



Tehipite Topics

March/April 2006 ♣ Vol. 52, No. 3

www.tehipite.sierraclub.org



Dear Members and Friends of the Tehipite Chapter,

by Gerald Vinnard, Tehipite Chapter Chair

Once again, it is time for our annual fund-raising campaign. Last year's fund-raising efforts were very successful, and on behalf of our Executive Committee I want to assure you that your contributions most definitely made a difference in the efforts of your Chapter and your Club.

Your Chapter's Conservation Committee and its Executive Committee were very active during the past year, and I am sure that the coming year will be just as eventful. I wish to take this opportunity to bring you up to date on just a few of your Chapter's efforts on your behalf.

We do not need to be reminded that air quality is one of our valley's most serious problems. Last year, your Chapter authorized two lawsuits against regulatory agencies to enforce compliance with applicable statutes and regulations. One, against the California Air Resources Board, has been favorably settled, with full recovery of costs. The other, against the Environmental Protection Agency, remains pending.

One of our most potent weapons against polluted air is an informed and aroused public. Last year, we were invited to participate with the National Sierra Club in the funding of a permanent staff position, based in Fresno, to marshal public support for the steps required to improve the quality of our air. Your Executive Committee voted to commit \$15,000 to this effort. The process of selecting the individual who will fill this position is now underway.

We closely monitor developments in the National Parks and Monuments in our area. As part of that effort, we authorized and supported an action, filed in San Francisco, seeking protection against increased logging in the Giant Sequoia National Monument. A hearing on cross-motions for summary judgment in that action is presently set for hearing on April 21 in the United States District Court in San Francisco.

See Fund Appeal, page 4

April General Meeting

Wednesday, April 19th at 7:00 P.M.
University of California Center
550 E. Shaw Ave., Fresno
(across from Fashion Fair)

“John Muir’s Continuing Inspiration”
presented by Harold Wood

Harold Wood is Chair of the Sierra Club John Muir Education Committee and webmaster of the World Wide Web’s leading website about John Muir at www.JohnMuir.info.

John Muir is as relevant today as he was 100 years ago. Many of today’s environmental issues—and even art themes like the California State Quarter—have Muir to thank for their inspiration. Come learn how John Muir remains an inspiration today for National Parks, environmental issues, and the arts.



Dinner Date with the Speaker

Meet at the Imperial Gardens Restaurant at 5:15 for our monthly no-host Dinner Date with the Speaker, an opportunity to interact with fellow Sierrans.

6640 N. Blackstone, east side, just south of Herndon.

Conservation & Executive Committees

Wednesday, April 12th at 7:00 P.M.

University of California Center, 550 E. Shaw Ave., Fresno



Tehipite Chapter
P.O. Box 5396
Fresno, California 93755-5396

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Chapter phone(559) 229-4031
Web . . . www.tehipite.sierraclub.org

Officers

Chapter Chair

Gerald D. Vinnard . . (559) 431-5780
..... gvinnard@cvip.net

Chapter Vice-Chair

JoAnne Armstrong . .(209) 726-0636
..... sierrafer@peoplepc.com

Chapter Secretary

Aimee Leyva (559) 438-867
..... aimee_leyva@yahoo.com

Chapter Treasurer

Joe Ruff (559) 436-4880
..... 2tehipite@sbcglobal.net

Executive Committee Members

William Fjellbo (559) 642-4511
..... jbfjellbo@sierratel.com

Don Gaede (559) 434-5138
..... gaede80@sbcglobal.net
June Gill (559) 432-5344
..... juneg21@sbcglobal.net
Ron Mackie (559) 683-0293
..... rmackie@sierratel.com
John Flaherty (209) 742-4668
..... kjohnflaherty@yahoo.com

Chapter Committee Chairs

Council of Club Leaders Delegate

JoAnne Armstrong . .(209) 726-0636

Awards

Gerald Vinnard (559) 431-9606

Hospitality

Rae Marx (559) 641-7589

Tehipite Topics Editors / Website

Marcia & John Rasmussen
..... (559) 332-2419
..... Rasmussen@BigBaldy.com

Membership/Hospitality

Rae Marx (559) 641-7589

Membership/Newsletter Distribution

Marian Orvis (559) 226-0145

Outings and Outings Leader Training

Richard Sloan (559) 696-2971
..... RiverRich1509@aol.com

Political Committee

William Fjelbo 559) 642-4511

Programs

Heather Anderson . . (559) 434-2510

.....ha062@cvip.net

Conservation Committee

Conservation Chair

Heather Anderson . . (559) 434-2510

Air Quality / Transportation / Global Warming

Kevin Hall (559) 227-6421
..... hallmos@aol.com

Kings Canyon National Park / Giant Sequoia National Monument / Sequoia Forest

John Rasmussen (559) 332-2419
..... John@BigBaldy.com

Sierra National Forest

Tom Eliason (559) 439-7195
..... tomeliason@comcast.net

Water

Chris Acree (559) 709-4913
..... chris.acree@comcast.net

San Joaquin River

Richard Sloan (559) 696-2971

Wilderness/Desert

Ron Mackie (559) 683-0293
..... rmackie@sierratel.com

Yosemite National Park

George Whitmore . . (559) 229-5808
..... geowhit1954@comcast.net

CNCC Delegate

Heather Anderson . . (559) 434-2510

Merced Group

Sierra Club
Box 387
Merced, CA 95341

Group Chair

JoAnne Armstrong. .(209) 726-0636
.....sierrafer@peoplepc.com

Group Vice-Chair

Rod Webster (209) 723-4747
.....rwebster@elite.net

Group Treasurer

Dave Tucker (209) 384-1354

Group Secretary

Annette Allsup (209) 723-5152

Member-at-Large

Jule Biesiada. juleb13@msn.com

Conservation Chair

JoAnne Armstrong. .(209) 726-0636
.....sierrafer@peoplepc.com

Publications

Rod Webster (209) 723-4747

Agriculture

Charlie Magneson . . (209) 394-7045

Membership

Linda Lagace (209) 384-1354

Publicity

Rod Webster (209) 723-4747

Population

Tammy Johnson (559) 665-5507

Merced Group

Conservation and Executive Committee Meeting

Thursday, April 6th at 7:00 P.M. at Rod Webster's home, 345 E. 20th St., Merced.

Conservation meeting is first and can last 30-40 minutes. Anyone with an interest in local, state or national conservation issues is welcome to attend. Come just to get informed or get as involved as you wish.

April General Meeting

Thursday, April 20th at 7:30 P.M.
Sierra Presbyterian Church, 3603 M St.
(M St. and Yosemite Ave., across from Merced College)

"Your Trip Photos"

presented by You!

Choose 40 slides from one of your favorite nature outings or vacations. At the general meeting on April 20th, we will have five or six people share their adventures with the group. Bring your slides and we'll use a Kodak projector. Email Linda Lagace at llagace@bigvalley.net and let her know your topic and how many slides you have, so she can develop our program for that night.

Outings

Thursday June 15th

Boat Tour of the Port of Oakland

Every year the Port of Oakland offers the public a rare glimpse of its maritime operations. This fun and free tour is offered June through October on the third Thursday of the month.

To reserve a space on the tour, please call or email Linda Lagace at (209) 384-1354, llagace@bigvalley.net. We've reserved 15 spaces on the 1:00 P.M. tour. You can take your personal cars, possibly carpool, or take the 7:45 A.M. Amtrak to Jack London Square. The train arrives at 10:55 A.M. There is a 5:50 P.M. train back from Oakland that arrives in Merced at 8:51 P.M. Check with Amtrak to confirm fares. We will connect those people who wish to carpool.

April Outings to the Vernal Pools

Midmorning Saturday in April

Since the exact timing is dependent upon circumstances such as the weather, we don't have an exact date. But if you are interested, email or telephone Linda Lagace at llagace@bigvalley.net or (209) 384-1354 so we can get your name on a list. Remember to give us your contact information so we can give you the details about this outing.

Additional Outings

Please see the Tehipite Chapter and Yokuts Group of the Mother Lode Chapter listings (Modesto area, motherlode.sierraclub.org/yokuts/index.html.) Phone Rod Webster at (209) 723-4747 if you would like to coordinate carpooling with others from your area.

SAVE OUR WATERWAYS!



photo/Ryan Peek

While the Clean Water Act has been instrumental in keeping millions of tons of sewage and toxic chemicals out of our waterways each year, we are still a long way from cleaning up ALL of the nation's water bodies. The goals of the Clean Water Act are still achievable — all that's missing is the will of our leaders to achieve them. We need to strengthen the enforcement of the Clean Water Act. And we could use your help to do it. **Join the Sierra Club today.**

Join today and receive a FREE Sierra Club Weekender Bag!



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State _____ Zip _____

Phone # _____

email _____

Check enclosed, made payable to Sierra Club
Please charge my MasterCard Visa AMEX

Exp. Date ____/____/____

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Card Number _____

Membership Categories	INDIVIDUAL	JOINT
INTRODUCTORY	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	
REGULAR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$47

Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to *Sierra* magazine and \$1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.

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Enclose check and mail to:
Sierra Club, P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322-2968

Fund Appeal, from page 1

Your Chapter continues to monitor real estate development projects in our area, in an effort to protect our air quality against degradation caused by such developments. To that end, we authorized financial support for one lawsuit against the proposed Fancher Creek project in southwest Fresno last year. That lawsuit, as well as a similar one filed some time ago against a proposed development in southern Madera County, is now close to being settled on terms that will help reduce any negative effects they might have on the quality of our air.

Environmental education and awareness is very important to the protection of our environment. To further that goal, your Chapter awarded three scholarships to recognize high school students for their achievements in the environmental sciences, and authorized an annual \$1,000 environmental scholarship award to a deserving student at the Center for Advanced Research and Technology.

Our membership has always shown a great deal of interest in the protection of our water and our rivers. Last year, your Chapter actively opposed plans to divert water from the San Joaquin River to a proposed development in the Millerton Lake area, and supported the settlement of major litigation in Sacramento to restore flows to that river.

Your contributions supported the monthly printing and distribution of our newsletter, the *Tehipite Topics*, helped make our monthly general meetings and our annual banquet a success, and made it possible for us to send Chapter delegates to the historic Sierra Summit held last August in San Francisco.

Our needs during the coming months will be just as great. Our struggle to protect our air, our water, and our National Parks and Monuments continues unabated. For example, in Merced we are threatened with the development of a large automobile racetrack project that, if completed, could significantly degrade air quality in that area. Our Merced Group expects to actively oppose that project, and will require your support to do so.

None of our efforts and accomplishments would be possible without the support of our members. Once again, I ask you to contribute generously so that we can continue to work together to protect our environment.

Please send your contribution to:

Tehipite Chapter
P.O. Box 5396
Fresno, California 93755-5396
(not tax deductible)

Earthkeeper Hero: John Muir

by Harold W. Wood, Jr.

He has been called the “greatest Californian,” “the father of our National Parks,” and “protector of the wilds.” But John Muir saw himself as an ordinary citizen of the universe, and in fact wrote his address as “John Muir, Earth-Planet, Universe.”

John Muir combined a traditionally romantic and radically new vision of man’s place in nature. Writing in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth, his was at once a scientific and a poetic voice for preservation of the natural environment. John Muir saw nature as not just a storehouse of raw materials for man’s economic needs, but as a spiritual resource as well. He wrote, with characteristic humor, “Our crude civilization engenders a multitude of wants, and lawgivers are ever at their wit’s end devising. The hall and the theater and the church have been invented, and compulsory education. Why not add compulsory recreation?” But Muir wasn’t talking here of mere escapism, for the recreation he advocated was in reality discovering what makes life most worthwhile for many people—the wondrous beauty of the forests, the mountains, the wild places. “Keep close to Nature’s heart...and break clear away, once in awhile, and climb a mountain or spend a week in the woods. Wash your spirit clean...” Muir lived these principles himself in his adventurous life—whether climbing the Sierra peaks, traversing Alaskan glaciers, riding an avalanche down a mountain and surviving, exploring the source of waterfalls, or traveling all over the world to see trees and mountain landscapes.

John Muir’s radicalism manifested itself in the non-anthropocentric view of nature which saw man as part of the natural world rather than the center of it. He noted, “When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.” This was a remarkable insight for a man who was born 150 years ago, who lived when industrialism was just getting into full swing. He recognized that all living things were a part of a whole, and that if we lose that whole we lose part of ourselves. “There is not a *fragment* in all nature, for every relative fragment of one thing is a full harmonious unit in itself.” For Muir, this was not a matter of merely conservation of natural resources, but a matter of human physical and psychic survival. Muir wrote, “I know that our bodies were made to thrive only in pure air, and the scenes in which pure air is found.” He advocated preservation of natural areas for reasons of mental health: “Come to the woods, for here is rest. There is no repose like that of the green deep woods. Here grow the wallflower and the violet. The squirrel will



come and sit upon your knee, the log cock will wake you in the morning. Sleep in forgetfulness of all ill. Of all the upness accessible to mortals, there is no upness comparable to the mountains.”

Muir’s insights were landmarks in the history of environmental conservation. The words and deeds of John Muir led to the establishment of the U.S. National Park System (including, during his lifetime, Yosemite, Sequoia, Grand Canyon, Petrified Forest, and other parks.) He was the founding president of the Sierra Club, which remains today the leading American grassroots organization for protecting wilderness and the human environment. He was not always successful, however, and some say he died of a broken heart when his beloved Hetch Hetchy Valley, within Yosemite National Park, was lost to a dam and a reservoir for a San Francisco water supply, even though less damaging options existed. But that loss inspired conservationists to work tirelessly to prevent dams in other national parks, like the Grand Canyon and Dinosaur National Monument.

John Muir’s life and voice remain a continuing inspiration to people today all over the world who are striving to protect the last fragments of living wilderness. Teaching us that nature is not just a commodity but an integrated whole, Muir showed us that it is the flow of life itself which must be preserved if humanity is to continue to thrive on this planet. He envisioned Earth as a divinely-appointed home of natural beauty, if we would only keep it that way:

See *Muir*, page 13

Outings Schedule

Some of the trips listed below (marked with an asterisk) are offered by other entities within the Sierra Club.

March 26th - Sunday

Cross Country Skiing—Intermediate
Location to be determined, weather and snow permitting.
Walt Taguchi (559) 435-2818

April 11th - Saturday

Day Hike (2A)
Horseshoe Bend
A super flower hike.
Don Redmond (559) 268-1537

*March 26th - Sunday

Day Hike, Morgan Territory Regional Park. Early spring wildflowers and broad vistas will greet us in this East Bay Regional Park, north of Livermore. Bring lunch, water, raingear, warm clothes, and other essentials. About 10 miles of up-and-down hiking on old cowpaths and ranch roads. Depart 8:30 A.M., North Modesto Park 'n' Ride. Sound exciting?
Elaine Gorman, Yokuts Group leader of the Mother Lode Chapter (209) 524-7630, goford@sbcglobal.net

April 1st - Saturday

Snowshoeing—any level
Location to be determined.
Carolyn Ordway (559) 449-7780

*April 1st - Saturday

Bike Ride. Welcome the new month with a bicycle ride up Del Puerto Canyon to Frank Raines Park. Enjoy early wildflowers as we roll up to the park and fly back down. About 30 miles round trip. Meet at Patterson Save-Mart Center (Ward & Sperry Rds.) 9:00 A.M. Bring helmet, water, snacks and well-maintained bicycle ready to ride. Call for reservations.
Sylvan Bupp, Yokuts Group leader of the Mother Lode Chapter (209) 524-0074

April 8th - Saturday

Day Hike (2A)
Horseshoe Bend, a super flower hike.
Don Redmond (559) 268-1537

April 9th - Sunday

Trail Run—gentle rolling hills.
Upper Kings River, just above Pine Flat Reservoir. This is Marcia's *most favoritest* place to run! Nine miles of dirt road overlook this beautiful stretch of whitewater river. We will plan to be out for about 2-3 hours, depending on what the group wants. Go at your own pace; walkers are welcome. Meet at Doyal's store on Trimmer Springs Rd. and carpool about an hour around the lake. Call or email for meeting time.
Marcia Rasmussen (559) 332-2419
Marcia@BigBaldy.com

*April 15th - Saturday

Day Hike, Pinnacles National Monument. We will meet in the Turlock Wal-Mart parking lot at 7:45 A.M. to carpool to Pinnacles. The hike is about 6 miles with 1,300 ft. elevation gain and some narrow, steep steps. Wear comfortable shoes and bring a sack lunch, sunscreen, hat, camera, and raingear (just in case). There will be great photo ops! The park entrance fee is \$5.
Monica Casey, Yokuts Group leader of the Mother Lode Chapter (209) 632-2051

April 22nd is Earth Day!

The Tehipite Chapter of the Sierra Club will be partnering with the Bureau of Reclamation, The San Joaquin River Conservancy and other organizations to help clean up and restore the newly-acquired Sycamore Island/Moen Lakes. Pass Valley Children's Hospital going east. Take Road 40 south; it will turn into Avenue 7-1/2. You will see signs directing you from there. Give an

hour or give a day. We'll start at 9:00 A.M. There is plenty to do: pick up trash by hand or by canoe, restore a boat launch area, remove a building, etc. RiverTree will have 8 canoes available. At Ball Ranch there is junk barbed wire fencing to be removed, and metal trash such as swamp coolers to be collected from along the river bank.

Richard Sloan (559) 696-2971
RiverRich1509@aol.com

April 22nd - Sunday

Day Hike, Moderately strenuous (2C)
Chilnualna has four spectacular waterfalls. The best sections and highest waterfalls are found at the beginning and end of the hike.
Carolyn Ordway (559) 449-7780

*April 22nd-23rd (Saturday-Sunday)

Joaquin Rocks
The rocks are large sandstone formations atop a ridge in the extreme south of the Diablo Range. You may have seen them to the west as you drive down Highway 5. This trip will give you a chance to get on top of them. We'll drive down on Saturday and do a short backpack, followed on Sunday by a day hike to the Rocks, after which we'll pack out and drive home. Limited to 16 people.
John Wilkinson, Wilderness Chair of the Loma Prieta Chapter (408) 947-0858
jfwilkinson@sbcglobal.net

May 5th-7th (Friday-Sunday)

Day Hike (3D)
Panamint City Ghost Town in Death Valley N.P.
This is a hard hike with bushwhacking involved.
Call Richard Sloan for details. (559) 696-2971

May 6th - Saturday

Day Hike (1A)
Pincushion Peak. Hike from Lake Millerton to a tabletop overlook. Wildflowers should be abundant. Easy pace, kids welcome.
Steve Cosner (559) 281-5983

May 13th - Saturday

Day Hike (2B)
Goat Mountain, views of Bass Lake.
Don Redmond (559) 268-1537

**May 20th-21st
(Saturday and/or Sunday)**

San Joaquin River
National River Cleanup, shore-based and by canoe.
Richard Sloan (559) 696-2971

***May 26th-29th (Friday-Monday, Memorial Day weekend)**

Lava Beds
The so-called Lava Beds are actually granite formations east of the Black Rock Desert in Pershing County, Nevada. We'll do an easy two-day backpack, looping through some of these formations. For those wishing to stay over 'til Tuesday, we'll do a day hike on Monday to the top of nearby Dry Mountain. Limited to 12 people.
John Wilkinson, Wilderness Chair of the Loma Prieta Chapter (408) 947-0858
jfwilkinson@sbcglobal.net

June 3rd or 10th - Saturday

Day Hike (2A)
Redwood Canyon. An Annual event through a great Sequoia Grove.
Don Redmond (559) 268-1537

***July 2nd-7th (Sunday-Friday)**

Sondra Dunkle, a Tehipite Chapter activist and outings leader in the 80s and early 90s is now a National Outings Leader. She is returning to the Sierra from Pocatello, ID to lead her first National Outing trip. The trip will be at Tamarack Inn near Bear Valley, in California (on Hwy. 4,

just southeast of Sacramento.) This will be a lodge outing. The lodge is at 7,000 feet, and our hikes will be at that elevation and higher. We will hike daily at a moderate pace for 5-9 miles over uneven, rocky terrain with elevation gains and possible stream/snow crossings. Views at the top will be beautiful! After the hikes, we will return to our comfortable inn for showers, hot meals and cozy beds (sure beats backpacking!) Evenings will find us gathered around a campfire or socializing inside. A hot tub is available on-site for trip participants.
Sondra Dunkle (208) 232-7245
dunksone@msn.com
<http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/national/brochure/06286A.asp>

July 4th - Tuesday

Day Hike (1A)
Lewis Creek
Cool off along this nice stream.
Don Redmond (559) 268-1537

August 6th - Sunday

Possible moonlight hike to Half Dome in Yosemite. Watch for details. Assistant hike leader needed for sweep.
Gerald Vinnard (559) 431-5780 or Richard Sloan (559) 696-2971

August 12th - Saturday

Day Hike (1A)
Willow Creek, which flows into Bass Lake, and Angel Falls.
Don Redmond (559) 268-1537

October 14th - Saturday

Day Hike (2B)
Grant Grove
A combination of three trails.
Don Redmond (559) 268-1537

Trip Ratings

Distance	Elevation Gain
1) up to 6 miles	A) under 1,000 feet
2) 6 to 10 miles	B) 1,000 to 2,000 feet
3) 10 to 15 miles	C) 2,000 to 3,000 feet
4) 15 to 20 miles	D) 3,000 to 4,000 feet
5) over 20 miles	E) over 4,000 feet

Our Tehipite Chapter Outings Chair is Richard Sloan (559) 696-2971 RiverRich1509@aol.com. Please contact him with any questions concerning our outings program. Contact the trip leader directly if you are interested in one of the listed trips.

Tehipite Chapter outings are free and open to the public. All leaders are unpaid volunteers assuming responsibility for a good trip, and your cooperation is mandatory. Please review additional trip and participant requirements at www.tehipite.sierraclub.org/outings.

Would you like to be an Outings Leader?

Do you have a favorite hike you would like to share with fellow outdoor lovers? Being an Outings Leader can be very rewarding. Basic qualifications include a desire to lead outings, basic first aid or the ability to devote a day to getting qualified in first aid, and reading the Sierra Club Outings Leader Handbook. The Tehipite Chapter would like to offer outings to people of all abilities and ages. If you are interested, phone Richard Sloan at (559) 696-2971 or email RiverRich1509@aol.com.

Current Outings Leaders please contact Richard with your proposed hikes.

Annual Awards Banquet Celebration with Dr. William Tweed

by Heather Anderson



Dr. William Tweed, Chief Naturalist for Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, gave a very interesting visual presentation at our Annual Awards Banquet on February 25. He illustrated for us a bit of history of the old Giant Forest village, its eventual congestion during the tourist season of over 600,000 annual visitors, the ecological impact on the big trees, and the need to protect them from traffic and commercial development. The move to Wuksachi Village, a few miles away took twenty years and over \$70 million to complete, but it restored the grove and its crown jewel status.

I was married in Crescent Meadow a half century ago and haven't been back to the village since, although I have hiked hundreds of trail miles in the intervening years. Our week long honeymoon hike (my first backpack trip) took off from Wolverton, through Heather and Moose Lake area, over Elizabeth Pass, and literally down Deadman Canyon and Roaring River to Cedar Grove (a great trip, only take the Sphinx trail down, not the river. I am anxious to return. I encourage you all to explore the backcountry wonders of this magnificent park.

Although Bill Tweed has been on the Sequoia Kings Canyon staff since 1978, he plans to retire this year and hike the John Muir Trail, among other projects. We are thankful to Bill for his enlightening talk, his protection of our Giant Sequoias, and for his role in developing an educational program for our students to better understand and value our national parks in general and especially Yosemite and Sequoia Kings Canyon Parks right here in our own backyard. (A "Ranger in the Classroom" program is in the offing.)

Doug Harwell Award Presented to Marsh & Carol Pitman



Marsh and Carol Pitman have been a member of the Sierra Club since 1966. They have participated in many Merced Group and Tehipite Chapter activities. Marsh served on the Merced Group's Conservation Committee and Executive Committee. He and his wife were co-leaders of a Wilderness Threshold family outing, and Marsh was Naturalist on a number of High Light Trips and on a High Trip. Marsh was first a trainee instructor and then instructor for a number of years at the Nature Knowledge Workshops for National Outings Leaders. Though limited in the last six months due to his wife's illness, Marsh is still active in the Merced group, the Yosemite Committee, and the movement to restore Hetch-Hetchy.

Carol was a collaborator with her husband of 51 years on many projects, until she became ill last summer. She opened their home to activists, scientists, and government officials visiting California. Carol was a founding board member of Habitat for Humanity of Merced County. However, she opted mainly for behind-the-scenes tasks in the non-profit organization.

Carol recently passed away. Her achievements will not soon be forgotten. Both she and Marsh were honored at this year's banquet with the Doug Harwell award for all of their outstanding achievements in all aspects of the Club.

Doug Harwell, who was an active member in the 1980s, was known for doing every task available in the Chapter. Doug held virtually every office, edited the *Topics*, and led outings. Mr. Harwell died unexpectedly at a very young age. In his honor, the Doug Harwell Award was established to recognize those who contribute substantially to every aspect of the Chapter.



Marcia & John Rasmussen, Gerald Vinnard, Scott Kruse, and Marsh Pitman

Education

Scott Kruse is a teacher in Kingsburg High School and Reedley College. He is currently involved in a program called Wildlink, in which twelve underrepresented students are taken each year on an expedition to Yosemite. Students work with the Yosemite Institute instructors and spend a week observing, writing and doing GLOBE protocols, a scientific program encompassing soils, atmosphere, hydrology, vegetation and remote sensing.

Scott is working on an ongoing air quality study using data loggers in cooperation with LA unified GLOBE and UCLA as well as our daily atmosphere monitoring. Further, he has a long-term climate study of the Great Central Valley and the Sierra Nevada.

Locally, he started the recycling program at Kingsburg High School, and has been a lifetime member of the Sierra Club since 1968. His license plate, J MUIR, has caused curious law enforcement officers to pull him over on several occasions.

Conservation

Gerald Vinnard has served as Chapter Chair on the Executive Committee since January 2005. In that time, he has served both the members of the club and the various committees by working as somewhat of a filter for all the incoming emails, telephone calls, and letters that the chapter receives daily. Gerald has managed to ensure that this correspondence is distributed to the proper parties, thus ensuring the most up-to-date information for all members in the club. Without such a person, members could very well be inundated with massive amounts of useless information or even worse, be left in the dark about pertinent information.

Special Recognition

John and Marcia began editing the *Topics* in April 2004, when the Chapter suddenly found itself without an editor, and with no means of publishing the *Topics*. These two graciously accepted this task without compensation, as it is a volunteer position. While John has been responsible for the web site version and layout, Marcia has worked to contact people, collect, select, coordinate, edit, write, and rewrite the articles and information for the *Topics*, a considerable effort. In addition, since about 1995, John has taken on the responsibility for the web site *Topics*, which provides up-to-date information on outings and issues.

Joaquin Rocks!

by John Wilkinson

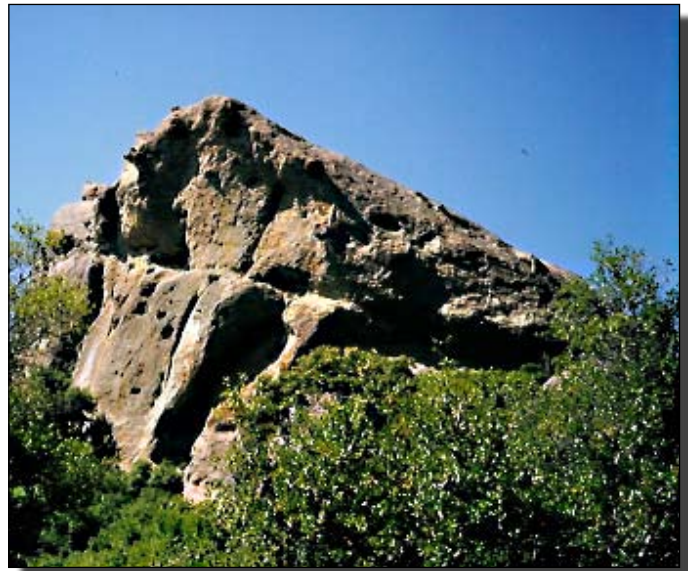
Photos provided by Vicky Hoover

Reprinted from *Tehipite View*, May 2003

Driving along Highway 5 near the northern cutoff to Coalinga, you may have noticed off to the west a striking row of shield-like rocks on the skyline. These are the Joaquin Rocks, named for the fabled Mexican bandit Joaquin Murieta, who has given his name to countless wild places in California.

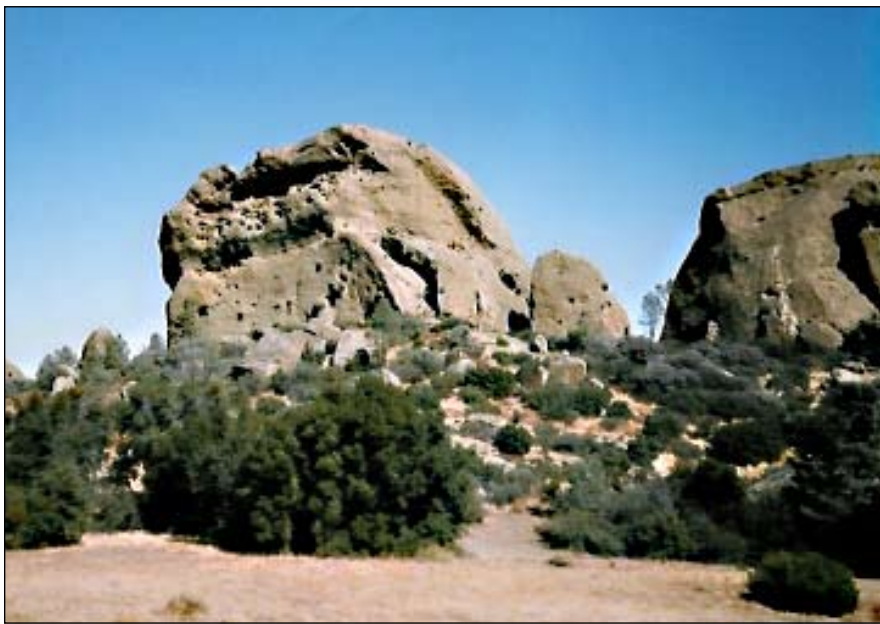
On April 5 and 6, 2003 I took part in a backpack trip led by Vicky Hoover to visit these famous rocks while educating ourselves about two important conservation issues: promoting wilderness status for the area around the Joaquin Rocks, and trying to curb depredations by Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) users in the Clear Creek Management Area.

This is all BLM land. Part of the Clear Creek Management Area is a designated OHV recreation area. Posted restrictions on OHV use, however, appear to be flouted constantly, as we were to witness. As we waited at the entrance to the Area for all the participants to arrive, we watched a steady stream of trucks enter, all with their two or three dirtbikes in the back.



This was one of those trips where the drive is harder than the hike. Our little caravan of six vehicles and sixteen hikers took two and a half hours to travel the twenty miles or so of steep, winding, and often deeply rutted road leading to the locked gate from which we would start hiking. The road leads through the most extensive serpentine barrens that I have ever seen. Serpentine is magnesium silicate, and serpentine soils have very high levels of magnesium and corresponding low levels of calcium, nitrogen, and phosphorus. This extreme chemistry starves out the oaks, grasses, and most wildflowers. Gray pine, on the other hand, flourishes, but this area is remarkable for the prevalence of ponderosa pine and incense cedar as well.

The steep grey slopes of the serpentine barrens seem to be irresistible to testosterone-charged dirtbikers, and the evidence of their presence was everywhere visible in the paths they had cut in the slopes. Serpentine forms a crust that impedes erosion. The bikes cut through the crust and





open the way for water to cut deep gullies in the serpentine.

When we reached the locked gate at Wright's Mountain, we divided up the commissary items, hefted our packs, and started for our campsite. There is no reliable water in the Joaquin Rocks area, so we carried a little over a gallon each. By this point, the serpentine has been left behind, and grasses, oaks, and abundant wildflowers reappear. After about three miles, we turned off the dirt road and descended about 200 feet to a broad meadow above Urruttia Canyon. This campsite was a garden of paintbrush, blue dicks, and fiddlenecks. We set up the commissary area and enjoyed a dinner of lentil soup, fresh asparagus with butter, and noodles with Parmesan cheese. (When I lead a backpack, it's everyone for themselves, but with Vicky it's another story.)

After getting acquainted with our fellow hikers and swapping stories for a while, we turned in and enjoyed a good night's sleep.

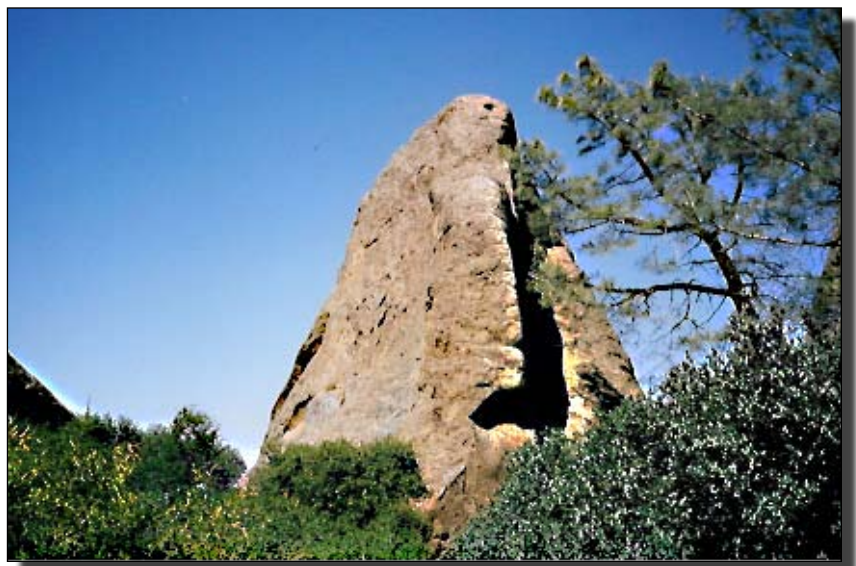
The menu in the morning included fresh-brewed coffee, Malt-O-Meal with brown sugar and fresh strawberries, and Stovetop Stuffing with fresh onion. Well-fortified, we packed up and returned to the road, where we stashed our backpacks and took water, lunch,

and layers of clothing in daypacks for the hike to the Rocks.

The road to the Rocks got more and more spectacular as we proceeded. The route follows close to the ridgetop, with deep wooded canyons to the west, and the Central Valley to the east, complete with the trucks zooming along Highway 5. Haze prevented us from getting a clear view of the Sierra Nevada. As we began to see cliffs, those who hadn't been there before kept asking "Are those the Rocks?" but were

always told they were beyond the next ridge. The wildflower display was amazing: lupine, fiddlenecks, chia, spring gold, blue dicks, paintbrush, madia, silverpuffs, wild onion, owl's clover, and the usual assortment of species that I had no clue about. As we got close to the Rocks, yucca began to appear on the rocky slopes.

Finally we came around that last bend, and the Joaquin Rocks were in front of us. The west side consists of nearly vertical cliffs. A trail leads between the two biggest rocks: classic bandit country. The temperature plunged in the deep shade.



The Rocks are solid sandstone, and the gentle eastern slopes make for easy scrambling. We all chose our own routes and rested on the summit of the tallest rock, with stomach-churning views off the cliff to the west, and down the deep tank that perches on the summit. A biting wind blew from the snows of the Sierra across the valley, but it was hard to leave behind the top-of-the-world exhilaration.

After descending, we spent a little time exploring the area. We could have spent hours in this spectacular playground, but we still had a long day ahead of us, so we reluctantly returned to our packs. The backpack out to the cars went quickly, though we were surprised to find that we'd done 2600 feet of elevation on a day spent mostly on the ridgetops.

At the locked gate, we witnessed a major violation of the closed area by what was apparently an organized group of dirtbikers, judging by the prominent numbers they were displaying. They were coming down from the summit of a knoll behind the gate, clearly marked as a closed area. This was the first time I realized that dirtbikes do not have license plates that are readable from a distance. This makes it very difficult to report violations.

On the drive back, we witnessed two more violations, this time in the serpentine barrens, where bikers were riding up and down the fragile slopes behind the "Closed Area" signs. It is clear that enforcement is very slack, perhaps because of lack of resources.

There are two areas in which conservation issues were highlighted by this trip:

Joaquin Rocks

Activists from the Sierra Club, Desert Survivors, and the California Native Plant Society began inventorying this area in 1997. They have submitted a proposal for a 31,000-acre wilderness to the California Wilderness Coalition. That proposal did not make it into Senator Boxer's Wild Heritage bill, because of a lack of support letters from local residents and elected officials. So the Tehipite Chapter has an opportunity to make a difference.

Please write to our U.S. senators and to your congressional representative asking them to support the proposed Joaquin Rocks Wilderness area.



Clear Creek Management Area

Here there are constant depredations by OHV users, chiefly dirtbikers, as we were able to witness on a random weekend. There is one BLM ranger to patrol a very extensive area, and it is not surprising that it should be hard to catch violators, but such flagrant scofflaws need to be ticketed.

To express your concern over slack OHV management, you can write to

Mr. Rick Cooper
Area Manager
Bureau of Land Management
Hollister Field Office
20 Hamilton Court
Hollister, CA 95023.

Send a copy of your letter to

Mike Pool
California State Director
Bureau of Land Management
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, CA 95825.

You can also write to our Senators and Congressional representative asking them to work for additional funding for the BLM, for managing OHV use on our public lands. For contact information, see www.senate.gov and www.house.gov. It is probably better to write to the local offices rather than the Washington offices. Mail delivery to Washington has been slow since September 11 and the anthrax scare. ❧

Editor's Note: *The Wilderness Committee of the Loma Prieta Chapter will conduct an outing on April 22-23 to visit this area. See the Outings section, page 6, for details.*



Muir, from page 5

“When we contemplate the whole globe as one great dew-drop, striped and dotted with continents and islands, flying through space with other stars all singing and shining together as one, the whole universe appears as an infinite storm of beauty.”

Is it any wonder that all of Muir's books are still in print? New biographies about him are still being written and published, and people from his birthplace home in Scotland have formed Dunbar's John Muir Association. His ranch home in Martinez, California is the home of the John Muir Memorial Association, and his name is still invoked by those who believe that nature's treasures deserve protection.

Muir's heroic life is recognized in the geography of many places, including the Muir Glacier in Alaska, Muir Memorial Park in Wisconsin, and in California by such places as Muir Woods National Monument, the John Muir Trail, the John Muir Wilderness, and the John Muir National Historic Site. In his birthplace of Dunbar, Scotland, there is a Muir Country Park, and his birthplace home is now a museum. Scotland also boasts a John Muir Trust which works to preserve nature in the United Kingdom much as the Sierra Club does in the United States, Canada, and through global partners all around the world.

Further, our appreciation for Muir is not confined to geography, for in California and elsewhere his birthday, April 21, is recognized as “John Muir Day,” a day to recognize the modern ecological insight that man is a part of nature, and that our well-being—indeed our very survival—depends upon an ecologically sound natural environment. Students and teachers can learn more about celebrating John Muir Day through the John Muir Day Study Guide.

Finally, the John Muir Trust in Scotland and the Sierra Club in the U.S.A. are now launching a new John Muir Youth Award to encourage young people to get involved in discovering and protecting wild places as Muir did.

John Muir is a hero who can best be honored by each of us doing what we can to live his message and protect the environment.

RECOMMENDED READING BY MUIR

- *Last Journey: South to the Amazon and East to Africa*
- *Stickeen*
- *The Wild Muir: Twenty-two of John Muir's Greatest Adventures*
- *Travels in Alaska*

A good anthology is Edwin Way Teale's *The Wilderness World of John Muir*. ❧

ECOVIEW

by Marian Orvis

CARPE DIEM - A REASON TO CELEBRATE SPRING EQUINOX - MARCH 20

The vernal equinox, when daylight is evenly balanced with darkness for the first time since September, has always been marked as a time of rebirth. And it is widely celebrated with eggs. Eostre, a Germanic goddess of spring and new life who lent her name to the Christian holiday of rebirth, was honored by the eating of eggs—sometimes brought by a rabbit, according to one legend. An obvious symbol of spring and fertility, eggs can stand upright (at least in theory) on the date of the equinox, a practice that promised good luck in ancient China. In ancient Persia, Greece, Rome, and present-day Iran, red eggs are given out to celebrate the arrival of spring, according to urban shaman Donna Henes' newsletter, *Always in Season*.

To celebrate either equinox or Easter this year, you might cook up some natural dyes to color eggs. Boil an onion skin for an orange color, half a teaspoon of turmeric in a small amount water for yellow, beet juice and vinegar for pink, and vinegar and the outer leaves of a red cabbage (left out overnight) for robin-egg blue.

TOO SOLAR FOR POLAR

With icy habitat melting as the planet warms, three environmental groups filed suit in December seeking to make polar bears threatened under the Endangered Species Act. If listed, these bears—the largest bears in the world—would be the first mammals protected under the law because of global warming.

The three groups, Greenpeace, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and the Center for Biological Diversity, cited studies showing that expanses of sea ice in the Arctic Circle—where the bears spend nearly all their time—are melting. They asked the court to make the government respond to a petition they filed almost a year ago, asking the Bush administration to protect the bears. They also argued that, if polar bears are protected, federal agencies would have to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service before approving power plant emissions, fuel economy standards, or oil and gas leases—all of which are tied to greenhouse gases and global warming. Though there is no exact count of polar bears (*Ursus maritimus*) on American territory, the world population is estimated at no more than 25,000—about half of which are in Alaska. Scientists say

arctic sea ice has become stunningly reduced and that the summertime Arctic could be ice-free within a century.

The giant white bears, which can weigh more than 1,700 pounds, are considered marine mammals because they spend most of their lives on sea ice. When the ice melts, the bears already have experienced trouble making the long swim to land.

Commenting on the bears' prospects, Richard Steiner, University of Alaska Fairbanks, said, "For anyone who has wondered how global warming and reduced sea ice will affect polar bears, the answer is simple: they die." (Thanks to *ECONEWS* Jan./Feb., 2006 for the above.)

If this next item doesn't kick "you-know-what," you're working too hard!

IN ARREARS

Cracked glass resulting from photocopied backsides during holiday office parties apparently has become so common that the Canon Company has made the glass on its machines thicker. The company said service calls go up about 25% toward the end of the year.

NEW TALLEST TREE

The 368' tall Mendocino Tree in Montgomery Woods, northwest of Ukiah, has lost its title as world's tallest tree to the Stratosphere Giant in Humboldt Redwoods State Park. The ancient redwood in the Park's Rockefeller Forest has been measured by a laser range finder at just over 370', or about five stories higher than the Statue of Liberty!

COW POWER!

A new federal study on the potential of using dairy manure to produce biomethane estimates that California's 1.7 million cows could produce the equivalent of 150 million gallons of gasoline. The study added that the output of all the cows in the U.S. could generate enough vehicle fuel to power one million cars. (Sounds too good to be true.)

Gee, I have a bunch more, but think my time is up...maybe next month? ☘

Inner City Outings

by *Richard Sloan, Outings Chair*

The Tehipite Chapter is crossing "I"s and dotting "T"s to start an official Sierra Club Inner City Outings (ICO) program in Fresno. The ICO program is a community outreach, which the Sierra Club created in 1971, to serve people such as low-income, inner city youth and the physically disabled, who are not able to participate in Sierra Club outings. There are approximately fifty ICO groups across the United States, each sponsored by a local Sierra Club chapter or group. All ICO leaders are volunteers who conduct hiking, backpacking, bicycling, canoeing, river rafting, and cross country skiing trips for people who would otherwise not have access to wilderness ventures and environmental education. Volunteers work with social service agencies, schools, housing projects, and other community centers to locate participants. Trained and certified ICO leaders provide participants with outdoor skills, equipment, insurance, and environmental education.

The basic ICO certified leader requirements are:

- Sierra Club membership
- Current Red Cross standard first aid certification or the equivalent
- Completed volunteer application form, including DMV check and police records check
- Demonstrated outing skills within the scope of the trip
- Demonstrated ability to relate to trip participants.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer ICO leader and can meet these qualifications, please call Richard Sloan at (559) 696-2971 or email RiverRich1509@aol.com. ☞

National Club Election: Vote Now!

Your Board of Directors sets Club policy and budgets at the national level, and works closely with the staff to operate the Club. Board members are required to stand for election by the Club's membership. It is both a privilege and a responsibility to vote for candidates who express your views on how the Club should grow and change.

Members frequently state that they don't know the candidates and find it difficult to vote without more information. You can learn more by asking the leaders and other experienced members of your group or chapter. And visit the Club's election website:

<http://www.sierraclub.org/bod/2006election/>

This site provides links to additional information about candidates and their views on a variety of issues facing the Club and the environment.

Take several minutes to read the ballot statement from each candidate. Then use your own judgment and cast your votes. You will find the ballot is quite straightforward and easy to mark. A user-friendly Internet voting option is also available for your convenience. ☞



Built by Sierra Club members in 1934, this rustic, hostel-style lodge stands atop historic Donner Pass, just an hour and a half from Sacramento. Expect convenient access to all mountain activities, excellent family style meals, a friendly staff and a casual atmosphere.

FEATURED PROGRAMS

MAY 5-8 Wilderness Responder Recertification For more information go to www.sierraclub.com/outings/training/brochures/wfr_recert.asp.

MAY 13 Full Moon Hike Lodge Staff will lead a hike through the forest and up to the ridges behind the Lodge. Price: \$5 (Lodge guests), \$15 (dinner and hike only).

MAY 26-29 Nature Knowledge Workshop Participate in guided hikes accompanied by geologists, biologists, and local historians. Price per day: \$50 member, \$55 non-member, \$30 child (includes hikes/lodging/meals).



For more information about these programs or to receive a full schedule and description of Clair Tappaan programs please visit our website at www.ctl.sierraclub.org or call (800) 679-6775.



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May *Tehipite Topics* deadline is April 14th.
Summer issue deadline will be May 12th.

An Apology from the Editors

by *Marcia Rasmussen*

You may have noticed that there was no March issue of the *Topics*. To those of you who eagerly checked your mailboxes each day, and to those of you who missed meetings and outings, we offer our most sincere apology.

As happens with many volunteer endeavors, life (and possibly a few gremlins) simply got in the way. First, we held the issue to wait for articles to appear. (Really, what sense would it make to publish an issue of blank pages?) Then, when the delinquent material finally arrived, the unthinkable happened. Our computer suffered a hard drive failure. Quick thinking—and creative computer wizardry on John’s part—saved all our data from being lost. The half-finished March *Topics* was copied onto a computer at John’s workplace, and was saved.

I will spare you the details of how we rebuilt the computer, labored another week to finish the *Topics*, and then suffered another failure. This time the week’s work was lost. But never fear, we still had the half-finished version saved on John’s workplace computer. However, when he tried to retrieve it, *that* computer went belly-up as well.

Eventually John was able to fix the machine and retrieve the March *Topics*. But by that time, much of the material was outdated, and it was time to put together the April issue. We decided to start over and combine the two issues. And then we both came down with the flu...

Ignoring the obvious conclusion that the March issue was simply cursed, we apologize profusely. We will continue to publish monthly issues on a timely (although sometimes late) basis, gremlins permitting. ☘