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Center Basin in Sequoia National Park

Photo by Bob Schneider

Survey Shows Strong Wilderness Support

According to the results of a study by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Arizonans strongly support wilderness. The August, 1982, public opinion survey was based on 3,034 questionnaires returned by a sample of Arizona registered voters.

The following are some of the highlights of the survey:

- * Eighty-one percent believe that wilderness is an important use of Arizona's federal land.

- * More than 80 percent believe that federal wilderness areas are important for the protection of wildlife, plants, air and water quality, and natural lands.

- * Fifty-eight percent think that they and their families will or may benefit from wilderness.

- * Sixty-eight percent believe that user fees should be imposed if more funds are needed for wilderness management and expansion.

- * Forty-seven percent agree that Arizona should have more wilderness areas, and 44 percent agree that Arizona has enough federal wilderness now.

- * Twenty-three percent remember the details of a wilderness trip. They report the average costs of \$18.86 per person for a two-day trip and a willingness to give an average of \$8.63 more if needed for the trip.

- * Forty-one percent would be willing to donate to a special wilderness fund. The average amount ranges from \$11.61 for existing Arizona wilderness to \$5.79 for a five percent increase in the amount of wilderness in the United States.

Responses to the questionnaire reveal a number of strong preferences for public land uses. The public lands are seen as important for wildlife protection by 92 percent of respondents, for outdoor

recreation by 89 percent, for livestock grazing by 83 percent, for wilderness by 81 percent, and for mining by 66 percent. The only activity not considered to be an important use for public lands by a majority of respondents is off-road vehicle travel. Fifty-six percent state that off-road vehicle use is not important while only 29 percent find it important.

Of those returning the questionnaire, 89 percent already knew about federal wilderness before receiving the survey form.

Eight purposes were listed as reasons for setting aside wilderness. All were considered important by a large majority, but the three lowest ranking purposes were a place to "get away from it all," research and study, and outdoor recreation. The higher ranking reasons were for protection of wildlife, water quality, plants, natural lands, and air quality.

Although Arizona is a mining state, 43 percent agree that new wilderness is more important than new mines with 39 percent disagreeing. Seventy-three percent agree that wilderness is a good thing for most Arizonans. When asked if easterners want wilderness more than westerners, 42 percent say no while 31 percent say yes.

Only a small percentage of respondents belong to conservation organizations. Five percent belong to a nature conservation group, five percent are members of a wildlife conservation group, and only four percent have joined a hiking club. Seven percent belong to a fishing or hunting club, but only one percent belong to an off-road vehicle organization.

The report is considered highly accurate of viewpoints and values for Arizona's registered voters.

King Range Wilderness Study Commences

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is beginning their study of the King Range and Chimise Mountain wilderness study areas (WSAs). Both areas are in the King Range National Conservation Area in southern Humboldt County, part of California's "Lost Coast."

The first phase of public involvement, known as "scoping," will end April 27. During this period BLM will identify the public's perspectives of issues and alternatives to be covered in the draft environmental impact statement, tentatively scheduled for release in October 1984.

The 32,342-acre King Range WSA contains the wildest stretch of coastline in California. The 25 miles of remote, nearly inaccessible seashore run from the mouth of the Mattole River south to Shelter Cove. Off-road vehicles illegally trespass on this "closed" area, but wilderness designation would give law enforcement authorities additional power to stop this use. Ris-

ing behind this strip of beach is the King Range with sharply sloping mountains rising over 4,000 feet in less than three miles.

In cooperation with the California Department of Fish and Game and California State Parks, the BLM transplanted 17 Roosevelt elk from the Prairie Creek State Park herd to the King Range in March 1982.

The Chimise Mountain WSA is 4021 acres of rugged and steep terrain adjacent to the Sinkyone Wilderness State Park. From Chimise Mountain the elevation drops 2,600 feet to the ocean in about one-half mile. This is the only area in California designated as a "primitive area" by BLM prior to the congressionally mandated wilderness review now underway.

Citizens who wish to comment during the scoping period or receive future information on the wilderness study for these areas must contact BLM at the Ukiah District Office, P.O. Box 940, Ukiah, California 95482.

Coalition Report

By Jim Eaton

Finally we have an issue of the Wilderness Record with less doom and gloom than usual. It's not that there are fewer problems in the wilderness world today, but there have been requests to print some other types of articles.

We hope you will enjoy Steve Evans' article on Springtime in Ishi Country. This is the time to visit that pleasant land, especially with the mild spring we are experiencing. I have fond memories of this special place, from being pinned down in a cave during a New Year's storm (it snowed at 2,000 feet) to catching my one and only steelhead trout.

I also greatly enjoyed the mountain lion article by Mike McWhorter. One of my life goals was to see a cougar in the wild. This objective was reached the Christmas before last in, of all places, the California Desert. Wendy, Stickeen, and I were hiking in the Whipple Mountains near the Colorado River when we saw a lion in a wash below us. Since we were in the desert, we were able to observe this magnificent creature for several minutes

as it worked its way up a ridge across the small gorge separating us. Now if we can only spot a wolf or a wolverine...

Maybe the most upbeat news is the front page story on the opinions of our neighbors in Arizona towards wilderness. We all know the public supports wilderness, and every time another public opinion survey is done this is confirmed. But here we have strong wilderness support from residents of a state that ranks mining as one of its main industries. Our challenge now is to turn this support of the public into positive political action. Are you paying attention, Senator Pete Wilson?

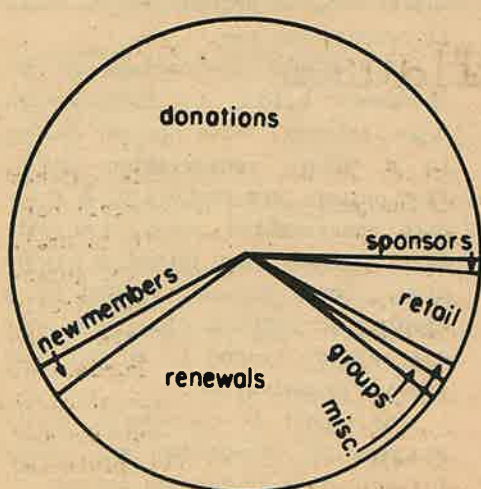
Our volunteer Wilderness Record staff is plotting some new changes to the newsletter. Former interns Mary Scoonover and Pat O'Brien, along with stalwart Marcia Cary, are starting on a facelift for the Record. Most of these changes will be in the April-May issue. Please let us know if you like what we are doing -- or if you don't like anything about the newsletter. In this organization, you're the boss!

Where Your Money Goes

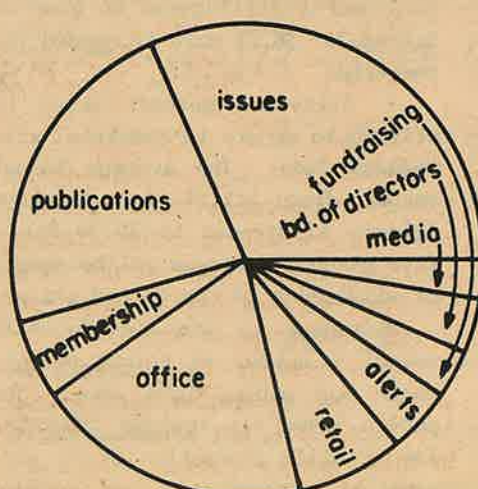
Before your money goes, it has to come in. As you can see from the first pie chart, the vast majority of our income comes from your membership renewals and donations. Our retail sales are mostly T-Shirts. In 1983 only a small part of our income came from our member groups and sponsors and from new members.

Over half of your money is spent on issues and publications, primarily the Wilderness Record. These two categories actually involve much more than half of the Coalition's time, but lots of volunteer help keeps the costs down.

1983 Income



1983 Disbursements



Update

Coehlo Trades Rivers: Tuolumne for Merced

Representative Tony Coehlo (D-Merced) has angered wild river supporters by introducing a bill designating portions of the Tuolumne and Merced rivers as wild and scenic but also authorizing dam construction on the Tuolumne.

John Amodio, Executive Director of the Tuolumne River Preservation Trust, called Coehlo's bill the "Orwell's 1984 Wild and Scenic Rivers Bill" for being a perfect example of doublespeak. The bill, HR 5291, protects portions of an 83-mile stretch of the Tuolumne while specifically authorizing the Ponderosa-Golden Rock project.

Coehlo's bill also would protect 36 miles of the South Fork Merced River, a deserving river threatened with hydroelectric development. Coehlo called the Merced the "only true wild river in the whole Sierra Nevada range."

In February, Senator Pete Wilson proposed wild river status for the Tuolumne River, but tied this proposal to a gutted California Wilderness bill. At that time Coehlo said, "I think true environmentalists will see through what Wilson is doing. Cuteness does not work here. He should be more upfront with people."

Conservationists now see Coehlo playing rivers off against each other, a variation of the same tactic used by Wilson.

There are two other Tuolumne bills before the House, H.R. 2474 by Rep. Ron Dellums (D-Oakland) and H.R. 5083 by Rep. Rick Lehman (D-Sanger). Both bills would protect the main stem of the river while allowing development on the tributaries. Hearings are scheduled on the bills during the first week in May.



Mt. Shasta Eyed for Skiing

The U.S. Forest Service is examining possible ski area development sites on Mt. Shasta outside proposed wilderness on the mountain.

The area of consideration extends from just north of Green Butte to about two miles below the old ski area. The Forest Service is in the initial stages of preparing an environmental assessment which will evaluate ski development potential on about 1,670 acres of public land.

Issues to be considered include:

1) impacts to existing uses such as cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, camping, and hiking; 2) quality of skiing, potential white-outs, kind and size of facilities, vertical feet, and length of season; 3) the affect of downhill skiing on the local economy; and 4) the religious significance of Mt. Shasta.

Written comments should be postmarked by May 10 to the Forest Supervisor, Shasta-Trinity National Forests, 2400 Washington Avenue, Redding, CA 96001

CWC Files More McCloud Appeals

The California Wilderness Coalition and the Sierra Club have filed appeals of three more timber sales planned in the proposed McCloud Wilderness north of Redding.

Two of the sales are outside the West Girard roadless area but on contiguous lands the groups feel should have been inventoried as roadless. In all three cases the

appellants are requesting a stay of decision for the sales until a legally adequate environmental impact statement is completed.

Late last year the Coalition and the Sierra Club appealed another timber sale in the proposed McCloud Wilderness. That sale was quickly withdrawn after the Regional Forester granted a stay of decision.

Life for the Sinkyone Wilderness

by the Environmental Protection Information Center

The Sinkyone wilderness, a portion of California's magical Lost Coast, is located in extreme north-western Mendocino County. So rugged is the terrain here, so powerful are the winter storms, that state engineers were forced to turn Coast Highway 1 inland a dozen miles south of the Sinkyone, leaving the region undisturbed by roads or development. But now it is being devastated by logging.

A small part of the Sinkyone wilderness, about 3,500 acres, already has been set aside as a Wilderness State Park. For more than a decade it has been the hope of the State of California to expand this park southward to include the spectacular scenery and habitat of the coastal bluffs and serene old growth forests.

Resistance to expansion of the park has come from only one source: Georgia-Pacific Corporation (G-P), a very large multi-national logging company. Beginning about 1974, G-P bought all the lands south of the existing park before the State could do so. G-P is now brutally clear-cutting all of its old growth reserves in the region. Their operations have penetrated to the heart of the remaining Sinkyone wilderness.

Efforts to protect or acquire the proposed wilderness park from Georgia-Pacific have been many and diverse -- a lawsuit, various legislative efforts, and offers to trade or purchase the Sinkyone wilderness lands held by G-P. But G-P has been consistently unwilling to sell or trade to the public.

The Sinkyone Wilderness State Park presently envisioned by the Parks and Recreation Commission requires the acquisition of about 8,000 acres. But both the Commission and conservation groups are most concerned about two critical areas: (1) 850 acres of old growth and partial old growth forest remaining in the heart of the Sinkyone wilderness, much of which already is approved for logging; and (2) a coastal trail corridor of about 1,500 acres, extending from Usal Creek north to the present State Park boundary.

NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE

For thousands of years, the people lived in balance here. The richness of the land made the northwestern California coast the



Proposed Addition to Sinkyone Wilderness State Park Photo by David Cross

most heavily populated region of Turtle Island (North America). Hunting, fishing, and gathering yielded a food supply unequalled for abundance, diversity, and accessibility. The people were blessed.

In the second half of the 19th century, however, disaster struck. Mounted vigilante gangs marauded the country. The state and federal governments paid wages for the annihilation of the peaceful, indigenous people. The Sinkyone people, who numbered perhaps ten thousand, were hunted down and murdered in these very mountains and valleys. Women, children, elders, men. Few survived.

Among the survivors was a child who watched from a thicket as white men murdered her infant sister, mother, father, and grandfather because they were "Indian," because they were "in the way." Taken into slavery several months later, she was given the name "Sally Bell." To honor her life, one of the last old growth redwood groves in the Sinkyone wilderness was named the Sally Bell Grove.

NATURAL HABITAT

In the Sinkyone wilderness, steep slopes and cliffs plunging to the sea are the region's last refuge for species dependent on coastal old growth forests. Mountain lion, black bear, and marbled murrelets need the Sinkyone wilderness. The murrelets are shy sea birds that cannot survive without old growth coastal forests in which to nest. Yet very few such forests

remain anywhere on the West Coast. The Sinkyone wilderness is the last opportunity to protect significant old growth coastal forests in California.

Herds of sea lions numbering up to 1500 animals have been reported by the California Department of Fish and Game. The huge herds of sea mammals include mostly California sea lions and harbor seals, but several other species such as elephant seal and Stellar's sea lion may be observed.

Tragically, extensive poaching of these sea animals now is occurring. Because the area is extremely remote, with access strictly controlled by the Georgia-Pacific Corporation, effective protection of these animals presently is not feasible. Witnesses have alleged that some of the illegal riflemen are G-P employees. Further slaughter of this herd can be prevented only by immediate State acquisition of proposed Sinkyone wilderness parklands

at Little Jackass and Jackass creeks.

NEW LEGISLATION -- THE BEST HOPE

New legislation designed to fully protect the Sinkyone wilderness has been introduced by Assemblymember Tom Bates (D-Oakland) with the support of Senator Dan McCorquodale (D-San Jose). This bill, AB 3934, mandates acquisition of all remaining old growth redwood groves and a coastal trail corridor in the Sinkyone Wilderness State Park project. All of the groves now are owned by the Georgia-Pacific Corporation. Under AB 3934, G-P would suffer no financial loss because California would acquire the 2,451 critical acres by exchanging surplus State timberlands and purchasing other adjacent timberlands for exchange. Sufficient acreage, owned by third parties, is available for such purchase and exchange. AB 3934 also authorizes the use of eminent domain if G-P refuses to negotiate these exchanges. The bill designates 3.2 million dollars from the 1980 Park Bond for use in the Sinkyone Park project. If passed, the 1984 Park Bond (Proposition 18 on the June ballot) may provide additional funding for Sinkyone land exchanges.

Other provisions of AB 3934 include the immediate halt to logging in the Sinkyone wilderness area during negotiations and a mandate to seek funding from other public and private sources for land acquisition and habitat rehabilitation work in upland areas severely damaged by past logging operations.

Governor Signs Hauser Bill

A bill to slightly expand the Sinkyone Wilderness State Park and provide a trail corridor through Georgia-Pacific Corporation land was signed into law by Governor George Deukmejian in March.

Assemblymember Dan Hauser (D-Arcata) had a similar bill vetoed last September, but he made changes in this year's version.

The bill adds the old growth

groves at Duffy and Whale gulches to the park and leases a trail corridor from the park south to Usal. The trail will be under the jurisdiction of the Recreational Trails Commission rather than the State Parks and Recreation Commission. The Sally Bell Grove, site of civil disobedience actions last October to halt logging, is not protected by the Hauser legislation.

The spring season is prime time for a wilderness experience in the Ishi Country. So named because it was the homeland of the Yahi Indians and their most prominent member, Ishi, this region of low-elevation foothills northeast of Chico offers a wide variety of all-season recreational opportunities. But visitors agree that the Ishi Country is at its best during the generally mild season from February to May.

The rugged canyons, high lava rimrock, and brush-covered ridges of the Ishi Country begin to take on a green hue as new grass sprouts from the winter rains. As the spring deepens, the grass grows more lush, wildflowers bloom in profusion, and the stark oak trees begin to bud. While the more popular high elevation recreation areas remain snowbound, the warm wilderness of the Ishi Country beckons to those who wish to expand their recreational horizons.

The canyons of the Ishi Country have been deeply carved by the drainages of Antelope, Mill, and Deer creeks. More aptly regarded as true rivers, these "creeks" provide much of the recreational focus in the Ishi Country, offering a wide variety of activities such as angling, hiking, backpacking, swimming, camping, and even whitewater kayaking.

An abundant riparian forest of sycamores, oaks, and pines in the creek bottoms contrasts sharply with the open oak-savanna, or grassland, on the canyon slopes. Trails tend to follow the creeks, and the open slopes enhance cross-country hiking and backpacking. The

canyons are hemmed in by precipitous cliffs and lava rimrock. Where side tributaries have eroded "coves" in the rimrock, the persistent hiker can bypass the cliffs and cross over the ridgetops to unexplored canyons beyond.

A trademark of the Ishi Country, the lava rimrock often erodes from bottom to top when exposed in cliff faces. This erosion eventually creates large overhangs and caves. Many southern-facing caves were choice living sites for the ancient Yahi. Natural solar homes, these caves were warmed by the low winter sun while sheltering the Yahi from the rain and wind.

What was, and still is, a rugged wilderness to the descendants of European settlers provided all the needs to sustain the Yahi for thousands of years. The clear streams produced salmon in the spring and the oak groves provided bountiful harvests of acorns in the fall. The wintering deer herds were a source of meat and hides. An incredible variety of trees, plants, shrubs, and herbs provided not only food, but medicines and tools as well. Sheltered in caves and pine bough huts in the winter, the Yahi welcomed each season in turn, spearing the spring run of salmon and steelhead, migrating up the canyons of Mill and Deer creeks to the slopes of Waganupa ("Little Shasta" -- Lassen Peak) in pursuit of the deer herds in the summer, and harvesting the acorn crop in the fall.

In her book, *Ishi In Two Worlds*, Theodora Kroeber described the Yahi as a "copper colored people on a golden land." But the peaceful Yahi existence ended with the influx of

pioneers into California after the 1849 gold rush. Partly due to their rugged and inaccessible homeland, the Yahi resisted this invasion longer than most other California tribes. In a series of bloody massacres carried out by white ranchers in the late 1800's, punctuated by occasional Yahi retaliatory raids, the tribe was destroyed to the last man, woman, and child, except for one. In 1911, after wandering alone for three years, the one Yahi survivor, Ishi, stumbled out of the foothill wilderness and into 20th century civilization.

Kroeber commented in her book on Ishi that the "stubborn and enduring land of California has changed less than its people." Nowhere is this more true than in the Ishi Country. Lacking timber and minerals, these remote foothills have resisted the roads and towns prevalent elsewhere in the Sierra Nevada. Much of the region is as wild and pristine as when the Yahi roamed the canyons and ridgetops.

The Ishi Country is one of the few portions of the Sierra Nevada foothills that remain undeveloped under public ownership. Much of the area is administered by the U.S. Forest Service as part of the Lassen National Forest. About 65,000 acres of the Ishi Country have been identified as "roadless" and currently are being studied by the Forest Service for potential designation as units of the National Wilderness Preservation System. If passed, current legislation in Congress would designate about 41,000 acres as wilderness. Mill and Deer creeks are being studied by the Forest Service as possible candidates for the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Depending upon actions of Congress, the Forest Service will be making decisions concerning the future management of the Ishi Country when it completes a comprehensive land management plan for the Lassen National Forest in 1986.

Wilderness preservation of the Ishi Country competes with other current and potential uses. Uncontrolled off-road vehicle use by hunters or joyriders has scarred many of the ridgetops and resulted in the illegal destruction of many archeological and cultural sites. Plans for hydroelectric development on Mill and Antelope creeks have been set aside for now, but the free-flowing nature of these streams is a prime target for utilities and developers. Use of herbi-

Springtime in

By Steve



Mill Creek

cides to clear "decadent" brush caused by years of overly strict fire control policies, all in the name of "enhancing" wildlife habitat and cattle feed, is a potential threat. Incompatible and competing uses such as these supposedly will be "balanced" in the upcoming forest plan.

The wilderness and recreational attributes of the Ishi Country are as varied as the region's terrain. Wildlife species inhabiting the Ishi Country include bald eagle, peregrine falcon, cougar, bobcat, black bear, numerous small mammals and birds, and a herd of wild horses. The region also provides critical winter habitat for the Tehama deer herd, the largest black-tail deer herd in the state.

Perhaps one of the most unique resources of the area is the salmon, steelhead, and wild trout fishery in the free-flowing waters of Antelope, Mill, and Deer creeks. These streams provide vital spawning habitat for the endangered spring salmon run of the Sacramento River. The undammed and undiverted



Graham Meadow

Photo by Dave Izzo

Ishi County

Evans

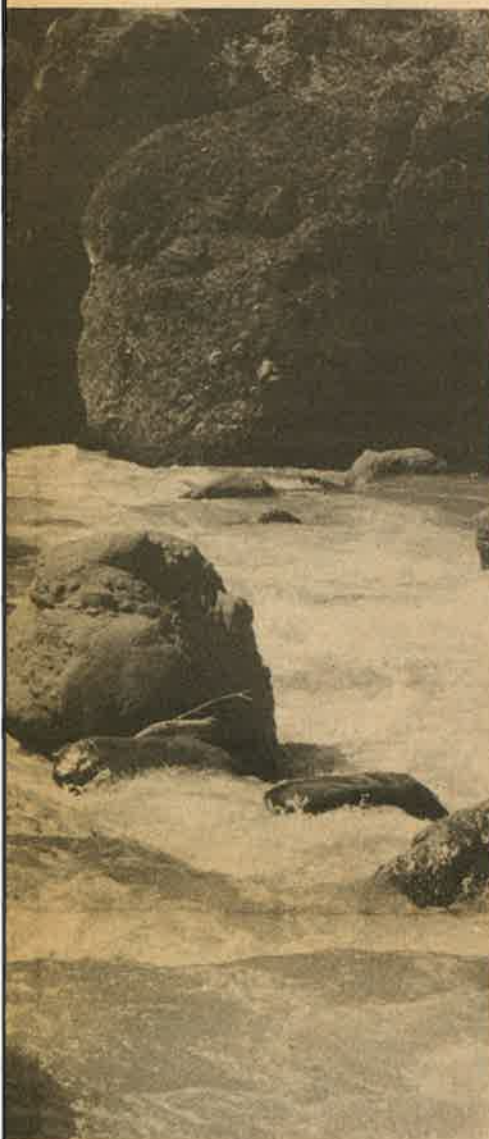


Photo by Jim Eaton

nature of these creeks also sustains healthy populations of native rainbow and steelhead trout.

The Ishi Country provides unlimited opportunities for a wide variety of primitive recreation experiences. Weekend recreationists can take their choice of easy to difficult day hikes and backpack trips, while the truly fanatic wilderness lover can disappear for weeks. Several campgrounds on major access roads provide convenient base camps and trailheads for the longer holidays and vacations.

Whether hiking along the creeks or savoring a cliffside vista, even the most casual visitor discovers that the Ishi Country is permeated with the unbroken spirit of the extinct Yahi tribe. By studying the natural history and cultural lore of the land, it is possible to grasp, however faintly, the thread of Yahi existence, how they lived and died in harmony with the land that sustained them.

In the Ishi Country, we have the opportunity not only to preserve and enjoy the unique wilderness

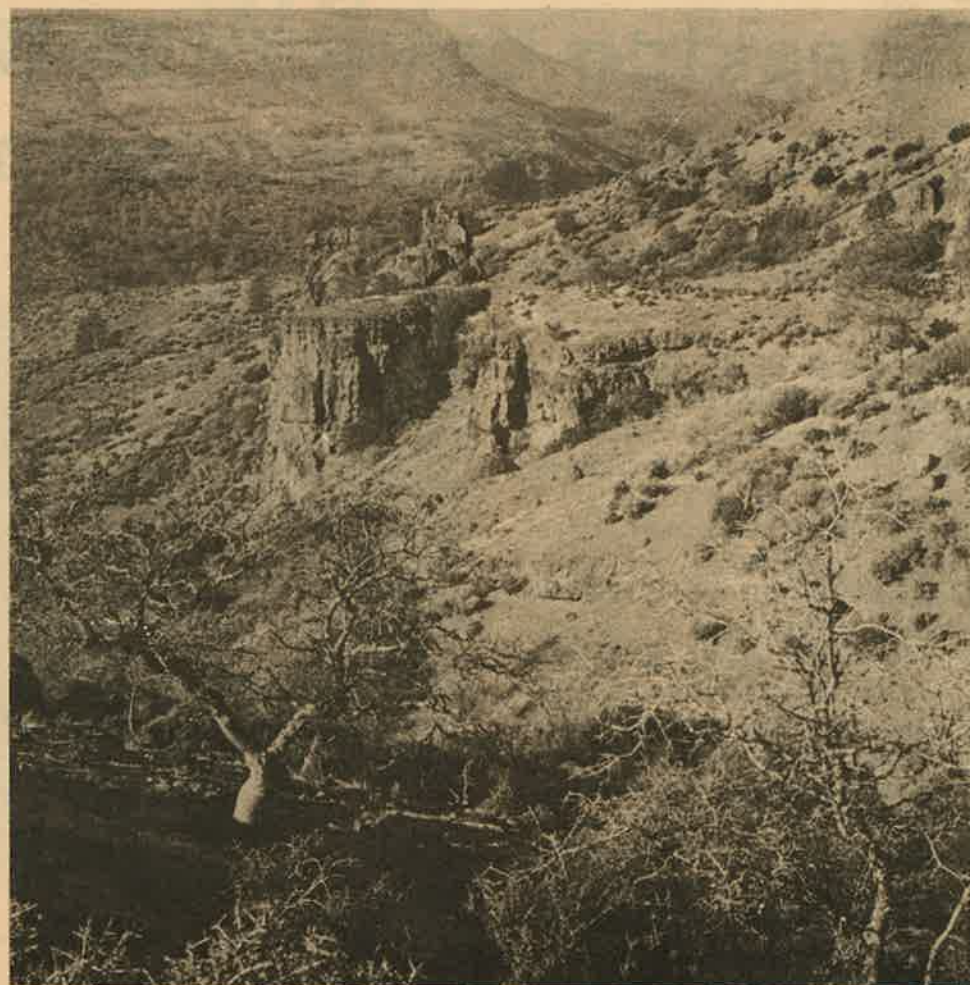
landscape; we also can save a physical remnant of the culture our predecessors destroyed.

Suggestions for outings in the Ishi Country:

Antelope Creek: Perhaps the most accessible region of the Ishi Country, the Antelope Creek drainage offers easy trails for weekend day hikes and backpack trips during all seasons. Access is via Red Bluff, then east on Highway 36. Turn off on Ponderosa Way at the small town of Paynes Creek and follow the all-weather roads marked on the Lassen National Forest map to the McClure trailhead. The McClure trail drops 120 feet down to the North Fork Antelope Creek. Well-marked and fairly well-maintained trails on the north and south forks of Antelope Creek provide numerous overnight camp spots and plenty of access for anglers. An easy four-mile round trip day hike to McClure Place, a historic homestead site, provides an excellent introduction to the Ishi Country.

Mill Creek: A longer drive south on Ponderosa Way from Paynes Creek (and past the McClure trailhead turnoff) will eventually lead you to Mill Creek canyon. The road past Antelope Creek generally is usable all year, but travelers should use caution during stormy weather as the shallow water crossing at Antelope Creek can be tricky. All other creek crossings have bridges. Farther down the road, the precipitous drop into Mill Creek canyon can be narrow and rocky, but generally safe and passable to standard vehicles. The seven-unit Black Rock campground located at the Ponderosa Way bridge on Mill Creek provides an excellent trailhead and base camp for day hikers and backpackers.

Visitors have their choice of hiking the 18-mile trail upstream to Hole In The Ground campground (an easy one-way backpack if you can handle the car shuttle) or hiking ten miles downstream to the National Forest boundary in the lower foothills. Upstream, the visitor slowly walks out of the oak-savanna ecosystem into mixed pine and fir forests. Downstream hiking leads you into the heart of the old Yahi domain in the oak and brush-covered canyon of lower Mill Creek. Perhaps the most well-known Yahi cultural site, Kingsley Cave, is accessible by a short cross-country trek from the lower Mill Creek trail. Unfortunately, the cultural value of the site has been de-



View from the Steamboat Trail

Photo by Nancy Morton

stroyed by illegal artifact hunting and easy access by off-road vehicles from the ridgetop. Treks along the Mill Creek trail, whether upstream or downstream, are better suited for the occasional three-day weekend or longer holidays.

Deer Creek: Upper Deer Creek is easily accessible by Highway 32 east of Chico. The trail which heads downstream from the first bridge crossing on the highway is about five miles long, offering unlimited opportunities for day hikes, swimming, and fishing. Wilson Cove at the trail's end is an excellent destination for an overnight trip. Lower Deer Creek is accessible via Cohasset from Chico, but the road usually is impassable to standard vehicles in the winter. If you decide to risk your automobile anyway, the lower Deer Creek trail, which leads downstream from the Ponderosa Way bridge crossing, offers some of the most spectacular scenery in the entire Ishi Country. Numerous campsites, easy trail hiking, and the deep, clear pools of Deer Creek, filled with wily trout, make the difficult road access to the trailhead well worthwhile.

Tips for trips: Poison oak is rampant in the Ishi Country so take precautions. Snakes have never bothered me, but you do occasionally confront a sleepy rattler sunning itself on the trail. Hike the Ishi Country in the spring, fall, or winter. Any midsummer visit should be limited to swim hikes as it often is hotter in these low

foothills than it is in the Sacramento Valley. Salmon are protected from fishing in Mill and Deer creeks, but the rainbow and steelhead are fair game if you can lure them to your hook.

Do not hike in the Ishi Country during hunting season. Marauding bands of hunters in jeeps who are doing their best to emulate old Rat Patrol reruns can ruin your wilderness experience and endanger your health. Much of the Ishi Country is grazed by cattle so drinking water should be purified. Springtime creek crossings can be tricky. Campfires require fire permits from the Forest Service. Archeological and cultural sites are protected by law. Any taking of artifacts not only is illegal, it's cultural rape. Please, take only photographs and leave only footprints.

Maps: The Panther Springs and Butte Meadows topographic quadrangles, which cover most of the Ishi Country, are available at most local outdoor equipment stores. The Lassen National Forest map, an invaluable tool for identifying current roads and private and public lands, is available by mail for \$1.00 from Lassen National Forest, 707 Nevada Street, Susanville, CA 96130. Ask the Forest Service to place your name on its public information mailing list concerning the planning for the Ishi Country.

Steve Evans is a Chico activist and is president of the California Wilderness Coalition.

Speaking out for the Mountain Lion and Wilderness in California



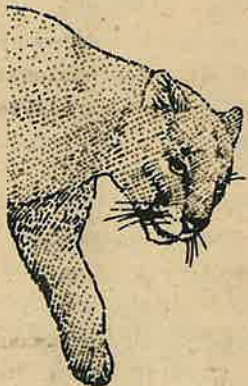
by Mike McWherter

In California the mountain lion lives in such diverse areas as the forested regions of the Sierra Nevada, the wet north coast ranges, and the dry low deserts near the Mexican border. Some areas of California which contain the highest densities of mountain lions also are wilderness areas.

The highest density of mountain lions in the state occurs in the coastal mountains of Monterey County where the Ventana Wilderness provides a setting free from disturbances of development. Just south, and also in the coastal range, is the San Rafael Wilderness -- another area of high mountain lion density.

The mountain lion's greatest stronghold in the Sierra Nevada is in the southern part of the range. Yosemite, Sequoia, and Kings Canyon national parks and their surrounding wilderness areas protect the mountain lion's habitat there. In northern California the Marble Mountain and Yolla Bolly-Middle Eel wilderness areas also have high lion densities.

However, most of the lion's habitat in California is not designated wilderness and, unfortunately, not enough of it is likely to become so. Gradual reduction of mountain lion habitat throughout California is recognized as a problem by the California Department of Fish and Game.



Under conditions of continued and expanding loss of critical lion habitat, reduction in populations would be expected. The more lion habitat that is designated wilderness, the better it will be for the mountain lion. Although wilderness offers protection of the mountain lion's habitat it does not guarantee that healthy lion populations will exist -- the buffalo existed in a land which was once largely wilderness. We also need wildlife

policies which strongly advocate the mountain lion's protection and preservation.

A LEGISLATIVE HISTORY OF THE MOUNTAIN LION

Today the mountain lion in California is a protected species. But only 70 years ago, in 1907, the California Legislature classified it as a bountied predator because it preyed upon livestock. Since then it has been reclassified a number of times. In 1963, the bounty was rescinded and the lion was classified a nonprotected mammal. In 1969 it was reclassified as a big game animal.

The first regulated hunting season occurred during the 1970-71 license year (July 1 through June 30) when license tag sales totalled 4,726, and 83 lions were taken. A one-lion limit was in effect from November 15, 1971, through February 29, 1972. That season tag sales totalled 227, and 35 lions were taken. Game animal status gave the mountain lion a some protection because limited seasons and a bag limit were imposed.

In 1971 the California Legislature passed a bill which directed the Department of Fish and Game to study the mountain lion population of the state. The bill also changed the status of the mountain lion from a game animal to a protected nongame animal and established a four-year moratorium on its sport hunting. Under this law lions only could be killed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and only after an investigation confirms that the lion has been killing livestock. The investigation must begin within 48 hours after the incident.

The Legislature extended the moratorium until January 1, 1983. Recently the moratorium has been extended until 1986 with some weakening of protection for the mountain lion. Farmers and ranchers currently are allowed greater freedom to eliminate troublesome lions.

The Yuma mountain lion, *Felis concolor browni*, differs slightly from other lions in California and is considered a separate subspecies or race. It occurs in the Colorado Desert area of Riverside and Imperial counties, and possibly in some of the mountain ranges in eastern San Bernardino County. The riparian

flood plain forest of the lower Colorado River has been greatly diminished in this century as a result of man's activities. Dr. Daniel F. Williams of California State University at Stanislaus was given a contract by the California Department of Fish and Game to study this subspecies. In his study he recommended that all mountain lions in the California desert areas continue to be fully protected and suggested state and federal "endangered" status for this subspecies.



Photo by Mike McWherter

A NATURAL HISTORY OF THE MOUNTAIN LION

The mountain lion has the largest range of any native mammal in the western hemisphere. It has been seen as far north as British Columbia and as far south as Patagonia. At least 15 subspecies or races are recognized. Mountain lions were absent in South America until the Panama land bridge was reestablished in the Pleistocene (about one million years ago), a time when the sabre-toothed tiger also entered South America only eventually to become extinct.

In the eastern United States the range of the mountain lion has been considerably reduced in the last century. Much of the previous forest cover, once harboring great numbers of deer, has been converted into farmlands. Also the bounty system in the East has been particularly harsh on lions. They have all but disappeared east of the Alleghany Mountains but may still be found in the Appalachian ranges. Mountain lions have fared better in the mountainous regions of the West where the Rocky, Cascade, and Sierra Nevada mountain ranges provide refuge.

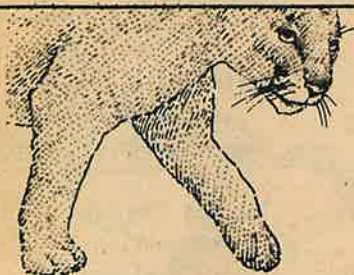
The mountain lion is an elusive creature seldom seen by people ex-

cept when treed by dogs. It is no wonder that its numbers are so difficult to determine. Techniques used to determine its populations rely on estimates based upon the frequency of observation of its tracks. In 1982 the California Department of Fish and Game estimated the state population to be between 2,400 and 3,000 animals. Previously, in 1977, the Department had conservatively estimated the population to be 2,400 animals. In an independent study, also in 1977, Defenders of Wildlife and the National Audubon Society contracted with the late Dr. Carl Koford of the University of California at Berkeley to make an estimate. His estimate was 1,000 animals with about 15,000 square miles of lion habitat. The Department estimates the current existing habitat of the mountain lion in California to be about 70,000 square miles.

Using the Department's current estimate of 2,400-3,000 animals and existing habitat figures it was calculated that the state population of mountain lions could not exceed 1,000 additional animals. There is an upper limit to the number of lions which a given area can support. The Department estimates that this upper limit is about 10 animals per 100 square miles as found in Monterey County.

In the western United States the mountain lion is commonly called the puma. Because it is such a widespread creature it has acquired many different names; so many that it is hard to believe that it is the same animal. Some of its other names are: cougar, panther, painter (corruption of "panther"), deer





"ATTACKS ON PEOPLE BY MOUNTAIN LIONS ARE EXTREMELY RARE"

tiger, Mexican lion, and catamount (from "cat of the mountain").

The word "panther," commonly used in the eastern United States by early settlers, is somewhat of a misnomer since "panther" is really another name for the leopard, a large cat more closely related to the lions of Africa. "Mountain lion" is a common usage in the western United States. "Cougar" is a Brazilian name and "puma" is

Within the genus Panthera are the largest cats: lions, tigers, leopards, and jaguars. These cats roar but are unable to purr. The two other genera of the cat family are Lynx and Arinonyx (cheetahs). The mountain lion is of the species concolor and thus its scientific name is Felis concolor.

Except for the larger jaguar, Panthera onca, the mountain lion is the biggest cat of North America. A

lion, as it drops on its prey from a tree or rocky ledge, is enough to bring its victim to the ground. Its great strength makes man its only serious enemy.

Attacks on people by mountain lions are extremely rare. It prefers to avoid all contact with them. However, the female will bravely defend her young. If you are in the same area with a lion it will probably know about your presence and will soon disappear in the forest cover. Many of us probably have been seen by lions, even though we have never seen them. There are individuals who have lived all their lives in mountain lion country and have seen only signs of the big cat.

The mountain lion is a large animal able to move swiftly and quietly as it stalks its prey. It will kill deer that are weak, old, or sick. Sometimes mountain sheep are included in its diet as well as smaller animals like rabbits, marmots, foxes, and raccoons. But deer are the mountain lion's main diet, and it may kill from 50 to 75 a year.

When deer are not plentiful mountain lions will even take skunks and porcupines. To the dismay of ranchers, farmers, and cattlemen, lions also will take domestic sheep, hogs, and young horses.

Although mating may take place any time of year, the young generally are born in the spring. Females begin to breed between two and three years of age. Factors such as weather and available food are strong influences on mating behavior.

The male is mostly a solitary

animal. If present when the kittens are born he will be driven away by the female as he may kill the young. Males will fight other males for territory or for a female in estrus.

Three months after mating, between two and five young are born. They are born with their eyes closed, ears undeveloped, and sense of smell absent. At this point the mother's purring has an interesting homing function. Her purring is felt as a vibration by the kittens who approach and immediately begin to nurse. When the kittens begin nursing, the mother stops purring.

By two months the kittens will be following her on hunts where they learn skills which will enable them to one day go off on their own. In the meantime they will take advantage of their stay with mother and spend long hours playing, jumping, and tumbling about with one another.

In the wild, mountain lions seldom live to be more than eight years old. However, in captivity they may live to be over fifteen years.

Few of us will ever see a mountain lion in the wild. It is a secretive creature that depends upon its stealth, speed, and cunning to survive in a world which often is hostile to its existence. With the grizzly now extinct in California the mountain lion may well represent the essence of wilderness in the state.

The future of the mountain lion in California will depend not only upon our understanding and appreciation of this majestic predator but also on wide public support of wildlife and on land use policies which advocate its protection and preservation.

Mike McWherter is a professional photographer and author who lives in Oxnard.



likely of Peruvian origin.

Mountain lions are of the order Carnivora which includes all cats (domestic and wild), dogs, bears, and wolves. Members of Carnivora are so named because of their penchant for meat eating.

All cats of the world belong to the cat family Felidae. Cats of the genus Felis include mountain lions, ocelots, and domestic cats. These cats purr but are unable to roar.

large full-grown mountain lion may have a body length over five feet and a tail over three feet, and weigh as much as 200 pounds. This is about half the size of the African lion. However, in California weights averaged much lower.

Fifteen adult males from Monterey County averaged about 106 pounds, and the average weight of eight females was about 73 pounds. The sheer weight of a mountain

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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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