



WILDERNESS RECORD

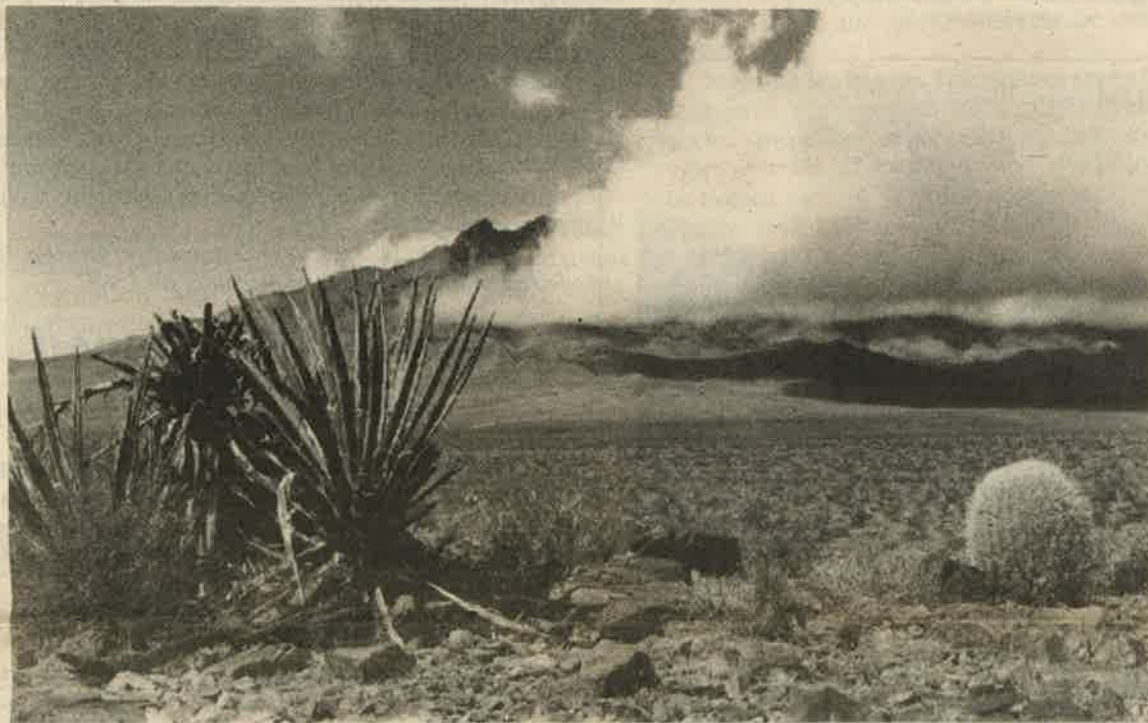
PROCEEDINGS OF THE CALIFORNIA WILDERNESS COALITION

ISSN 0194-3030

Vol. 18, No. 2

2655 Portage Bay East, Suite 5 Davis, CA 95616

February, 1993



There is a seemingly infinite variety of desert landscapes. The landscape changes with every mile and every season. This one is in California's East Mojave. Photo by Jim Eaton

Interior Committee buckles down with new names, green agendas

By Ron Stork

When Representative George Miller (D-Martinez) assumed the chair of the venerable House Interior Committee in the 101st Congress, it quickly became apparent that Rep. Miller intended to make history. Today, at the outset of the 103rd Congress, the body he chairs has been renamed the Committee on Natural Resources at his behest, the better to reflect its new orientation, and a new subcommittee has been created.

Whatever its name, Rep. Miller's committee is of vital importance to environmentalists seeking protection for endangered wildlands. The make-up of the committee and its subcommittees, which changes as new representatives join the House and others leave, will have impacts on legislation as diverse as the California Desert Protection Act and ancient forest bills.

The old National Parks and Public Lands Subcommittee chaired by Rep. Bruce Vento (D-MN) has been renamed the National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands Subcommittee, signaling Reps. Miller and Vento's continuing interest in national forest management, a jurisdiction they share with the Agriculture Committee.

This is the subcommittee that authorizes wilderness areas, national parks, and wild and scenic rivers. Its Democratic membership generally supports the expansion of these systems. This Congress, in a notable departure from the last decade, no California Democrats will serve on the subcommittee. Only Reps. John Doolittle (R-Rocklin) and Ken Calvert (a first-term Republican from western Riverside County) will be representing California interests. It is not anticipated that they will be sympathetic to environmental legislation.

The other key public lands subcommittee is a brand new one, the Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee to be chaired by Rep. Richard Lehman (D-Fresno). This subcommittee is expected to set legislative direction for mining and oil and mineral leasing on our public lands. Environmentalist cause célèbres such as reform of the 1872 Mining Law and restrictions on oil development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge are sure to be on Rep. Lehman's agenda.

Although legislation regarding licensing of hydro-
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Desert bill hits the home stretch, but hurdles remain

By Lucy Rosenau

On January 21, the desert bill was brought before both houses of the 103rd Congress, and this time there seems to be no question that California's desert wilderness will be protected at last. The legislation, ten years in the making, would designate more than seven million acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) wilderness and national park lands in the Mojave, Colorado, and Great Basin deserts of California, the largest land protection bill since the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act in 1980.

Though there is no doubt that a desert bill will be enacted this year, just what sort of bill remains uncertain. The Senate bill, S. 21, introduced by Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), is in some ways more and in some ways less protective than the House bill, H. R. 518, introduced by Representatives Rick Lehman (D-Fresno) and George Miller (D-Martinez). Both, however, closely approximate the desert bills advanced by former Senator Alan Cranston.

Specifically, the Senate bill would establish three national parks and 74 wilderness areas outside the parks. The existing Death Valley and Joshua Tree national monuments would be expanded and redesignated as parks, and a new 1.5 million acre Mojave National Park would be created from lands now administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The 74 wilderness areas (see companion article beginning on page 3) would remain under the protection of the BLM. Portions of the parks also would be designated wilderness.

The House bill would designate 76 BLM wilderness areas but would establish a Mojave National Monument instead of a park.

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Special pull-out section:
Desert wilderness

**An introduction to California's
once and future desert wilderness.
This month, the 76 proposed
Bureau of Land Management
wilderness areas.....3-6**

Wilderness news

Chainsaws stilled in Sierra, clearcuts banned for two years

Early in January the U. S. Forest Service earned the tempered praise of environmentalists when it imposed a two-year moratorium on clearcuts to protect the California spotted owl, which inhabits the dwindling ancient forests of the Sierra Nevada. Unlike the better-known northern spotted owl, the California owl has not been listed as a threatened species.

That the Forest Service voluntarily will protect the California owl (two-and-a-half years ago the Fish and Wildlife Service listed its northern relative only under judicial fiat) may have been a response to impending lawsuits or the impending arrival of a new administration that has signaled its interest in ancient forest protection. Whatever the reason, the agency's adoption of its own scientists' recommendations was heartening.

Specifically, the decision will protect all live trees and most snags larger than 30 inches in diameter, prohibit clear-cutting and other logging methods that remove more than 60 to 70 percent of the trees in a stand, and establish the 300 acres around each known nest site as conservation areas where no logging will be permitted. The conservation areas are a new layer of protection intended to supplement the existing spotted owl habitat areas.

In addition to the logging restrictions, the Forest Service announced it will work to reduce the fire hazard in the Sierra by using prescribed burns and other fuel reduction techniques. All these practices were among

the recommendations issued last year by a team of Forest Service scientists (see article in July 1992 WR).

Though environmentalists consider the agency's adoption of new practices vital to the long-term survival of the California owl, the change in direction does not guarantee protection for the other denizens of the Sierra's ancient forests. Consequently, ancient forest activists will continue to pressure the Forest Service to make its interim protections permanent and to address the needs of fisher, marten, and the forests themselves.



The Freel Peak Roadless Area contains most of the scarce old growth of the Toiyabe National Forest. Photo by Phil Farrell

Natural Resources Committee

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electric dams falls primarily within the purview of the Energy and Commerce Committee, Rep. Lehman has a long-standing interest in loosening the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's stranglehold on licensing decisions. The subcommittee is likely to explore reform legislation which would grant the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management more say in these decisions. The Forest Service, for instance, opposes the installment of a dam at the confluence of Caples Creek and the Silver Fork American River in the Eldorado National Forest, but under current conditions cannot prevail over the commission, which has sole authority.

California Reps. Doolittle and Richard Pombo (R-Stockton) will join Rep. Lehman on the subcommittee, where they are expected to oppose his environmental efforts.

Ron Stork is Associate Conservation Director of Friends of the River and a Director of the CWC.

Road work planned for Tioga Pass

The Park Service is proposing to reconstruct a stretch of the Tioga Pass Road inside Yosemite National Park, where water seepage has damaged the roadbed. In January the agency issued a draft environmental assessment (EA) which states that the 6.7 miles of roadwork proposed between Tuolumne Meadows and the east entrance to the park will "have no impacts on threatened and endangered species, the Tuolumne Wild and Scenic River, or designated wilderness."

The formal comment period for the proposal ends January 29. Send comments to: Superintendent Michael Finley, P. O. Box 577, Yosemite National Park, CA 95389, Attn: Compliance Officer. For more information or for a copy of the EA, call Bob Howard, Branch Chief, at (209) 372-0318.

Desert bill a harbinger of things to come

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Unlike the desert bill passed by the House in 1991, the new bill would not allow sport hunting in the Mojave.

The reason for the differences between the House and Senate bills is simple—politics. The two BLM wildernesses left out of the Senate bill are a concession to the military, which wants to use the South Avawatz Mountains and the Slate Range for base expansions, and specifically to Senator Sam Nunn (D-GA) who chairs the Armed Services Committee. The House bill affords the Mojave slightly less protection (and less status) because grazers and miners consider park designation too restrictive.

That we have reached a point where passage of a good desert bill seems certain and only a few, though very important, negotiations remain must seem incredible to the activists, that lonely breed, who first approached Senator Cranston with a "modest proposal" more than ten years ago. Jim Dodson, Director of the California Desert Protection League and Wilderness

Chair of the Desert Protective Council, is a veteran of the ten-year effort. "We've hit a hundred hurdles," he said, from figuring out what parts of the desert need protecting to convincing the world. One double-barreled impediment remains: the National Rifle Association, which is expected to pressure Congress to allow hunting in the Mojave, and what Dodson describes as the military's paranoia that wilderness designation threatens national security. To counter the expected opposition, desert advocates are asking environmentalists across the country to express their support of desert protection to their representatives.

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The desert bill's significance beyond California lies in its multi-agency approach. Dodson believes that the California Desert Protection Act is the first step toward ecosystem preservation, land planning that addresses the habitat needs of wildlife instead of human-imposed boundaries and the jurisdictional concerns of agencies. The desert bill, for instance, would effectively designate a wilderness

stretching from California across the Colorado River to Arizona, a wilderness that would be administered by both the BLM and the Fish and Wildlife Service. To the west, the new BLM Santa Rosa Wilderness will link the existing Santa Rosa wildernesses in the San Bernardino National Forest and Anza-Borrego Desert State Park into a greater Santa Rosa Wilderness that protects peninsular coast range, desert, and transitional ecosystems.

Perhaps this desert bill will itself be transitional, a link between the recreation-oriented wilderness bills of the past and the ecosystem-oriented bills of the future. Consensus is growing among conservationists and scientists that the time for that future is now.

Jim Eaton's Coalition Report appears on page 7 this month; the wilderness trivia question resumes next month.

California desert

Acquaint yourself...

Sometime soon, California's wild desert finally will become desert wilderness. Bills now before Congress would designate some seven million acres of wilderness in the Mojave, Colorado, and Great Basin deserts of our state. The majority of these once and future wildernesses, some separated only by dirt roads, will be administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Here is a look at what's on the horizon: the 76 proposed BLM wildernesses.

Argus Range The Argus Range north of Trona contains a great diversity of terrain and geological features: alluvial fans (or bajadas), broad canyons and washes, and narrow, steep-walled canyons. Because of its elevation, the area gets higher-than-average rainfall. Stands of pinyon and juniper adorn the upper slopes, and permanent streams, springs, and waterfalls support dense riparian vegetation. The range also is home to many rare birds and rare plants. 74,000 acres.

Avawatz Mountains* This area south of Death Valley consists of many colorful slopes, rugged ridges, and steep-walled narrow canyons. It contains over 75 square miles of bighorn sheep habitat, with nine springs in the mountains providing good sources of water. The area contains numerous cultural sites associated with prehistoric use. 61,000 acres.

*The Senate bill would designate a smaller Avawatz Mountains Wilderness than the House bill.

Big Maria Mountains These steep, rugged moun-

tains west of the Colorado River are exceptionally wild and largely inaccessible except by foot. They are home to a multitude of inhabitants, including sheep, bald eagles, and fringe-toed lizards. 47,000 acres.

Bigelow Cholla Garden This area near Needles includes the desert's largest concentration of Bigelow cholla. This rare "teddy bear" cactus is covered with spines which impart a golden sheen. Many small animals live among the very dense cholla stands, using the cholla's needles as protection from predators. Prairie falcons, desert tortoises, and cactus wrens can be seen in the area. 10,000 acres.

Bighorn Mountain The bighorn sheep for which the mountains were named are locally extinct, but other species—mule deer, mountain lions, bobcats, and golden eagles—remain. Topography and vegetation vary, from the rugged, desert-like Bighorn Mountains to the pines of Granite Peak in the adjacent San Bernardino National Forest. Rock art, middens, metates, caves, and village sites bespeak the area's prehistoric occupants. 39,000 acres.

Black Mountain Northwest of Barstow, this small area is rich in cultural values. In fact, the entire area is listed as sensitive. Aboriginal remains include trails, rock art, and camp sites. The endangered cactus, *Sclerocactus polyancistrus*, is found among the lava flows of Black Mountain. Other inhabitants include the desert tortoise and the state-listed Mojave ground squirrel. Raptors using the area include prairie falcons and golden eagles, and an eagle aerie is known. 13,000 acres.

Bright Star Most of the terrain consists of steep-sided ridges separated by narrow canyons, at elevations of 3,500 to over 5,000 feet. The vegetation represents a transition between the conifers of the Piute Mountains in the Sequoia National Forest to the west and the desert to the east. This area is unique for its numerous overlapping ecosystems. 9,000 acres.

Cadiz Dunes This is one of the few truly unstable dune systems in the state. The dunes are unusual in containing pockets of water and vegetation in the hollows between the dune ridges. These pockets support a variety of wildlife and, in particular, more mammals than normally inhabit dune systems. Wildflower displays long past the usual spring show often are found in these unusual dunes near Twentynine Palms. 42,000 acres.

Cady Mountains The Cady Mountains east of Barstow are an area of vast, wind-blown, sandy valleys and highly eroded volcanic ridges. Two springs provide a water source for significant wildlife populations. Desert bighorn sheep, falcons, eagles, and lizards roam the land. 85,000 acres.

Carrizo Gorge This area, an ecotone where the ecosystems of the Colorado Desert and the Peninsular Ranges converge, is bordered on the east and north by the wilderness of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. A fan palm oasis and populations of Jacumba milkvetch, mountain springs lupine, Parish's larkspur, and California barrel cactus are noteworthy botanical features. Visitors also are lured by the extensive, hundred-mile views. 15,000 acres.

Chemehuevi Mountains A large, rolling valley carpeted in cholla, ocotillo, and agave is surrounded on three sides by the Chemehuevi Mountains; the fourth side fronts



Desert bighorn sheep. Photo by Mike McWherter

the Colorado River. The mountains themselves are a contrast in shading: pale granite peaks are succeeded by dark volcanic spires. Desert bighorn sheep and mule deer occupy the area, which also is rich in archaeological sites. 64,000 acres.

Chimney Peak This area is characterized by steep-sided ridges and narrow canyons covered, for the most part, by pinyon pine forest at elevations from 5,000 to 8,000 feet. This remote portion of the Sierra has interested anthropologists looking for artifacts of isolated populations of Native Americans. 13,000 acres.

Chuckwalla Mountains* The Chuckwalla Mountains, jutting abruptly from the surrounding flatlands of the Colorado River Basin, are home to raptors, bighorn sheep, coyotes, desert tortoises, foxes, and snakes. An omnibus of desert plants—nolina, creosote, yucca, ocotillo, cholla, and barrel cactus—grow among steep canyons, bajadas, valleys, and slopes. 158,000 acres.

*The Senate bill would designate a smaller Chuckwalla Mountains Wilderness than the House bill.

Cleghorn Lakes The gigantic boulders of the Bullion Mountains in the northern portion of this area east of Twentynine Palms are classic scrambling terrain. The western portion of the area is prime wildflower country, while the vast flats and gentle slopes up to the boulder fields provide a spectacular spring wildflower display of yellows, oranges, and blues. 34,000 acres.

Clipper Mountains These mountains west of Needles bear a striking resemblance to a clipper ship with sharp prow, blunt stern, and three masts suggested by peaks. The vast Fenner and Clipper valleys lap at the base of the mountains and provide habitat for desert tortoise, Mojave yucca, creosote, and a variety of cacti. Desert bighorn sheep and mule deer are attracted to the area by its abundance of springs. The springs not only draw wildlife, but also drew Indians who left many signs of their presence in the area. 40,000 acres.

Coso Range Southeast of Owens Lake are two large interior valleys surrounded by volcanic tablelands. Extensive evidence of volcanic activity is found throughout the range. Large obsidian outcrops were used by the Piute Indians. A variety of large mammals live here, including bighorn sheep, mule deer, burros, and wild horses. Naturalists also have noted the presence of a rare black toad. 50,000 acres.

Coyote Mountains In addition to several colorful gorges, this area next to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park contains sensitive plants, the rare peninsular bighorn sheep, and the magic gecko, a shy, primitive-looking reptile. The Painted Canyon area is a favorite of hikers and photographers, and Fossil Canyon contains the casts of

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The ungainly Joshua tree is the plant that best characterizes the Mojave desert. Photo by Jim Eaton

California desert

with a desert wonderla

hundreds of thousands of marine animals. 18,000 acres.

Darwin Falls The terrain of this area east of Lone Pine consists of two distinct parts: Darwin Canyon, with its stream and waterfalls, and the northern highlands. Most spectacular is Darwin Falls, where perennial streams from the plateau feed a lush growth of ferns, mosses, and other riparian plants. Numerous species of birds nest in the canyon. 8,000 acres.

Dead Mountains Contrary to its name, this area at the junction of California, Nevada, and Arizona supports much life. The mountains harbor spectacular communities of Bigelow cholla, yucca, red barrel, creosote, annual grasses, and Colorado River Basin plants. Hawks, eagles, bighorn sheep, hares, quail, and coyotes abound amid the rugged chocolate and rust peaks. In addition, the area hosts a very high concentration of desert tortoises which may be the source of populations in the surrounding area. Other points of interest are Red Springs, an active spring on a large mound, and Picture Canyon, with its hundreds of carefully chiseled petroglyphs. 48,000 acres.

Domelands Additions The Domelands Additions are natural ecological extensions of the Domelands Wilderness in Sequoia National Forest. Included in this area is the South Fork of the Kern River, an outstanding candidate for wild-and-scenic-river status. Elevations range from less than 3,000 feet in the south to over 7,000 feet farther north. Most of the area is covered by pinyon pine forest. 36,000 acres.

El Paso Mountains Southwest of Ridgecrest, these badlands—volcanic mesas and red buttes intersected by narrow canyons—have attracted a surprising number of visitors, from the early human inhabitants who left significant remains to the raptors which breed here still. The 5,244-foot Black Mountain is vegetated with creosote and Joshua trees. 16,000 acres.

Fish Creek Mountains The Fish Creek Mountains adjoin Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and are sufficiently forbidding as to remain partly unexplored. Limestone chutes channel rain into tinajas, natural tanks, that are a year-round source of non-potable water. Little is known about the plant and animal species of the mountains, but the range is considered likely habitat for barefoot geckos, raptors, and peninsular bighorn sheep. 26,000 acres.

Funeral Mountains The name and the proximity to Death Valley notwithstanding, the Funeral Mountains region supports creosote, burrobush, cheesebush, spiny hopsage, and Mormon tea. Red Amphitheater is an enclosed valley; other scenic features include rugged canyons and rocky, banded peaks. The Bureau of Land Management termed the area "an exquisite representation of desert wilderness." 28,000 acres.

Golden Valley Golden Valley, 20 miles south of Ridgecrest, is embraced by Almond Mountain to the southeast and the Lava Mountains to the northwest. Wildflowers make an extravagant display each spring; the rest of the year visitors have to content themselves with the varicolored sedimentary rocks that cut through the Lava Moun-

tain. The rare Mojave ground squirrel and the desert tortoise abide here, and artifacts of human residents have survived. 37,000 acres.

Granite Mountains The Granite Mountains are a geological wonderland southeast of Baker, with rock jumbles, fault lines, plutons, pinnacles and spires, and, of course, mounds and mountains of granite. A surprising number and variety of plants and animals make their home amid all that rock: among them, the desert shrew, Mexican free-tailed bat, and dusky-footed woodrat. 68,000

Indian Pass Locally known as "Julian Wash country," the Indian Pass area is part of the Chocolate Mountains. Together, BLM and Fish and Wildlife Service lands will form a California-to-Arizona wilderness spanning the Colorado River and affording recreation opportunities (like canoeing) unique in our desert wilderness. California ditaxis, a sensitive plant, and such rare-to-California species as the tree lizard and Colorado River and great plains toads are found in this area. 35,000 acres.

Inyo Mountains Between Owens and Saline valleys east of the Sierra, the Inyo Mountains peak at 11,000 feet. Low desert vegetation gives way to Joshua trees, which yield to pinyon and bristlecone pines as the terrain rises. The mountains are steep and rugged enough to deter all but the most persistent visitors today, though ancient Americans gathered pine nuts here. Desert bighorn sheep, Inyo Mountain salamanders, and rare plants populate the slopes. 205,000 acres.

Jacumba On the California-Mexico border are the Jacumba Mountains which have been likened to a stairway running from the Peninsular Coast Range down to the Colorado Desert. As a transitional ecosystem, Jacumba is rich in botanical and biological value, containing such disparate species as lupine, chaparral, and fan palms. Archaeological sites, rare plants, and rare animals, including one otherwise confined to Mexico, the Trinidad Merriam kangaroo rat, combine to make the area unique. 34,000 acres.

Kelso Dunes The 600-foot-high Kelso Sand Dunes north of the Granite Mountains are part of the Devil's Playground, an extensive and varied

complex of sand formations. These singing, shifting, booming sands support a profuse assortment of flowering plants, endemic insects, and specialized animals, making the area a smorgasbord for scientists and nature lovers alike. 128,000 acres.

Kiavah Most of the area is covered by a magnificent pinyon pine forest, an ecosystem not presently well-represented in the wilderness system in California. Archaeological sites are so abundant that it was difficult to locate an acceptable route for the Pacific Crest Trail through this area at the southern end of the Kern Plateau. 88,000 acres.

Kingston Range Creosote scrub gives way to pinyon woodlands and relict white fir as you travel uphill in the Kingston Range, a range that also supports the only Eastern Mojave population of giant *Nolina wolfii*. The area is renowned for its rare fossil sequence; petrified wood attracts visitors to Sperry Wash Canyon. Virginia's warbler and the hepatic tanager, infrequent occupants of the desert, inhabit the stands of white fir, and the gila monster, rare in California, has been spotted in the range. 249,000 acres.

Little Chuckwalla Mountains The beauty of this wilderness lies in its vast open spaces. The vegetation—creosote bush, scrub, and desert microphyll woodland—represents a transition zone between the low Colorado Desert and the high Mojave Desert. In addition to mule

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The spare beauty of the ocotillo is typical of the Sonora Desert. Photo by Mark Jorgenson

acres.

Grass Valley A range of low, rolling hills rises up in the center of a wide grass valley southeast of Ridgecrest. One is struck by a sense of great distance as the valley drops gently toward Cuddeback Dry Lake. Joshua trees dot the landscape. The Mojave ground squirrel frequents the entire area. The abundance of small rodents has attracted golden eagles, while the flats provide desert tortoise habitat. 31,000 acres.

Great Falls Basin Rising to almost 5,000 feet above Searles Dry Lake, this range north of Trona receives higher than average rainfall. There are several permanent springs, streams, and waterfalls supporting a great diversity of plant and animal communities. The most unusual is the collection of cottonwoods and willows. 8,000 acres.

Hollow Hills To the southwest of this area is a long bajada sloping to Silver Dry Lake and the community of Baker. The lake is noted for the mirages it produces as the whole shimmering surface ripples with heat waves. The area contains habitat for the Mojave fringe-toed lizard. 22,000 acres.

Ibex The hills' horizontal rock layers of brown, bright yellow, red, and black produce a unique scenic effect southeast of the Death Valley wilderness. Excellent views of the coloration of the Ibex Hills can be seen from Greenwater Valley, which supports a good creosote bush community. Eight square miles of the area contain cultural artifacts. 26,000 acres.

California desert

and, enchant yourself...

deer, the area supports a collection of sensitive, rare, threatened, and endangered wildlife including bighorn sheep, desert tortoises, prairie falcons, golden eagles, and fringe-toed lizards. 45,000 acres.

Little Picacho Peak Flat expanses of land contrast with jagged peaks and deep canyons. Located along the Colorado River, the washes have an abundance and variety of vegetation, including dense stands of smoke tree, palo verde, and mesquite. On the bajadas are ocotillo, creosote, and cholla with their exuberance of colorful flowers in spring. 36,000 acres.

Malpais Mesa The top of the mesa offers a spectacular 360 degree view of Owens Lake to the west, the Inyo Mountains to the north, the Coso Mountains to the south, and the Panamint Mountains to the east. Joshua trees dot the volcanic slopes and mesa. No other nearby area offers such stark contrasts of sky and rock. 32,000 acres.

Manly Peak The variety of vegetation is extensive, beginning at the lower elevations with sparse desert shrubs, such as creosote, and annual plants in the canyons. Some canyons host riparian plants such as desert willows, cottonwoods, and cattails. One rare plant species, *Brickellia knappiana*, is found in Pleasant Canyon. This area west of Death Valley includes 24 square miles of bighorn sheep habitat. 16,000 acres.

Mecca Hills The San Andreas Fault has contributed new and dramatic wrinkles to these old, eroded hills near Indio. Ironwood, ocotillo, palo verde, and smoke tree clothe the washes and lower slopes, and numerous rare plants and animals (including the rare spotted bat) can be found, but it is the colored, fractured strata and otherworldly rock formations that attract most visitors. 24,000 acres.

Mesquite On the slopes of the Mesquite Mountains near Nevada is a transition zone from the Mojave to the Great Basin, where Utah yuccas and Joshua trees are found. The area contains many archaeological sites, including rock shelters, stone works, ceramics, and agave roasting pits. Limestone and dolomite formations have formed caves and grottos in the porous rock. 47,000 acres.

Newberry Mountains Multicolored rock formations and soils, rugged crags, and labyrinthine canyons are the hallmark of this scenic area east of Barstow. Bighorn sheep once roamed the Newberry Mountains; prairie falcons and golden eagles nest here still. 22,000 acres.

Nopah Range Stretching 18 miles along the California-Nevada border, the Nopah Range is itself bordered by bajadas, badlands, playas, and plains. Desert willow, cacti, creosote, ivory-spined agave, and mesquite soften the contours of this rugged land, the only home of the Nopah desert bighorn sheep. 110,000 acres.

North Algodones Dunes A national landmark (alternatively known as the Imperial Sand Hills), this area near the Arizona border features steep, shifting, and bewildering dunes that are difficult for humans to traverse. Other animals, including the endemic Andrews dune scarab beetle and two lizard species, manage just fine. The dunes also nurture a number of rare or endangered plants. 32,000 acres.

North Mesquite Mountains Here, creosote bush blends into the vegetation of the Great Basin, blackbrush. The limestone outcrops support a plant endemic to limestone soils, *Buddleja utahensis*. Springs in the foothills attract itinerant populations of birds. The alluvial areas to the south are desert tortoise habitat. 25,000 acres.

Old Woman Mountains This massive, fault-lifted

area west of Ward Valley is a wonderland of rock walls, deep canyons, sandy washes, enclosed valleys, and steep spires. The flora of the area is diverse. There are 16 freshwater springs that support a herd of desert bighorn sheep and a large mule deer population. The valley floor is desert tortoise habitat and part of the Fenner-Chemehuevi Desert Tortoise Core Area, one of four core breeding populations recognized in California. 146,000 acres.

Orocopia Mountains* The Orocopia Mountains near the Salton Sea have been molded and fractured by the San Andreas Fault. A large herd of Nelson's bighorn sheep inhabits the area, as do a number of rare plants, including the Orocopia sage. A sacred site, *Pa-Ha-Pe-Che*, in the northeast corner shows evidence of ancient habitation. 57,000 acres.

*The Senate bill would designate a smaller Orocopia Mountains Wilderness than the House bill.

Owens Peak Granite peaks, the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, and perennial streams attract rock climbers and hikers to this area east of Sequoia National Forest. Pictographs and other archaeological sites date back 6,000 years; modern Native Americans consider the area sacred. At higher elevations grow pinyon, juniper, and a sensitive plant, Ninemile Canyon phacelia. 74,000 acres.

Pahrump Valley Sweeping, open, undisturbed valleys are densely covered with creosote, yuccas, and Joshua trees. This is almost unique in the California desert today, since most such areas are criss-crossed with roads and vehicle tracks. These valleys near the Nevada border were used by five different Native American groups. 74,000 acres.

Palen/McCoy South of the Granite Mountains, pencil cholla, pygmy cedar, and barrel and cotton-top cactus are scattered on a landscape dominated by creosote, brittle brush, and cheese bush. The Palen and McCoy mountain ranges slope down into bajadas, canyons, and valleys. Coyotes, kit and gray foxes, bobcats, mountain lions, bighorn sheep, and burro deer roam the land. 214,000 acres.

Palo Verde Mountains This Imperial County area is characterized by rugged volcanic peaks, sheer cliffs, caves, arches with narrow canyons, and small, enclosed, intimate valleys. The mountains provide habitat for burro deer, desert tortoise, bighorn sheep, and prairie falcon. The Bureau of Land Management has recorded an average of ten prehistoric sites per square mile. 32,000 acres.

Picacho Peak In the Chocolate Mountains near the Colorado River is a small area of uncommon significance. Steep arroyos cut through these benchlands, making travel difficult. Where desert meets river, outstanding habitat for Nelson's bighorn sheep and burro mule deer results. Desert tortoises hibernate in the loose volcanic soils. Potsherds and cobblestones etched with petroglyphs are mute evidence of former inhabitants. 7,000 acres.

Piper Mountains From the top of Piper Peak at 7,300 feet to the floor of Eureka Valley, plants and animals are as varied as the topog-

raphy. The area is home to the pale kangaroo mouse, desert bighorn sheep, a large number of deer, and the rare black toad. In addition, the most northern Joshua tree forest in California is found within the area. 72,000 acres.

Piute Mountains Bighorn sheep, mule deer, quail, and doves all can be found amid the rough, rocky ridges and deep canyons of these mountains west of Needles. An extensive system of connecting washes bisects the area. Lush creosote stands, outstanding cactus displays, and yucca are scattered throughout. This is part of the Fenner-Chemehuevi Desert Tortoise Core Area, where concentrations of tortoises are high enough to assure reproduction. 37,000 acres.

Resting Spring Range In parts of this area on the Nevada border, rocks display a variety of colors ranging from subdued brown and tan to more intense pinks, reds, greens, and black. Wildlife includes bighorn sheep, prairie falcons, and golden eagles. The area contains many Native American sites from the Panamint-Shoshone and Chemehuevi cultures. 78,000 acres.

Rice Valley North of the Big Maria Mountains, the valley itself, the largely untouched central portion of this wilderness, has retained its natural condition. The southern portion of the area represents a territorial subdivision

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Saguaro, which grow only in the Sonora Desert, are rare in California. Photo by Jim Eaton.

California desert

with a desert mirage.

between the Chemehuevi and Serrano Indians. Notable here are occupation sites, ritual collection areas, rock art, and springs. 40,000 acres.

Riverside Mountains These mountains were traversed by early humans moving along the Colorado River and for the most part are accessible only by foot. As a result, many artifacts are still intact; rock alignments, intaglios, and petroglyphs are just a few of the remains here. 22,000 acres.

Rodman Mountains Southeast of Barstow, an ancient lava flow appears today as a long, sloping mesa through the Rodman Mountains. Water collects in natural basalt tanks in the mesa; the mesa also holds several thousand superb petroglyphs depicting lizards, bighorn sheep, tortoises, snakes, and mythical beings. The area is a prime breeding site for raptors which, together with Joshua trees, populate a stark, dramatic landscape. 27,000 acres.

Sacatar Trail On the east side of the Sierra stretching south from the Inyo National Forest, this country of deep, branching canyons and rugged ridges is traversed by Sacatar Trail. Joshua trees predominate, interspersed with desert scrub, cacti, and pinyon pine. The area has long been used by the Native American groups of the Owens Valley. 51,000 acres.

Saddle Peak Hills The northern section lies close to the Amargosa River, which attracted native peoples. The area is known to support Mojave fringe-toed lizards in the sand flats leading up to the mountains. 14,000 acres.

San Gorgonio An addition to the the popular San Gorgonio Wilderness in the San Bernardino National Forest, the area includes the extremely wild east flanks of Mount San Gorgonio, the highest peak in southern California and a haunt of black bears, bighorn sheep, mountain lions, and many other wildlife species. 33,000 acres.

Santa Rosa This area links the Santa Rosa Wilderness in the San Bernardino National Forest to the Santa Rosa Mountains State Wilderness in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Combining montane and desert ecosystems, Santa Rosa is home to the great horned owl and the desert slender salamander, to juniper-pinyon woodlands and palm-lined oases. 53,000 acres.

Sawtooth Mountains Between the Cleveland National Forest and Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, the Sawtooth Mountains are a critical transition zone where wildflowers bloom riotously each spring. More than 80 species of flowering plants have been identified in a single square mile. The San Diego horned lizard, loggerhead shrike, willow flycatcher, and assorted raptors, all imperiled species, live among the mountains. More than 100 cultural sites have been documented. 35,000 acres.

Sheephole Valley This vast, remote, almost untouched area near Twentynine Palms takes the visitor back in time thousands of years. Creosote, galleta grass, and mixed shrubs dominate the valley vegetation. Bighorn sheep, desert tortoises, and prairie falcons inhabit this Sahara-like area. 174,000 acres.

Slate Range* Prairie falcons, golden eagles, and desert bighorn sheep move across a Great Basin landscape where rugged, varicolored mountain ranges embrace broad Panamint Valley. To the east is the wilderness of Death Valley National Monument. 44,000 acres.

*The Slate Range Wilderness is not included in the Senate bill.

Soda Mountains* The topography north of the Mojave River varies from gentle, creosote-covered slopes to rugged, highly eroded, jagged ridges. Two dry lakes are included in this area, one of which often contains water, providing habitat for wintering and migrating waterfowl and shore birds. The Yuma clapper rail, a federally-listed endangered species, has been observed here. The area



Mojave yucca in full bloom. Photo by Jim Eaton

contains desert bighorn sheep habitat and a number of significant cultural sites. 80,000 acres.

*The Senate bill would designate a smaller Soda Mountains Wilderness than the House bill.

South Algodones Dunes The area is part of the largest dune system in the United States and the largest and most highly evolved in California. The unique plant and animal populations of the dunes offer fine opportunities for study. Seven plant species are listed as rare, threatened, or endangered. 61,000 acres.

South Avawatz Mountains* This area contains colorful eroded ridges and steep-walled canyons. The mountains gradually change to a creosote-covered bajada which blends into a dry lake. Bighorn sheep have been sighted here. 23,000 acres.

*The South Avawatz Mountains Wilderness is not included in the Senate bill.

South Nopah Range Limestone and dolomite interspersed with older Precambrian deposits lend color and variety to the striations of rock in the area. Mesquite and catsclaw acacia are found in woodlands along the drainages, where wildlife also concentrates. A rare agave is present in the area. There are two invertebrate fossil sites, and Indian trails, villages, and artifacts can be found. 16,000 acres.

Stateline The north slopes above Mesquite Lake are noted for outstanding mesquite thickets, a highly valued food source for the early native inhabitants. This area near

the Nevada border contains many archaeological sites including rock shelters, stone works, ceramics, and agave roasting pits. A herd of about 40 bighorn sheep frequents the area. 7,000 acres.

Stepladder Mountains The Stepladder Mountains east of Ward Valley provide a rich, unique habitat for many species of birds and mammals. Desert tortoises are present in extremely high densities. Bighorn sheep, prairie falcons, golden eagles, Brazilian free-tailed bats, doves, quail, and rabbits all thrive amid the diverse mountains, bajadas, and washes. The area is heavily vegetated, abounding in cactus gardens, ocotillo, Mojave yucca, and fine creosote flats. 81,000 acres.

Surprise Canyon This area adjoining the Panamint Range in Death Valley National Monument has rugged ridges, high peaks, and deep, narrow canyons with extensive riparian zones. The Panamint daisy, a rare and endangered plant, grows in rocky areas. The indigenous Panamint alligator lizard is found here, as are bighorn sheep. 29,000 acres.

Sylvania Mountains On the Nevada border, dramatic elevation changes, with peaks of almost 8,000 feet, and limestone formations provide a wide diversity of flora, including many rare endemic species. The elevation range also promotes a diverse group of fauna such as the pale kangaroo mouse and prairie falcon. 17,000 acres.

Trilobite The rugged terrain, though almost waterless, supports bighorn sheep and prairie falcons. This San Bernardino County area contains the Marble Mountains, named for their colorful striations, and is one of the few desert areas with fossil trilobites. 33,000 acres.

Turtle Mountains South of Needles is a vast land where volcanic cliffs flow into broad plains. The Turtle Mountains are both spectacular scenery and habitat. Rock collectors come from across the country to gather "Mopah roses" and climbers test their mettle on rock spires, but beyond the springs where human visitors concentrate, golden eagles, prairie falcons, bighorn sheep, and desert tortoises flourish. 144,000 acres.

Whipple Mountains In the Whipple Mountains near the Colorado River, grayish green sedimentary deposits cap natural lava bridges. Domes, spires, outcrops, and a canyon a thousand feet deep are part of a complicated landscape blanketed with scrub and, in some places, concentrations of palo verde, smoke tree, saguaro, and Mojave prickly pear. Golden eagles, red-tailed hawks, screech owls, and prairie falcons dot the sky. 75,000 acres.

Compiled by the California Desert Protection League and the California Wilderness Coalition, with help from Norbert Riedy. Acreages are approximate.

To learn more about the California desert and these wildernesses, contact the Bureau of Land Management's California Desert District Office, 6221 Box Spring Boulevard, Riverside, CA 92507; (714) 697-5200.

To learn more about conservationist efforts to pass the desert bill, contact The Wilderness Society, 116 New Montgomery Street, Suite 526, San Francisco, CA 94105; (415) 541-9144 or Larry Freilich at the Sierra Club's Southern California Office, 3345 Wilshire Boulevard #508, Los Angeles, CA 90010; (213) 387-6528.

MONTHLY REPORT

This new year started off on a pleasant note with a knock on the door. An unexpected visit from the Wolf Women! The Wolf Women is my collective name for Sue Rodriguez-Pastor and Myra Finklestein, two young but experienced environmental activists. Several years ago they and others organized Friends of the Wolf to stop aerial hunting of wolves in British Columbia. These brave women learned to sky dive for a plan that involved jumping out of an airplane in the dead of the Canadian winter to stop the hunt. (Eventually, the hunt was stopped with a lawsuit.)

Sue got her start in environmental activism after taking a summer course in Montana. Her instructor, CWC member Crandall Bay, suggested she look me up when she returned to California.

Shortly after I met Sue and Myra, they attended an Earth First! rendezvous near Big Basin where they found kindred souls. But they were most taken with a passionate plea from Paul Watson of the Sea Shepherd Society, a group that makes Greenpeace look moderate. They joined the crew of the Sea Shepherd and have had many adventures around the world stopping whalers and disrupting drift-net fishing boats.

They then began the wolf campaign, uniting environmentalists throughout the continent to stop the proposed wolf slaughter. In the process of becoming environmental activists, they both became vegans, strict vegetarians who eat no animal products.

I had last seen Myra in person several years ago when she returned to Davis to finish her degree,

although I'd seen her on television several times on Sea Shepherd stories. Sue had gone on to work for the Fund for Animals in Washington, D.C. When I last was there we had dinner, in the course of which I was challenged as to how I could possibly consider myself an environmentalist and not be vegetarian. (I tried suggesting that since plants have been on this planet far longer than animals, plants deserve more respect).

Sue lives in Montana now, and Myra spends a lot of her time at sea defending marine mammals. Although I don't agree with all of their animal-rights agenda and they don't like my eating animals, we have remained close friends.

While here, Myra mentioned her old Macintosh had died, so I talked her out of the carcass. Combining that with the best of the CWC's dead MacPlus has giving us another working computer.

The change in the two young women over the six years I've known them has been incredible. It started with Crandall showing them the threatened wilds of Montana, an experience that converted Susie the "fraternity girl" into Sue the environmental activist. Not everyone in Crandall's class turned into an eco-warrior, but they all gained a better idea of what needs to be done to make this planet a better place for all creatures.

Over the years, a number of U.C. Davis students have been CWC interns and volunteers. Many of them drop by when they are in the area. It brightens my day when these women and men return to share their experiences. I'm part of a wonderful, growing family of environmental activists.

BY JIM EATON

DATES TO REMEMBER

January 29 COMMENTS DUE on a proposal to reconstruct part of Tioga Pass Road in Yosemite. Address comments to Superintendent Michael Finley, P. O. Box 577, Yosemite National Park, CA 95389. (See article on page 2.)

February 4-7 CONFERENCE of west coast ancient forest activists in Ashland, OR. For details, call Headwaters at (503) 482-4459.

February 7 ANNUAL MEETING of the California Wilderness Coalition. For details, call Jim Eaton at (916) 758-0380.

February 7 EVENING ON THE WILD SIDE in Davis featuring eco-radical Dave Foreman, to benefit the CWC. For information or tickets, call the CWC at (916)-758-0380.

February 8 & 9 WORKSHOPS on state park planning sponsored by the Department of Parks and Recreation. The February 8 workshop will be held in Los Angeles at the California Museum of Science & Industry; the February 9 workshop will be held at the Clovis Senior Center in Fresno. Northern California workshops are scheduled for March. For details, contact the Department of Parks & Recreation, Planning Section, Room 1138-5, P. O. Box 942896, Sacramento, CA 94296-0001; (916) 653-9901.

March 13 ACTIVISTS' MEETING of the California Ancient Forest Alliance in Davis. For details, call Jim Eaton at (916) 758-0380.

CWC t-shirts in bright new colors!

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



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* 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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Printed by the Davis Enterprise on recycled paper

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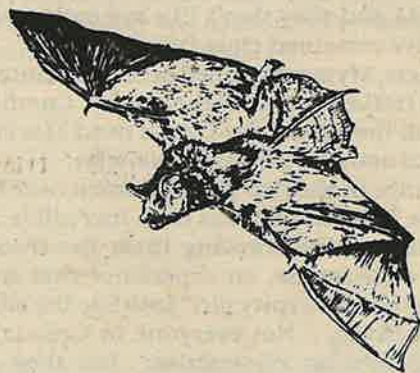
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