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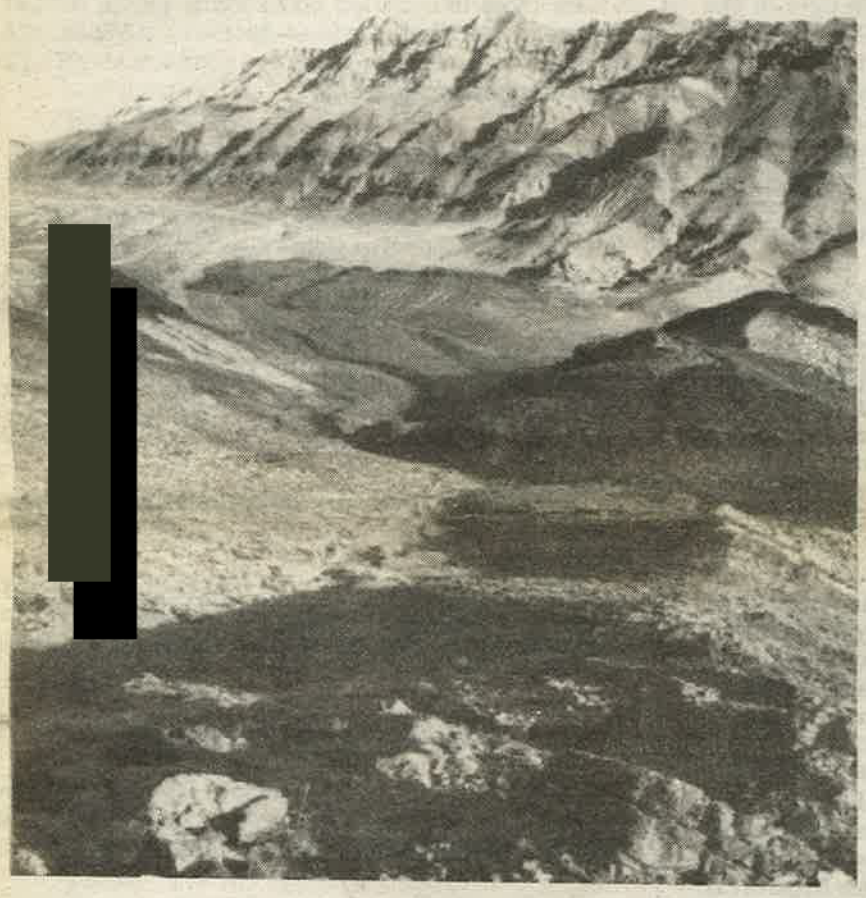
Senate passes desert bill

Nine-year impasse finally broken



In the vicinity of Pyramid Peak, in the future Death Valley Wilderness. Death Valley will become the largest national park outside Alaska when the desert bill is enacted. Photo by Pete Yamagata

By Jim Eaton

"The ayes are 69, the nays are 29; the bill is agreed to," announced the president of the U.S. Senate. On April 13, after nine long years, the California Desert Protection Act did what it had never done before—pass the Senate. Attention now turns to the House of Representatives, where a similar but by no means identical bill has been introduced (see chart on page 4 for comparison). Getting the bill through the House, where a desert bill passed in 1991, should be easier although weakening amendments are sure to be offered.

"I believe this is a balanced bill," said its sponsor, Senator Dianne Feinstein, "a bill which will protect important desert resources and at the same time allow existing activities to continue and future needs to be met." Sen. Feinstein took up the cause of desert protection after the retirement of Senator Alan Cranston, who introduced a desert bill in 1986 and in every Congress in which he served thereafter.

The Feinstein bill would establish a 1.2 million-acre Mojave National Park, expand Death Valley and Joshua Tree national monuments, and redesignate the monuments as national parks. When the bill is enacted, Death Valley, at 3.3 million acres, will become the nation's largest national park outside of Alaska.

Between the parks, which would include large wilderness areas, and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) wilderness areas, nearly 6.4 million acres of California's Mojave, Colorado, and Great Basin deserts would be protected as wilderness.

Though two Republican efforts to gut the bill were handily defeated, environmentalists were disappointed that amendments to strengthen the legislation were not attempted.

Although a desert bill passed the House in 1991, that bill stalled in the Senate because of an unwritten rule that both senators from an affected state must agree on the disposition of federal lands. Former Senator Alan Cranston was never able to work out a compromise with either Pete Wilson or Wilson's successor, John Seymour. All that changed last year with the election of Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, who both promised in their campaigns to protect the desert.

Battle for the Mojave

With both California senators backing this bill, its opponents had to devise a new strategy to fight its passage. Led by Senator Malcolm Wallop (R-WY), foes of the desert bill concocted a theory that the rest of the nation could not afford to protect the California desert. Their arguments focused on the Mojave National Park.

In the ill-fitting guise of a National Park Service champion, Sen. Wallop charged that Congress had not appropriated enough money for park maintenance and employee wages. He claimed that in Yellowstone National Park alone, over $300 million dollars is needed to repair the road system. Arguing that budget constraints would

continued on page 4

Last chance for Beegum Basin in Yolla Bolly–Middle Eel Wilderness

Ancient red firs will become lumber, black bears and bobcats will be evicted, and the beauty and biological integrity of the Yolla Bolly–Middle Eel Wilderness will be diminished unless Congress appropriates $600,000 from the Land and Water Conservation Fund this year to purchase the 160-acre Beegum Basin inholding in the Shasta–Trinity National Forest. The owner of the inholding near North Yolla Bolly Mountain has an approved logging permit and plans to log next year unless Congress acts first.

Beegum Basin is a steep, densely forested canyon at the headwaters of the south fork of Beegum Creek, a proposed wild-and-scenic river. The basin is a haven for threatened northern spotted owls, goshawks, and pine martens. With its old-growth Sierra montane forest of Douglas and red fir, sugar pine, and incense cedar, the area also supports cougars, fishers, and, possibly, the very rare wolverine.

Conservationists have been trying to prevent logging in the roadless parcel since the fall of 1992, when hunters noticed trees tagged for the saw (see article in November 1992 *WR*). Because Beegum Basin is sandwiched between the wilderness area and a potential wilderness addition, the Murphy Glade Roadless Area, it is a critical link for wildlife, a link that would be lost if the basin were logged.

What you can do

Write to Rep. Sidney Yates, chair of the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, and Sen. Robert Byrd, chair of the Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, asking them to allocate $600,000 from the Land and Water Conservation Fund for Beegum Basin this year. Send copies of your letter to senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein, to your representative, and to representatives George Miller, George Brown, Nancy Pelosi, Vic Fazio,

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Coalition news

Monthly Report

Gordon Robinson has been the forestry mentor for two generations of environmental activists. So I was slightly taken aback when I received an invitation to his art show. Now this was a side to my teacher I had never seen!

So Bob Schneider and I went to Albany on what turned out to be Gordon's 83rd birthday for the opening exhibit of his Zen-inspired paintings. We chided him for never sharing this wonderful side of his personality with us, but it was great to see one of the deans of the wilderness movement enjoying his retirement years.

A week later I was glued to the TV watching CSPAN2's coverage of the Senate debate on the California Desert Protection Act. I heard impassioned speeches by senators Barbara Boxer and Harry Reid about the importance of protecting the desert and watched the crocodile tears wept by senators Malcolm Wallop and Larry Craig who insisted they *really* want to protect the desert but feel the nation just can't afford to.

I cringed when weakening amendments passed and cheered the strong votes against provisions that would have gutted the act. I watched with satisfaction when the Senate overwhelmingly passed the bill. But I didn't celebrate.

Tired and worn out, I loaded the canoe, packed the telescope, and drove up to Indian Valley Reservoir.

I don't know why I keep returning to Indian Valley. It is close to home, but I seldom catch any fish. Often the reservoir is nearly empty, and the wind can make canoeing difficult.

Perhaps the dead oaks rotting in the still waters remind me of my first real defeat as a conservationist. Shortly after signing on to work for the Mother Lode Chapter of the Sierra Club, I discovered that a special August election had been scheduled in Yolo County to authorize construction of a dam that would flood the North Fork of Cache Creek and create this reservoir. I tried to delay the vote, but I was green and the deal already had been made to slip this boondoggle through.

Now every month I grimace when I pay my water bill that includes charges for this subsidy for a few county farmers. The only saving grace of this travesty is the ospreys that have taken up residence in this once beautiful valley.

But it was a particularly nice evening at Indian Valley. Under the stars it began to sink into me what an accomplishment the desert bill is. We need to work for improvements before it passes, but it remains a remarkable piece of legislation.

A few days later I was off to a meeting at the Kern River Preserve in Weldon (midway between Onyx and Bodfish for the geographically impaired). John Hopkins and Bob Barnes had set up a meeting for activists interested in a biodiversity plan for the southern Sierra and Tehachapi Range. I saw old friends like Joe and Bugs Fontaine, Harold and Janet Wood. and Mary Ann Henry. I met CWC members who previously had been just names on mailing labels, including Scott Kruse and Tom Dudley. And I was delighted to see a host of new faces.

Inyo had been a patient dog throughout the long meeting, so I rewarded him (and me) with an evening hike into the Dome Land Wilderness. We trekked from the Long Valley Campground down to the South Fork Kern River, returning after dark.

The next morning we drove around the (soon-to-be-designated-by-the-desert-bill) Chimney Peak Wilderness to the (ditto) Owens Peak Wilderness. From there we headed south along the Pacific Crest Trail.

It was a warm day, and the creek beds already were dry in this year of little snow. Inyo was able to sniff out some water at a seep. We reached the Sierra crest, but surrounding ridges limited the view.

So we headed higher. When the trail wound away from my destination, we crawled our way up a dry stream bed and picked a route along the rugged slope. Much to my chagrin, we reached the top only to find that the trail had switchbacked its way to the same point.

As we caught our breath and soaked up the scenery, I thought of the sad news I had received the previous day about the death of Mary Ann Henry's husband, Ron. Whenever I think I've been in the wilderness business a long time, I remember volunteers like Mary Ann and Ron who have worked to save wild lands for many decades.

I looked at Owens Peak and at other lands slated to become wilderness in the California Desert Protection Act: Chimney Peak, Kiavah, and the Rockhouse additions to the Dome Land Wilderness. Ron helped to draw the boundaries for these areas. His legacy soon will be an enduring wealth of wilderness.

By Jim Eaton

CWC T-shirts

Joe likes our six-tone landscape shirt now available in jade and fuchsia as well as the ever-popular light blue and pale green for $15. Bugs wears a design by Bay Area cartoonist Phil Frank; it comes in beige or light gray for $12. All shirts are 100 percent double-knit cotton. To order, use the form on the back page.

Wilderness Trivia Quiz Question:

What is the highest California peak in the Basin and Range?

Answer on page 6

California Mule Deer Association Joins CWC

The California Wilderness Coalition's newest member organization is the California Mule Deer Association, a statewide group of hunters and activists working for the benefit of California's native deer. The conservation-oriented group is involved in habitat management on both public and private lands and also works on deer management issues.

Last year, the California Mule Deer Association co-founded the California Grazing Reform Alliance to maintain and improve the ecological health of commercially grazed public lands. Dano McGinn, a representative of both groups, explains that the California Mule Deer Association got involved in grazing reform because "grazing is the key issue facing wildlife on California's public lands."

For more information about either group, contact McGinn at 1673 Fruitvale Road, Lincoln, CA 95648. See also the article on page 5 about the alliance's May 21–22 range monitoring workshop.

Remembering Ron Henry

We were saddened to learn that Ron Henry, a longtime wilderness supporter from Ridgecrest, died in March. "Ron was one of those steady, reliable people you could always count on," says fellow Sierra Club activist Joe Fontaine. "He never sought credit or glory."

This modest man deserves a lot of credit, however. With his wife Mary Ann, Ron spent many years garnering the information and public support that led, most recently, to the Senate passage of the California Desert Protection Act.

Ron also served on the Sierra Club's Eastern Sierra Committee. It was the Sierra that he loved most, and he backpacked all over the range.

Professionally, Ron was a successful chemist who held a number of patents. His most lasting legacy may be the California wilderness areas he loved and protected, however. He will be missed.

CWC fundraiser

May 6, 7:30 p.m., at the Veterans Memorial Center in Davis. Tickets ($15) and sponsorships (from $50) are still available. Call the CWC at (916) 758-0380 for details.

News from

NATIVE CALIFORNIA

"An inside view of the California Indian world"

News from Native California, a 56-page quarterly magazine, focuses on Indian people of California and many of the articles are written by Native Californians. As a special service to readers of *Wilderness Record*, the editors of *News from Native California* would like to offer a special rate on new subscriptions! You can get the magazine for one year (four issues) for $12.50, a savings of $5.00.

To take advantage of this offer, send your name, mailing address, phone number and a check for $12.50 to: *News from Native California*, P.O. Box 9145, Berkeley, CA, 94709. For more information, call (510) 849-0177.

Wilderness management

Sierra Club is vying with user group for the soul of Sheep Mountain and San Gabriel wildernesses

By Lucy Rosenau

Imagine that you're the manager of twin wilderness areas in a national forest that sees more visitors than Yosemite National Park. Imagine that one of the world's largest, smoggiest cities is an hour's drive from wilderness trailheads. Imagine that the wilderness is pocked with inholdings, active and inactive mining sites, old homesteads, and vacation cabins. Imagine that at the edge of the wilderness is a river that was the site of a 19th-century gold rush, a river that attracts hundreds of prospectors each fair weekend. Imagine a climate that is almost always fair.

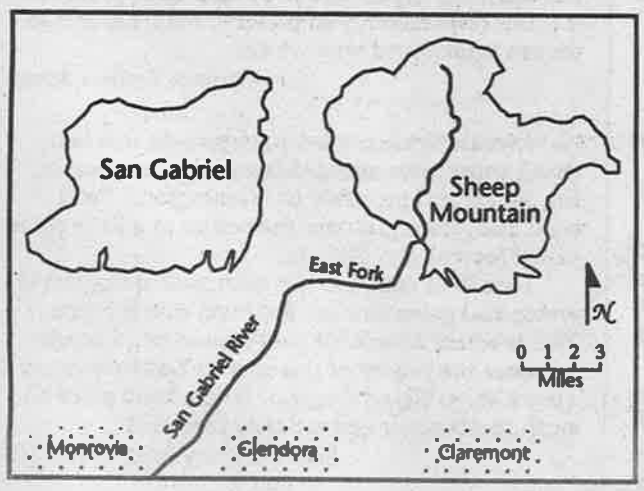
Now imagine further that you work for a bureaucracy modeled on the army, a bureaucracy that is perennially underfunded and staffed with an assortment of idealists and pragmatists, tree huggers and tree cutters. And imagine that the agency you work for requires you to supervise a team of citizens and wilderness users who will develop a plan to manage the wilderness.

"If we can resist the pressure here and still come out with a good plan, anyone can do it—for any wilderness—and there's no excuse not to."

So you send out notices, inviting the public to join your team. You contact the local chapter of the Sierra Club, the wilderness groups, the inholders and the miners and the outfitters. And when they all show up at the first meeting, you begin to explain the nine-step "limits of acceptable change" (LAC) system that the Forest Service uses to develop wilderness plans.

In the best of circumstances, the LAC process is complicated, time-consuming, and arduous. And it quickly became apparent that the best of circumstances were not surrounding the development of wilderness plans for the Sheep Mountain and San Gabriel wilderness areas of the Angeles National Forest.

There has been a long-simmering controversy about recreational mining on the East Fork of the San Gabriel River, which runs through the Sheep Mountain Wilderness (see article in July 1992 *WR*). Dredging, sluicing, and panning are allowed downstream of the wilderness boundary, but the wilderness portion of the river has been closed to recreational mining. In February, the Pacific Southwest region of the Forest Service, which includes most of the national forests in California, adopted a new policy (section 2323.73–.74 in the Forest Service Manual) requiring that "mineral information-gathering activities in designated wilderness be for scientific or educational purposes" and that written authorization be obtained. The policy further specifies that "gathering...mineral information as a recreational activity or for commercial exploration or for non-commercial purposes for personal gain" does not qualify as an allowed use.



Map by Jim Eaton

New frontiers in obduracy

Despite the apparent finality implicit in the Forest Service's adoption of an explicit policy, mining proponents have brought up the issue of recreational mining in wilderness at every LAC meeting. At first, the Forest Service staff who run the meetings patiently explained the new policy: that recreational mining is not allowed in wilderness. Copies of a letter from the forest supervisor were distributed. Undeterred, the mining proponents, members of the Azusa-based Public Lands for the People (PLP), challenged the legality of the LAC process, contending that it violates the 1964 Wilderness Act by modifying the wilderness.

With their protest on record, the PLP members continued to attend the LAC meetings, continued to introduce the issue of recreational mining at every opportunity. After repeatedly being told that recreational mining will not be considered in the LAC process, the miners adopted new tactics. They began to refer to the activity as "prospecting" and to assert that it is a cultural practice that warrants protection. At one point, they suggested that barring recreational mining violates their civil rights.

When the team reached the second step of the LAC process—defining opportunity classes, the various zones that will be superimposed on the wilderness to represent the different amounts of human activity that will be allowed—the miners struck again. Dissatisfied with the usual opportunity class hierarchy of pristine, primitive, and semi-primitive, PLP members submitted a frontier class in which the wilderness visitor will encounter "undeclared towns, logging camps, ranches, mining sites, remnants of old structures and buildings, mines, tailings, diggings, tunnels, equipment, old roads and trails," all to be preserved as historic and cultural artifacts.

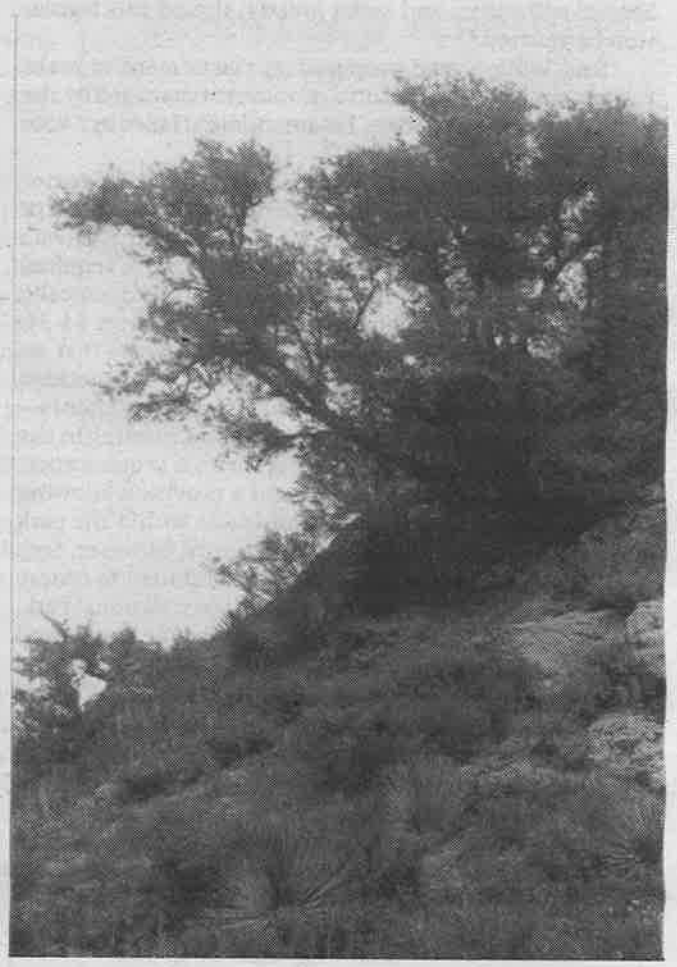
No prospects for consensus

The Sierra Club representatives on the team oppose the frontier opportunity class, and some of its provisions would be opposed by the Forest Service as well because they are inconsistent with various laws and with agency policy. Sierra Club members also will fight some of the other proposals that have arisen during the LAC process—proposals like allowing trash cans and fire breaks in the wilderness. It has become clear that the team will not be able to reach consensus, but the LAC effort is continuing nonetheless.

"Public Lands for the People contends that the U. S. Forest Service is out of Control and that their indiscretion of the law has directly abused the Human environmental rights of all of the people whom they have misinformed. How Are we Going to put a stop to this?"

—from a treatise by the vice president of the PLP

George Duffy, wilderness manager for the Mt. Baldy Ranger District, believes that the LAC meetings are worthwhile even if consensus cannot be reached. What Duffy hopes will develop from the process is a two-way education. By the time the LAC process ends, probably in the fall of 1994, the members of the LAC team will have learned a lot about wilderness, a lot about tolerating other viewpoints, and a lot about each other.



Oaks, chaparral, and yucca cover the hills near Bear Creek in the San Gabriel Wilderness. Photo by L. Rosenau

Then the Forest Service will begin writing a management plan for the Sheep Mountain and San Gabriel wilderness areas. Duffy hopes to have a draft plan and environmental analysis completed by the spring of 1995. Duffy is confident that the agency's plan will not include trash cans in wilderness or enshrine tailing piles as protected historic sites. He is less confident, however, about the fate of the ban on recreational mining. Duffy worries that as pressure from interest groups mounts, the Forest Service may reconsider its policy.

On the whole, however, Duffy is optimistic. Under the worst of circumstances—an adversarial LAC team, a wilderness beset by millions of potential users with different cultural values and different versions of recreation—Duffy intends to produce a plan that will protect the wilderness in a pristine state, a plan that will be a national model. "If we can resist the pressure here and still come out with a good plan, anyone can do it—for any wilderness—and there's no excuse not to," he concludes.

To get a copy of the wilderness plan and environmental analysis that will be released next year, write to the Angeles National Forest, 701 N. Santa Anita Ave., Arcadia, CA 91006.

Desert wilderness

Desert bill—sans Lanfair Valley—moves to House

continued from page 1

require wresting funds for the new California parks from existing parks, Sen. Wallop stated that "the National Park Service will suffer, and suffer greatly, should this legislation be enacted."

Sen. Wallop then proposed an amendment to make the eastern Mojave a national monument managed by the BLM. After lengthy debate, his amendment failed by a vote of 65-32.

A second attempt to gut the bill was offered by Senator Robert Bennett (R-UT). Sen. Bennett's provision—a sort of poison pill—required that if 90 percent of the private inholdings in a park or wilderness area were not acquired within ten years, the protective designation automatically would be rescinded. This amendment went down 64-34.

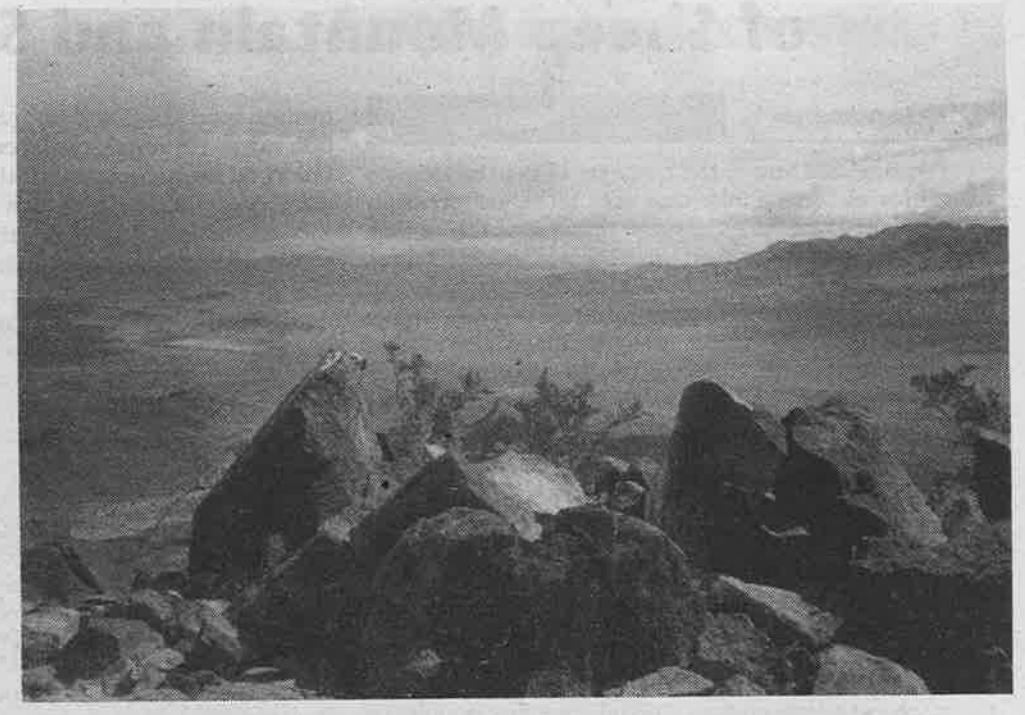
Frustrated by the decidedly bipartisan votes that rejected their amendments, desert bill opponents decided not to delay passage by offering additional amendments—not even the dreaded requirement to allow hunting in the Mojave National Park. In exchange for their acquiescence, some minor boundary changes and a provision allowing inholders to build or improve residences within the park were added to the bill. Most importantly, however, Sen. Feinstein agreed not to advance an amendment to restore public lands in Lanfair Valley to the Mojave National Park.

Sen. Wallop previously had persuaded the Energy and Natural Resources Committee to delete Lanfair Valley from Mojave National Park because the valley contains private inholdings. In describing the area to be excised, however, the committee included a vast 290,000-acre rectangular tract, a key element of the proposed park. The amendment necessary to restore the public lands in the tract to the park was not offered.

After it was clear that Lanfair Valley would not be returned to the park, Senator Harry Reid (D-NV) gave an impassioned speech asking that if the House includes Lanfair Valley in its final version of the desert bill, the Senate accept an enlarged park in the House-Senate negotiations that would follow.

"I would venture a bet to anyone in this body that I know more about this area than anyone in the Senate and probably in Washington," Sen. Reid told his colleagues. "I was born and raised just over the border in a little place called Searchlight, Nevada."

Sen. Reid praised the beauty and importance of the lands removed from the park and explained how his experiences at Paiute Springs had influenced his appreciation of the wild desert.



The Cady Mountains would remain a wilderness study area under the Feinstein desert bill passed by the Senate. Photo by Vicky Hoover

More maneuvers and modifications

Sen. Feinstein received no objection to requiring that commercial grazing continue in the Mojave National Park and in additions to Death Valley. Originally scheduled to be phased out over 20 years and later, in the lifetime of the permittees, grazing now seems poised to be a permanent fixture of these areas.

Further changes to BLM wilderness areas passed, including small reductions in acreage to the Owens Peak and Santa Rosa wilderness areas. The proposed Cady Mountains Wilderness would remain in wilderness study area (WSA) status to accommodate a potential hazardous waste dump, and Great Falls Basin would remain a WSA to appease a mining operation frightened by the prospect of having to reduce its air pollution.

The portions of the Owlshead and Avawatz Mountains not slated to become part of Death Valley National Park also would remain WSAs, in this case to placate the military at Fort Irwin.

Senator Hank Brown (R-CO) succeeded in attaching to the bill a study of the entrance fees charged at federal institutions across the nation. And, in traditional pork barrel fashion, a National Jazz Park in New Orleans would be established as part of the California Desert Protection Act, courtesy of Senator Bennett Johnston (D-LA).

On to the House

Action now moves to the House, where Representative Rick Lehman (D-Fresno) plans to shepherd the legislation through the Natural Resources Committee. "This clearly becomes the highest priority in our committee," said Rep. George Miller (D-Martinez), who chairs the committee.

Environmentalists plan to fight on to keep Lanfair Valley in the Mojave National Park and to change the grazing provisions. Attempts to change language that would exempt military overflights from all public-land laws also will be made.

Opponents to the desert bill are expected to attack the Mojave National Park again by offering a number of weakening amendments. In the 1991 House bill, language allowing hunting in the park was passed. Environmentalists will try to keep that from happening again.

After the dust settles, a conference committee will reconcile the differences between the Senate and House versions of the legislation and send the California Desert Protection Act to President Clinton.

Differences in the House and Senate versions of the California Desert Protection Act

Wilderness	House acreage	Senate acreage
Cadiz Dunes	42,640	39,740
Cady Mtns.	85,970	0
Chuckwalla Mtns.	158,950	80,770
Clipper Mtn.	40,000	26,000
Coyote Mtns.	18,600	17,000
Death Valley	3,183,438	3,158,038
El Paso Mtns.	16,100	23,780
Great Falls Basin	8,800	0
Indian Pass	35,015	33,855
Kingston Range	249,368	209,608
Little Chuckwalla Mtns.	46,460	29,880
Little Picacho	36,440	33,600
Orocopia Mtns.	57,500	40,735
Palen/McCoy	214,149	270,629
Rodman Mtns.	27,700	21,300
San Gorgonio	33,500	37,980
Santa Rosa	53,240	64,340
Slate Range	44,410	0
South Algodones Dunes	61,630	0
Trilobite	33,720	31,160
Whipple Mtns.	75,300	77,520

Notes: Minor boundary changes (less than 1,000 acres difference between the House and Senate figures) are not shown. Where the Senate acreage is larger than the House acreage, the difference is the result of a request from the Department of the Interior to increase the size of the wilderness to facilitate its management. Figures are the most accurate available at press time, courtesy of the Wilderness Society.

Voices from the debate

The desert is incredibly diverse: sand dunes, extinct volcanos, ninety—nine-zero—mountain ranges, the world's largest Joshua tree forest, and over 100,000 archaeological sites. The varied landforms provide habitats rich in biological diversity, with more than 760 different wildlife species.

—Senator Dianne Feinstein

When we pass this bill, we will protect the California desert and prove once and for all that strong environmental policy makes good economic sense.

Just three days ago I stood in awe of the California desert environment. I stood among the cliffs, and I really felt the power and the spirit of nature. It's an unbelievable feeling. It's a transforming experience to be that close to nature. It is our responsibility to preserve nature as it is so we can understand who we are.

—Senator Barbara Boxer

I would venture a bet to anyone in this body that I know more about this area than anyone in the Senate and probably in Washington. I was born and raised just over the border in a little place called Searchlight, Nevada.

I am ill at ease, frankly, with pine trees, lots of water, and green things. But here, this is home. This is where a national park should be. I would compare the beauty of this area to Yellowstone, to Yosemite, to Grand Canyon. There is no place on earth that's better aesthetically than this.

—Senator Harry Reid, D-Nevada

Grazing reform

Become a riparian watchdog

By Stew Churchwell

"I don't see any degradation. That meadow looks like a golf course."

Some people fail to recognize degradation caused by livestock; others choose not to see it. Don't count on land managers to acknowledge and control it. Political forces continue to foster degradation denial. It's up to the public to expose degradation and compel change. To do this, we need to know where it occurs, what it looks like, and how it impacts resources.

What is a riparian area?

Because livestock congregate in riparian areas, degradation is concentrated there. Technically, riparian areas are lands where vegetation is strongly influenced by the presence of water, whether surface or subsurface, seeps or springs, potholes or lakes. In the West, we're talking primarily streams, though other wet areas can be important.

Functioning riparian areas are as valuable to this arid land as water itself. Their specialized vegetation supports the water resource by protecting stream banks from erosion, slowing flood flows, filtering sediment, capturing and breaking down nutrients and pollutants, shading and protecting soil and water from sun and wind, and thereby controlling temperatures and minimizing evaporation. These areas collect, store, and slowly release water during low flow periods when it's needed most. They moderate the severity of drought and flood and play a critical role in the life cycles of most western wildlife species. They are by far the most productive lands in the West in terms of variety of plant and animal species (biodiversity) and production of living organisms (biomass).

What goes wrong

Nonfunctioning or degraded riparian areas can have a devastating impact on local economies and environments. The wake spreads far and wide in the form of diminished stream flows, flooding, silt-choked rivers, and reduced migratory wildlife populations. Until the 1960s, agency range scientists and managers considered these priceless lands sacrifice areas. Thankfully, attitudes are changing, though management plans rarely reflect this because of political pressure.

Degradation occurs when the function of riparian areas is disrupted. Livestock can widen stream channels by trampling and breaking down the banks, for example, or by consuming vegetation that supports bank-stabilizing roots. When a stream channel widens, water depth decreases simultaneously, leaving the stream banks high and dry.

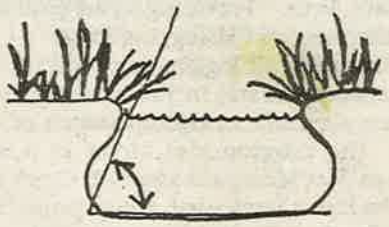


Figure 1. Narrow, deep stream channel has a bank angle less than 90 degrees.

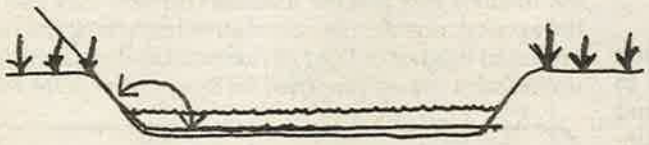


Figure 2. Overwidened stream channel has a bank angle greater than 90 degrees.

Forest Service graphic

At this point degradation has occurred because the stream can no longer carry its sediment and the high water table beneath the flood plain drops to the new water level in the stream. Riparian vegetation that relies on the higher water table is replaced by species such as sagebrush that are better suited to dry lands, which is what this area has become. Water temperature control, water storage, and metered release all are lost.

What to look for

According to Forest Service hydrologist Peter Bengeyfield, the width of the stream channel is the first dimension to be altered when degradation occurs. A deep, narrow channel provides the most contact surface between the water in the stream and the banks (see Figure 1). This results in the maximum amount of bank absorption for storage. In addition, deep, narrow channels force heavy runoff from spring snow melt and cloudbursts to overflow the stream banks, thus exhausting energy and depositing sediment over the flood plain. In contrast, streams in overwidened channels cannot access their flood plain, so flood flows rush between the banks, further widening the channels and elevating sediment levels.

To recognize degradation, look for an overwide stream channel. A good indicator is the bank angle formed where the bottom meets the bank. A narrow, deep channel usually will create an angle of 90 degrees or less. In a narrow, deep channel, this angle is usually submerged, so it may be necessary to probe with a stick to determine its shape. In degraded shallow streams this should not be necessary. If a significant portion of the bank angle in a representative segment of a stream exceeds 90 degrees, you are probably looking at degradation (see Figure 2). Other clues are a shallow stream, banks laid back, sand and gravel bars in the middle or along the sides of the channel, stabilizing roots or raw soil exposed to air or running water, numerous hoof prints, and stream areas that disappear during dry periods.

What about a cure?

Fortunately, degradation is reversible. Once the source of degradation is eliminated, vegetation begins to return to the stream channel and starts trapping sediment, which rebuilds the stream banks.

Most land management agencies presently limit how much vegetation livestock can consume in riparian areas. When the limit is reached, livestock are removed from the area. But these limits are usually set far too high to allow recovery because the agencies are not monitoring the most fragile component of the riparian area—the stream banks.

The shortest route to riparian area restoration is the elimination of livestock grazing from public lands. Realistically, that probably won't happen anytime soon. In the meantime, agencies must acknowledge degradation, start monitoring and managing the most critical rangeland components, and impose restrictions which are sufficient to lead to recovery. But these changes will not occur unless the agencies are told that we are aware of their mismanagement and its price.

What you can do

The Clinton administration will be accepting comments on its proposed policy to reform grazing on public lands until July 28. Ask Interior Secretary Babbitt to include a 25 percent bank trampling standard and a provision for removing livestock from nonfunctioning riparian areas until full restoration has occurred. Address comments to: Rangeland Reform '94, P. O. Box 66300, Washington, DC 20035-6300.

Get involved in the management of grazing allotments in your area.

Ask for quarterly project reports for the areas you want to watchdog from the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service.

Work toward bank alteration limits and stricter vegetation usage limits in allotment management plans and land resource management plans.

Reprinted from the April 1994 issue of New Voices, *a publication of the Denver office of the Wilderness Society. Suzanne Fouty provided scientific review for this article.*

An analysis of the Clinton grazing policy will appear in a future issue of the Wilderness Record.

Range monitoring workshop scheduled for May 21–22

The California Grazing Reform Alliance is sponsoring a two-day workshop in Truckee to train activists to monitor rangelands. On May 21, experts from the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Department of Fish and Game, and University of California will explain the laws, policies, and techniques involved in range management and monitoring. On May 22, participants will have the opportunity to practice what they've learned on a field trip.

To register for the workshop, send your name, address, and phone number to the Alliance at 1673 Fruitvale Road, Lincoln, CA 95648. The fee, which can be waived, is $10 per person, payable to the California Mule Deer Association. For more information, call Dano McGinn at (916) 645-3288.

Field weekend in Mokelumne Wilderness

The Eldorado National Forest and National Audubon Society are sponsoring field trips, monitoring workshops, wildlife surveys, and plant surveys at Indian Valley adjacent to and partly within the Mokelumne Wilderness. Cattle recently have been banished from this valley at the headwaters of the North Fork Mokelumne River, and the Forest Service is planning rehabilitation projects in which the public can participate.

The rehabilitation, surveys, and workshops are scheduled for the weekend of July 28–31. For more information or to register for the free event, call Bob Barnes at Audubon's Sacramento office, (916) 481-5332, or write to Helen Bombay or Mike Foster, Indian Valley Field Weekend, Eldorado National Forest, 100 Forni Road, Placerville, CA 95667.

New grazing standards proposed for Inyo NF

Managers of the Inyo National Forest are proposing to adopt forest-wide standards and guidelines for grazing through an amendment to the 1988 forest plan. The Forest Service will accept scoping comments on its proposal until May 31.

Presently, grazing in the Inyo National Forest is administered in individual allotment plans which are expensive and time-consuming to develop. Under the proposed amendment, a general set of standards would be incorporated into the forest plan, standards that could be modified for individual allotments to accommodate variations in vegetation and local conditions.

The conservation group Friends of the Inyo supports the idea of overall standards, provided the standards are sufficient to protect forest lands from being overgrazed or

continued on page 6

Wilderness news

Campfire ban proposed for John Muir Wilderness

The Forest Service is soliciting public input on a proposal to ban campfires in a portion of the John Muir Wilderness and Tinemaha Roadless Area. Comments on the proposed ban, which would be implemented this summer following an environmental analysis, will be accepted through May 13.

Inyo National Forest planners believe the ban is needed because heavy recreational use along the South Fork trail, which leads climbers to the Palisades, has depleted the the South Fork watershed of Big Pine Creek of dead and downed wood. The depletion of woody debris not only robs the subalpine ecosystem of an important source of nutrients, but it also has led recreationists to turn to standing trees in their search for firewood. The Forest Service is proposing the campfire ban to protect the area from further damage.

Comments on the proposed ban should be sent to District Ranger, White Mountain Ranger District, 798 North Main Street, Bishop, CA 93514. For more information, call Keith Waterfall at the ranger district office, (619) 873-2525.

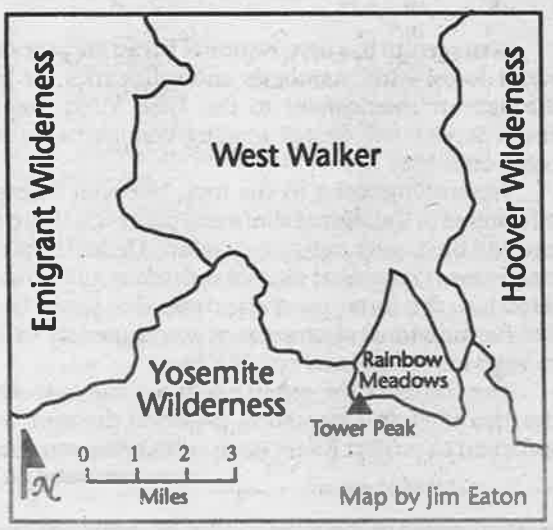
In the vicinity of Palisade Glacier Photo by David Robertson

West Walker meadows may become research preserve

The Forest Service plans to designate Rainbow Meadows, a pristine alpine and subalpine area adjacent to the Yosemite Wilderness (see map), as a research natural area where camping, pets, and grazing by pack and saddle stock would be prohibited. New mining claims and exploration also would be barred. Public comments on the proposal will be accepted until May 23.

Steep terrain has protected Rainbow Meadows from the heavy grazing and recreational use that have affected much of the eastern face of the Sierra Nevada. By designating the site as a research natural area and barring some uses, the Forest Service and the Nature Conservancy, which has studied the area, hope to protect the meadows' pristine condition. The meadows could serve as a baseline or control area for scientists studying ecological change or managers trying new techniques.

Rainbow Meadows is the southern tip of a larger roadless area adjacent to the Hoover Wilderness. The roadless area, known variously as the Hoover additions or the West Walker country, was dropped from the 1984 California Wilderness Act when wilderness proponents were asked to cut some of the wilderness acreage from the bill. Confident that the rugged terrain and inaccessibility of the West Walker area would guarantee its safety until it could be designated in a future wilderness bill, activists agreed to its excision from the 1984 bill. Instead of being released, the area was accorded Congressional study status and has since been managed by the Toiyabe National Forest as if it were wilderness.



The Forest Service is preparing an environmental analysis to assess the environmental and social impacts of research natural area designation. To submit comments for consideration in the analysis, write to: Rainbow Meadow RNA, c/o District Ranger, Bridgeport Ranger District, P. O. Box 595, Bridgeport, CA 93517.

Beegum Basin

continued from page 1

Esteban Torres, and Ronald Packard. Beegum Basin is in Rep. Fazio's district, so letters from his constituents will be doubly helpful. The addresses are:

The Hon. _____
U. S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. _____
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Inyo grazing

continued from page 5

degraded. Friends of the Inyo representative Mike Prather says the group is evaluating the Forest Service plan to determine the adequacy of the proposed standards and will have a fact sheet available soon to help conservationists prepare their comments. You can contact Friends of the Inyo at Drawer D, Lone Pine, CA 93545.

For a copy of the scoping document or for more information, call Resource Officer Ron Keil at (619) 873-2400. Comments should be addressed to Inyo National Forest, Attn: Range Management, 873 North Main Street, Bishop, CA 93514.

CALPAW includes funds for wilderness inholdings

By John K. Moore

Proposition 180 on the June ballot, dubbed CALPAW, authorizes selling two billion dollars in bonds to acquire parks, open space, riparian lands, and other wildlife habitat all over California. In addition to providing these large environmental benefits at a surprisingly low price (about 50 cents per person each month), CALPAW also will provide funds to purchase inholdings in roadless areas and wilderness areas.

Some examples of how CALPAW would benefit wilderness are:

- $1.8 million for checkerboard inholdings along the North Fork American Wild and Scenic River in Tahoe National Forest; these lands on the bottom and lower slopes of a deep, rugged, and wild canyon are the center of the North Fork American Roadless Area.
- $3 million for inholdings in the Grouse Lakes Roadless Area of Tahoe National Forest; Grouse Lakes, a very popular backcountry recreation area, is notable for its dozens of lakes, colorful cliffs, and attractive forests. (CALPAW funds would not be used to purchase the extensive Sierra Pacific Industries inholdings, which are being acquired by a land exchange.)
- $2.5 million for inholdings within roadless areas adjacent to the San Gorgonio Wilderness.
- $3 million for land acquisition in Alpine County, including inholdings within the Mokelumne Wilderness near Charity Valley.
- $16 million for acquisition of private lands within Anza–Borrego Desert State Park; many of the parcels are inside roadless areas that are potential additions to the state wilderness.

Tell Forest Service to butt out of Butt Mtn. RA

The Lassen National Forest has a host of projects planned for its Butt Creek Management Area. Though some of the projects sound benign—road closures, stream channel restoration, and the construction of "sweet smelling toilets" at Stover Springs—others trigger conservationists' alarm bells. "Providing forest products to local communities" sounds like logging to us.

The specter of logging is of special concern because the management area includes part of the Butt Mountain Roadless Area and a ridgetop stretch of the Pacific Crest Trail. The ridgetop also serves as a roadless corridor between Butt Mountain and Cub Creek roadless areas.

The Forest Service will accept public comments on its plans for Butt Creek Management Area until May 13. Write to the Almanor Ranger District, P. O. Box 767, Chester, CA 96020 and tell the Forest Service to stay out of the roadless area and the roadless corridor. Ask also that the agency consider the cumulative impacts of the newly proposed logging in light of the number and intensity of timber sales already proposed for this portion of the forest.

Wilderness Trivia Answer:

White Mountain Peak at 14,246 feet.

from page 2

Book review

Where steep peaks chill their feet in the Pacific

The Natural History of Big Sur
By Paul Henson and Donald J. Usner, University of California Press, 1993, 416 pp., $30.

Almost anyone can tell you that Big Sur is one of the most spectacular sites along California's magnificent coast. But what precise area is encompassed by that name is anything but clear. Is it only the rugged coast where steep peaks chill their feet in the Pacific? What bounds it to the north and south? Does it include the rough and wonderful terrain behind the towering coastal ridges?

In *The Natural History of Big Sur*, biologist Paul Henson and geographer Donald Usner answer this question by reference to mountains and watersheds, including in their Big Sur "all of the Santa Lucia Range between the Carmel River and San Carpoforo Creek, including the coastline." This is a definition I like, for it takes in all of the Ventana Wilderness, which to me has been the wild heart of Big Sur since my first backpack trip there. Thus I was eager to read this natural history of the grand terrain that sweeps up from tidepools and redwoods through oaks, pines, and firs to parched mountainside scrublands. What I found was a useful overview, but one that suffers from several flaws.

The book is set up in an interesting manner. The first part discusses the area's natural history in chapters on geology, climate, shoreline natural history, plant communities (by far the longest section), fire ecology, and fauna. Part Two augments the earlier discussions of natural phenomena by pointing out where they occur along Big Sur's trails.

The general natural history part of the book is filled with interesting information and is handsomely illustrated (mostly with drawings of individual plant and animal species) by Valerie Kells. The writing is rather flat, however, and tends to offer brief, standardized descriptions where a telling detail or two would bring the text to life. Thus, the reader is told of the shyness of harbor seals but not that, once safely in the water, they exhibit considerable curiosity toward people. Tanoak is described by appearance and range, but no mention is made of its unmistakable pungent perfume when in flower.

In part, such gaps are excused by the sheer bulk of the task the authors set themselves—presenting the natural history of so vast an area in 300 pages. I would have liked to see some mention of nudibranchs in the tidepool discussions, more about the area's bats than their mere listing in a species table, more about Big Sur's wild orchid species. But any reader could provide a similar list of personal interests, and one cannot fairly fault the authors for having set limits to avoid writing an encyclopedic text.

Nonetheless, certain information of wide general interest also is missing. Discussions of terrestrial fauna are confined to vertebrates, with no survey of even the most common and frequently encountered invertebrates. (With regard to ticks, this omission seems particularly glaring in a book that is in part a trail guide.)

As another example, on a recent visit to Andrew Molera State Park, I saw notices requesting hikers to report sightings of marbled murrelets; obviously, attempts are being made to identify the nesting range of this old-growth dependent species. Despite the press attention that this species has received in the last several years and its unique status as a creature of both ocean and ancient forest, it receives no mention in the book beyond an entry in a bird list.

The text also suffers from occasional errors that the editors should have caught. One would look in vain for an eastern screech owl in Big Sur (p. 224), 874 meters do not equal 1,435 feet (p. 310), and "tortuous" is not a synonym for "torturous" (pp. 350 and 385). Though minor, such mistakes detract from the book's overall authority.

I was pleased to find a chapter devoted to human impacts on the Big Sur environment, including, along with the usual suspects (grazing, mining, and logging), the negative effects of recreational use. Some of these discussions are frustratingly general, however. The section on livestock impacts describes the damage that cattle can cause but offers no information on the extent of cattle grazing in Big Sur, nor on the extent to which it is allowed on national forest land generally or within the Ventana Wilderness in particular. Such information is essential to understanding the severity of human impacts.

I had far fewer reservations about the second part of the book, the descriptions of the natural features found along various trail routes on public lands throughout Big Sur. Having discussed the endemic Santa Lucia fir, the faults that fragment Big Sur's mountains, the odd serpentine plant communities, and countless other intriguing features, the book performs an invaluable service by detailing trail routes that will take the reader to these features. My only complaint here is that no maps are provided with the trail descriptions, and the five maps in the back of the book are on a scale that lacks useful detail. One must truly follow the authors' advice and read the trail section with one's own topo maps at hand. This part of the book would be much easier to use if it provided maps of a quality to match Kells' illustrations in the first part.

Overall, *The Natural History of Big Sur* is a good introduction to the natural features and processes that comprise Big Sur. For the reader little familiar with the area, it will provide a good grounding in the area's basics. Those who have a better acquaintance with Big Sur may find themselves wishing for a deeper, broader, and livelier approach to this rugged, complex, and fascinating region.

—Trent Orr

DATES TO REMEMBER

May 7 COMMENTS DUE on a Clinton administration offer to reinvent the Forest Service. Send ideas to: Forest Service Reinvention Team, P. O. Box 96090, Washington, DC 20090-6090 or fax to: (703) 522-6724.

May 9 COMMENTS DUE on the administration's plan to improve habitat for anadromous fish in the Pacific Northwest. Send comments to: PACFISH EA, Forest Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, P. O. Box 96090, Washington, DC 20090-6090. *(See article in April 1994 WR.)*

May 13 COMMENTS DUE on logging projects proposed around Butt Mountain Roadless Area in Lassen National Forest. Send to: Almanor Ranger District, P. O. Box 767, Chester, CA 96020. *(See article on page 6.)*

May 13 COMMENTS DUE on a proposed campfire ban in portions of the John Muir Wilderness and Tinemaha Roadless Area. Send to: District Ranger, White Mountain Ranger District, 798 North Main St., Bishop, CA 93514. *(See article on page 6.)*

May 21–22 WORKSHOP in Truckee sponsored by the California Grazing Reform Alliance to train activists to monitor rangelands. *(For details, see article on page 5.)*

May 23 COMMENTS DUE on a proposal to designate Rainbow Meadows in the West Walker area of Toiyabe National Forest a research natural area. Send to: Rainbow Meadow RNA, c/o District Ranger, Bridgeport Ranger District, P. O. Box 595, Bridgeport, CA 93517. *(See article on page 6.)*

May 31 COMMENTS DUE on a proposed amendment to the Inyo National Forest land and resources management plan that would establish forest-wide standards for grazing. Send to: Inyo National Forest, Attn: Range Management, 873 North Main St., Bishop, CA 93514. *(See article on page 5.)*

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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California Wilderness Coalition
2655 Portage Bay East, Suite 5
Davis, California 95616
(916) 758-0380
jeaton@igc.apc.org

Editor
Lucy Rosenau
Contributors
Stew Churchwell
Jim Eaton
John K. Moore
Trent Orr
Photos & Graphics
Jim Eaton
Vicky Hoover
David Roberston
Lucy Rosenau
Pete Yamagata
Advisors
Wendy Cohen
Jim Eaton

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"I am ill at ease, frankly, with pine trees, lots of water, and green things. But here, this is home. This is where a national park should be."

—Sen. Harry Reid, D-NV, speaking in support of the California desert bill

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