedly in response to the move to reform the 1872 Mining Law. Dr. Thomas Power, Chair of the University of Montana's Department of Economics, put this fallacy to rest with his report, "Not All That Glitters" (published by the Mineral Policy Center), which found that the overall effect of federal mining law reform on the industry would be positive because reclamation jobs would be created. Mining reform also would benefit the economy of western states, Power found, by protecting the high-quality living environment that is the source of the West's current and future economic base.

**Mining reform will cause mining companies to move out of country.** A related myth is that additional regulations will cause mining companies to move their mining operations to countries where the regulatory climate is friendlier, which is to say, nonexistent. This claim is suspect since most large mining companies already are operating mines in other countries. Mining companies take to heart their maxim "gold is where you

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*While glibly maintaining that cyanide is safe, the industry also focuses on citizen concerns about cyanide because it is among the least of the pollution problems presented by modern industrial gold mining.*

#### Mining Law reform

Legislation to reform the 1872 Mining Law is stalled until the House and Senate, which passed markedly different bills last year, can agree on a compromise. Conservationists support the House bill and will be campaigning for a stronger Senate bill. California's Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein both support strong, comprehensive reform.

For more information about reform efforts, contact the Mineral Policy Center at 1325 Massachusetts Ave. NW #550, Washington, DC 20005; (202) 737-1872.

### Gun club still shooting for Masonic Mtn. WSA

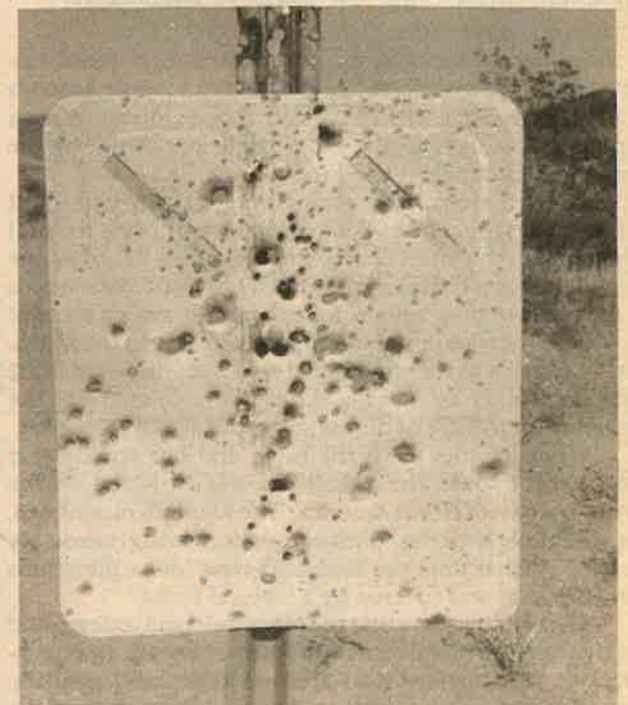
Mono County and the Bridgeport Gun Club have filed an application with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to lease 200 acres of public land for a shooting range, and the agency has begun an environmental assessment of the proposal. Because most of the land targeted for the range is in Masonic Mountain Wilderness Study Area (WSA) northeast of Bridgeport, the environmental assessment must consider whether the development will impair the area's wilderness character.

According to the notice issued by the BLM, "it has been determined that the community [of Bridgeport] needs a designated shooting range to diversify the local economy and conduct national shooting tournaments, to provide area target shooters an approved facility for local shooting, and to abate the existence of unauthorized target shooting."

To meet the community's need, the county and the club want to erect targets, a picnic area, club house, parking lot, and other facilities on 65 acres of BLM land adjacent to the WSA. The 135 acres in Masonic Mountain WSA would be used for trap and skeet shooting, activities that do not require targets or other structures but would result in shot and clay pigeon shards falling into the WSA. The BLM has determined that allowing shot and clay pigeon shards to fall inside the WSA would violate the agency's interim management standards that protect WSAs until they are designated wilderness or released from study by Congress. Consequently, the environmental assessment will consider how to mitigate or redesign the proposed trap and skeet range.

The only development proposed for the WSA is signage warning the public away from the shooting range. Larry Primosch, the BLM planner who is writing the environmental assessment, says the construction of the shooting range and posting of signs would not amount to privatization of public lands, however, because the range will be open to the public and because the signs will not prohibit entry into the leased lands.

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The BLM thinks a shooting range will abate the "unauthorized target shooting" that defaced this WSA sign. Photo by Lucy Rosenau

## Endangered species

# Coalition petitions Forest Service on behalf of carnivores



Female marten in snow, Tahoe National Forest. The marten has little body fat and must continue to hunt tree squirrels and other prey that remain active above and below the snow in winter, when starvation is a constant threat. Photo by Bill Zielinski

## Tortoise habitat

continued from page 1

ment, mine, motorcycle race, or nuclear waste dump, for instance—would harm the species' chance for survival. For a species with a large geographic range, like the desert tortoise or spotted owl, Reames says "it's pretty hard ever to answer 'yes' to that question." It takes critical habitat designation to stop harmful activities.

But even critical habitat designation does not automatically stop any project; it merely requires land-managing agencies to consult with the FWS before authorizing a discretionary activity in critical habitat. The FWS would assess the expected impacts of the project against "jeopardy standards" that have yet to be determined and in light of the recovery plan the agency is developing for the tortoise. The consultation process is likely to get a lot of attention because Ward Valley, the proposed site of a highly controversial nuclear waste dump, is in one of the 12 units of critical tortoise habitat selected by the FWS.

### Vindication for desert bill

Hughes has studied the critical habitat units to determine how they coincide with lands in the Mojave that are proposed for wilderness designation under the Feinstein desert bill. In all, 52 of the proposed wilderness areas are in critical habitat units. All of those areas are in the east Mojave. Only one western Mojave wilderness study area, Golden Valley, provides good tortoise habitat, Hughes says, but Golden Valley was not selected by the FWS.

Hughes sees the overlap as vindication for the Feinstein desert bill, a bill that would protect far more of the desert and its wildlife than the BLM recommended. Only nine of the wilderness study areas recommended for wilderness designation by the BLM fall within critical habitat, and that difference betrays the BLM's overemphasis on scenery, Hughes says. What makes good tortoise habitat—scrubby slopes and bajadas—does not, according to the BLM, make good wilderness. Luckily, Senator Feinstein disagrees.

continued from page 1

wildlife. Consequently, the petition specifically requests that the Forest Service amend its regional policy to provide for the long-term viability of the species.

The fisher, marten, red fox, and wolverine are rare and elusive residents of the Sierra Nevada. Though there are populations of fisher, marten, and wolverine outside of California, all four species are considered potential candidates for federal endangered species listing in the state. The small carnivores need large ranges to find enough food, and historic and present-day logging have fractured and degraded suitable habitat.

The Forest Service currently protects Sierran old growth by designating 1000-acre spotted owl habitat areas (SOHAs) where logging is restricted, and the agency recently adopted an interim "CASPO" strategy to protect the owl to avoid listing it under the federal Endangered Species Act. But the petitioners argue that the Forest Service approach, even if it were adequate to protect viable populations of the owl, is biologically insupportable for the fisher, marten, red fox, and wolverine which have different habitat requirements than the owl.

The petition presents a strong scientific case, supported by declarations of researchers and conservation biologists, that the "habitat islands" protected under current Forest Service policy are too small, too far apart, and generally inadequate to support even individual furbearers, let alone stable populations of the four species. The petitioners compiled substantial evidence showing that these species require large areas of late-successional forest and connecting riparian areas for their survival.

In addition, the supporting declarations from numerous experts establish the case that the Forest Service's

management of spotted owl habitat under the CASPO plan will render forest habitat unsuitable for sensitive furbearers. The experts concluded that the logging allowed by the CASPO strategy would preclude the carnivores from using these forests.

Agency studies and assessments have recommended a system of reserves—each capable of supporting multiple pairs, or metapopulations, of furbearing species—to maintain viable populations of the species as the NFMA requires. These studies also show that riparian areas are essential for successful foraging and dispersal of these species. These arguments are bolstered by the declarations of experts stating the Forest Service should discard its current unworkable SOHA strategy and adopt a scientifically based approach that protects large areas of habitat and riparian corridors capable of supporting stable populations of the four species.

The petition will be an early test for the new Forest Service Chief, Dr. Jack Ward Thomas. Dr. Thomas was one of the most prominent federal scientists spearheading the effort to apply conservation biology to forest planning in the Pacific Northwest and was the primary author of many of the documents cited

*The myopic focus on a single species—the spotted owl—will inevitably lead to ecological train wrecks.*

in the petition to support the contention that more protection is needed. It remains to be seen whether Chief Thomas will apply the principles he established in the Pacific Northwest to the Sierra's national forests.

The petition was prepared and filed by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) on behalf of the California Wilderness Coalition, Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center, Friends Aware of Wildlife Needs, Friends of the River, Forest Alert, Plumas Forest Project, Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, Yosemite Area Audubon, and two individuals. For more information on the petition, contact the NRDC at 71 Stevenson St., San Francisco, CA 94105; (415) 777-0220.

*Sami Yassa is a NRDC forest ecologist.*



Fishers have the unique ability to prey on porcupines for food—an often fatal endeavor by less-skilled hunters. Photo by Tom & Pat Leeson, Nature Wildlife Photography

## Wilderness news

### Watching over wilderness: Wilderness Watch comes to California March 17-19

By Canyon Fred

Contrary to popular belief, the millions of acres of designated wilderness are not entirely secure. Wilderness advocates have been so busy working to get lands into the wilderness system that we have not paid much attention to how wilderness is managed once it's designated. And we need to pay attention: The Forest Service recently permitted a permanent resort to be built on public lands within Idaho's River of No Return Wilderness, the military continues to conduct training flights over many wilderness areas, and national park managers in the Sierra Nevada use helicopters and chainsaws in the wilderness.

In 1989 a former Forest Service employee named William Worf founded a national organization called Wilderness Watch to monitor and influence how wilderness is managed. Worf has been involved in wilderness management since the passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964, when he went to Washington, D. C. to draft guidelines dictating how the Forest Service would implement the Act. His work then is the reason you don't routinely hear helicopters and chainsaws in Forest Service wilderness areas today (in contrast to some national park areas).

The sole purpose of Wilderness Watch is to promote sound stewardship of designated wilderness areas and wild-and-scenic rivers. The Montana-based organization has filed successful lawsuits to end many damaging activities and traditions, like the practice of allowing commercial outfitters to maintain permanent camps in wilderness areas.

Wilderness Watch chapters are now forming in many states, and Worf himself is coming to California in March to meet with activists who may want to start chapters here. Worf plans to hold two meetings March 17-19, one on the east side and one on the west side of the Sierra. If you would like to attend one of the meetings or be involved in a local chapter of Wilderness Watch, call Peggy at (209) 928-4800. For more information on Wilderness Watch, call (406) 542-2048 or write to the organization at Box 9175, Missoula, MT 59807.

Canyon Fred is a former wilderness ranger.

## Myths

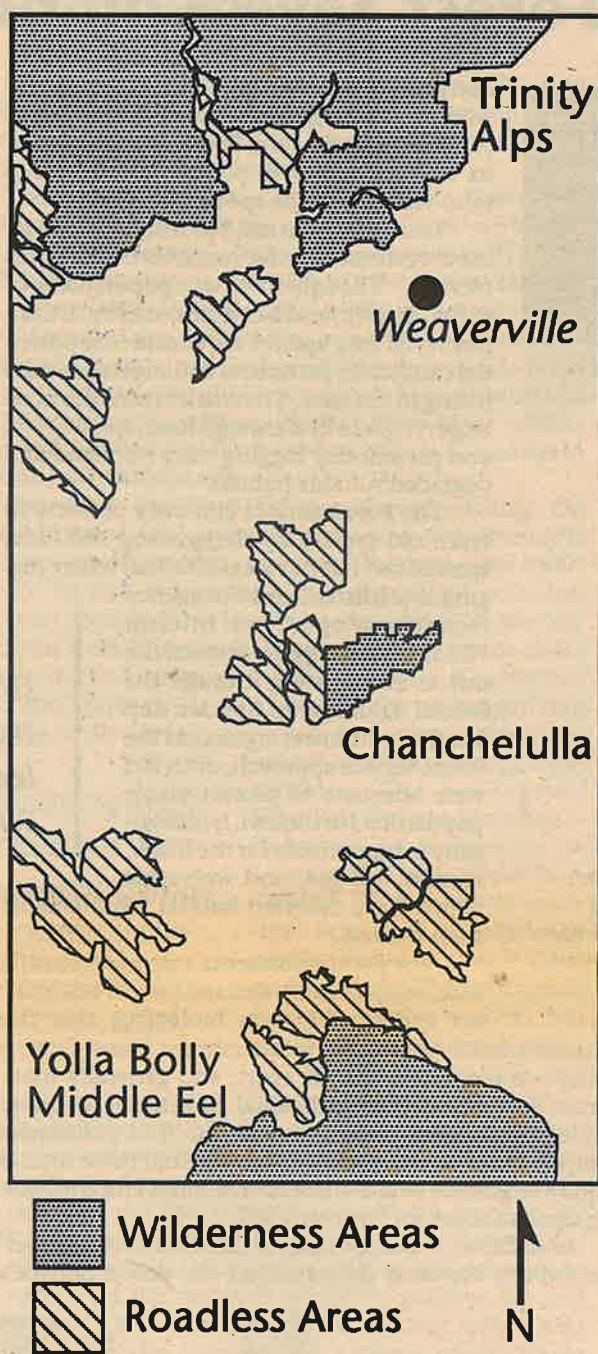
continued from page 4

find it" and will try to mine wherever it is found, whether that's in the U. S. or elsewhere.

Environmental regulations will shut mining companies down. A variant of "Mining reform will shut the industry down," and equally dubious. Certainly, environmental regulations inevitably will make mining more expensive and may make some mines economically infeasible. But regulations are simply attempts to force the mining industry to pay some of the environmental costs of mining, costs that historically have been borne by the public.

The production of gold is vital to the American economy. The industry points to the gold used in the space, defense, and computer industries as examples of how important it is that we continue to mine gold. About 80 percent of the gold produced in the U. S. is used for jewelry, however—hardly a vital use. Gold is certainly a vital resource for some sectors of the economy, but we can easily meet that need with much less mining, and we haven't even begun to look at options like recycling. The impetus behind the current level of gold mining in America is the demand for gold jewelry and the profit motives of international mining companies.

A longer version of this article appeared in the December 1993 issue of Washington Wildfire, newsletter of the Washington Wilderness Coalition.



Map by Jim Eaton

## Chanchelulla Wilderness plan underway

The Forest Service has begun work on a new management plan for Chanchelulla Wilderness, a small, little-known area situated midway between the Trinity Alps and Yolla Bolly-Middle Eel wildernesses in northwest California (see map).

The dominant feature of the wilderness, Chanchelulla Peak, is also the area's dominant attraction, and access to the peak is likely to be the dominant issue addressed in the management plan. The 7,800-acre wilderness has only two trails, and both lead to the peak, a sacred place for local Native Americans.

Little-used as the area is, it has not been immune from trespass by off-road vehicles (ORVs). The management plan will consider ways to keep ORVs out of the wilderness, ways that may include reconfiguring trailheads and posting signs.

The initial public comment period, or scoping, has ended, but anyone interested in the Chanchelulla and its management can still get on the mailing list for the draft plan and environmental assessment that will be issued later this year. Contact District Ranger Robert Ramirez at the Yolla Bolly Ranger District, Shasta-Trinity National Forest, HC01 Box 400, Platina, CA 96076-9701; (916) 352-4211.

## Season for wilderness permits opens March 1

If you want to climb Mount Whitney or backpack in the Yosemite Wilderness this summer, you'll need a wilderness permit. And you'll want to apply soon. The Inyo National Forest and Yosemite National Park will begin processing permit applications March 1.

### Whitney

To obtain a permit and reserve space on Whitney's trails, you must use a lottery form. You can get a form by calling the Inyo National Forest at (619) 876-6200. Lottery forms will be accepted until May 31, but the summer quota fills quickly and early applications have preference.

### Yosemite

The wilderness office at Yosemite National Park will accept written requests for permits that are postmarked March 1-May 31. Your request should include when (what dates) and where (what trailheads) you will enter and leave the wilderness, your destination, and the number of people and stock in your party. Include alternative dates or trailheads if possible. Send permit requests to: Wilderness Office, P. O. Box 577, Yosemite, CA 95389. Wilderness permits can also be obtained at the park, but the daily quota fills early in summer. A free guide for planning trips in the Yosemite Wilderness is available from the wilderness office; call (209) 372-0308 and request "Keep it Wild."

The California Wilderness Coalition's 1994 guide to wilderness regulations will be included in a spring issue of the *Wilderness Record*.



## Masonic Mtn. WSA

continued from page 4

The Bridgeport Gun Club has been seeking to develop a shooting range on public land for several years. Last summer, the *Mono Review-Herald* reported that the club had asked Representative John Doolittle (R-Rocklin) to alter the boundary of the WSA to accommodate the shooting range. The current proposal to lease the land is better for the club because, unlike a boundary change, it does not have to be approved by Congress.

Leasing the land has another benefit for the gun club. There will be no charge for the 20-year, renewable lease. The gun club will build the facility and "assist the county in running it," Primosch says, but because Mono County, a non-profit government entity, is applying for the lease, the BLM will not charge a fee.

Public comments on the proposal will be accepted until March 15. Send comments to the BLM's Bishop Resource Area, 787 North Main Street, Suite P, Bishop, CA 93514. For more information or to request a copy of the environmental assessment, which the agency expects to issue this month, call Primosch at (619) 872-4881.

## Book reviews

### San Joaquin history retrieved from obscurity

#### Indian Summer

By Thomas Jefferson Mayfield, Heyday Books, Berkeley, 1993, 125 pp., \$16.00.

"My daddy had traveled a great deal and it was not easy to get him excited about wild flowers, or pretty scenery. But he said that he would not have believed that such a place existed if he had not seen it himself... For my own part, I have never seen anything equal to the virgin San Joaquin Valley before there was a plow or fence within it."

This is how six-year-old Thomas Jefferson Mayfield remembered entering the San Joaquin Valley in the spring of 1850. His family eventually settled along the Kings River near Sycamore Creek (now at the bottom of Pine Flat Reservoir). For several years the Choinumne Yokuts living across the river supplied food to the family to keep them from firing their guns and scaring the game.

After his mother died, Mayfield was adopted by the Choinumnes while his father and brothers ran stock elsewhere in the state. For the next decade Mayfield saw few white people, including his family.

*Indian Summer*, Mayfield's account of his years with the tribe, chronicles Choinumne language, customs, food, and games. Mayfield relates the fishing, hunting, and gathering practices of his surrogate family in this land of plenty.

Much of the discussion of wildlife is related to hunting practices, but there are descriptions of the abundance of animals in the valley. "I have seen the white geese with

black wing tips flying so thickly that I am positive that one band of them would cover four square miles of land as thick as they could land and take off again." A pilgrimage to Tulare Lake, once one of the largest in the West, reveals the diversity of wildlife living among the tules.

The book ends on a sad note as Mayfield describes how the Indians were crowded out by settlers, forced onto small rancherias, and devastated by disease. In his ten years with the Choinumnes, he saw their numbers dwindle from more than 300 to fewer than 40.

Mayfield's story would have been lost had not historian and ethnographer Frank F. Latta sought him out shortly before his death in 1928. Because of ignorance and prejudice against Indians, Mayfield had not spoken of his incredible childhood until asked to by Latta. Now, editor Malcolm Margolin, in turn, has rescued Latta's writing from obscurity to produce *Indian Summer*.

Margolin's sensitive editing of the narrative is respectful to both the author and modern-day readers. "Mokees" and "squaws" have been changed to "women," for example, but the Choinumnes's hatred of neighboring tribes is retained. While racial and sexual slurs are unacceptable in contemporary writings, we can lose historical perspective when older books are rewritten to reflect today's values. In his introduction, Margolin explains what he edited and why.

*Indian Summer* is a fascinating record of the beauty and biological diversity that the San Joaquin Valley has lost and the equally tragic loss of most of its indigenous people.

—Jim Eaton



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## DATES TO REMEMBER

March 11-13 RIVER CONFERENCE and festival sponsored by Friends of the River in San Francisco. Call FOR at (415) 771-0400 for more information.

March 15 COMMENTS DUE on a proposal to lease part of Masonic Mountain Wilderness Study Area to Mono County for a shooting range. Send scoping comments to the Bureau of Land Management's Bishop Resource Area, 787 North Main Street, Suite P, Bishop, CA 93514. (See article on page 4.)

March 15 SCOPING DEADLINE for proposals for how the site of Lassen Volcanic National Park's former downhill ski area should be used. Send comments to: Lassen Volcanic National Park, P.O. Box 100, Mineral, CA 96063-0100.

March 17-19 MEETINGS to organize California chapters of Wilderness Watch. Locations and times to be determined; call Peggy at (209) 928-4800 for details. (See article on page 6.)

#### Wilderness Trivia Answer:

The river was named Rio de los Santos Reyes (river of the holy kings) by Spanish explorers in 1805.

from page 2



California  
Wilderness  
Coalition

#### Purposes of the California Wilderness Coalition

...to promote throughout the State of California the preservation of wild lands as legally designated wilderness areas by carrying on an educational program concerning the value of wilderness and how it may best be used and preserved in the public interest, by making and encouraging scientific studies concerning wilderness, and by enlisting public interest and cooperation in protecting existing or potential wilderness areas.

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#### The Wilderness Record

The *Wilderness Record* is the monthly publication of the California Wilderness Coalition. Articles may be reprinted; credit would be appreciated. Subscription is free with membership.

The *Record* welcomes letters-to-the-editor, articles, black & white photos, drawings, book reviews, poetry, etc. on California wilderness and related subjects. We reserve the right to edit all work.

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**—Professional forester  
Gordon Robinson, in Clearcut.**

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