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Sierra Uplift

Newsletter of the Sierra Nevada Group of the Sierra Club
November - December 2003

Issue 7, Number 6

General Meeting

The Sierra Nevada Group of the Sierra Club

Friday, November 21, 2003

Yuba County Main Library - Community Room
303 2nd St, Marysville

7:00pm

Mike Painter will discuss Utah as a leading example in the broader citizens wilderness movement that has taken off across the West in the last few years, as citizens have recognized that government agencies and legislators cannot necessarily be relied on to provide permanent protection for wildlands. He will illustrate this discussion with some wonderful wilderness slides.

Mike is a member of the Sierra Club's National Utah Wilderness Task Force and coordinator of Californians for Western Wilderness. CalUWild ([www .caluwild.org](http://www.caluwild.org)) is a statewide organization that promotes and facilitates citizen involvement in wilderness and other public lands management.

We know that it is difficult for our distant members in Yuba and Sutter Counties to come all the way to Nevada City for our regular General Meetings - so this time we are coming to your neighborhood instead. We are looking forward to meeting with you and sharing this inspiring program .

Bring your appetites - we'll bring dessert.!



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Our Newsletter Editor, Ed Lynch, is moving to Southern California and we are searching for a replacement for him. The Sierra Nevada Group's newsletter is published 6 times a year. The editor is responsible for reminding the Group of the bimonthly deadline, assembling the various articles into newsletter form, and sending it in electronic form to the printer. Our circulation person, Rachel Hilleman, and her steadfast crew takes it from there and gets it folded and mailed.

Ed will provide the information that the replacement will need to take over the job. The National Sierra Club is also offering a free training program for newsletter/Web editors Dec. 4-7 in Phoenix, and will pay for the airfare, hotel and most of the meals.

Please call Carolyn at 477-1320 if you can help us keep our members informed .

Chair Chatter

by Carolyn Hinshaw

"WISH YOU WERE HERE"

I spent the first two weeks of September participating in one of the Sierra Club's International Outings. We hiked The West Highland Way - Scotland's first and most famous long distance route. We traveled 95 miles in nine days through the glens and straths and lochs and towns of the Highlands. It was a panorama of green, moist with low hanging clouds. The emptiness of the countryside, the sweeping views of the hillsides and moors were such a pleasant change from congested California that I wanted to stay and savor this slowerpace awhile longer.

The West Highland Way passes from the lowlands across the Highland Boundary Fault, and on into the Scottish Highlands. Much of the Way follows old drove roads along which highlanders herded their cattle and sheep to market in the lowlands; military roads - built by troops to help control the Jacobite Clans; and old coaching roads and disused railway lines. It links Milngavie, just north of Glasgow, to Fort William - from the outskirts of Scotland's largest city to the foot of its highest mountain following the east shore of its largest freshwater lake, Loch Lomond. We traveled in September because the Way passes through a lot of farmer's fields and much of it is closed during lambing in April, early May, and the infamous midges of Scotland are not as active in September. Along the way we traveled through the incredible scenery of the Loch Lomond and the Trossach's National Park, Scotland's first National Park, officially opened in 2002.

We were a group of eleven, from all over the United States. It was fun to meet people from other states and talk about their involvement with the Sierra

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Conservation Committee Report

by Karen Cox



YUBA RIVER CLEANUP. A number of you missed one of the best events of the year, the Yuba River Cleanup. This year we were assigned our regular spot, Langs Crossing. We were joined by the Audubon group, folks from Reno and assorted others. The cleanup takes place every September and so far we have had beautiful weather every time. It couldn't be simpler. Everyone is supplied with plastic bags and heads out on a treasure hunt for bottles, cans, auto parts, old socks etc. Its a good excuse to be outdoors, to do something helpful and worthwhile, and to enjoy the food and camaraderie.

SB 810. Governor Davis recently signed the first significant forestry reform legislation since the state forestry act was passed in 1973. SB810, co-sponsored by the Sierra Club, gives regional Water Quality Control Boards the power to stop a logging plan if it will not meet their standards for protecting water quality. Most of the effect of the new law will be felt on the coast rather than in our area of the sierras because the law is triggered by whether or not the watershed is in an impaired condition. I believe we only have one or two small areas that are so classified. What I find really encouraging about this new legislation is that the direct relationship between logging and water quality is recognized. It should be self evident that logging on very steep slopes above waterways will affect in some manner the water and the wildlife dependent on it.

COTTONWOOD. The Tahoe National Forest is now projecting a decision date for the Cottonwood Herbicide Project for March, 2004. That means that we should be seeing the draft SEIS sometime before Christmas. In the meantime the Forest Issues Group (with Sierra Nevada Group support) continues their project of monitoring the area and the project.

Endangered species. Contrary to the Bush administration's claims that the Endangered Species Act is "broken" two recent reports by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service show that species with critical habitat are twice as likely to be improving as species

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Review of “Flowers From Fire”
\$17.50 CD-Rom
by Photographer Don Jacobson
Fundraiser for the Forest Issues Group



“By forces seemingly antagonistic and destructive, Nature accomplishes her beneficent designs”.

observed John Muir, over 100 years ago. While the mainstream media is busy fanning our fears about forest fire, it's important to remind ourselves that Nature is infinitely wiser and more complex than even journalists might imagine. While those fears may be well-placed along the urban-wildland interface, the issue that never makes the headlines is the important role that wildfire plays as an agent for renewal, re-growth, and succession. From the ashes of even the most devastating fires, a rebirth inevitably follows—often with a riot of color rarely seen on the forest floor. This burst of creativity has been captured in a series of eloquent photographs by local glass artist, photographer, and forest activist Don Jacobson. The CD-Rom “Flowers From Fire” contains 72 art-quality, high-resolution color images of the flash of wildflowers that germinated in the ashes of the 2001 Red Star Fire in Duncan Canyon, upper North Fork American River watershed.

The images, which include alluring wildflower close-ups and bold washes of wildflower color at a landscape-scale, are excellent for printing at 8x11 or larger. Don't be bashful—try zooming in for a closer examination of the flower's reproductive parts, characteristics that are often diagnostic in wildflower identification.

The CD also includes a collection of 40 images as screensavers (PC only), which are easily downloaded from the folder, as well as a fairly complete plant list for the area in 2002. Navigate first to “Instruction Sheet” for a quick background description and instructions for downloading the screensavers. A free photo viewer for PC is provided, should you need one. In the folder titled “The Burn”, you will find several intriguing photos of the low intensity burn areas and large-scale landscape photos to get a sense of the mixed burn pattern, keeping in mind that burns of all sizes and intensity are important for maintaining forest biodiversity—not just low intensity fires. The size, shape, and intensity of fires produce different effects on the landscape and its many inhabitants.

Never mind that the CD is a bargain at \$17.50, (+ \$2.50 for shipping) it also comes with the satisfaction of knowing that 50% of the proceeds will be contributed to one of the areas most effective conservation groups, the Forest Issues Group (FIG). It's also a great way to acknowledge Don's remarkable contribution to this community, including this generous gift of images, 19 years of service as a forest activist, and as the creator and host of the popular KVMR folk music program “Long & Dusty Road”.

Carolyn Chainey-Davis, California Native Plant Society

To purchase a CD, contact:
 Don Rivenes, chairperson, Forest Issues Group
 P.O. Box 1334
 Nevada City, CA 95959
rivenes@infostations.com

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Club. We stayed in B&B's or hotels each night and a travel service carried our luggage from stop to stop - so we were able to hike carrying just our day packs and raingear. Our leaders were incredibly organized and very personable. The group seemed to mesh well, the weather cooperated (the barman in Balmaha, one of the places we stayed, said that Scotland was having its nicest weather in twelve years) and we really didn't have to don our raingear until the last 4 miles of the trip.

The last day of our trip we traveled by train from Fort William to the little fishing village of Mallaig and took the ferry over to the Isle of Skye and visited the Armadale Castle Gardens and The Museum of the Isles, The museum tells the complex history of the Scottish Highlands, and if you have Scottish ancestors who emigrated to the US, as I do, it is quite spellbinding.

I highly recommend participating in one of the Club's International Outings. If your experience is as enjoyable as mine you will have a wonderful trip. I think I left my heart in the Highlands - I might have to go back and retrieve it.

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without it. The Bush administration has opposed the designation of critical habitat areas because large landscapes can be protected rather than just individual species. The reports were submitted to Congress in June of this year but we had not heard about them until this month. Dr. Jeffrey Rachlinski of Cornell University and Dr. Martin Taylor of the Center for Biological Diversity analyzed the data in the two Fish and Wildlife Service reports and published a study which may be viewed at: www.biologicaldiversity.org/swobd/programs/policy/ch/index.html.



**Sunday, January 4, 2003
Cross Country Ski**

If we get enough snow and enough people (4 minimum) we will do a moderate cross country ski outing wherever the snow is good. Meet at Rood Center at 9am, return around 4 pm. Bring water, lunch and ski gear. Call Jean (477-7902) before 1/1 to sign up.

SNG Outings

**Winter Outings
December**

Tuesdays or Thursdays

Snowshoeing, Down Hill or X-country Skiing
(Snow permitting)

Three or more persons (1 car pool).

Call G B at 265-2432.

Leave message with preferences:

(1) Date, (2) Type, (3) No. in party, and

(4) Contact telephone

"All participants on Sierra Club outings are required to sign a standard liability waiver. If you would like to read the liability waiver before you chose to participate on an outing, please go to: <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/>, or contact the Outings Department at (415) 977-5528 for a printed version."

Once there were pine....

When human beings first came to settle in Scotland the land was draped with great forests of birch, oak and, in particular, pine. Scotland's true native pine, *Pinus sylvestris*, has short needles of a distinctive bottle green and its boughs are covered with a scaly bark that is a marvelous handsome red. When growing naturally it is a tree of great individual character and beauty, vastly different from the regimented ranks of identical bolt-upright squads beloved by commercial foresters. Now less than 1% of the original forest remains to provide a refuge for rare species such as capercaillie, crested tit, Scottish crossbill and wildcat,

The destruction of the Scottish forests began during the bronze age when men started clearing most of the birch forests that then covered much of the island. That was about 4,000 years ago. Two thousand years later, raiders in narrow ships from Scandinavia, the Vikings, came sailing up the sea-lochs and repeatedly set fire to the forests to drive out the local people. When, at last, some degree of law was established over these wild lands and tribes, the felling of trees was continued and intensified, first to deny refuge to wolves and bears and bandits, then to provide timber to fuel the furnaces of iron smelters. Later still, men came up from the south with sheep and set fire to the forests, sometimes a whole valley at a time, just to create grazing for their flocks. So today the hillsides and moors of Scotland are treeless over vast areas. Heather and bracken stretch as far as the eye can see.

The Scottish Highlands have lost not only most of their trees but most of their people. The land was never very fertile, for the Ice Age glaciers scraped most of the soil away. Even so, until the 18th century, the tribal chieftains

managed to maintain small armies of tartan-clad, sword-wielding, cattle-keeping clansmen, together with their families. The chiefs, however, lost their power in the last large-scale fighting to take place on British soil, during the brutal battles of the Jacobite Revolutions. Eventually many chieftains abandoned life in the Highlands for the comfort of cities and became absentee landlords, ignorant or careless of their tenants needs and welfare. Others sold their lands to men who, wishing to increase its profitability, concluded that the easiest way was to evict the crofters who had lived there for many generations and replace them with sheep. Thus began the shameful Clearances. The Highlanders, sometimes by force, sometimes from despair, left their homeland. Some migrated to the coast and took to fishing. Many more emigrated to build new homes and lives in distant places. The Highlands today are wild, little forested, and mostly unpopulated.



October 16, 2003

Down and Dirty: Airborne Ozone Can Alter Forest Soil

The industrial pollutant ozone, long known to be harmful to many kinds of plants, can also affect the very earth in which they grow.

Researchers at Michigan Technological University and the North Central Research Station of the USDA Forest Service have discovered that ozone can reduce soil carbon formation—a measure of the amount of organic matter being added to the soil. Their findings are published in the Oct. 16 issue of the journal *Nature*.

The scientists exposed forest stands to increased levels of two atmospheric pollutants, ozone and carbon dioxide. Soil carbon formation dropped off dramatically in the plots fumigated with a mix of ozone and carbon dioxide compared to carbon dioxide alone.

“This research shows that changes in atmospheric chemistry can cascade through the forest and affect soils,” says Dr. Kurt Pregitzer, a coauthor of the *Nature* paper and a professor in Michigan Tech’s School of Forest Resources and Environmental Science. “Reductions we have observed in plant growth under elevated ozone appear to result in similar reductions in soil carbon formation.”

The findings could have implications for the health of forests in areas with high levels of ozone, says Dr. Wendy Loya, the lead author of the paper and a postdoctoral research scientist at Michigan Tech. “Under normal conditions, forest litter, which is made up of fallen leaves, twigs and dead roots, decomposes and releases carbon that is then stored in the soil,” she says. “Under conditions of elevated ozone, the amount of soil carbon formed is reduced.”

Because increased carbon dioxide tends to cause plants to grow more quickly and take in more carbon from the atmosphere, some scientists and policymakers have speculated that forests could become “carbon sinks,” absorbing carbon dioxide and mitigating its greenhouse effects.

However, the soil in the plots exposed to an ozone/carbon dioxide mixture gained only half

the carbon as plots fumigated with carbon dioxide alone. Thus, plants and soils may be less able to clean the air of excess carbon dioxide when ozone levels are high.

Ozone pollution occurs at levels known to be toxic to both plants and people in many parts of the United States and throughout the world. It is formed when chemicals produced by burning fossil fuels and from industrial processes react in the presence of sunlight and warm temperatures.

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Monthly Meetings

Conservation and Management Committee

Meets every 4th Monday at 6:30 p.m.
at the SYRCL office at 216 Main St.,
Nevada City.

Address Changes

Send old and new addresses to
Sierra Club Member Services
P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80328-2968

Web Connections

Find national and local Sierra Club news by visiting
these web sites:
<http://www.sierraclub.org> and
<http://www.motherlode.sierraclub.org/sierranevada>

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