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Alone in the wilderness

More than just a pleasant hike

By Trent Orr

One of the hallmarks of wilderness is that it often offers "opportunities for solitude." Like many *Record* readers, I avail myself of these opportunities several times a year, tramping off into more or less obscure corners of wilderness areas, depending upon how much solitude my companions and I desire. But there's companionable solitude, and then there's solitude, with emphasis on the Latin root *solus*, alone. Early last June, for the first time in a decade, I spent five days in the wilderness with only myself for company.

In talking to people both before and after the trip, I got a variety of reactions to spending a few days alone at a not inconsequential distance from human amenities, or at least those that can not be carried in a pack. Responses ranged from naive awe at the daring of undertaking solo such a perilous journey, to incredulous dismissal of the very notion of leaving our technological support system behind. "I won't go anywhere I can't plug in my blow dryer" was an extreme statement of the latter view.

More interesting—because better informed—reactions came from those who backpack with other people. Their attitudes toward solo packing fell into three basic categories. There were those who could "never" backpack alone because, for them, it would be too lonely and frightening. A second group had an uneasy fascination with the concept, aware of how exhilarating lone contact with the wilds could be, yet fearful of the dangers even a small mishap could present without a friend's aid.

The third group wholeheartedly embraced the idea, expressing envy and no scintilla of doubt that lone packing must be the grandest experience a wilderness lover could have. This group was almost unanimously joined by those who had actually packed alone, to judge from the glowing tales they told of their trips. But then, it is in the nature of reminiscence to recall the positive and, to the extent that the negative is not altogether forgotten, to turn the adversities of past hikes into the adventures of present stories.

To my mind, though, the school of uneasy fascination comes closer to the truth, and the "never" school is not without its merits. The anecdotes I'll recite to support these opinions will concentrate on the miseries, major and minor, of my trip, on the assumption that you, Dear Reader, a presumed lover of the wilderness, can amply

continued on page 6



Backpacking alone deep in the wilderness is not for everyone. Alexander Gaguine and photographer Tim Palmer were hiking together here on Mather Pass. Photo by Tim Palmer

Ventana Wilderness boundary redrawn

Dam expansion would have flooded wilderness

There was only one problem with the original boundary of the Ventana Wilderness—it got in the way of a proposed reservoir. So for the first time, Congress changed the boundary of a California wilderness area to avoid the flooding of a wilderness.

On October 25 the U.S. Senate approved the trade of 23 acres along Danish Creek, inside the wilderness, upstream of the Los Padres Dam. The Forest Service will gain for the wilderness 140 acres along the same creek, further upstream, which belong to the California American Water Company, if President Bush signs the bill. The company will sell its land to the local water district, which pushed for the trade so that the dam could be enlarged to hold more water. Monterey County has been rationing water for two years. Both California Senators Pete Wilson and

continued on page 5

Inside this issue:

- Tahoe National Forest plan appeals filed.....3**
- Shasta Ski Area case has lawyers licking their chops.....3**
- Will spotted owl protection harm other species?.....4**

COALITION PAGE

MONTHLY REPORT

It's been a rough fall, at least weatherwise. For more than a month, it has been sunny and in the 80's. Absolutely perfect weather for Davis, which can best 110° on a summer day or be cold, clammy, and foggy for weeks on end during winter.

What makes it rough is wasting these perfect days by being inside glued to the Macintosh and the telephone and knowing that after the election, when a little free time appears, it will be wet and chilly, the garden will be too wet to dig, and the garage too frigid to work on my backlog of home improvement projects.

Well, the entire fall hasn't gone to waste. On Columbus Day weekend, that strange holiday honoring the Italian sailing under a Spanish flag who "discovered" a new world already populated by natives who since have been called "Indians," I did get out into the wilds. CWC President Steve Evans shared one of his favorite places with Wendy and I (and Inyo, the wonder dog).

The three of us (or four, if you are not specieist) hiked for three days (or two and a half if you don't count the truck shuttle) in the Mill Creek Roadless Area, a canyon of incomparable beauty sandwiched between Lassen Volcanic National Park and the Ishi Wilderness.

[For those of you that wonder if we wore fluorescent red vests and caps, made lots of noise, and frequently shouted "we are *not* deer," we should point out that the cañon is in a State Game Refuge.]

Although we were a little concerned when we began the vehicle shuttle as seven vehicles disgorged a horde of Boy Scouts that made the Golden Horde seem tame in comparison, we were pleasantly surprised that we did not see another soul along the trail. This was greatly appreciated, since there are not a lot of campsites despite the trail paralleling the river.

The highlight of the journey was at lunch the second day when I watched Steve's eyes narrow as they looked into Mill Creek, first in puzzlement, then in joy. Salmon. That magical fish that

chooses to swim out into the ocean for most of its life but then return to the same stretch of fresh water into which it was born. During that *final* journey, in which the salmon literally rot at they reach their spawning gravels, they must evade fishermen, massive state water project pumps and irrigation canals, then jump the waterfalls and rapids of a creek dewatered by years of drought, and finally lay eggs in water heavy with silt from logging, road building, and wildfires.

Remarkable creatures.

Near our camp the second night we found a pool populated by a half dozen of these two-foot long anadromous swimmers. Although Steve and I actively were attempting to supplement our diet with the salmon's cousin, the trout, we found ample time in which to sit, watch, and wonder.

After hiking above 11,000 feet in Colorado this summer, it was a pleasant change to hike for three days downstream at low elevation. Not to say it was all downhill; the gorge is so rugged that the trail hugs the canyon wall, frequently climbing over a spur ridge, then contouring along a slope, and only rarely dropping close to Mill Creek.

Much of the journey is through a magnificent mixed-conifer ancient forest. Massive Jeffrey pines have survived the centuries in gentler portions of the canyon. Beautiful oaks add to the area's charm. Large, colorful maple leaves floated from pool to pool in the creek. Aside from our own voices, the only sounds were from Mill Creek and the wind in the trees.

The only disappointment was the cord of trash we consolidated from a campsite and hauled up to the trail for removal by packstock. There also was the suspicious camp sporting bags of organic soil and peat pots.

But if you want a great wilderness experience, try Mill Creek. And for avoiding the crowds, plan a trip in the fall. The nights may be a little nippy, and you need to be prepared for rain (well, in pre-drought days), but the rewards can be great.

BY JIM EATON

Wilderness Primer, Part VII

The RARE I Inventory

The Wilderness Act of 1964 required the National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to inventory *all* of their lands for potential wilderness areas, study them, and protect them until Congress made a final determination on the wilderness suitability of each area. But the Act did not do the same for the Forest Service. Instead it took areas administratively designed by the Forest Service as "wild" or "wilderness" and made them the first components of the National Wilderness Preservation System. The Cucamonga, John Muir, Caribou, South Warner, and Marble Mountain areas, among others, became Congressionally protected *wilderness areas* by this Act.

The only lands the Forest Service was required to study for potential wilderness were lands administratively designated as "primitive areas" by the agency. Some of these areas are known today as the San Rafael, Emigrant, Desolation, and Trinity Alps wilderness areas.

But there were millions of acres of *de facto* wilderness which the Forest Service was not required to study, including areas that citizens had been fighting to protect for years, even decades, such as Golden Trout, San Joaquin, Snow Mountain, Mt. Shasta, and the Siskiyou.

Conservationists began fighting to save their favorite places, mostly from timber sales and off-road vehicle incursions. They learned to use the administrative appeals process and the courts to delay or stop projects that threatened these wild lands.

What frustrated the Forest Service was that there was no grand conservationist strategy for new wilderness areas. Instead there were small groups of local citizens all across the country working to preserve their favorite area. Every time the agency tried to road and log a *de facto* wilderness, they ran up against another contingent of dedicated people determined to save their area.

As this process repeated itself again and again, there was talk of requiring the Forest Service to study these lands for wilderness designation. As early as 1967 the Chief Forester sent a directive to each Forest Service Region asking for additional areas which merited consideration as wilderness areas.

This directive generally was ignored until an executive order mandating such a study was being prepared for President Nixon. Conservationists wanted such a study to protect roadless lands until Congress made a final determination on their future.

In order to head off this effort (especially fearing interim protection for all roadless areas until Congress made its decision), the Forest Service announced, in 1971, the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE) program. The inventory found 1449 areas with 56 million acres nationwide, including 136 areas totaling 3.3 million acres in California. Conservationists felt the inventory was far from complete.

Recommendations for wilderness study selected from this list of roadless areas originated from Forest Service officers. They went through an elaborate process of staff analysis and public comment, but the selection process remained essentially arbitrary, depending upon the subjective judgement of Forest Service officials.

In October 1973 the Forest Service announced their selection of "new study areas." In California, outside of the primitive areas mandated for study by the Wilderness Act of 1964 (but counted by the Forest Service in RARE), there were 19 areas totaling 750,000 acres. The Forest Service intentions for the remaining roadless areas was to proceed without further delay with existing development plans.

(To be continued with RARE II in the next issue.)

Letters

Plant tress where they belong

Dear Jim:

Your journal is excellent! I admire the writing and subjects. How do you keep up?

There are two more essential precepts when it comes to 'planting a tree in a natural area' (Book review—page 7, October 1990). The most important is *NOT to plant a tree* if there are other more appropriate ecosystems—i.e. grasslands, shrub communities, wetlands. The second is the concept of gene pool protection, so that seeds and cuttings from nearby sources should be favored in many circumstances.

So many of our urban open space areas need to be protected from vast expansions of weedy species like broom, pampas grass. If only the zest for planting trees could be married to restoration and to promotion of other ecosystems we would have a winner when it comes to ways to rescue the universe.

Sincerely yours,
Susan M. Smith



Uncle Jim's

Wilderness Trivia Quiz Question:

In what California Wilderness Areas do Oregon rivers have their headwaters? (Bonus: name the rivers.)

answer on page 7

Updates

Forest Service denies right to appeal

Mt. Shasta ski area opponents ready to sue

By Lois Kent

The Shasta-Trinity National Forest has issued a Final Supplement to the Environmental Impact Statement for the Mt. Shasta Ski Area. The latest in this long-standing planning fiasco does little to allay environmentalists' concerns, but rather resurrects the worst of their fears.

The Mt. Shasta Ski Area (MSSA) controversy has always centered around questions of high elevation real estate development. At the inception of the planning process, the Forest Service permittee outlined grandiose plans for an entire village at timberline. His plans for a "Lemuria Village" included condominiums, gondolas, shops, restaurants, vacation homes, a lake, and a golf course.

In 1986, an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the ski area was appealed, partly on the contention that the EA did not address issues of adjacent private land development. The document was remanded by the Regional Forester and planners were instructed to analyze issues of private land development that would be fostered by a large ski area on public land. In response to the public outcry and successful appeal, the permittee supposedly abandoned his plans for off-site development. He did, however, retain his option to purchase the private, developable land adjacent to the planned ski area. The appellants see this as proof that the MSSA developer is more concerned with real estate development than he is with skiing.

National forest planners evaded the issue in a 1988 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) by pretending that there were no plans for private development. This EIS was appealed to the Regional Forester and then to the Chief of the Forest Service. The Chief remanded the EIS and instructed the Shasta-Trinity to address issues of private development and investigate alternative sites to the original proposal.

Now, after six years and three appeals, the Shasta-Trinity National Forest has issued a supplement that admits there is a strong likelihood that Lemuria Village will be built. After years of strident denial, in an eleventh hour document, the Forest Service has casually described the massive commercial development planned for Mt. Shasta's timberline. Incred-

ibly, now that the Forest Service has been forced to recognize some of the impacts of Lemuria Village—the most controversial aspect of the project—the Chief of the Forest Service has announced that no appeal will be heard.

The Chief's unprecedented decision to deny an appeal is most unfortunate in many respects. Proponents of MSSA have always claimed unanimous support for their project but, in fact, even among local supporters Lemuria Village is not a popular idea. Many see it as a cheapening of a natural wonder, others see it as lost business opportunities in Mt. Shasta City. An open discussion on Lemuria Village would surely show a serious erosion in support for MSSA.

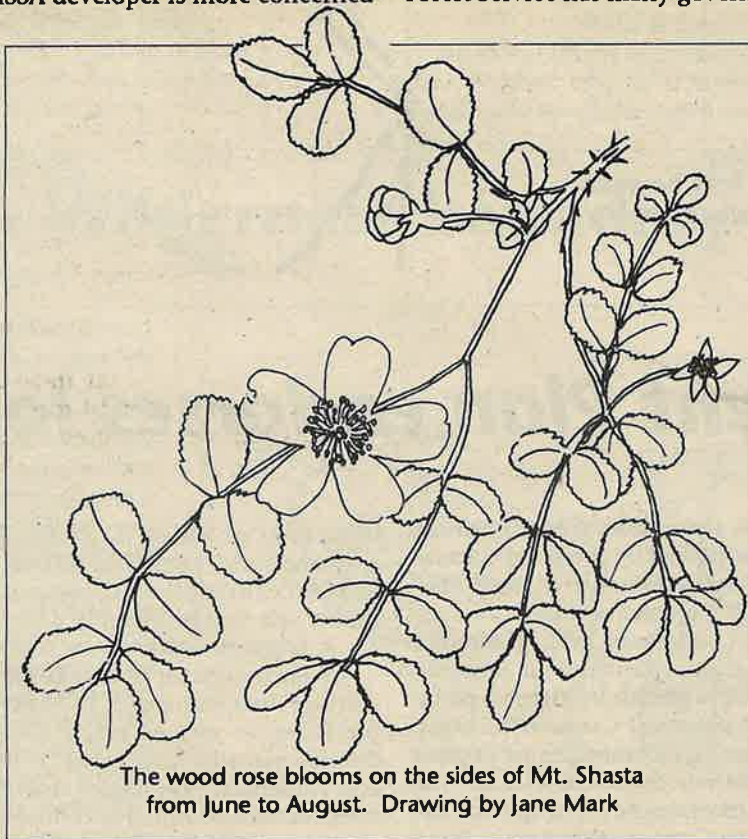
Downhill skiing can be accommodated on Mt. Shasta without the impacts associated with the MSSA project. There already is a ski area on Mt. Shasta; an expansion of this area would not damage the fragile Panther Meadows, impact the Mt. Shasta Wilderness, or lead to a massive commercial development.

It is a common strategy for the Forest Service to prefer to go to court, particularly when it finds it cannot win with its own process of administrative appeals. Few environmental groups can afford the judicial process; and the Forest Service has many government lawyers. The Forest

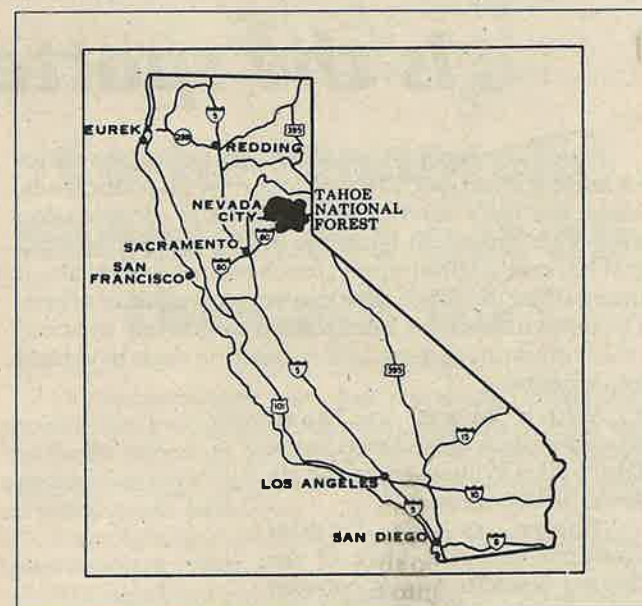
Service often will win when an appellant's financial reserves are exhausted. The Mt. Shasta Ski Area case is different. One of the largest law firms in the state, Morrison & Foerster, has reviewed this case and elected to represent the appellants on a *pro bono* (no fee) basis. There will still be many expenses in pursuing the Mt. Shasta ski issue, but the appellant's legal resources are, at the very least, a match for the government lawyers.

One more hoop to jump through remains prior to going to court. The Forest Service will receive comments on the Final Supplemental EIS that are post-marked by November 12. After reviewing those comments, a

Record of Decision will be issued. Please send your cards and letters to: Forest Supervisor, Shasta-Trinity National Forests, 2400 Washington Ave, Redding, CA 96099.



The wood rose blooms on the sides of Mt. Shasta from June to August. Drawing by Jane Mark



Appeals of Tahoe forest plan filed

The California Wilderness Coalition, in concert with The Wilderness Society and Mother Lode Chapter of the Sierra Club, submitted a comprehensive, 114-page appeal to the U.S. Forest Service Chief protesting the Tahoe National Forest Plan.

Appellants claimed: "The selected alternative repeatedly violates both the National Forest Management Act and the National Environmental Policy Act in regards to preserving biodiversity, preservation of roadless areas, protection of old-growth forests, maintenance of water quality and fisheries, proper timber management, analysis of range management, and a needed program of land exchange."

Of particular concern to the appellants is the seeming assumption of the Forest Service that roadless areas "released" in the 1984 California Wilderness Act must automatically be treated as any other part of the forest.

Other conservationist appeals were submitted by the Beckwitts of San Juan Ridge and Nevada County Forest Issues Group (an offshoot of the Greens Alliance) (NCFG), both of which covered many of the same issues as the CWC, *et al*, appeal. The NCFG also addressed off-road vehicle management. The Natural Resources Defense Council submitted an appeal that focused primarily on the management of California spotted owl habitat. Steve Beckwitt hopes one result of the appeals will be to "set up some process of negotiation" between appellants and the Forest Service.

As of press date, 18 appeals had been forwarded to the Tahoe Supervisor's office from Washington, D.C., according to Forest Planner Terry Randolph. Other appeals received were from the California Department of Fish and Game, Timber Association of California, a pack station outfitter, and parties concerned about specific projects such as a proposed campground in Alpine Meadows, cross-country ski trails at Castle Lake, and others.

The Tahoe Forest Supervisor's office is now beginning to review the appeals and prepare a "litigation report" to reference the place in the planning records where the various issues are addressed. This report will be sent to the Forest Service Chief to assist him in considering the appeals.

Ancient Forests

Is the spotted owl dictating where to cut?

Think like a spotted owl—that may be the best advice for ancient forest species trying to survive on public lands, where the owl's survival needs get more consideration than other species. It is not the owl's purported wisdom that has created this inquiry; much more is known about the owl than the fisher, pine marten, wolverine, or others. The bird's habits have been studied extensively by scientists, and reports and regulations based on these have been implemented.

Which brings us to an unroaded piece of land next to the Trinity Alps Wilderness in the Six Rivers National Forest.

Known as the "Ladder Compartment," the piece of the Orleans Roadless Area is between two spotted owl Habitat Conservation Areas (HCAs). Being essentially surrounded on three sides by protected lands, it might be ideal ancient forest to preserve, filling out a pristine area. This is how environmentalists see it.

To the Forest Service, however, this piece of land, rather than an already-roaded area, is a perfect place to cut trees. According to Larry Cabodi of the Lower Trinity Ranger District, the agency is being forced to look at logging in unroaded areas due to the "50-11-40" rule for lands between spotted owl HCAs. The rule, which is part of the Interagency Scientific Committee's (also known as the Jack Ward Thomas Committee) recommendations, is that fifty percent of the forest landscape outside HCAs be maintained in stands with an average diameter of eleven inches and at least forty percent crown closure.

Cabodi says the 50-11-40 rule limits the amount of timber his agency can cut on roaded lands.

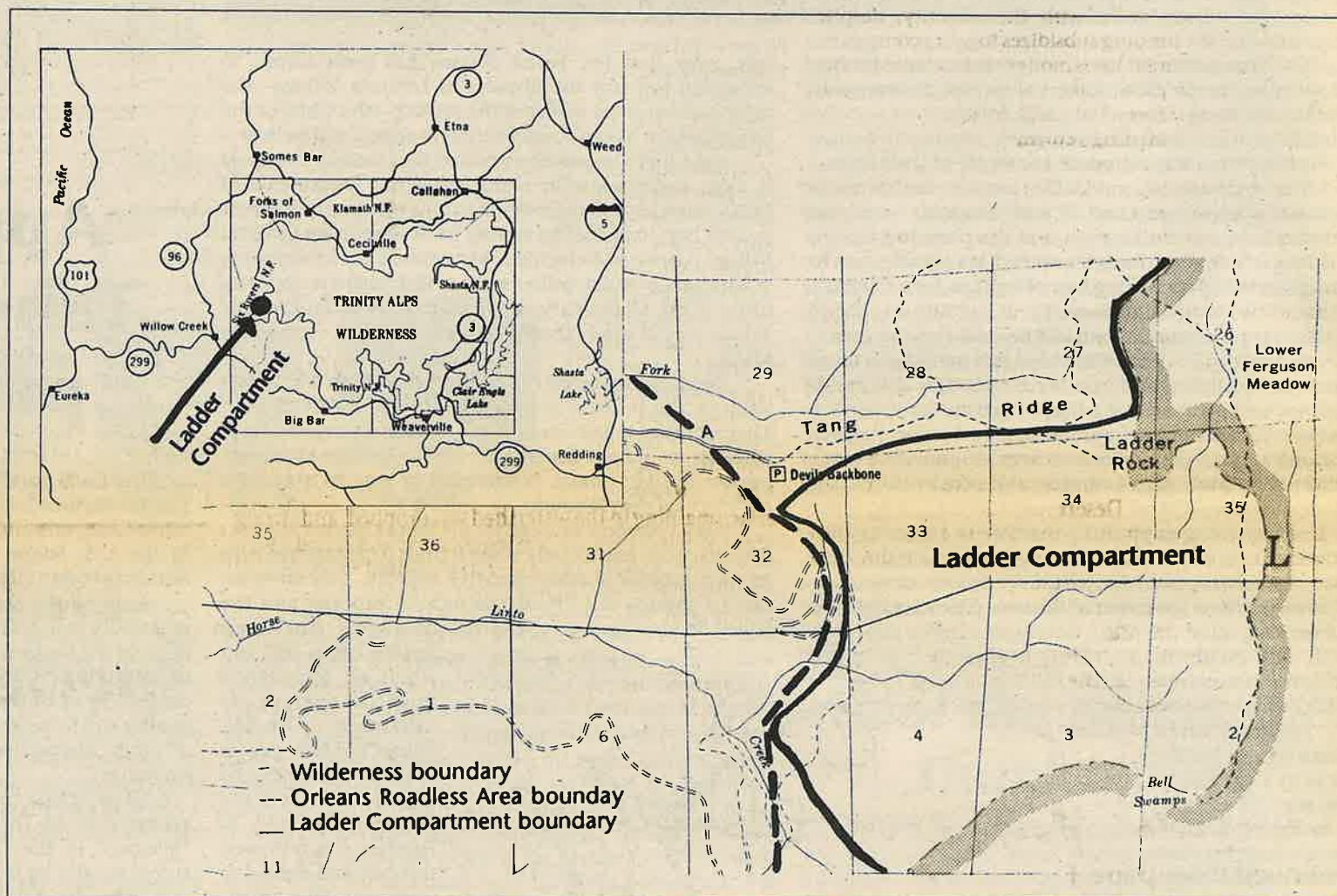
"We fully suspect that pine marten and fisher are there," Cabodi

said of the Ladder Compartment, adding that the Step (get it—Ladder and Step?) timber sale plan will include "managing for" these creatures. "High stumps" and travel corridors would be left. Cabodi says he would like to make the sale a model logging project, with minimal clearcutting.

Environmentalists recommend that activity in the roadless area be deferred until enactment of ancient forest reserve legislation, which did not pass this year. Tim McKay of the Northcoast Environmental Center says, "We

see the Ladder Compartment as being an area of exceptional biological significance, because it occurs in one of the more intact dense natural forest stands in the region."

An Environmental Impact Statement is being put together for the Step timber sale, with the draft out by next spring. A public scoping meeting is scheduled for November 28th at 7:00 pm at the Lower Trinity Ranger District in Willow Creek. Call (916) 629-2118 for more information.



South Fork Eel Management Plan endorses logging

By Steven Day and Tracy Katelman

It's time to act to protect the last of the ancient coastal lowland Douglas fir forest in California. Only a small percentage of this original forest is left, most of which is in the hands of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), which plans to cut into the heart of it.

The BLM's plans are disguised as the "South Fork Eel Wild and Scenic River Management Plan" (WRMP). The South Fork of the Eel was declared Wild and Scenic in 1981; nine years later, this is the agency's plan to address the river issues. There is no mention of fisheries in the plan. Instead, it is a justification of the agency's intention to cut the ancient forests on Elkhorn Ridge, Brush Mountain, and Cahto Peak in what is known as the Cahto Wilderness.

Local environmentalists have developed a biodiversity/

wilderness alternative to the alternatives presented in the BLM's river plan. This Alternative "D" is offered because BLM did not offer a full range of alternatives in the WRMP Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The settlement of region-wide issues in the California North Coastal Basin will clarify the need to seriously consider Wilderness Study Area and/or Wilderness designation by Congress for the proposed Cahto Wilderness. The recent Interagency Scientific Committee to Address the Conservation of the Northern Spotted Owl, a.k.a. the Jack Ward Thomas report, recommends setting aside the entire Cahto area as a Habitat Conservation Area because of the presence of spotted owls and the lack of suitable habitat nearby. However, the BLM refuses to consider managing the area as wilderness.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Ask for a "stay" of any action in the proposed Cahto

Wilderness which alters natural old growth forest stands and associated forest (for recovery of old growth forest between existing stands), particularly the Elkhorn Ridge timber sale that is presently under litigation.

- Support Citizens' Alternative "D".
- Encourage the BLM to consider wilderness as a river corridor designation. In Wild River corridors, logging is precluded as well as major water impoundments and developed roads. Alternative D calls for a wilderness study and wilderness boundaries that determine the required river corridor boundaries. Wilderness designation would also protect Wild and Scenic River uplands for the nearby Nature Conservancy preserve.

For more information, or to help, please contact: Ancient Forest Defense Fund, Leggett, CA 95455-0151, (707) 925-6329. Ask for Michael Huddleston, Steven Day, or Rick Cloninger.

Legislative update

Congress strikes out

1990 may go down in history as the year of a boom in public concern over the logging of ancient forests.

But it will not be remembered as the year that Congress acted to change the status quo.

When the 101st Congress adjourned on October 29, legislation to establish an ancient forest reserve was stuck in committee.

And Senator Wyche Fowler's (D-GA) proposal to reduce the Forest Service road-building budget by \$100 million, almost one-third of the total, was defeated 52-44. California Senator Pete Wilson voted with the majority, despite arguments that the funding subsidizes logging companies and that the government loses money through the timber programs in the Sequoia, Lake Tahoe, Los Padres, and three other national forests in California.

Mining reform

Also defeated was a proposed one-year ban on selling federal land containing gold, silver, and other hardrock minerals for as little as \$2.50 an acre. Rejected by a close vote of 50-48, the moratorium was designed to prevent what sponsor Senator Dale Bumpers (D-AR) called a flagrant giveaway. The Mining Law of 1872 says that miners can gain title to federal land for \$2.50 to \$5.00 an acre as long as they have found a valuable deposit and have done \$500 worth of work. Once the land is bought, however, miners may sell the land at market rates—making huge profits—or use it in any way they choose.

A number of Senators from western states opposed Senator Bumpers' measure, but it was supported by both California Senators Alan Cranston and Pete Wilson.

Desert

Despite strong support in the Senate Public Lands, National Parks, and Forests Subcommittee, the California Desert Protection Act, S. 11/H.R. 7, never came to a committee vote. Some Republican members stopped a vote with a procedural rule.

Off-shore oil drilling & grazing

Legislation to open up the California coast to oil drilling was not passed, but this was in exchange for a freeze on grazing fees on public lands.

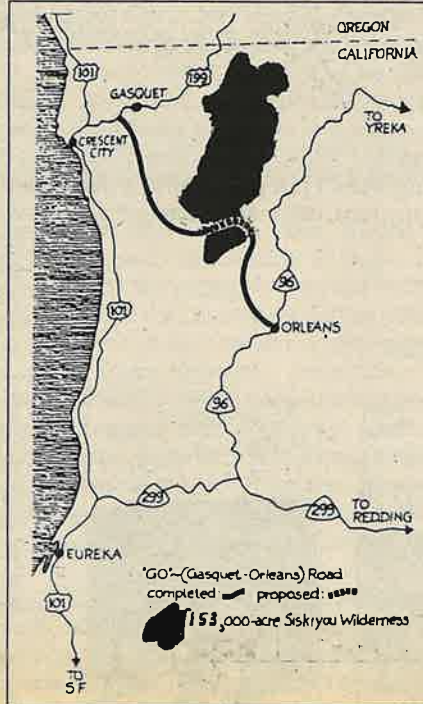
Good news flash-G-O Road added to Siskiyou Wilderness!

The only Congressional silver lining for wilderness advocates was the passage of the Smith River National Recreation Area bill, which Congress approved in a weakened form. The provision adding the Gasquet-Orleans (G-O) Road to the Siskiyou Wilderness survived, a major victory in a long-fought battle. The prohibition on large-scale

surface mowing in the watershed was dropped, and strong language restricting salvage logging was weakened. Rep. Doug Bosco, the bill's author, has promised to try to pass a clean-up bill next year, restoring the deleted protections, according to Steve Evans of Friends of the River.

Wild & Scenic Rivers

Disappointment reigned over the fate of the two other wild and scenic river bills, however, those for the upper Klamath and lower Merced rivers.



Castle Mountain negotiators get all they ask for

Environmentalists won the remaining mitigation measures they sought to protect the California desert from the Castle Mountain gold mine. The final gains won in negotiations over the cyanide heap-leach mining project on public lands were:

- a reclamation advisory committee, to be controlled by environmentalists;
- independent monitoring of the water level of Piute Spring; and
- reclamation standards even more stringent than those required for national parks.

"It appears that we got all we asked for," said Peter Burk of Citizens for Mojave National Park. "For a long time, we just wished they'd go home," he added. But now Burk is pleased that the project's environmental safeguards will serve as a model for future mines.

Burk praised Deborah Reames, Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund attorney, and Nobby Reidy for their excellent negotiating.

Castle Mtn. is in the East Mojave National Scenic Area, which the California Desert Protection Act would designate a national park.

Endangered species need \$\$

According to the *New York Times*, the implementation of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (F&WS) is so underfunded as to be ineffective. An investigation by Interior Department Inspector General James Richards identified 34 species of plants and animals whose inadequate protection under the ESA over the last ten years resulted in their extinction.

The F&WS did not dispute the basic accuracy of the investigation. But the most telling statistic is that the \$33 million allotted this year to enforce the ESA is less than one percent of the funds estimated by Richards as necessary to carry out the law properly. Compared with this, the fact that Congress continues to allow the Forest Service to subsidize many timber sales is seen by some environmentalists as a disgusting outrage.

The key to a species receiving ESA protections is its official designation as "threatened" or "endangered." Yet a central finding of Richards' investigation is that despite substantial evidence in favor of listings, the F&WS has failed to place hundreds of species on the list.

In the Tahoe National Forest, candidate species such as the Sierra Nevada fox, Sierra Nevada snowshoe hare, and spotted bat are not treated as management indicator species, even though the F&WS warned the Forest Service four years ago about "potential adverse effects" to their populations resulting from the Tahoe's preferred alternative in its draft plan.

The combination of ESA ineffectiveness and the perceived mission of various resource agencies to "develop" resources places many additional species in a helpless and precarious situation.

Ventana Wilderness boundary change

continued from page 1

Alan Cranston supported the legislation, which was approved by the House a few days earlier.

The Sierra Club's Northern California/Nevada Regional Office objected to the boundary change, primarily because of the danger of setting a precedent for moving wilderness boundaries that are not convenient for development plans.

But according to Dea Nicely of the Sierra Club, "locally it was never a big issue," partly because the chaparral area traded away was not particularly scenic. However, Sierra Club member Joyce Stevens adds that "we never agreed or supported any land swap." Nicely, Stevens, and others convinced the Forest Service that the riparian area should be exchanged for another riparian area. The Forest Service said in advance it would relocate the hiking trail now encircling the reservoir.

Lowell Figen, another local Sierra Club member, criticized the fact that the boundary was changed before

the dam enlargement was even proven feasible. "They're putting the cart before the horse," he said.

The Ventana boundary change was tacked on a West Virginia land exchange bill.



Wilderness adventure

The solo wilderness experience

continued from page 1

Reader, a presumed lover of the wilderness, can amply imagine the wonders I experienced, without the dubious descriptive aid of my feeble pen.

I started my solo hike in Tehipite Valley, deep in Kings Canyon National Park. I had eased myself into my time alone by coming that far with two friends, who went out the way we had come. Early one morning, I set off up the Middle Fork of the Kings River toward Simpson Meadow, some ten miles distant. Ten minutes out of camp, a gentle but steady rain began to fall. The trail, which had not been maintained for several years, was just as another hiker had described it a few days before, easy to lose, but easy to find again. Nonetheless, the rain and the alarming tendency of the trail to disappear in dripping, waist-high riparian vegetation rather dampened my enthusiasm at the prospect of five days alone.

Worse, my informant about the condition of the trail had also told me that there was one and only one crossing of the Middle Fork, swollen with snowmelt, to Simpson Meadow: a huge downed tree spanning the river. "Delightfully terrifying" was how my informant's companion characterized their crossing of this natural bridge, and they had crossed—together—on a sunny day. Still, before I could attempt that tenuous passage, I had to find it, and nine miles or so up the canyon, I began to worry that I might somehow have missed the "prominent duck after the trail follows an arroyo for some distance," which was to guide me to the fallen tree.

At every rocky patch of ground the trail crossed, I asked myself, "Could this be the 'arroyo' he was talking about?" An extra set or two of eyes and other voices assuring me that no trailside duck had waddled by unnoticed would have been most welcome. Happily, after another nervous half mile, the promised duck appeared; I followed its cousins down to the roaring river and the rain-soaked log stretching long yards across it. Fortunately, its bark was still intact, offering reasonable footing, but the crossing was indeed delightfully terrifying, though the delight did not truly kick in until my boots were firmly on the opposite bank.

We'll fast forward past the cessation of the rain, the splendid campsite I found, and the panorama of Simpson Meadow under a steely, lowering sky, and zoom in on one of my wilderness *bêtes noires* (black beast), the fine art of bear hanging. Having been victimized some years back by a camp bruin who managed to snag a reasonably well-positioned bear hang, I am painfully aware that "reasonably well-positioned" is not enough; only the counterpoise of food bags at the ideal distance from trunk, limb, and ground, pendent from a branch of ideal thickness and slant, can give one a modicum of confidence that the food supply will survive the night. Alas, the ideal limb, so neatly sketched in the brochure that comes with a wilderness permit, is an item rarely encountered in nature,

and especially rare in conjunction with good campsites.

Add to this the fact that my throwing arm has been a source of personal humiliation since the semi-annual President's Fitness Tests I was forced to endure in school, and a whole set of otherwise-ideal-but-too-high limbs must be withdrawn from candidacy. Among the chief reasons I backpack in company, I realized, was so that someone else can toss a stone tied to a rope over a suitable bough. Thus, it was remarkable that, in each of my campsites, I not only found a decent limb within earshot of my tent, but managed to get a rope over it within—well,

let's not talk numbers—"several" gallant throws. Solo backpacking instills confidence (though I was not in an area likely to have skilled camp bears, who might still be laughing among themselves had they been around to see my handiwork).

From Simpson Meadow, I climbed south out of the Middle Fork Canyon to a summit 4,000 feet above. It was not an especially diffi-

cult trail, but, by the time I reached the top, I was exhausted. That, of course, would have been the case had I been hiking with others, though my pack would have been lightened by the parceling out of community equipment. The more serious solo problem concerned the effects of fatigue on my judgment. After lunch, I dropped into a shallow drainage beyond the summit, then began climbing gently again, bent on reaching my intended campsite, the alluringly-named Lake of the Fallen Moon. Though I had only to gain 250 feet before dropping to the lake, I found myself gasping for breath every hundred steps, worn out and unacclimated to the rarefied air. But stubbornness is in my blood, and I was determined to get to Fallen Moon, convinced that it would be better to exhaust myself further so as to rest all the next day than to camp along the stream I had passed just below the summit and, refreshed, make my way to the lake in the morning.

It would have been quite helpful then to have a more rational or merely less single-minded companion along with whom to confer about the wisest course of action. As it was, I trudged on toward my obsessive destination, only to discover that the side trail to the lake did not exist on the land as it did on the topographic map. The last half mile of my over-ambitious day's trek was a steep cross-country, trying to follow sporadic ducks along vestiges of the former trail, to a lake 700 feet below. I can say this about my added judgment: My rest day was the greatest of pleasures.

But even that day had its drawbacks. To me, the loneliest, spookiest time when alone in the wilderness is the time between dinner and sleep. On my previous nights, I had been tired enough from the day's exertions that this period was quite pleasant—a warm meal, a long look at the twilight sky and the emergence of the first stars, a short reverie by a small fire, and then a sound, well-earned sleep. On my rest day, this sequence stopped short of the final phase. Having spent the day basking, reading,

and staring into the distance, I hadn't earned my sleep, and, in the tent, each noise outside conjured images of dread: the bear come for my food, Freddy Kruger turned backpacker, Leona Helmsley. Fill in the blank with whatever peoples your closet of anxieties, and you'll realize that I was a long time falling asleep with no reassuringly familiar person beside me.

Has all this made solo backpacking seem ill-advised, foolhardy, even dangerous? Have I discouraged those of you who have never tried it from ever doing so? I hope not. As I said, I've accentuated the negative. But rest assured, you can experience things in the wilderness by yourself, and experience them in unique ways because you are by yourself, that you simply can't in a group. For three days straight, I didn't see another human being, a lifetime record and a profound experience for an urban soul like me. (If such utter solitude isn't inviting, you can follow more-traveled trails alone, and you'll be sure to meet other hikers along the way and at popular camping areas.)

To me, the negative aspects are part of a positive whole. If these maunderings have a moral, it is that solo backpacking, like anything in life, has its ups and downs, physically and emotionally (as well as topographically). I hiked alone from Tehipite Valley to Cedar Grove not just because of the glorious country I would see at my own pace, but also because it did offer a physical challenge, a rare opportunity to rattle around inside my own head for a few days, and a chance to confront a few personal demons and show myself that, even if I can't beat them, I'm at least up to the fight. Will I pack alone again? Sure, though probably not next summer. I don't want to burn out my throwing arm.

Trent Orr is a writer, attorney, and CWC Director.

Heal the desert this Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving plans up in the air? How about helping to heal the desert while working off that overstuffed stomach? Friday through Sunday, work projects in the open air—seven different opportunities, in seven different locations—are available to volunteers. Coordinators are from the Sierra Club, Desert Protective Council, Audubon Societies, and California Native Plant Society; most groups will be working on "Heal the Desert" projects identified by the Bureau of Land Management or National Park Service.

This series of projects was planned to contrast to the infamous Thanksgiving Barstow-to-Vegas motorcycle race, which was cancelled this year. Mike Prather, one of the Heal the Desert inaugural leaders, said, "I've been wanting to do something like this for years. It gives people a chance to really feel good; they're doing something beneficial while having fun and getting exercise." Jim Dodson, another of the organizers, expects the Heal the Desert effort will continue on other long weekends during the winter months. "We don't know how many people we'll get," he added, "but it's better than a poke in the eye with a sharp stick, which is what the desert has been getting every year the Barstow-to-Vegas race runs."

Heal the Desert projects will take place at Hunter Mtn. (call 619-876-5807 for more information), Jacumba Mountains (619-489-6528), Camp Cady (714-779-2099), Orocochia Mountains (213-599-3559), Kern River Preserve (209-784-4477), Western Mojave Desert (619-868-6934), and Joshua Tree National Monument (805-986-3072).



Book review

The wilderness gourmet?

Wilderness Ranger Cookbook:

A Collection of Backcountry Recipes by Forest Service Wilderness Rangers

Valerie Brunell and Ralph Swain, Falcon Press Publishing Co., Inc., 111 pp., 1990, \$7.95.

I discovered this book on the desk of a recreation planner with the San Juan National Forest in Colorado. I bought one there, but since then I've seen it at REI and local bookstores.

It is not the *greatest* cookbook I've ever found, but it is a lot of fun. The recipes all are submitted by wilderness rangers and go from dumb to gourmet. I mean, I think I could figure out myself that to make pistachio pudding I should mix powdered milk with water, add instant pudding mix, shake, and pour into cups (you're a neat person, Gayne, but I'll do my own cooking if you don't mind).

On the other hand, how often do you have three boneless chicken breasts available to fix for your backcountry dinner (Chicken-Chuck)? Some of these rangers must live high on the hog (Pig's Ass Chili).

There are a number of recipes that I will try. Linguini and Clams, Packer's Peppers Magnifique, Ginger Desperation over Rice, and Tortellini *a la* Trinity Alps all sound appetizing. But I'm not sure I'm ready yet for Regurgitate *de al* Prospector con Yama Yama or Chocolate Tortillas just yet. But maybe after a few weeks in the wilds...

The cookbook is an outgrowth of a wilderness ranger workshop held two years ago in Colorado. A backcountry "cook-off" among rangers was held, and the winning recipes and others were submitted for this cookbook.

In addition to the recipes, each ranger added a sentence or two of his or her philosophy. "I see wilderness as a total resource," writes Gayne Sears. "It is a place of value. The wildlife, the clean air, the natural processes, and the ecosystems are all reasons in and of themselves to have designated wilderness areas."

Also included is a list of the country's wilderness areas managed by the Forest Service, the complete text of the Wilderness Act, and numerous quotes, facts, and tips about wilderness and wilderness management.

All in all, it is a useful and fun book. It's also a bargain at \$7.95.

Here's an example of a backcountry dinner:

Pilaf de Résistance

Jon R. Herman, 2 seasons

Alpine Lakes Wilderness, Washington State

- 1 c. quick brown rice
- 1/2 c. instant refried beans
- 2 1/4 c. water
- 1 sm. can chicken or turkey meat
- 1 slice cheddar cheese
- 1/4 c. diced green pepper
- 1/4 c. chopped celery
- 2 tbsp. diced onion
- 1/2 tsp. diced garlic or garlic powder
- 1 tsp. dried celery
- 1/4 tsp. salt

Bring water to a boil. Add rice. Cover and simmer for ten minutes. Then add all ingredients except cheese. Simmer and stir occasionally for five minutes. Add cheese and set aside with cover on. Serve when cheese is melted.

—Jim Eaton

CWC T-Shirts!

The animal design that Trent Orr is wearing is by Bay Area cartoonist Phil Frank; it comes in beige and light gray for \$12. Wendy Cohen is wearing our anniversary shirt; it has no less than six colors and comes in light blue, yellow, light green, and peach (xlarge, large, & small only) for \$15. All the shirts are 100 percent double knit cotton. To order, use the form on page 8.

DATES TO REMEMBER

November 12 DEADLINE FOR COMMENTS on the Final Supplemental EIS for the proposed Mt. Shasta Ski Area. Send to: Forest Supervisor, Shasta-Trinity National Forest, 2400 Washington Ave., Redding, CA 96099. (Article on page 3.)

November 19 DEADLINE FOR APPEALS of the Sherwin Ski Area final EIS. For further information contact: John Ruopp, Inyo National Forest Recreation Staff Officer, 873 N. Main St., Bishop, California 93514.

November 20 DEADLINE FOR COMMENTS on the draft River Management Plan and EIS for the South Fork of the Eel Wild & Scenic River. For a copy or to submit comments, contact: District Manager, BLM, 555 Leslie St., Ukiah, CA 95482, (707) 462-3873. (Article on page 4.)

November 23-25 "HEAL THE DESERT" volunteer work projects in seven different locations; one- and two-day activities available. (Details in article on page 6.)

January 17 DEADLINE FOR COMMENTS on the Bishop Resource Management Plan and EIS, covering BLM lands east of the southern Sierra Nevada. Send to: Area Manager, BLM, 787 N. Main St., Suite P, Bishop, CA 93514. (Article in next issue.)

Wilderness Trivia Quiz Answer: The Applegate River originates in the Red Buttes Wilderness, and the Illinois River starts in the Siskiyou Wilderness.

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. Please address all correspondence to:

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Focus:

Northcoast Environmental Center

"Marginally-controlled chaos" is how director Tim McKay describes the activity in the Northcoast Environmental Center (NEC) office. The level of activity comes from taking on so many issues and projects, perhaps the best known of which is *Econews*, the organization's "almost monthly" newsletter.

The NEC, with its three paid staff, ten work study students, and 100 volunteers, focuses mainly on environmental issues of regional concern, meaning Northern California. And with pulp mills, the Humboldt Bay, and four national forests in the region, that's plenty.

The group played a central role in the lawsuit that stopped the G-O Road. They also slowed Forest Service salvage logging of roadless areas after the 1987 fires by convincing the courts to demand Environmental Impact Statements for these sales.

With all the controversy surrounding the NEC, its more well-known activists have received numerous threats. But a volunteer jokes that its location keeps the office itself safe from arsonists—it is between the local bar and auto parts store.

Contact the NEC at 879 9th St., Arcata, CA 95521.

American Alpine Club; El Cerrito Ancient Forest Defense Fund; Ukiah Angeles Chapter, Sierra Club; Los Angeles Back Country Horsemen of CA; Springville Bay Chapter, Sierra Club; Oakland Butte Environmental Council; Chico California Alpine Club; San Francisco California Native Plant Society; Sacramento Citizens Comm. to Save Our Public Lands; Willits
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Soda Mtn. Wilderness Council; Ashland, OR
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Tulare County Audubon Society; Visalia
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