The cover of the magazine features a photograph of a small boat on the ocean. The boat is positioned in the middle ground, slightly to the left of the center. The ocean is filled with small waves, and the sky is a pale, hazy blue. In the background, a large, dark mountain range is visible under a clear sky. The overall color palette is muted, with various shades of blue, green, and grey.

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VOLUME 18, NO. 1  
SPRING 2002 • \$4.95

North Coast Stories  
LA to Nature—Nature to LA  
Year of Ecotourism

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Our web site includes most of the articles from the print edition (some abridged), many color photos, back issues, and some supplemental information.

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**Cover photo:** Photojournalist Stephen Merrill Corley lives in northwestern California with his wife and 12-year-old son. He works for the *Crescent City Daily Triplicate*, and his work has been published in *National Geographic*, *People*, and other national magazines, as well as in numerous California magazines and newspapers. More of his photographs can be seen at [www.nicelightimages.com](http://www.nicelightimages.com).

**Back cover photo:** Malcolm Lubliner



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SPRING 2002



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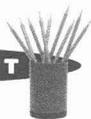
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## Views from a Two-Lane Road

ONE APRIL MORNING, after the Aleutian Canada geese had already left Crescent City on their northward journey, I was driving west from Petaluma to look at restoration work on private cattle ranches along Walker Creek. There was to be a small tour of these projects in the Chileno Valley, and I thought we might do a story.

That was the pretext. In fact, I was in the grip of spring fever and escaping the office. This issue of the magazine was almost ready to go to the printer, only this page remained to be written, and the wildflowers were in full bloom.

The quiet two-lane road toward the coast winds through a curvaceous landscape, radiantly green in early sunlight. The hills have retained their smooth roundness, they have not been carved up by development, and my eyes followed their contours the way a lover's hands might trace the curves of the beloved's body. I was drunk with spring, and once again thanked whatever fates had arranged that I should live amidst all this beauty.

After passing an old one-room schoolhouse, though, I was ambushed by the spectre that has been hiding in the back of the mind ever since September 11. What if one of those bombs we dropped on Afghanistan were to explode here, one of those bombs that blast through rock and penetrate caves? What if some of the spent-uranium bullets we used in the Gulf War were to scatter their radioactive dust here? What then?

I turned on the radio. On KPFA, a British journalist, speaking from the West Bank, was describing what he found in the Palestinian refugee camp he had managed to reach by eluding Israeli troops: a field of rubble where perhaps a hundred homes had been leveled by bulldozers. There was a ter-

rible stench, he reported, which he recognized from past experience as that of decaying human bodies.

I drove on, no longer seeing the land around me. Now a young woman was being interviewed, one of the brave international observers who had chosen to stay in the battle zone as a human shield. There is no escape, I thought, the world is here. What goes around comes around, as a wise woman once told me. Our planes, our bombs. Ourselves.

I switched off the radio before turning in to the Chileno Valley Ranch, where a small group had gathered for the tour, mostly people involved in the restoration projects, from the Marin County Resource Conservation District, Marin Agricultural Land Trust, Point Reyes Bird Observatory (PRBO), and Prunuske Chatham, Inc., the consultants.

We walked past the barn—I stepped inside and breathed deeply of the sweet fragrance of hay and animals—across a meadow and a new small bridge across the creek, flowing amid dense willows. Restoration was begun on this ranch seven years ago and was now completed. First a fence had been built to keep grazing cattle away from the stream, prevent further bank erosion, and allow riparian plants to grow. Then the denuded banks were planted with a variety of willows and understory plants selected with the advice of PRBO. Big-leaf maples, oaks, blackberries, and wild roses had formed a dense canopy above pools of clear dark water. It was a peaceful place. We could see that steelhead will find it suitable for spawning when they return one day from Tomales Bay. Songbirds have already reestablished themselves.

For the next three hours I forgot the rest of the world. We visited several other ranches along Walker Creek,

where restoration projects are in earlier stages, and were glad to see the results of the slow and patient efforts to mend what had been destroyed by carelessness and lack of understanding. To help heal a natural system is more difficult than to destroy it. Instream studies had been conducted, permits had been obtained, banks had been stabilized by willow weavings, rocks had been strategically placed here and there. Children and teachers had helped with the revegetation. Cows had watched quietly from behind the fence, as they now watched us.

When I got back on the road I found it unfamiliar, although I had passed along it just a few hours before. By the time I was at the old schoolhouse, however, the landscape unfolded again for me, restful and lovely.

This issue of the magazine contains stories about mending nature, human beings, and communities. There is much good news here, news that often does not get reported because it is quiet, local, and undramatic. To find and publish this news is one of the pleasures of editing *Coast & Ocean*. But the suffering world is all around us, and we are part of it, so it is also inside us, for we are bound together on this planet by air, ocean, and our common humanity.

Many of our fellow citizens, moved to express empathy with victims of terrible violence, have displayed American flags. We here at *Coast & Ocean*, also feeling a need to respond, are publishing a poem by Hafiz, a Persian Sufi who lived in the 14th century and is known and loved throughout the Mideast today. Arthur Okamura has created a monoprint to go with it. You will find both on the inside back cover.

—Rasa Gustaitis

# North Coast Story

MICHAEL BOWEN

**T**raveling to a meeting in Crescent City recently, I paused near Prairie Creek, in Redwood National and State Park—one of the most beautiful places on earth—for a brief hike. Seeing soft, afternoon light filtering through the branches of towering redwoods never fails to inspire. And I was sorely in need of inspiration, for I was headed to a meeting that promised to be contentious.

The topic was the proposed purchase of 25,000 acres of industrial timberland on Mill Creek, in the Smith River watershed, from the Stimson Lumber Company for addition to the state park system. To conservationists the prospect of protecting this land for the public and wildlife was an unparalleled opportunity. The Save-the-Redwoods League had raised most of the money required and was working hard to raise the remainder of the purchase price. But many Del Norte County residents were angrily opposed. To them the proposed park expansion did not look like a blessing; they saw a potential loss of jobs and economic opportunities.

Life has been difficult in and around Crescent City ever since the timber industry began a steady decline nearly three decades ago. Among those expected to attend the meeting at the firehouse that evening, February 21, 2002, were many who either had worked on, or knew someone who had worked on, the Stimson property and were now unemployed.

Never mind that the company had closed its mill and largely stopped logging this land in the mid-1990s, thereby ceasing to be



PHOTOS THIS PAGE: STEPHEN CORLEY

**Top: Lighthouse at Battery Point, Crescent City**

**Bottom: A welder works on a large vessel at Fashion Blacksmith shipyard in Crescent City Harbor.**



STEPHEN CORLEY

**Above: Pebble Beach, Crescent City**

a major employer in the county. In fact, this forest land had been harvested so vigorously that at least 40 years would be required before it could be expected to yield much timber again.

Never mind either that Stimson wanted to sell, and the Save-the-Redwoods League stood ready to buy. Or that a diversity of rare salmon and steelhead unparalleled in California survives in the Smith River and its tributaries, providing a picture of a healthy watershed for the rest of the state.

The County of Del Norte—already facing a \$1.7 million budget deficit, chronic unemployment, crumbling schools, and high rates of alcoholism, drug abuse, and other poverty-associated problems—looked at ancient redwoods in expansive parks and saw not raindrops glistening on needles but a declining tax base and a departing employer. Already, most of the county's land was in federal, state, or local public ownership; the proposed acquisition would bring the figure to 75 percent.

Not long ago, Del Norte County Supervisor Chuck Blackburn said that he believed his county had been "targeted" for an expansion of parkland. "It concerns me greatly," he told the *Del Norte Triplicate*. "It seems like there are more and more bond measures for parks—how much more can we take in this county?" Feelings ran so high that the County had taken steps to launch a lawsuit to stop the sale—unless the Save-the-Redwoods League paid it \$10 million to compensate for potentially lost taxes.

Needless to say, I was not looking forward to the hostility I expected to encounter at the meeting. But the Conservancy exists to seek creative solutions to vexing land use conflicts in the coastal zone.

That detour into the redwoods turned out to be valuable. Not only did it lift my spirits, but it helped me to grasp more fully what North Coasters were up against. Walking along a well-maintained creekside trail, I realized I was alone: no other human was in sight. There had been no cars in the parking lot when I arrived. Yes, it was a midweek winter day in a remote location, but this was a world-famous place, so why was no one else here? On another occasion, I might simply have relished the solitude. Now I saw an economic reality: The park was empty. It was devoid of visitors who might have bought gas at the local gas stations, eaten at local restaurants, shopped a bit, spent the night—brought some dollars and jobs to this region.

There has been a lot of talk about a new economy based on ecotourism and recreation coming in to fill the void left by the decline of the timber industry—but where was it? Instead of an infusion of new income, what many North Coasters are experiencing is an economic tailspin, as first timber and then fishing—also once a major source of livelihood—struggle to survive against worsening odds. Declining stocks of groundfish and salmon and steelhead have led to increasingly severe fishing restrictions. Fierce competition and a shrinkage in the number of buyers have forced crab fishermen into an unaffordable, self-destructive crab derby (see p. 11).

"We have a real changing economy," Del Norte County Supervisor David Finigan told me. "We were in the boom and bust cycle for a long time; it just isn't there anymore and hasn't been for some time."

Diane Mutchie, city planner for Crescent City, pointed out that "for those who have been able to make the choice of where they live and work this is a wonderful place." However, "there is a strong component of the population who are economically and educationally immobile.

Supervisor Finigan is among those who see nature tourism, along with sportfishing, as a keystone to the county's future. "Instead of complaining about open space and parks," he said, "we need to use tourists as the number one motivator of our economy."

## What Is Happening to Our Timberlands?

Coastal timberlands are in an unprecedented state of flux and many private holdings are changing hands, sold either in large parcels or broken into smaller subdivisions. The buyers are either other timber companies or entities that intend to convert the land to other uses, especially residential development and vineyards.

Chris Nance, public relations coordinator for the California Forestry Association, a timber industry trade association, says environmental regulations are driving these changes: "It's getting to the point where it's no longer fiscally possible to keep forest lands forested," he said. "Timber Harvest Plan costs are prohibitively high."

The profitability of timberlands was significantly affected by the Forest Practices Act of 1973, which required more stringent regulation of harvest practices. That legislation required that Timber Harvest Plans be submitted to and approved by the California Department of Forestry before logging begins. More recently, regulations to protect endangered species and water quality added to the landowners' legal and financial obligations.

These increasingly tough regulatory standards likely lowered the bottom lines of companies that had invested in coastal timberlands. Greater profits may now be had from the sale of forest land—especially logged-over land—for subdivision into country estates or conversion into other uses, such as vineyards. With the escalation of land prices in the wine-growing regions of Napa County and the Alexander and Anderson Valleys, vineyard developers are expanding their horizons. In the Gualala River watershed, hundreds of acres of land have been converted to vineyards, mostly within the last ten years.

Changing standards for land stewardship are not, however, the only reason for recent timberland sales. Shareholder pressure is another, as is a drive for greater management efficiency.

Connie Best of the Pacific Forest Trust explains that standard accounting procedures require corporations to carry timberland on books at cost. If land was bought many years ago, the appreciation of its value does not show on the balance sheet. Therefore, from a shareholder's perspective, the company has a dramatically undervalued asset and may sell to bring it to market value. Some lands are also sold because the owner wants to avoid having to manage widely scattered islands of timber.

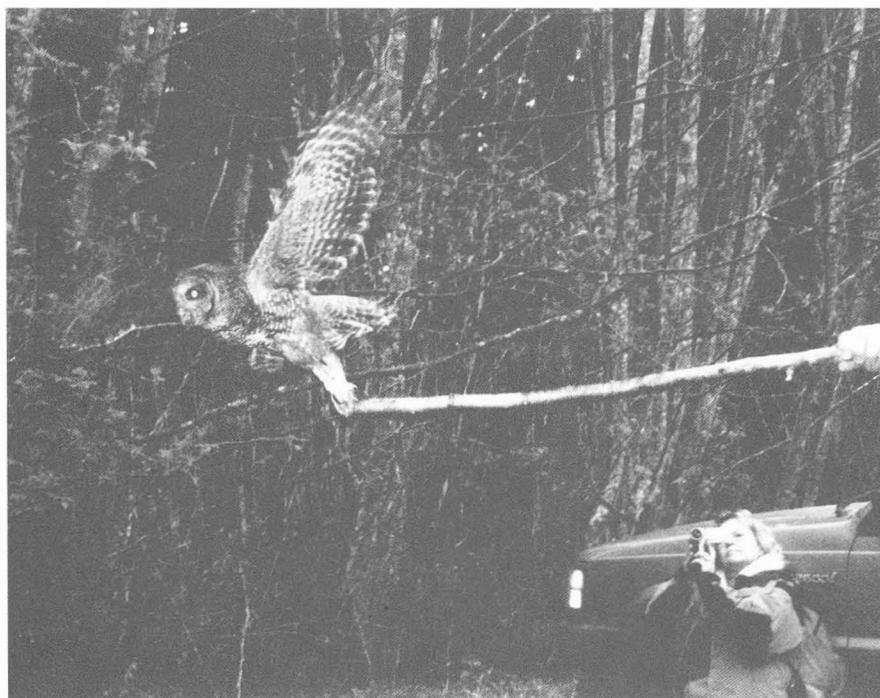
Whatever the reason, "prior to sale, owners tend to convert resources to cash to the greatest extent possible," according to Richard Geinger, environmental advocate for the Environmental Protection Information Center. "This is accounting-speak for harvesting as much standing timber as will be legally allowed prior to relinquishing title."

As large timber holdings have come onto the market, park and wildlife advocates and resource agencies have seized on opportunities to buy them. State Proposition 12, the 2000 bond measure, and Proposition 40, passed by voters in March, have made funds available for conservation purchases. At least two industrial timberland owners have sold partial or entire holdings in a mutually beneficial arrangement that enlarges state parks while enabling timber companies to increase efficiency, post higher assets, consolidate landholdings, or all of the above.

While Stimson Lumber is in the process of



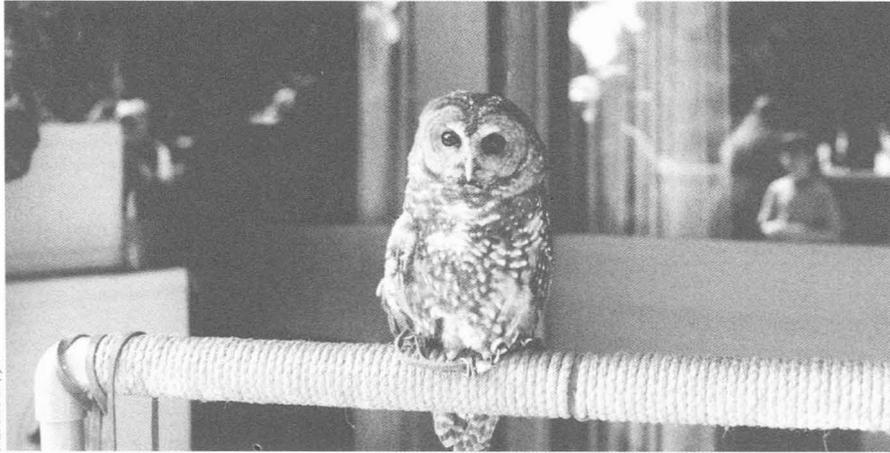
TOP TWO PHOTOS COURTESY NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



F.L. HISER, JR.

**Top and center: Trees in Redwood National and State Parks**

**Bottom: A northern spotted owl swooped to seize a mouse from a stick.**



F.L. HISER, JR.

**Above: A northern spotted owl views the human scene.**

selling to the Save-the-Redwoods League 25,000 acres near the Smith River, in Del Norte County, the Campbell Hawthorne Timber group is selling 7,400 acres on the Big River, near the town of Mendocino, to the Mendocino Land Trust, also for addition to the state park system. Louisiana-Pacific (LP) also liquidated its holdings in Mendocino County, selling to Mendocino Redwood Company, a new company formed expressly for the purchase. LP, a behemoth industrial timber landowner, had a corporate sense that their operations on the North Coast were not a core part of their business, and a desire to satisfy shareholder concerns about booked assets; it therefore acted on a previously established exit strategy to shed this heavily logged land base.

## Jobs vs. Environment?

The writing was on the wall long ago for timber-based economies, and not because parks were expanding. History belies the timber industry's and timber workers' contention that the spotted owl and overzealous environmental regulators have destroyed their livelihoods.

In fact, the greatest decline in timber employment in the Pacific Northwest occurred between 1947 and 1964—decades before the Forest Practices Act and other environmental laws. The main cause was reckless logging practices, followed by automation of the industry.

The number of mills in California declined substantially between 1969 and 1993. According to "The Forest Products Industries in California: Their Impact on the State Economy," a 1994 report produced by the College of Natural Resources, University of California, Berkeley, "Newer sawmills are more efficient and have greater

capacity than old mills. As the reliance on the logging of large, old-growth trees was reduced, older mills that were unable to handle smaller logs were phased out." In addition, explained Eric Niemi, vice president and project manager of ECONorthwest, the Pacific Northwest's largest economic consulting firm, "By the 1980s, as the supply of old-growth logs dwindled and new automated technologies emerged, the industry broke the unions, laid off thousands of workers and cut wages,"

After the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the northern spotted owl as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1991, and the late Justice William Dwyer of the U.S. District Court for Western Washington placed a temporary injunction against logging some 24 million acres of national forest, industry analysts predicted a massive economic dislocation and loss of jobs. President George Bush warned in 1992: "We'll be up to our neck in owls, and every millworker will be out of a job."

Timber communities already deep in economic decline were outraged by the spotted owl rules. Their anger only rose with the listing of Coho salmon and the marbled murrelet, followed by yet more stringent regulations on the management of timberlands, particularly on public lands. Bumper stickers reading "Earth First! Log the Rest Later" appeared, and bartenders throughout the Northwest placed boxes of "Spotted Owl Helper" above their bars, coaxing a bitter laugh from unemployed loggers stretching their meals with Hamburger Helper.

Niemi, however, does not buy the "jobs vs. environment" argument. "Old myths die hard," he commented. In his keynote address to the American Fisheries Society's 2001 annual meeting, he put it this way: "The long-term health of the economy appears to be compatible with—and probably depends on—the long-term health of our environment." According to Niemi, "By 1988, when the spotted owl lawsuits were just starting, timber jobs accounted for only 3.6 percent of total employment in Oregon and Washington." An estimated loss of 6,000–9,000 jobs has been attributed to the spotted owl restrictions—far short of the 150,000 industry analysts had predicted. Some of the unemployed timber workers were later hired for natural resource restoration work under President Clinton's "Jobs in the Woods" program, but most of those jobs proved to be temporary.

## All Economics Are Local

In the 1990s and 2000, while the electronics and service industries were growing and California's economy was booming, the North Coast and other rural economies suffered. Timber was not a major economic power statewide, representing only 1.7 percent of total income and 1.9 percent of all jobs in the state, but in 1992, 36 percent of the timber industry and its jobs were on the North Coast. While young dot-commers ate at pricey new restaurants in San Francisco and luxury mansions sprouted on San Mateo County hilltops, in Humboldt County Maxxam's Pacific Lumber Company sacked 140 workers just in time for Christmas 2001.

Beyond the North Coast's current hardships, however, the discerning eye might notice a brightening glimmer, a movement toward a better future based on sustainable use of the region's natural resources and scenic assets. Environmental laws and regulations are generating significant new economic growth.

In Humboldt County, timber harvest in 2001 was 500 million board feet, 33 percent of its 1.5 billion feet peak in the late 1950s. Only 5.96 percent of the county's workforce was employed in timber, down from 50 percent five decades before. Meanwhile, service-based employment had increased from 10 to 23 percent.

An entirely new industry, environmental restoration, has taken root. Restoration-oriented consulting work and small businesses have materialized in erosion control, creek revegetation, fish habitat improvement, and native plant cultivation. Some of this work is on public lands, some on private lands, including timber properties that must meet environmental requirements such as soil retention above creeks. Practically unknown before the 1980s, the environmental restoration job sector in Humboldt County has grown from 135 jobs in 1990 to 300 today.

Non-lumber manufacturing has risen from next to nothing in the 1950s to 3.68 percent of the local economy today. In Arcata, energy-efficient and solar-compatible refrigerators have been manufactured since 1984 by Sun Frost, employing about 20 people. According to an economic analysis

**A kayaker shoots the rapids on the Smith River.**



STEPHEN CORLEY

F.L. HISER, JR.



**Aleutian geese**

by Gabriela Carvalho, a graduate student in economics at Humboldt State University, and Associate Professor Steven C. Hackett, “most of Sun Frost’s materials are imported and most of its customers are outside of Humboldt County.” When Carvalho asked why the company is located in Humboldt County, the founder, Larry Schlussler, told her that “his first customers consisted of homeowners that were off the grid, and there were a lot of these homeowners in Humboldt County. He also said that he loves the area.”

Del Norte County has another profitable icebox: Pelican Bay State Prison, built in 1989, is now the largest service industry employer in the county. It employs 1,317, at relatively high wages.

Ecotourism provides some seasonal income not only to motels, hotels, bed and breakfast businesses, and restaurants, but also to nature guides, ornithologists, and artists. A promising sign that ecotourism is growing is the success of Godwit Days in Arcata and the Aleutian Goose Festival in Crescent City.

The Arcata festival, celebrating the marbled godwit (*Limosa fedoa beringiae*), a migrating shorebird that overwinters in Arcata Marsh before heading to its summer breeding grounds on the tundra near Ugashik Bay, Alaska, has been attracting a growing number of visitors since it began seven years ago. This year’s event, April 19–22, includes over 80 events, and was expected to draw 300 paid registrants and 1,000 or more to free events (see p. 17).

The Aleutian Goose Festival, launched four years ago and featuring some 75 scheduled events, was held March 23–25 this year, attracting 251 paying visitors from a dozen states. In addition, more than 1,000 adults and children participated in free events. This festival celebrates the amazing recov-

ery of this subspecies of Canada goose, *Branta canadensis leucopareia*, one of the first species to be listed (in 1967) under the Endangered Species Act. By 1974, when a formal recovery program was begun, only 800 individuals were known to exist, their population devastated by foxes that were brought into their nesting grounds, the Aleutian Islands, for the fur trade in the 1800s. After the foxes were removed and other measures were taken to sustain the geese, the species rebounded; now deemed “fully recovered,” it was delisted on March 20, 2001. The current population is upwards of 40,000—more than five times the original goal of the recovery plan.

Almost the entire population of this goose arrives near Crescent City in March to rest and feed en route from its wintering grounds near Modesto to the Aleutian breeding grounds. The dawn flight of this bird is awesome to behold.

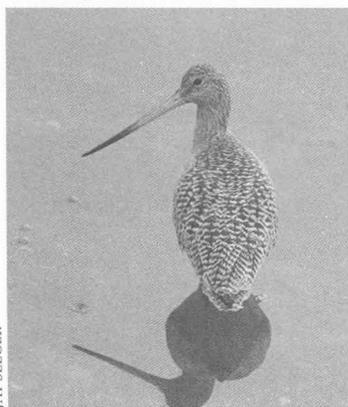
Rick Hiser, one of the goose festival’s founders, said that the first time he spoke to the local Rotary Club promoting the event, “people in the back of the room were pretty much asleep—until I started talking about how many visitors the festival was starting to draw; that’s when their ears perked up.”

A few hundred people may not sound like a big crowd to anyone living in an urban area, but Del Norte County’s entire population is only about 40,000. The festival’s growth is a clue to what might be possible as one element of a diversifying new economy.

Richard Geinger has given considerable thought to balancing the needs of rural economies with environmental needs: “The industrial extractive model hasn’t really worked out from a resource protection standpoint because self-esteem and worth were all tied to how effectively we could convert natural resources to dollars . . . regardless of what happened to the landscape,” he said. “Nor has complete ‘protection’ of landscapes without any provision for economic sustainability worked very well, as poor rural communities demonstrate. In the best of both worlds, we would provide plans for rural areas that achieve consensus on sustainable livelihoods in conjunction with the protection of our public trust resources. It’s a challenge, but it’s where we need to be.”

The shape of such a possible future is outlined in *Prosperity—The North Coast Strategy*, an economic blueprint developed by Humboldt County’s Office of Economic Development and recently adopted by the County

JAY SEGER



**Marbled godwit**



HARRY STUART

**Birders from Arcata Godwit Days at Trinidad Head**

as its Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. It calls for the timber industry, tourism, fisheries, and manufacturing to stand side by side, with due regard for sustainability, while commercial and residential development, marked by "compact, multidimensional land use," are undertaken in such ways as maintain or improve public health and the environment.

## Plans and Promises

The North Coast is a country of legend, sometimes thought of as being hidden behind a Redwood Curtain. The Eureka-Arcata airport is often fogged in, and the one in Crescent City has extremely limited service. There is no rail access from the San Francisco Bay Area, nor is any likely in the near future. A drive from San Francisco to Crescent City takes seven hours. A lot of people who live here appreciate the isolation and don't particularly want to see crowds of outsiders.

Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park gets many visitors in the summer months, and the Smith River is a steelhead angler's mecca in winter. In fact, the Smith is the last river in California where anglers are allowed to harvest wild steelhead. "Sport-fishing is a vibrant part of the economy, but people almost want to keep it secret," said Del Norte County Supervisor Finigan. "We

knew we needed tourism but we don't embrace it. Every time we'd get on the freeway and there was a Winnebago in front of us, we'd curse it. Few recognized that tourism is where the money is."

That is changing, he said. "The County is in the middle of an economic strategic planning process, and I hope that this process will allow the old business community to come together with the new community, parks and others, and formulate a strategy based on the fact that our greatest asset is land—not only in the renewable way of timber harvest, nor in the harvesting mode of fisheries, but also in the enjoyment of tourism. The necessary mental transition is a difficult one, however," Finigan said. "A lot of that is due to the unfulfilled promises from when the [Redwood National and State] Parks expanded by 48,000 acres in 1978. They said visitor-use days would rise, money would pour in, and it didn't and that created some real negativity." There had been talk of building an ecotourist lodge. Twenty-four years later, it's still in the talking stage.

## Toward Consensus

All of which brings me back to the meeting I was headed to. If the Mill Creek property were purchased, the Coastal Conservancy and the Save-the-



STEPHEN CORLEY

**A crab boat tending pots south of Crescent City**

Redwoods League wanted to make sure that the public would not be denied access to the land while State Parks developed plans for its long-term management, a process that could take years. The League had therefore applied to the Coastal Conservancy for funding to prepare an Interim Management Plan, which would enable the local community and visitors to start using and enjoying this landscape as soon as possible. The Conservancy had approved \$100,000 for this project. My task at the meeting was to help inform the community of the project and invite participation in it.

Much to my surprise, this meeting I had feared turned out to be a friendly gathering of some 30 to 40 citizens who had foregone a local candidates' forum and even the Winter Olympics so they could participate in shaping an interim use plan for the old Stimson property. The suggestions they offered were as varied as the people in the room. A horse enthusiast urged that equestrian use be promoted, and she volunteered her fellow trail riders for trail patrols. Someone else suggested that the old mill site be used for a new sewage treatment plant for Crescent City. A man dressed head-to-toe in green moleskin, looking as if he'd just come back from hiking the Austrian Alps, spoke at some length about the use and abuse of public land and offered suggestions on a variety of topics, ranging from fishery protection to highway bypasses. Many urged that fish continue to be

monitored, as Stimson Lumber had done quite thoroughly, to ensure that salmon and steelhead received the protection they needed. In the end, approval for an interim plan was unanimous.

As Diane Mutchie later pointed out, "We have a pretty independent bunch up here—which is one of the aspects of a rural lifestyle that keeps us here."

On March 11, the Save-the-Redwoods League and Stimson Lumber Company announced that they would provide the County a \$5 million mitigation fund to ease the transition from private industrial timberland to public ownership. According to Andrew Miller, owner of Stimson, "the amount of private dollars offered in mitigation is unprecedented in this type of case." The funds are to be invested to create a growing source of income for the County budget, making up for potential lost tax revenue. In exchange, the County agreed to drop its legal challenge to the sale of the Mill Creek property.

Chuck Blackburn, chairman of the Del Norte County Board of Supervisors and one of the most outspoken opponents to the land purchase until now, said: "I think overall it will be a good deal for us." The sale is expected to be completed before summer. ■

*Michael Bowen is a project manager for the Coastal Conservancy. He works on the North Coast.*

# Crab Fishermen Trapped in a Bind

ARNO HOLSCHUH

IT IS A SAD TALE, and one that does not become easier to take with repetition: once-proud fishermen reduced to poverty by factors outside their control. The good old days with overflowing boats are gone, and fishermen see smaller and smaller returns for every dollar they spend. Their work becomes more dangerous as they feel forced to go out in bad weather to eke out a bare existence.

California's crabbers are seeing their livelihoods go down the tubes. Why? Are the stocks being depleted, as happened with salmon, sardine, or groundfish? No, that's not the reason. Dungeness crab remains a robust and commercially valuable species. Just what is the problem?

Rich Young, a crabber since the mid-1970s and second-generation fisherman who fishes out of Crescent City, said he feels "backed into a corner." His wife works at Del Norte County Social Services, "and these days she sees people from the fleet all the time," he said. "A big percentage are on food stamps."

What caused this predicament? If there are still healthy stocks of crab off the Northern California shore, why is the crab fishery in such trouble? The answer isn't simple. For one thing, intensified competition has turned the crab season, officially seven months long, into a one-month fishing derby. Afraid someone else will get there first, fishermen sink ever more effort and money into landing the same number of crabs quickly.

For another, the number of crab buyers has collapsed in recent years. The largest processing company, Pacific Choice Seafoods, has grown so dominant that North Coast crabbers, unable to sell their crabs anywhere else, feel they have little say in the price. Young said that most crabbers realize their situation is untenable in the long run.

## The Crab Derby

CALIFORNIA'S DUNGENESS crab fishery has been regulated by the same simple system for almost a century. Fishermen are only allowed to keep male crabs with bodies over 6.25 inches wide, and they can't harvest them when they are molting. These refreshingly straightforward rules have proved adequate to keep the Dungeness population at sustainable levels for over 80 years.

Increased fishing effort hasn't damaged crab stocks—or so it seems to fisheries biologists, regulators working in this area, and the fishermen themselves. The data needed to say this with certainty, however, are unavailable, mostly because of the broad perception that Dungeness crabs are doing well. Research dollars tend to go to fisheries that are known to be in trouble, not seemingly healthy ones.



**Top:** Crab pots were piled at the Eureka marina in anticipation of crab season opening at midnight.

**Bottom:** Early morning at Trinidad Harbor. Predawn starts are the norm for crab fishermen.



ALL PHOTOS BY ARNO HOLSCHUH



**Dave Hankin in Humboldt State University's "crab lab"**

"There is no indication that the fishery is not sustainably managed," said Dave Hankin, a fisheries biologist at Humboldt State University. "The population has always persisted in spite of the intense fishing." He has been studying Dungeness for 20 years, using the amount of crab landed as a rough guide to population numbers. While the Dungeness population sometimes swings radically from year to year, he said, over the long term it has remained strong.

Right now, 600 vessels are licensed to fish for crab, which they do mostly from Crescent City, Bodega Bay, and Pillar Point, just north of Half Moon Bay. There are no limits on the number of crab pots a vessel carries, or on the time of day when fishing is allowed.

During the past 15 years, as salmon and other fisheries were severely curtailed, crab attracted more attention—even though there wasn't any more crab to catch. Studies have estimated that up to 90 percent of the legal male crabs in the water were already being caught, and that is assumed to be true today.

With more crabbers going after the same limited stock, the pool of eligible crabs now gets caught much sooner than in past years. In other words, fishermen do not take more crab, they have just compressed the season—which extends from the end of the moulting season in November or Decem-

ber, depending on the region, to June—into little over a month early on. Nowadays, at least 80 percent of a year's catch is brought to shore in the first six weeks. Patrick Collier, associate marine biologist in the Eureka office of the California Department of Fish and Game, recalls that 30 years ago, when he was a regulator for Fish and Game, the early "gold rush" part of the season lasted "at least a few weeks longer" than it does now.

A fisherman who sees the crab stock being harvested more quickly will of course buy more pots to keep up, beginning a cycle of overcapitalization. "Any crab fisherman will tell you that over the years, more and more gear has been going into the water without more crabs being caught," Young said.

"It's true that there's too much fishing gear out there," said Zeke Grader, executive director of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations. "It's getting to the point where the operation is becoming marginal."

Again, there are no hard numbers. Collier says Fish and Game keeps track of the number of boats that go out, but not the number of traps—and a 30-foot boat could work as many crab pots as a 100-foot boat if the crabber with the smaller boat were willing to constantly check his gear.

Zack Rotwein, a crab fisherman out of the



**Zach Rotwein and deckhand Jim Simmons haul crab onboard the *Sundown*.**

village of Trinidad in Humboldt County, works 350 crab pots from a boat that is just 30 feet long. At \$100 per pot, that's a \$35,000 investment—plus the value of his boat and the \$16,000 crab fishing permit.

George Boos, who fishes out of Bodega Bay in a 36-foot boat, has only 50 pots, but says that most fishers in the area have 200–400. Lately they have been competing with vessels up to 100 feet long that each carry 80–100 pots. “The other day I pulled up 15 crabs, and only one was male,” he told a reporter in late March. “Early in the season they’re almost all males.”

The crab derby not only pushes crabbers to invest more capital, it also forces them to take more risks. Early December, when the state’s most lucrative crab grounds open off the coast of Humboldt and Del Norte Counties, is also the time when the most violent storms hit. Each year, fishermen lose their lives in the race for crab.

“I think crab fishing is the most dangerous fishery on the North Coast,” Young said. “People feel pressured to go regardless of the weather, and as fishermen grow poorer over time they spend less money on maintenance. It would be silly to deny the danger there.” It is a danger Young knows personally. His brother died in a fishing accident off Eureka 30 years ago.

“Unless the weather is just death, you gotta go fishing,” observed Rotwein. He too speaks from experience—in the 1980s, he was dumped into the water when the boat he was working on sank.

Even if the weather isn’t rough, the hours are. At the beginning of crab season, Rotwein said, crabbers normally stay up for two days straight, to make sure they catch their share. “While you’re sleeping, someone else is pulling up those crabs. So it gets hard to sleep.”

Big boats with large crews can work around the clock, fishing at night with lights. Small boat crews, no matter how determined, have to sleep sometime. Still, they stay out as long as they can, making a perilous job even more dangerous.

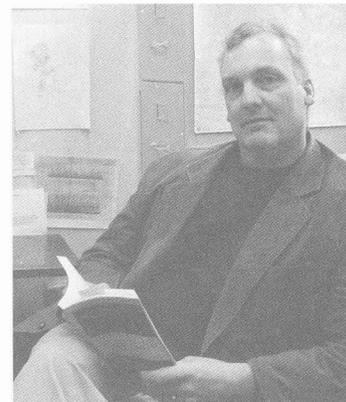
**W**HAT CAN BE DONE to help crabbers break out of this bind? A trio of professors is attempting to find some solutions: Hankin and natural resources economist Steve Hackett at Humboldt State University, and human ecology research scientist Chris Dewees at UC Davis. Their study, sponsored by California Sea Grant, examines the possibility of insti-



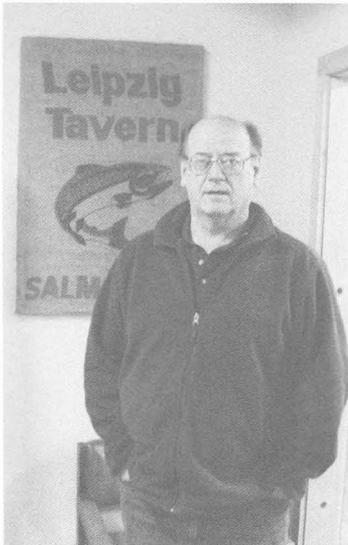
tuting a management system that would spread out the season, letting fishermen reduce the intensity of their operations without losing their share of the catch.

That could have benefits besides making crabbing safer and less costly. “Right now,” Hackett explained, “most crab is caught in a huge pulse in late December and early January.” As the market cannot absorb the supply all at once, most of the catch is frozen. Yet fresh crab brings a higher price on the market than frozen crab, so if the season were spread out, the value of the catch would increase. In addition, consumers would have access to fresh crab for a longer period of time.

In looking for “a management system that generates more net economic value from those crabs that are caught,” Hackett said, they have considered trap limits, which



**Top: Fresh-caught crab in a live well. Marketing fresh crab may provide fishermen a better price, according to Steve Hackett (bottom) professor of economics at Humboldt State University.**



**Top: Pete Leipzig of the Fishermen's Marketing Association says, "There's been an enormous consolidation in the past few years."**

**Bottom: A crab gauge shows legal sizes for various states and species.**



would limit each boat to a certain number of crab pots. Such a plan was implemented in the State of Washington just last year, but it is too soon to judge its efficacy.

Another approach involves individual transferable fishing quotas (ITQs), by which each fisherman is given a share of the catch and can collect it whenever he wants. ITQs have proved controversial because, in some cases, they have led to concentration of the right to fish in a few hands (see "Can ITQs End Overfishing?" *Coast & Ocean*, Summer 1998). "You'd have to make sure permits don't fall into the hands of processors," said Grader. "Often there's a failure to enforce them, and pretty soon fishermen are sharecroppers."

Other proposed management approaches include reducing the number of permits (a drop from 600 to 350 would be reasonable, according to Grader), limiting the number of traps (as was done with lobster in Florida and crab in Alaska, Grader pointed out), banning night fishing, limiting the number of trips per boat, and forming a fishermen's cooperative, as has been done with salmon.

Imposing new regulations on the crab fishery would not, however, be easy. "The crab fishery is difficult to deal with because the participants are far more diverse than in any other fishery," said Pete Leipzig, executive director of the Fisherman's Marketing Association, located in Eureka. "There are fishermen with open-hulled skiffs and a couple dozen pots, and there are fishermen with 150-foot boats," he said. "Coming up with a management scenario that makes everyone happy is probably impossible."

In addition, fishermen have a deep distrust of government regulation—which is understandable, Hackett said. "So often, regulation comes about after a fishery has suffered some decline and regulators are confronted with having to reduce the amount of effort and harvest in the fishery. That makes it a lot more difficult to make a living."

Deweese, who specializes in the interplay of biological and human dimensions in fisheries management, added that fishermen tend to guard their independence jealously, much like farmers and others involved in natural resource industries. "In any field where people are independent operators, they value that," he said. "And there aren't that many alternative fields that offer that independence." According to Dewees, "a grassroots solution" would be more effective

than regulation "because it would get better compliance. Things that are forced on people are not often well heeded."

The way Young sees it, however, crab fishermen currently compete so fiercely that it's absurd to think they could achieve the consensus necessary for self-regulation. "If we were able to reduce the amount of effort at the start and get a situation where people's survival was not at stake, I think you could get the kind of behavior you need to do a self-regulating plan."

A little of the needed breathing room might perhaps be provided by reducing the size of the crab fishing fleet, said Young and Zeke Grader. If the government could team up with industry to buy out a portion of the fleet, the remaining crabbers would be less pressed and could perhaps begin to talk about how to replace the derby with a full season. But prospects for that happening, said Young, appear dim.

## Only One Big Buyer

**C**ALIFORNIA'S CRAB FISHERMEN are not only being pushed to the margins out on the water, they also face a shrunken market at the dock.

"There's been an enormous consolidation within the past few years. These days, Pacific Choice—we call it No Choice—pretty much controls the coast," Leipzig said.

Not only does Pacific Choice Seafoods of Eureka now dominate the local market, it also processes some 40 percent of all the crab landed in California. Its parent company is Pacific Seafoods, the nation's largest vertically integrated seafood buyer and processor, based in Portland, Oregon.

Scores of Pacific Choice's competitors have gone bankrupt, been absorbed by the company, or both. Eureka Fisheries; Sea Products of Crescent City; Ocean Beauty in Astoria, Oregon; Del Mar Seafood's Northern California branch—all have fallen by the wayside.

That means that when fishermen bring in their big loads at the beginning of the season, selling to Pacific Choice may be their only option. As a result, Pacific Choice pretty much decides what the price of crab will be. "It's hard to negotiate with just one buyer," Young said.

Other companies still exist, but they don't have adequate facilities to handle the high volume of landings at the beginning of the compressed season. Caito Fisheries of

Fort Bragg and Hallmark Fisheries of Charleston, Oregon, for instance, have one processing facility apiece while Pacific Seafood has nine.

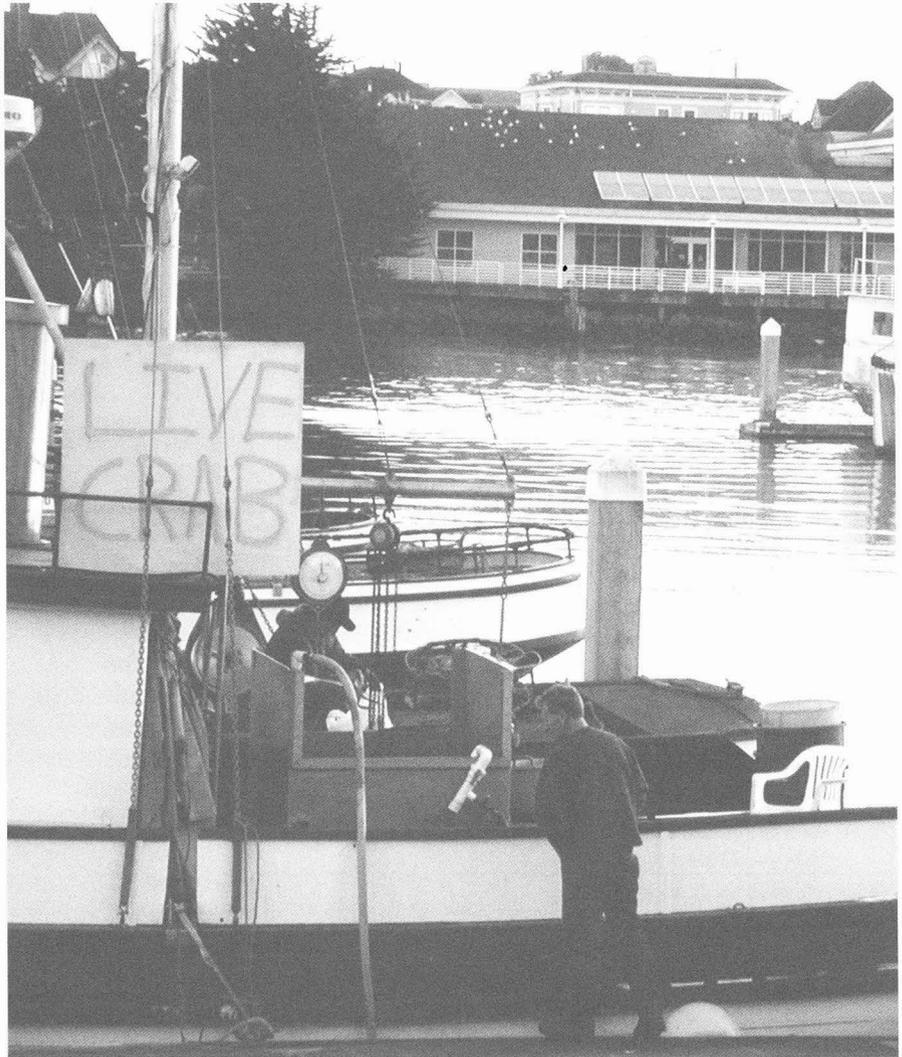
"Unfortunately, the market is at a point of consolidation," said Rick Harris, Pacific Choice's general manager. "We've bought up plants that have asked us to buy them," he said. "We have made sizeable capital investments to be able to handle the volume," including the purchase of special nitrogen freezers that chill crab to 120 degrees below zero to keep crabmeat's quality high.

Some crab fisherman in Eureka, Bodega Bay, and Pillar Point Harbor sell crabs off their boats at the dock, getting twice as much per pound as from Pacific Choice. While that strategy works for small fishermen, it is impractical for large boats or during the most productive time of the season. In December, at the height of the crab derby, a single boat may bring in up to 6,000 pounds. The only processor that can handle that quantity is Pacific Choice.

Hackett points to this as another reason to spread the season—converting more of the market to fresh or even live crab would open the door to buyers who lack the large freezer capacity of Pacific Choice. A hypothetical "fleet of little white vans with live tanks in the back" could ferry fresh-caught crab from Eureka, for instance, to Los Angeles and other hot markets. That would help keep prices up.

"In an ideal competitive market," Hackett said, "you have a large number of small sellers and buyers." Buyers in the markets for grains and minerals, for example, pay as much as they can while still making a profit because if they don't offer top dollar, others will. Although such a situation is rare in the world of fisheries, "as economists, we believe those markets perform better," said Hackett.

Bill Carvalho, currently the coast's largest distributor of fresh crab, is skeptical, however. He's bought crab off the dock at Eureka and shipped it—live—to markets up and down the coast, and even all the way to Shanghai. It's a great business, he said, but he sees little room for expansion—largely thanks to the business savvy of Pacific Choice, which is unlikely to allow a fleet of white vans to steal its markets. Indeed, as the live and fresh markets expanded in the past few years, he said, Pacific Choice responded by selling more live crab, covering that market as it does



the market for frozen crab. Thus fishermen get no price increase by selling to the live market.

Even if it were possible to end Pacific Choice's hegemony, it isn't clear that that would solve anything. In fact, slaying the giant could have dire side effects. As Hackett pointed out, Pacific Choice is very important to fishermen, for it buys not only crab but also groundfish and shrimp, and some crabbers also fish for these.

All this helps to explain why the research project won't be delivering any quick, easy recommendations. The idea behind the study, Hackett said, is to "help participants in the fishery, including processors, assess the situation and find out if change makes sense." If change is to happen, however, it will be up to the fishermen to bring it about. ■

*Arno Holschuch, a reporter for the North Coast Journal, is currently hiking the Pacific Crest Trail.*

**Scott Creps sells live crab off his boat, the *Barbara J*, at the dock in Eureka.**

# International Year of Ecotourism



**T**HIS YEAR, 2002, is the International Year of Ecotourism, so designated by the United Nations General Assembly to encourage the kind of travel and visitor-serving development that requires protection rather than consumption of the wonders of the natural and human world.

Leafing through travel brochures, exploring by internet, chatting with friends, many a Californian entertains thoughts of adventure in distant

## Ecotourism Here at Home

places: watching vast caribou herds streaming by in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, perhaps, or taking a leisurely boat ride down the Amazon River, or trekking in Bhutan, with a stop at a community festival that celebrates the arrival of black-necked cranes from Tibet, after an arduous journey across the Himalayas.

Yet too few people know of the opportunities to explore natural places, led by expert guides, right here at home—also ecotourism opportunities, if not identified as such. Although the term has been stretched to become a marketing tool for a variety of enterprises, genuine ecotourism abides by three basic principles: it contributes to the protection of natural and cultural resources, it shares economic benefits with local communities, and it is sustainable.

Along the coast and around San Francisco Bay, a growing number of communities, conservation organizations, and small entrepreneurs offer nature explorations that meet the criteria for true ecotourism.

Another term that might be applied to this sort of journeying is conservation tourism, with a subcategory for restoration tourism.

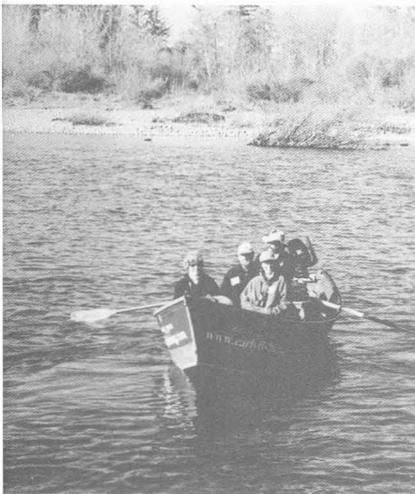
One can take guided walks to view wildflowers or birds, canoe rides on sloughs and up coastal rivers, hikes to beautiful

open spaces that people are trying to protect or along creeks and wetlands undergoing restoration. There are also wildlife festivals, organized by entire communities, that often last for several days and offer dozens of special events in natural places, all led by expert guides. Coastwalk lists an array of hikes for this summer, in all 15 coastal counties. The Sierra Club is in the midst of its Great Coastal Places campaign, and local chapters offer many walks to the public free of charge.

Except for the wildlife festivals, which tend to get broader publicity, most of these offerings attract mainly local people who are already on the mailing lists of the sponsoring organizations or are especially interested in conservation. Yet they are exactly the kind of thing that ecotourists seek: they support conservation and local culture, contribute to the welfare of local communities, and provide income for local people. Were they listed in travel brochures as California ecotourism offerings, they would likely attract huge numbers of visitors from all over wishing to experience some of the state's natural beauty. And many more local people would come if they recognized how enjoyable such excursions can be.

Especially heartening are the walks along creeks and wetlands that have been severely degraded but are now being restored by various local "Friends of . . ." groups, with the help of landowners, civic organizations, schools, resource agencies, and local governments.

In this issue of *Coast & Ocean* we describe various opportunities for nature tourism along the coast. (See also *Coast & Ocean*, Summer 1997.) In the next two issues, we will bring you more. We focus particularly on places where restoration work can be



COURTESY ALEUTIAN GOOSE FESTIVAL

## On-scene at the Aleutian Goose Festival

**Y**OU CAN HEAR THEM before you see them, so you've been told. As night sky sifts into shades of gray, you strain to catch their voices over the crash of Pacific

breakers and the patter of raindrops on your companions' umbrellas. Then their music reaches your ears. It starts as a high-pitched whisper, and builds quickly to a

gabbling and then a clamor as skein after skein of Aleutian Canada geese wings overhead. For several weeks in late winter and early spring they make this commute each morning from the offshore rock where they roost to the fields where they graze, gathering strength for their 2,100-mile migration to rookeries in southwestern Alaska.

This scene on the Crescent City bluffs is noteworthy for two reasons. One is the presence of the geese themselves—close to extinction for decades, but now recovered to a population some 40,000 strong. The other is that hundreds of locals and out-of-towners now gather to celebrate the geese's survival, in a gritty town where environmentalists are as popular as hangovers.

The "dawn fly-off," as it's billed, is the centerpiece of the Aleutian Goose Festival, an annual fête now in its fourth year. Conceived as a marriage of ecological celebration and economic development, the

viewed, and where the results of environmental protection laws are visible.

One of the success stories made possible by the Endangered Species Act, for example, was enjoyed this March by participants in Crescent City's Aleutian Goose Festival. This migratory species, once on the brink of extinction, is now in such a healthy state that it has been delisted: a cause for celebration for this economically depressed community, where some 40,000 geese come to rest and feed each spring en route from their wintering grounds in the San Joaquin National Wildlife Refuge, near Modesto, to their Arctic breeding grounds. A month later, in Arcata, another big festival, Godwit Days, celebrated a bird that thrives in the Arcata Marsh, a wetland that has been protected and restored in a pioneering effort that began more than 30 years ago.

Or consider the Los Angeles River. This is no longer a natural place. Yet what could be more inspiring than the refusal of Angelenos to resign themselves to the loss of nature along their concrete-encased river? River activists lead walks through the little parks that have been built along the river, and to sites of parks-to-be. They have amazed many people and taught them much about their city and its communities.

It's been happening for close to three decades now along the entire coast as well as inland, in California and elsewhere: creeks, watersheds, and natural places ravaged by what some still call "progress" are being coaxed back to life and health. Environmental restoration has grown into a field of endeavor backed by science, art, and commitment. It is providing jobs and income, improving quality of life in local communities, and redefining "progress." The International Year of Ecotourism is an invitation to take a look. ■

—RG

## WILDLIFE FESTIVALS

### International Migratory Bird

**Days, May 10–11** at Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Alviso; (408) 262-5513 or [www.desf-bay.fws.gov](http://www.desf-bay.fws.gov). This family-oriented event features bird walks for beginners and experts, speakers from local bird observatories, and other live presentations.

### Ocean Discovery Day Festival,

**June 8** at Upper Newport Bay Ecological Reserve, Newport Beach; (949) 640-9956 or [www.newportbay.org](http://www.newportbay.org). Learn about the bay's rich marine habitat, which supports spiny lobster, octopus, squid, sea stars, sea urchins, and many other marine invertebrates.

### Return of the Terns, June 30

at Crab Cove Visitor Center, Alameda; (510) 521-6887 or [www.ebparks.org](http://www.ebparks.org). Learn about the endangered California least tern, then travel by bus to see the birds nesting at the Alameda Wildlife Refuge.

For more listings see:

[www.outdooradventureca.com/events](http://www.outdooradventureca.com/events).



STEPHEN CORLEY



E.L. HISER, JR.

three-day event is the brainchild of nature photographer Rick Hiser and economic development pro Sandy Jerabek.

"My husband and our friends used to sit out on the bluffs after work with wine, cheese, and bread to watch the geese fly back to the rock," Jerabek recalls. "Then we thought, 'we should share this.'" The festival now attracts a few hundred people each year, so far from 13 states as well as some international visitors, including many hardcore birders and other nature enthusiasts. Originally funded by a U.S. Forest Service grant, the festival now operates on registration fees and local sponsorships, notably from the Tolowa Indians' Smith River Rancheria.

The participants come for more than just the geese. Organizers assemble a menu of trips and workshops, 65 this year, on topics ranging from the habits of owls to local geology. A birding excursion this year to Del Norte County's varied habitats encountered 96 avian species in a single day. On another trip, two Tolowa elders gave a riveting tour of village sites their people used to inhabit. And for kids, Mother Goose herself makes an appearance.

The festival is demonstrating that visitors will come to the area for nature-based tourism if the town rolls out a welcome mat and offers interesting activities. "It's an invitation to people to be part of the transition

from resource extraction to resource celebration," says county supervisor Martha McClure. Festival-goers spend at least \$70,000 in the area each year, Hiser estimates, during a lean time two months before the beginning of peak tourist season. Savvy organizers equip participants with cards to leave behind at area restaurants and motels, letting proprietors know that goose-gazers have patronized their establishments.

Many residents have embraced the festival, not just as a source of visitor dollars, but in spirit. Schoolchildren from kindergarten to high school enter goose poetry and poster contests. The town bakery turns out goose cookies, and about fifty locals show up for a dawn "community fly-off" a week or so before the festival, with refreshments provided by a nearby reform school. "For people here, the geese used to just be 'the birds,'" Hiser says. "Now they think of them as 'our birds.'"

Some have mixed feelings about the geese, which the festival organizers—to their credit—are quick to acknowledge. Three dozen geese are said to eat as much grass as one cow, burdening local ranchers with the equivalent of as many as a thousand extra head for several crucial weeks when their grass is just sprouting. The geese's appetite forces cattlemen to buy more hay for their herds, at a cost estimated at upwards of \$60,000 a year, and to expend considerable energy driving them off fields reserved for cattle. A solution is now being crafted that would compensate ranchers for the loss of forage, and dedicate some public and private land to the geese.

Like other California wildlife festivals, the Aleutian Goose Festival helps locals and outsiders alike to appreciate the unique qualities of the place and its species. Back on the cliffs near Point St. George, sandwiched between rainclouds and the steel-gray ocean, the morning's last wave of geese flies by in ragged V's. To the east, redwood-covered mountains come into view with the rising light behind the coastal cypress. The geese have worked their magic once again, entrancing observers with their beauty, their constancy, and their rebound from near-oblivion. "Thank you," says one of the participants on the shuttle back to festival headquarters. "Don't thank me, thank the geese," Hiser replies. ■

*North Coast writer Seth Zuckerman writes often for Ecotrust's daily news service, Tidepool.org.*



COASTWALK is offering 21 walks in all 15 coastal counties between May and September this year. The emphasis is on hiking adventures in the context of the coast's

## Coastwalk Explorations

natural and human history.

Following as much as possible the route of the California Coastal Trail (a work in progress), hikers will pass through ancient forests and along pristine beaches as well as through coastal towns and open areas that have been damaged—lightly or severely—by human activity. Occasionally, restoration work in progress will be visible along streams, wetlands, and bluffs.

Knowledgeable local guides will be along on many of the trips and will join the hikers for evening meals, which Coastwalk volunteers will provide. Hikes range from easy strolls to challenging backpacks. Except for the backpack trips, only a daypack need be carried; other gear goes by van. The walks are planned and managed entirely by Coastwalk volunteers.

Coastwalk is a nonprofit organization that works to educate Californians about their coast, build support for its protection, and help complete the California Coastal Trail, which eventually will run the entire length of the state's 1,100-mile coast. This year's offerings include:

**In Del Norte County, June 16–22**, hike six days along 40 miles of Coastal Trail, along beaches, through virgin redwood groves, on abandoned historic roads, and to Lake Earl. On the shore of this lake, a great example of foolish building in an inappropriate location can be studied. Years ago, streets were put in across hundreds of acres for what was to be the Pacific Shores subdivision—without regard for the lack of adequate water or septic system capacity. Part of the subdivision lies below the high water line of the lake.

**In Sonoma County**, a six-day hike along a rugged shoreline has been scheduled for **June 8–13**, and a four-day family walk, rated light to moderate, for **July 17–20**. Trekkers need good knees and hips for the first one; for the second one adults must be accompanied by at least one child aged six or older.

**In Santa Barbara County, July 28–August 6**, hikers will pass fantastic rock formations, gooey tar seeps, and long, isolated beaches. The trek covers 20 miles along the shore, from Gaviota State Park to the University of California at Santa Barbara, with some scrambling over wet rocks required in areas that offer public access to the beach only during low tide. Hikers will hear how environmental groups have organized around the goal of saving this dramatically beautiful shoreline area as a national seashore, and how land trusts and state agencies are looking for ways to keep the area open.

**In San Diego County, July 14–20**, first-time Coastwalkers are likely to be surprised many times over. Between Imperial Beach and the border fence the Coastal Trail route passes through the Tijuana River National Estuarine Reserve and into Border Field State Park, at the southwesternmost tip of the United States. Here walkers will be able to see what has been accomplished by a multiagency binational task force that has been working for many years to restore this important wetland to health. Participants will also see what the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Border Patrol are about to build along the border: a second fence and a road. This project requires enormous earthmoving, which would inevitably destroy restoration work in the reserve.

Geologists and oceanographers speak of the California coast as "the collision coast." Any Coastwalker will realize that term can refer to more than the two tectonic plates that scrunch against each other here. Those willing to subject their Vibram soles to a beautiful stretch of trail are bound to come away with a new understanding of their coast, the many forces that shape it, and why Californians continue to fight passionately for its preservation. ■

—Richard Nichols

*For a complete schedule of this year's hikes and other information, contact Coastwalk at 7207 Bodega Avenue, Sebastopol, CA 95472; (800) 550-6854; coastwalk@coastwalk.org; or see www.coastwalk.org.*

## TOURS & HIKES

**The Sierra Club** is in the midst of its Great Coastal Places campaign. See [www.sierraclub.org/ca](http://www.sierraclub.org/ca) to check local chapters for scheduled hikes.

**Marin Agricultural Land Trust** offers hikes, tours, and special events.

**May 11:** Hike over pastures with fourth-generation rancher Dave Evans to visit cattle that eat only fresh grass and are marketed directly to individual buyers. Taste various cuts of beef during a mountainside picnic.

**May 31:** Tour the Straus Family Creamery, the first dairy west of the Mississippi to be certified as organic. See the unique dairy on Tomales Bay, picnic at the Straus Home Ranch, visit the bottling plant.

For other MALT offerings and to pre-register, call **(415) 663-1158** or write to MALT, P.O. Box 809, Point Reyes Station, CA 94956.

**Save the Bay** offers numerous outings and events on and around San Francisco Bay. These include:

**May 12:** The Bay Rocks! Hike to the top of the Coyote Hills with geologist Ken Lajoie and learn about the origins of the bay.

**May 18:** River Rafting on Cache Creek.

**May 26:** Kayak to Brooks Island off the East Bay shore, then hike and climb to the summit.

See [www.savesfbay.org](http://www.savesfbay.org) for additional outings and participatory programs.

**Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy** leads nature walks on the second Saturday of every month, exploring different parts of the peninsula. Volunteer docents talk about local ecology, botany, geology, and history and provide an overview of the peninsula's open space. Call (310) 541-7613 or see [www.pvplc.org](http://www.pvplc.org) for the schedule and maps.

## Los Angeles River Revival Tours

JOE LINTON is probably the first Los Angeles River guide since the Los Angeles basin was dotted with indigenous villages, and he's clearly a pioneer in the brand new field of restoration tourism. He

takes curious Angelenos to places along the river where restoration work

is happening, in the planning stages, or still just a gleam in a creek freak's eye.

Since June '98, on Sundays almost every month, he has led walks along the river or one of its major tributaries: Arroyo Seco, Tujunga Wash, and Compton Creek. The walkers move at a leisurely pace and usually cover no more than a couple of miles. Linton figures that some 1,500 people, "mostly adults, and quite a few seniors," have taken part. A lot of folks return month after month.

"We're doing Walk Number 48 in May," said Linton, 38, an Orange County native who now lives in Koreatown, west of downtown Los Angeles. A former computer analyst who now works as a professional artist, illustrator, and activist, he is a longtime board member of Friends of the Los Angeles River, and also a cofounder of the L.A. County Bicycle Coalition.

The walks take people to places along the river or one of its major tributaries where restoration projects are in the works or have been completed: Arroyo Seco, Tujunga Wash, and Compton Creek.

Through these tours, Linton and FoLAR hope to help build the constituency for the river's revival. "If 'Taylor Yard' or 'Tujunga Wash' is only an abstract lot on a map to you, walking there will make it real," he explained. The imagination is stirred, possibilities present themselves.

"Pretty much every other walk" has been focused on the Glendale Narrows, the soft-bottomed stretch just north of downtown L.A., to visit a string of riverfront mini-parks built by the Trust For Public Land, NorthEast Trees, and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority. Other walks have introduced Angelenos to planned and potential restoration sites, including Taylor Yard and the old Headquarters spreading grounds between Griffith Park and the river.

The most popular walk so far went through the 40-acre "Cornfields," a former Southern Pacific freight yard between Chi-

natown and the river, which only last year appeared destined to be paved for industrial warehouses but will now be a state park. One blustery Sunday last winter, at the height of the battle about the site's future, some 110 people showed up to explore stacks of rotting railroad ties and take in the spectacular views of downtown. The land has since been acquired by California State Parks. An advisory committee is to be formed this spring to assist in the planning process.

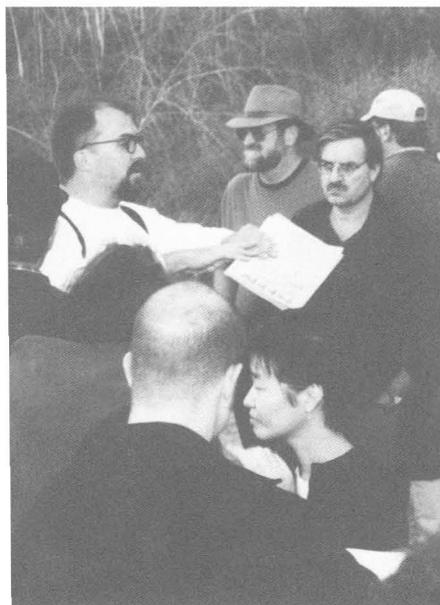
Among those who have come out for the river walks, said Linton, are the mayor of South Gate and the city manager of Cudahy, people from agencies with responsibilities along the river, and "plenty of neighborhood activists—homeowner resident association types," including members of the Village Gardeners of Sherman Oaks, Atwater Residents Association, and the Wrigley Association of Long Beach.

On a recent tour of the nearly inaccessible downtown Los Angeles River front, where the walkers had to cross several still-active railroad tracks, Linton discussed the fine set of concrete arch bridges that link downtown L.A. with the East Side. Then Merrill Butler III, grandson of the city engineer responsible for most of the bridges' design and construction, discussed his grandfather's life and work.

"I often worry that walking folks around a vacant lot will be boring for them," Linton said. "Same for concrete areas—like the Maywood, Cudahy, Studio City, Arroyo Seco, and Downtown bridge walks. But folks check it all out—they seem to like the rough urban exploration—and the river delivers." On the Long Beach greenbelt stroll, Linton spotted a raptor hovering above a riverside overflow pond that serves as an outlet for a major city storm drain. A rapid consultation with a birding manual showed it to be a white-tailed kite, the first any of the participants had ever seen. "Even when it's all concrete and vacant lots, it's an interesting, albeit sad, empty urban beauty," Linton muses, "and nature creeps in wherever she finds a tiny bit of space." ■

—Lewis MacAdams

To join Linton's next tour, check out the Friends of the Los Angeles River's website at [www.folar.org](http://www.folar.org) for time and location, or call FoLAR at: (323) 223-0585 or (800) LA RIVER.



Joe Linton (left) leads urban explorers on a walk through the "Cornfields."

MICHELLE MASCARENHAS

THE TREEFROG'S FRIEND

# Tending to the Urban Wild

HAL HUGHES

**M**ost people who grew up on a city's edge are haunted by memories of natural places that are now gone, and Jim McKissock is no exception. While others lament what's lost, or resign themselves to inexorable change, however, he is deeply engaged in a personal mission: to discover what has survived and restore what he can rescue in and around El Cerrito, on the east shore of San Francisco Bay.

He works quietly, almost invisibly, without sponsors or appointment. While neighbors tend to their gardens he does that and more—he gardens the urban wilds, on his own time and initiative, occasionally assisted by a handful of volunteers.



FROG: PHOTOS BY GLENN MCCREA. ALL OTHER PHOTOS BY MALCOLM LUBLINER

I followed him on his rounds for several hours one sunny day—a day of discovery in the thick of the metropolis. We visited pockets of indigenous flora and fauna, most well hidden in inconspicuous urban niches McKissock had discovered. At what might be dismissed as a weed-choked bog, an attraction to homeless squatters, he showed me remnant riparian willow habitat, rich with tules and water primrose. Looking at a grassy hillside, too steep to build on, he pointed to a rare serpentine system that supports a unique array of plants.

With McKissock as my guide, I began to see how remarkably tenacious native plants and creatures can be when faced with the juggernauts of human ambition and igno-

rance, and how one informed and passionately dedicated person can significantly increase their chances for survival.

Our exploration began in McKissock's back yard, from which his efforts reach outward. Thick vegetation arched up over fences and other structures, screening the neighboring houses from view. There, behind the red-shingled house where he lives with his wife, he propagates and nurtures native plants that need help to survive. He showed me scarlet monkey flower (*Mimulus cardinalis*) in bloom; red-stemmed water primrose (*Ludwigia hexapetala*); water smartweed (*Polygonum punctatum*), resembling *Ludwigia* but less invasive; and several varieties of tules (*Scirpus*) gathered from nearby hillsides and wetlands.

In the center of this yard is a frog pond, where he raises Pacific treefrogs (*Pseudacris (Hyla) regilla*). They have created a new breeding population there, and most of his neighbors now also, quite happily, have frogs in their yards.

As the chilly morning gave way to sunshine that warmed the pond, tiny frogs started to stir and hop about in a thicket of *Ludwigia*. "This is a great plant for the frogs. It grows really fast and provides shade and hiding places, and they can lay their eggs on the underside of the leaves," he said. "It's a native, but very invasive—I'll have to cut it back soon. It's easy to control."

As we talked, McKissock filled five-gallon jugs from a hose, added a dose of AmQuel detoxifier to each to remove ammonia and other organic toxins, then poured the water into one end of the pond. "I threw some spinach in a few minutes ago, so you can see some of the tadpoles. They love spinach," he said. Sure enough, among the plants snaking through the water were dozens of half-inch-long tadpoles busily nibbling on bright green spinach leaves.

Inside the house, he showed how he raises flightless fruitflies in customized plastic water bottles to feed the frogs. We looked at historic photos of the El Cerrito region, and at an old map that showed that the East Bay had already been targeted for real estate development and landfills by 1875.

As a child growing up in the 1940s and '50s near Richmond, a few miles from his current home, McKissock roamed a countryside that was still mostly rural. "We used to play around what we called 'rain ponds'—vernal pools," he told me. "Our parents

**Bottom: Jim McKissock works on the new frog pond at the Mira Vista School meadow.**



would say, 'I'm not buying you any more new shoes, so stay out of those rain ponds.' Of course there was always a bunch of kids going to school in stiff, shrunken leather shoes. We didn't have sneakers then."

As a young adult he spent time in other parts of the country, but a strong connection with the San Francisco Bay region always drew him back. Houses now covered the bay shore and had spread up into the Berkeley Hills. The wetlands and rain ponds were all but gone, as were the frogs and their spring chorus, which had been part of his childhood's music.

McKissock felt a need to hold on to what bits of nature remained and, where possible, to bring back some of what had disappeared. He found work with the Southern Pacific Railroad, educated himself about native plants and wildlife, and explored most of the wildlands that remained in the region, searching out pockets of native plants and potential frog habitats.

## Perils and Pitfalls

WE GOT INTO HIS CAR and drove a few blocks to the Ohlone Greenway. I had crossed this strip of hiking and biking trail that runs beside elevated BART tracks on my way to McKissock's house. Now, at the base of a trailside retaining wall, he showed me a narrow marshy area a few yards long. "This is where the frog restoration got started," he said. "This is actually a sea-

sonal wetland. Water seeps down through the hill and out of those pipes in the wall." This was one of the last low-lying spots in the area where treefrog tadpoles still morphed into adults. Three years ago the City filled the puddle with two feet of wood chips. With the help of Joanna Brandurf, a teacher at Sierra Prospect School, he was able to recruit some students to help him clear the chips out of the pond.

The frogs were able to breed successfully, but the next winter the City mowed down all the vegetation. McKissock transplanted *Ludwigia* into the puddle, to provide the needed cover. Eventually he was able to convince the City to designate the area as treefrog habitat. Now the spot is marked with signs, and vegetation is mowed high or hand-weeded, and from this little pool frogs have begun to spread along the greenway.

Pacific treefrogs are not particularly attracted to trees. (Although most frogs of the treefrog family are good climbers, many live in water, on the ground, or even in burrows. Perhaps because of this, they are now often called chorus frogs.) They do need wet places and cover to breed, however; then, when mature, they will range up to a half-mile from home. Anything that holds water, even an old tire, is a potential breeding site. Unfortunately, the same is true for mosquitoes, so frog populations are often destroyed by mosquito-control efforts. McKissock's approach is to skim mosquito



**Left: This little frog pond by the Ohlone Greenway is a natural seasonal wetland.**

**Right: McKissock works to maintain the manmade Canyon Trail Park frog pond.**



larvae from frog ponds by hand until enough frogs are established to consume the larvae. "In my backyard pond there hasn't been a single mosquito this year," he said. "Now I find dragonfly nymphs instead." He has also experimented successfully with using Bti, a bacterium that kills mosquito larvae but is harmless to frogs, humans, and other creatures.

Next we drove to Baxter Creek, a spring-fed creek remnant behind industrial buildings where homeless people camp in willow groves, and abandoned shopping carts are strewn among weeds. The creek is clogged with cattails, blackberries, fennel, and other alien plants, but there are tules and other natives too. "That's where all the *Ludwigia* you've seen came from," he said.

Finding and propagating the necessary plants is one part of a restoration project, but the job does not end there. Until a system becomes self-sustaining, it must be watched and protected. This was vividly illustrated at McKissock's most successful frog restoration project to date, in Canyon Trail Park. Between a trail leading into the canyon and a massive boulder marked with ancient mortars and small round petroglyphs, we came upon a man-made concrete pond brimming with *Ludwigia*, its long red stems topped with lovely yellow flowers and bearing shiny green leaves. Here too, as in his backyard pond, McKissock had planted *Ludwigia* because it spreads quickly and brings oxygen to the

bottom soil, so aerobic bacteria can thrive and eat the detritus, creating healthy frog habitat. "I'll have to clear out a lot of this and replace it with *Polygonum* that's not so invasive," he said.

At every step we took beside the pond a dozen or more tiny frogs leaped and scurried deeper into the greenery. "The neighbors say they make quite a chorus at night now, and most like to hear it. Only the males sing." McKissock noticed that tules he'd planted were starting to take hold, but several had been broken. "Those darn dogs," he muttered. As if on cue, a couple of joggers passed by, and their dog headed directly into the pond. I could feel McKissock's frustration, but he did not reprimand the couple.

Most people have no idea that their activities may be disrupting fragile habitats. Even worse, says McKissock, many of the agencies charged with managing green spaces are unaware of the deleterious effects of many common maintenance practices.

We walked up a hillside of recently mown dry golden grasses. To McKissock, it was priceless habitat needlessly destroyed. "I keep telling them not to mow it so short," he said. "If you cut it to about eight inches, the native grasses can go to seed, regenerate, and spread. They won't grow as tall as nonnatives, and they stay green in summer, so there's very little fire risk." He pointed out native grasses and sedges poking up green through the cut grass. In a little copse of trees he bent down and showed me frag-



ile leafy vines snaking through the grass. "This is pipevine, *Aristolochia californica*," he said. "It's where the pipevine swallowtail butterfly lays its eggs. Normally it grows up into shrubs and the low branches of trees, but here the trees have all been lollipopped." All the low branches had indeed been removed, and there was no underbrush at all. The manicured hillside was lovely, but it no longer welcomed the large iridescent blue-and-black swallowtail (*Battus philenor*).

This place and moment epitomized my experience that day. It was exciting to see an uncommon endemic species surviving, but discouraging to realize that the forces arrayed against it may already have usurped its role in the ecosystem. McKissock hopes he will be able to persuade workers to respect these key bits of habitat and spare them from destruction. The longer I was with him, the more I appreciated how much patience and determination this work requires.

## Tiny Survivors

WE DROVE FARTHER UP into the hills, to an open strip of hillside near Mira Vista School, where McKissock had managed to stop the mowers in time to protect several unique plant communities that grow in serpentine soil there. Clumps of native grasses and sedges (*Carex*) were brown and dry. "They are slow growers, and this close-cropping disrupts their regenerative cycle. I don't know if they can come back from this," he said.

McKissock pointed out plants that had long been used by the indigenous people without unnecessarily disrupting natural processes. "The Indians must have thought the European settlers were crazy, damming up streams and destroying the natural food supplies," he reflected.

Higher on the hillside were clumps of yampa, or Indian potato (*Perideridia kelloggii*), a relative of parsley that resembles a tiny fennel or Queen Anne's lace. It is the natural host of the anise swallowtail butterfly (*Papilio zelicaon*), which now feeds mostly on invasive fennel. Its tuberous roots used to be ground into meal. Nearby was a tiny patch of "clay onions" (*Allium unifolium*)—a couple dozen plants at most. "This is the only patch of these for miles," said McKissock.

(Since my visit, things are looking up for the Mira Vista meadow. A grant from the

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Fund to Aquatic Outreach enables that organization to work with the school and McKissock to map the area in detail, with native plants clearly marked so maintenance workers will know where to mow. He will install a native plant demonstration garden. Neighbors are already helping to tend a new frog pond McKissock dug at a natural seep in the meadow.)

## Life in the Cracks

LATER WE WALKED ALONG Cerrito Creek, at the base of Albany Hill, the conspicuous eucalyptus-covered mound that rises from the flats near Interstate 80. Restoration projects in progress there include one funded by the Coastal Conservancy in December 2001. We visited a spot where native oaks and willows had been planted to restore riparian habitat, and a secluded stretch of the stream where McKissock had recently placed some treefrogs. Sure enough, it took only a moment to see some leaping into the water.

Along the banks were scattered patches of surviving endemics—wild roses, various native grasses, little willow herb (*Epilobium minutum*) with pretty, tiny pink flowers. "In springtime when the *Epilobium* is in full bloom it's like a pink mist covering the hills," he said. We plunged one last time into the thick vegetation along the creek. McKissock pointed out remnant patches of endemic plants—lovely yellow monkey flowers (*Mimulus guttatus*), tules, rushes (*Juncus*), more *Ludwigia* and *Polygonum*—thriving where their habitat was undisturbed.

By the time we returned to McKissock's house, my legs were wobbly, unaccustomed to pavement. I felt more connected to the past and the natural landscape than to the city I'd come from. Heading back to BART to catch a train home, I again crossed the Ohlone Greenway. The green-bordered path now represented a connection to treefrogs and native plants that I had not before known existed. I realized that after this day with McKissock, a glimpse of an undeveloped hillside or a soggy weed patch would have new meaning. I had been initiated into the wild world that lives in the interstices of our urban wasteland. ■



# Ventura Trails: From Mountains to the Sea

JOANNE CUNHA



ALL PHOTOS BY JOANNE CUNHA

**Top: Tandem bike riders make the 30-mile round trip ride between Ventura Beach and downtown Ojai.**

**Below: Weary bikers and hikers can ride around Ojai on the Ojai Trolley Service.**



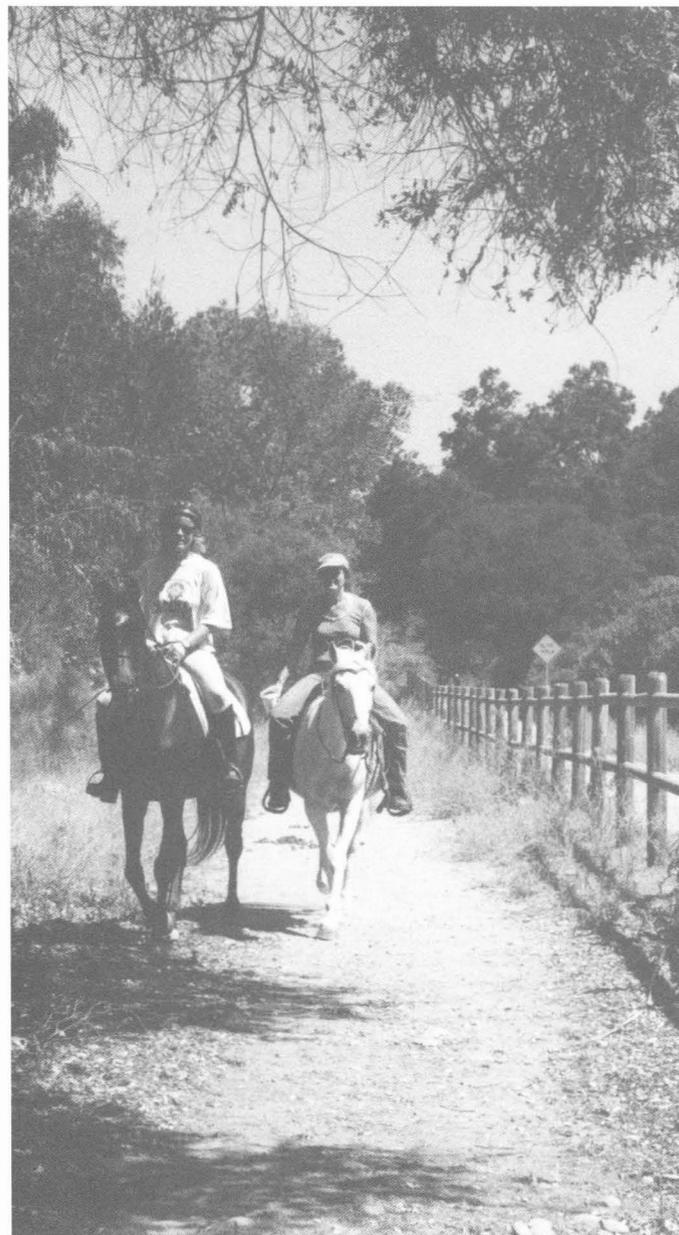
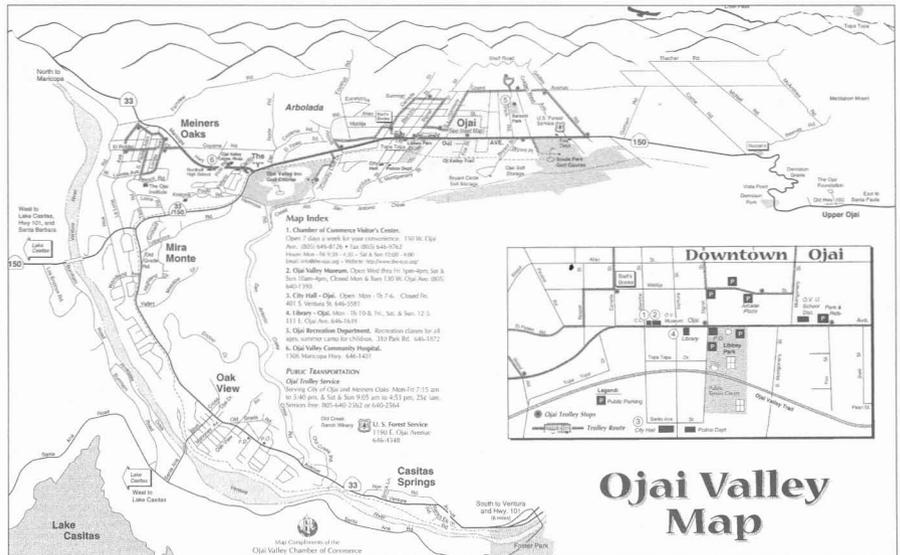
The Ojai Valley Trail is nestled between Highway 33 and the Ventura River, starting at Foster Park, inland of Ventura, and ending in Ojai. Many local artists have been inspired by the landscape it traverses, with rolling hills studded with oak trees, grazing horses, red-tailed hawks gliding overhead,

and blazing wildflowers in spring. You can see some of their work in Ojai galleries.

Nestled between Highway 33 and the Ventura River, this trail consists of two 10-foot-wide paths separated by a four-foot-high wooden fence: a concrete path for hikers, skaters, and bikers, and a wood-chip equestrian path. It winds through the rural communities of Casitas Springs, Oak View, Mira Monte, and Meiners Oaks. "The constant use of the trail amazes me," said John Martin, director of Ojai's Recreation Department. "There is never, I repeat, never, a time that I drive along Highway 33 that I don't see hikers, bicycle riders, joggers, and horseback riders." Because the trail is close to the highway, people can start and stop wherever they choose.

The Ojai Valley Trail is part of a three-trail mountains-to-the-sea trail system that provides a total of 24 miles of motor vehicle-free recreation for an estimated one million people a year. The system was built in partnership by state, county, and city governments, mostly along abandoned Southern Pacific Railroad rights-of-way. It was started in 1981, when Ventura County purchased an abandoned 9.5-mile stretch of former track. "The old spur train line had been used 100 years ago to bring down fruit grown in the Ojai Valley," according to Albert Carbon, associate civil engineer for the City of Ventura. The grade was gradual, and the rail bed was set back from Highway 33.

**F**or more information, see the web sites of the Ojai Valley Chamber of Commerce, [www.the-ojai.org](http://www.the-ojai.org); the City of Ventura, [www.ci.ventura.ca.us](http://www.ci.ventura.ca.us); or the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, [www.railtrails.org](http://www.railtrails.org). Call Ventura County, (800) 438-1112, for a map of county bike paths.



**A separate equestrian trail runs parallel to the Ojai bike/hike/skate path.**

Of the three trails in the system, the Ojai Valley Trail was the first to open. Completed in 1988, it was built and is maintained by the County. It has been cited as a model by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, a national nonprofit organization that encourages communities to convert abandoned rail corridors into public trails.

“As a bike rider, I love it. I think it’s beautiful,” said landscape architect Theresa Lubin, who is in charge of day-to-day trail maintenance. “It is a benefit to our community and is a Class 1 bike path, which means it’s totally separate from vehicular traffic.” The required maintenance is considerable. “We have crews who check the path weekly. We have had landslides that had to be cleared,” Lubin said. “Some areas erode from flooding, and we have to maintain the trail’s integrity where it crosses over streams. We repair fence breaks and keep the path clear of debris.”

In 1999, the City of Ventura acquired 6.3 more miles of the abandoned railroad right-of-way and built the Ventura River Trail, linking Main Street to the Ojai Valley Trail at Foster Park. This more urban trail goes through agricultural, industrial, and residential areas and is open from dawn to dusk. The Ventura River Trail, in turn, gives access to the beachfront Omer Rains Trail, built by the State Parks Department, which links the Ventura Pier to Emma Wood State Beach.

This trail system accommodates everyone—including dogs, but only if they’re on leashes. Those looking for an easy ride or walk can stay near the ocean or on the flat Ventura River Trail, while those wanting a more vigorous workout can take on the Ojai Valley Trail. All roads lead to ice cream—at the beach, on Ventura’s Main Street, or in downtown Ojai. ■

*Joanne Cunha is a freelance writer and photographer living in Ventura County. Her e-mail address is [joannecu@earthlink.net](mailto:joannecu@earthlink.net).*

# East L.A. Comes to Point Reyes

WYN HOAG

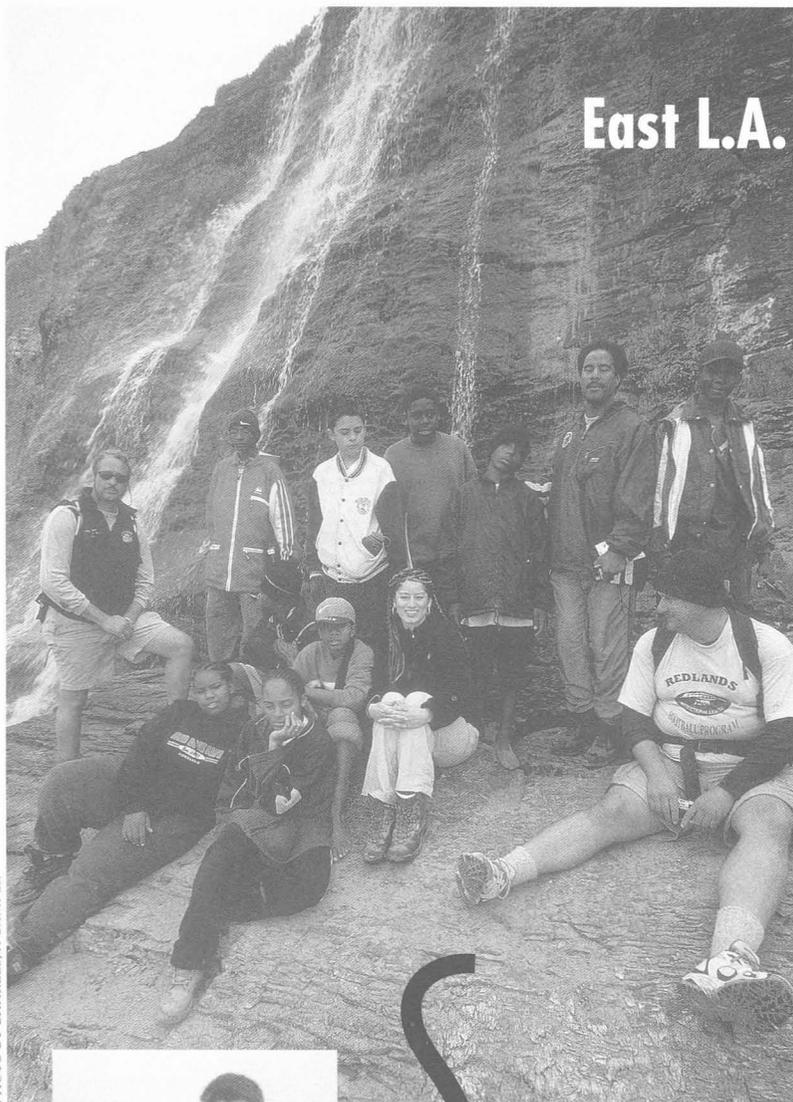


PHOTO BY CHARLES, A CAMPER

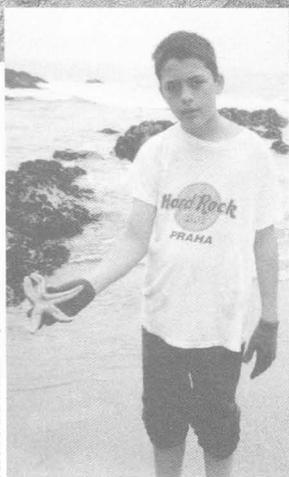


PHOTO BY WHITNEY, A CAMPER

**Top: The campers rest at Alamere Falls before exploring tide pools.**

**Above: Edward holds a seastar (Pisaster) found in tide pools near Double Point.**

**S**TANDING ALONE and viewing the ocean for the first time, 12-year-old Jonathan recorded his thoughts at Wildcat Beach in the Point Reyes National Seashore:

*"I'm telling you about this beach. I'm here to tell you: do not come to this beach! We are here near San Francisco and this is the only beach they got! And all around are these signs that say: "WARNING! HELP PROTECT OUR WILDLIFE! DON'T FEED, TOUCH, OR DISTURB ANY MAMMALS. IT IS HARMFUL AND ILLEGAL." Then it says it means by mammals: "SHARKS, WHALES, AND SEALS!" We saw dead crabs and two dead sharks (two-foot sand sharks)! Sharks come to the shore. Something might happen! So I'm out! Right now I'm kinda scared you know, cause I've never been on the beach."*

Jonathan was accompanied by two girls—Whitney and Jessica—and six other boys—Wendel, Kyle, Kent, Zack, Charles, and Eddie—from East Los Angeles. Their ages ranged from 12 to 15, their heights

from four to six feet, and their aspirations from finishing high school to graduating from Cal Tech. Some had never built a sand castle or felt the surf wash over their bare feet. In July 2001 they spent an intense week hiking and backpacking, and two nights camping at Point Reyes, during a trip sponsored by Outward Bound Adventures (OBA) and Coastwalk. Besides the customary camping equipment, each was issued a disposable camera, and all shared a tape recorder to interview one another for this story.

OBA takes urban youths on outdoor trips within the Los Angeles Basin, and on treks to the Sierra Nevada, Mojave Desert, and the California coast. Most of these youths have been caught shoplifting, possessing a controlled substance or weapon, or tagging public property with gang insignias. These trips are part of a program that extends over two or three years and is designed to help young people move toward a more positive future. Coastwalk leads coastal walks and works to preserve the coast and to complete the California Coastal Trail. I came as a Coastwalk volunteer and photographer, representing WildNature Photography, a nonprofit organization that seeks to heighten awareness of the West's diminishing wildlands.

The expedition of nine youths and six OBA counselors traveled by van from Pasadena to San Luis Obispo. It spent the first night at San Luis Reservoir camping and bird-watching, and the second night at the Marin Headlands Hostel, north of the Golden Gate. On the third morning the van arrived at the Palomarin trailhead of Point Reyes National Seashore. From there it was six miles to Wildcat Camp, on foot with 40-pound backpacks, along the Coastal Trail. Coastwalk's executive director, Richard Nichols, led the way through oaks, eucalyptus, Douglas fir, and coastal scrub.

It wasn't long before the group split in two: fast and slow. The fast pack, energized by five large boys (Kyle, Zack, Charles, Jonathan, and Wendel), was intent on getting to camp. Its pace was set by 12-year-old Jessica, who refused to let "the guys" leave her in the dust. The slow group ambled along steadily, conserving energy for the long haul.

As the miles were racked up, Kent, Kyle, and Wendel struggled and complained that their feet hurt, but on they went. Zack surveyed birds over the ocean to his left and deer on the mountains to his right, asking rapid-fire questions that counselors struggled to answer. Eddie, a quiet, wispy kid who may have weighed less than his pack, teetered along in a world of his own. He twice lost control on a downhill grade and tumbled, but scrambled right back up and carried on without a word.

Descending to Wildcat Camp, the hikers edged around a deer carcass, a mountain lion's fresh kill. Wide-eyed, they listened to a quick lecture on proper behavior toward lions, should one appear in their path: make yourself look bigger, don't run; always hike in pairs. This instruction was the only one besides "Dinner" that did not require a shout to get everyone's attention.

Ten minutes later we were in the blufftop meadow above Wildcat Beach, sheltered on three sides by dark stands of Douglas fir. The lion was temporarily forgotten. The sun, which had emerged late in the afternoon, was now slipping into the silvery fog bank just offshore.

Jonathan [speaking into the tape recorder]: *I'm here with two young kids who were on the slow walk today. How was the walk? How long was it? Was it tiring?*

Kent: *It was six miles and YES it was tiring!*

Jonathan: *Why was it so hard?*

Kyle: *My feet hurt like hell!*

Jonathan: *Please disregard that cuss word.*

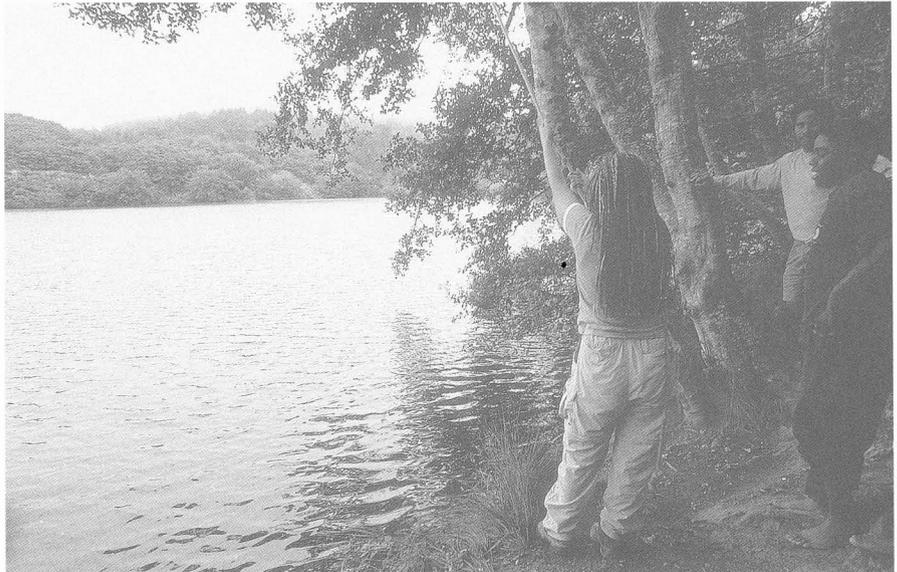
Kyle: *Did you really think you'd be here wrecking your feet for five hours?*

Jonathan: *So I see he has a feet problem? Charles how was the walk?*

Charles: *Terrifying. Goll dang, I fell in the plants!*

Groups of buddies had hurried to claim tent sites, but the lead counselor, Gary Clemmons, announced a new mix of tent mates.

Jonathan: *Wendel just got angry because he learned that he cannot share a tent with the per-*



PHOTOS THIS PAGE: WYN HOAG



*son he wanted. He thinks (the counselors) are being kind of racist or something. Wendel?*

Wendel: *I ain't sayin' nothin', dog.*

Jonathan: *Kyle, what do you think of these big heavy sleeping bags?*

Kyle: (Silence)

Jonathan: *Kyle does not have any comment right now. He just has a big smile on his face. I'll try to get back to him when he is in a better mood. Zack, how hard [was it] to make your tent?*

Zack: *Our tent was up in record time.*

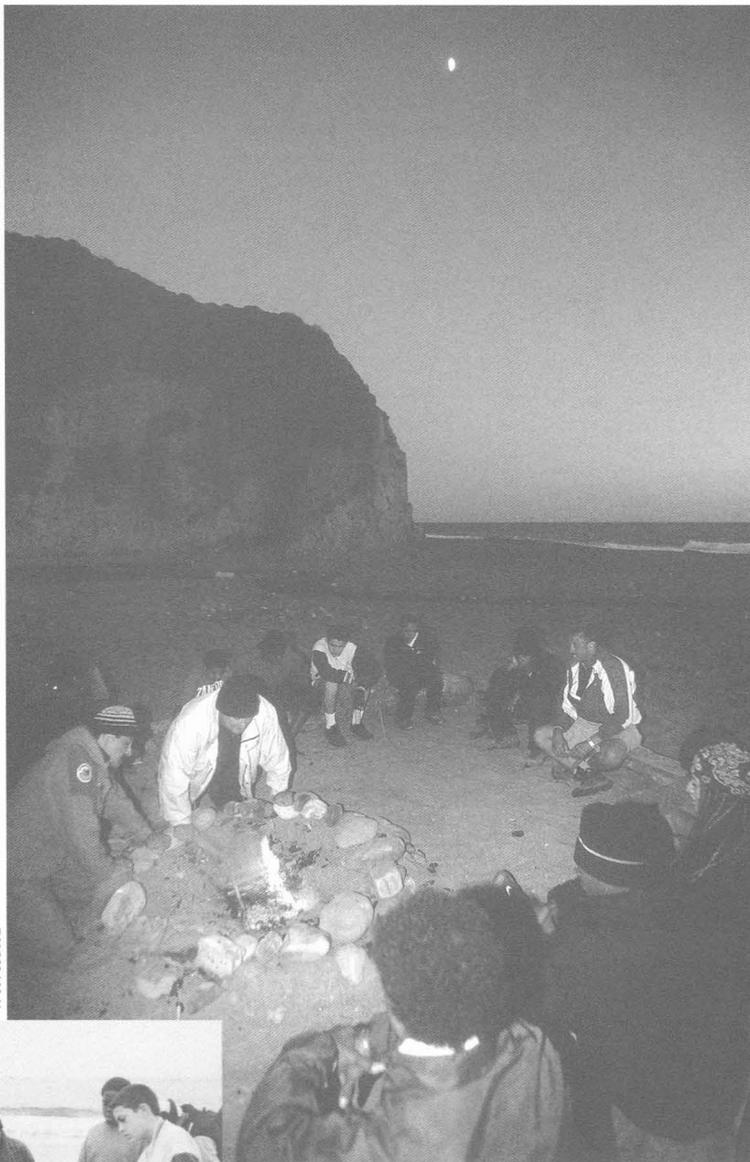
Jonathan: *Was there any kind of difficulty?*

Zack: *Getting the poles situated . . . you had to get two poles in just the right place. Then bend them over the whole tent. . . .*

Jonathan: *So you're saying it was done in record time?*

**Top: OBA counselor Evelyn Galindo about to swing out over Bass Lake**

**Above: The group learns how to purify water by filtration.**



WYN HOAG



EVELYN GALINDO

**Top: Evening campfire circle at Wildcat Beach**

**Above: Wyn Hoag explains a bull kelp holdfast.**

Zack: Yeah, that's what I'm saying!

Once all tents were up, half the campers were assigned to cook under the watchful eye of counselor Scott Johnson; the other half were sent to gather driftwood for the after-dinner fire. Counselor Bryan Jackson reined in the five boys ready to hightail it to the beach with a stern warning: "Wait! Listen to me. *Do not go in the water.* On your way down to the beach go along the main path. See that couple over there? *Do not go by them.* That is their domain. Be quiet around them. Wait a minute! Hold up! Listen! There is a fire ring down there, so gather the wood and place it next to the fire ring. Staff members are already at the beach—Chuck, Gary, and Richard. Stay with them!"

Down on the shore, the wood gatherers found small kelp crabs, myriad undis-

turbed animal tracks, and a large, dead sand shark.

Jonathan: Man, what do you think ate this shark? What kind of tracks are these?

Edward: Raccoon tracks. The fish probably got caught up here at high tide, it was drowning in the tide pool, and then the raccoon saw it at night and was able to get food without a fight.

Kent: I think the same thing. Maybe a fisherman caught them. Maybe the raccoons ate it. Maybe it was already dead and washed ashore.

Jonathan: Somebody ate it. I think whatever you think is right. I don't really know 'cause I wasn't here when it happened!

Catching up with Richard Nichols and OBA executive director Chuck Thomas, the young campers stared in awe at the sedimentary rock, folded in huge layers that eons before had turned 180 degrees back on itself, then back on itself again. "What made this happen? How did it turn back on itself?" asked Edward. The explanation that Point Reyes had drifted north from Mexico on the Pacific Plate raised a score of unanswered questions. Chuck bent his arms to show how the earth had folded up like a blanket, all the while maintaining layers laid down in an ancient sea. The listeners' faces plainly acknowledged a sense of the gigantic geologic event as their fingers touched the stacked strata of mudstone. As darkness fell, the youngsters hurried back along the shore, picking up whatever might burn, and tossed it all into the fire ring before ascending to camp.

*Yeahhhhh, macaroni and cheese for dinner!*

After the meal, Whitney manned the tape recorder while counselors Gary Clemmons and Evelyn Galindo led an exercise of interdependence to serve as a metaphor for the connection of animals and plants within the ecosystems around Wildcat Camp.

"Everyone form a circle real close," instructed Gary. "Join hands. Now imagine around our camp. Underwater in the ocean. In the tide pools. The beach. The grassy hills. The forest. The rocky cliffs. The sky. Understand how dependent each creature is upon the others to get food, water, nest materials, and other things it needs. Now to show how dependent we are on one another, I'd like to have a little fun with you."

He paused, then prompted: "Everyone turn to the right. Close the circle and crowd together." Giggles erupted. "Gradually sit down on the lap of the person behind you!"

Much nervous laughter as big people sat on little people. "Now fully sit and relax!" Major laughter as the gigantic chair-chain wobbled but then stabilized. "There! See how dependent we are on one another. If one of us falls we all fall." Laughter erupted as bodies crashed in a pile. "There! See what interdependence means!" Gary continued his talk from a prone position on the ground. "If one creature in the ecosystem falls, the whole system can crumble. Other ecosystems then come crashing down. If we destroy the mountain lion, then the deer population runs rampant and eats all the grass. With less grass, the rodents begin to die back. With fewer rodents to eat, the coyote goes elsewhere in its search for food, and so on."

The group broke up with Evelyn announcing that wake-up would be at 7:30 a.m. It had been six a.m. the previous three days. Sleep came quickly.

The next morning started with pancakes, eaten right off the grill. Then it was down Wildcat Beach to Alamere Falls and the tide pools at Double Point. Since I knew the area's natural history, I led this walk. The cliffs revealed more gigantic folds, and the kids proudly shared the previous day's geology lesson. In the cove below the falls, various animals gathered to partake of fresh water. With mounting amazement kids and counselors alike explored the biological diversity.

They counted over 100 sea gulls, pelicans, sanderlings, and willets. They spotted

**Outward Bound Adventures** is a nonprofit organization that takes urban youths on challenging adventures in nature.  
[www.outwardboundadventures.org](http://www.outwardboundadventures.org).

**Coastwalk** is a nonprofit organization that works to preserve the California coast for the enjoyment of the public and to complete the 1,100-mile California Coastal Trail.  
[www.coastwalk.org](http://www.coastwalk.org).

harbor seals poking their heads from the kelp beds just offshore, staring at the humans. Red sea stars, white barnacles, black turban snails, gray limpets, and green anemones dotted the clear tide pools left by the receding tide. Purple sea urchins and yellowish-green sea palms stuck out from lower in the tide zone. Kelp crabs fell from bull kelp strewn on the beach—the plants' holdfasts sheltering entire communities of creatures. The sand held the tiniest shells and worm calcifications. Stretched out on the sand, the skeleton of a pelican revealed its prehistoric link to the dinosaurs, the bird's evolution traceable in the small feathers on the front of the wing, to cut the air, and larger, maneuverable back feathers to push air down to provide lift. Cormorant and grebe skeletons expanded the lesson. Meanwhile black oystercatchers flitted across the rocks. An osprey splashed into the water, caught a large fish, and ascended; carrying its catch head-forward, it flew inland toward its nest in one of the tall Douglas firs by the freshwater lakes. A doe and two spotted fawns moved across a hill-



WYN HIOAG

**Top: Zack, Brian, and Whitney examine a black turban snail.**

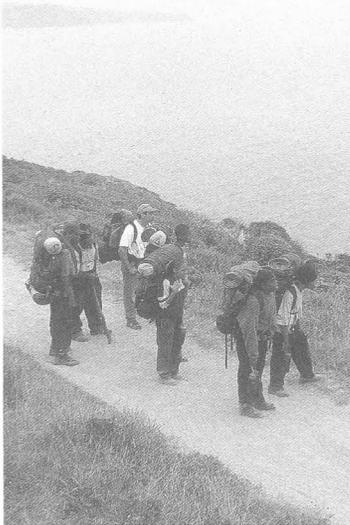


EVELYN GALINDO

**The group examines a pelican skeleton found on the beach.**



PHOTOS THIS PAGE: WYN HOAG



**Top: Solidarity helped campers who ventured into the surf.**

**Above: Hiking on the California Coastal Trail**

side. Bright yellow monkeyflower and red paintbrush hung from a seep beneath a fold of sedimentary rock.

The group's demeanor had changed dramatically. Normal roles had disappeared. All were in awe of something greater than, but also inclusive of themselves.

*Whitney: There were so many animals! I've never seen so many in one place.*

*Jessica: This is my first time on the beach. . . . I learned to respect the animals' homes.*

*Wendel: Walking to the falls was fun. Going swimming was fun. The hike was hard. The birds are cool. I like how the big birds come down and get fish in the water. That is cool, the way the bird turns the fish so it faces front and the bird can fly better. The forest. The beach is cool. The sun came out. Got in the ocean and got wet.*

As the sun came out in full blaze, Chuck dropped down in a secluded spot beneath the bluff, stretched out in the sand, and announced that it was time for lunch and a nap. The other counselors also lay down, but the kids stripped to bathing suits and ran for the water. Laughter rang out as waves bowled them over and rolled them in the shallow surf zone.

Later, at the circle around the fire on the beach, tired boys and girls sat shoulder to shoulder, watching the orange flames leap high and the half moon glow a creamy yellow,

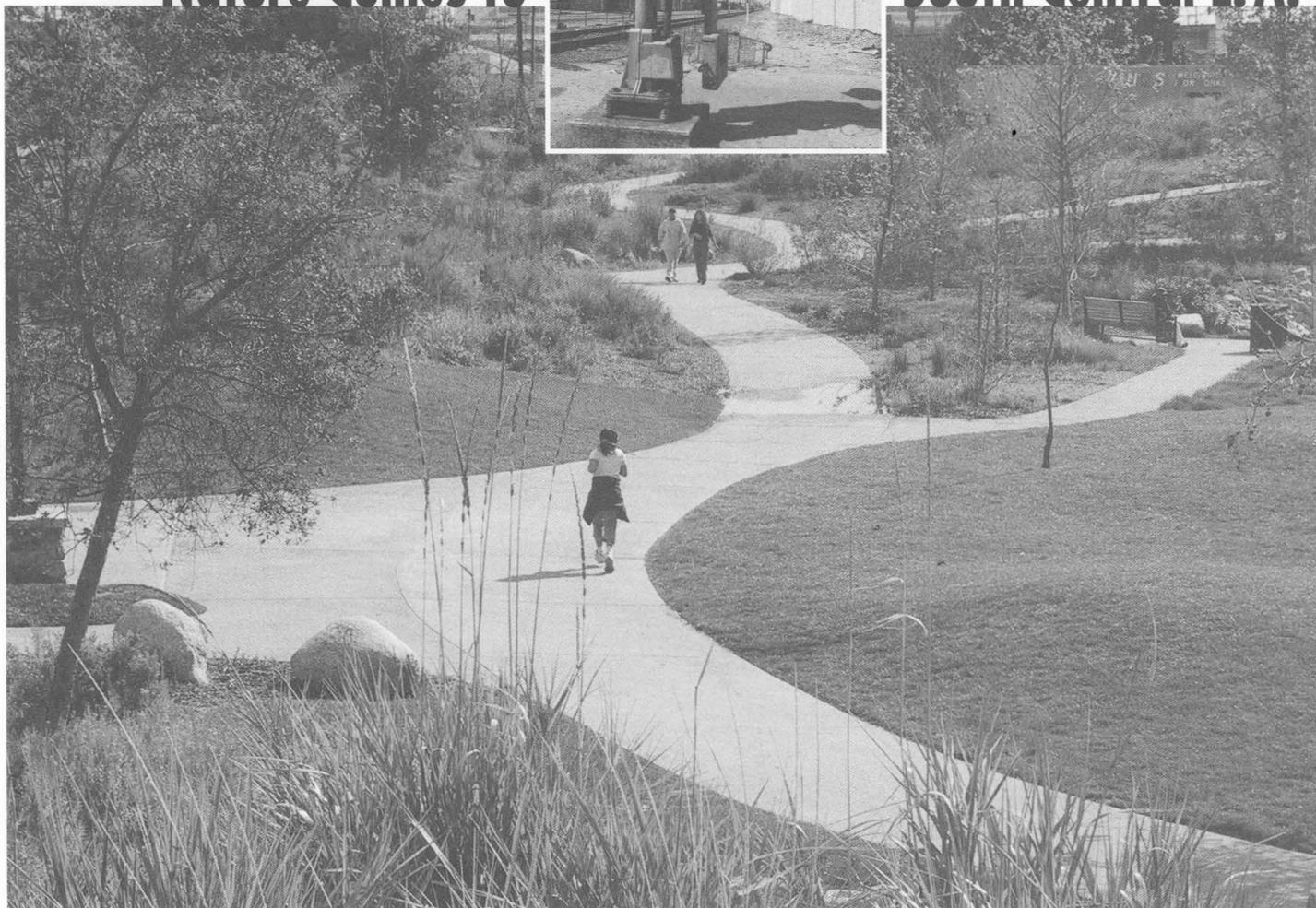
low, sending a glimmer across the ocean. It was their last evening here. After two very full days here, they would be leaving in the morning. They said goodnight, then drew together for a colossal group hug, as breakers crashed on the shore and the moon illuminated the shore and the ocean. The next day would bring an early wake-up, a hike out to the van, a drive to San Francisco, a hike across the Golden Gate Bridge, and the journey back to East Los Angeles.

They would return to their neighborhoods, where they had first gotten into trouble. By taking them out to the wild California coast, OBA and Coastwalk had tossed out a lifeline. Later in the summer some of the teens would go on a 100-mile trek in the Sierra Nevada as part of the OBA program, which requires five camping trips within two to three years for graduation. Some would go to the Mojave Desert later, and, in the summer of 2002, some will take part in a Coastwalk-sponsored ten-day trip along the Lost Coast in northern California. The counselors hope these campers came away with a new self-confidence, an appreciation of nature as a powerful voice within their lives, and the knowledge that we all belong to a larger world. ■

*Wyn Hoag, director of WildNature Photography, is working with Coastwalk on a book about the California Coast. [www.wildnaturephotography.com](http://www.wildnaturephotography.com).*

## Nature Comes to

## South Central L.A.



PHOTOS THIS PAGE: ANNE CANRIGHT

ONE SATURDAY this March I set off on a mission: to find and explore Augustus F. Hawkins Natural Park, a diamond in the rough at the intersection of Slauson and Compton Avenues in South Central L.A. Only a little over a year old, it was, I had heard, a lovely, restorative, and *natural* place within this industrial wasteland.

I was, I admit, skeptical as I drove down Slauson from the Harbor Freeway, seeing only the “wasteland” part of the equation: block after block of concertina-wire-topped chainlink fence, graffiti-covered warehouse walls, and signs yelling “Carros desde \$499” and “Sport shoes from \$8.99.” All along the way, bushels of broken glass sparkled in the cinder railroad bed.

At the corner of Compton, I turned left, then pulled into a dirt parking lot—and was immediately transported out of the grime and grit. A massive, hundred-year-

old cactus rose before me, a bright green lawn rolled toward small hills covered with aromatic plants native to the Los Angeles Basin, and a cool and quiet Craftsman-style nature center beckoned from behind a wisteria-covered gate. Birds flitted and twittered. It was an oasis—without a single palm tree, but an oasis for sure. My skepticism evaporated in the blink of an eye.

Operated by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, the park opened on December 16, 2000. It sits on an 8.5-acre city block that for 90 years was used for pipe storage by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. During that time it was a natural magnet for children wanting some adventure, and accidents happened among the industrial refuse.

The unsightliness combined with the lack of safety convinced some that a change had

ANNE CANRIGHT

**The rolling hills and winding paths of Hawkins Park provide a refuge from an urban landscape dominated by industrial wastelands and railroad tracks.**



**Top: for many years the park site was a "pipe graveyard" surrounded by razor wire.**

**Above: A century-old *Cereus* cactus has survived.**

to be made. Fortunately, dreamers got involved, pointing out that the setting had potential to be more than just another characterless city park offering basketball courts and benches and flat expanses of grass and concrete.

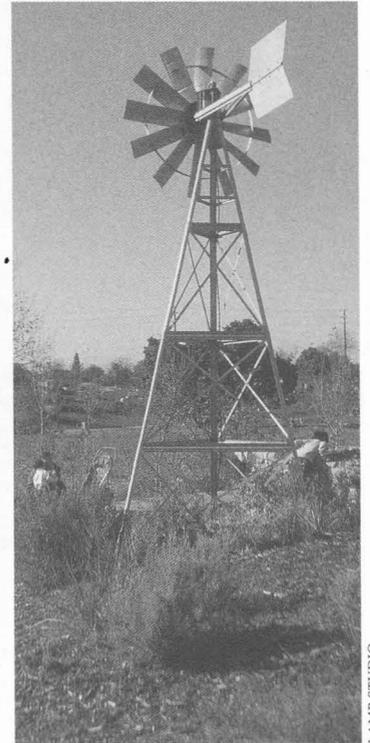
One of the prime dreamers was Los Angeles City Councilmember Rita Walters, who contacted the SMMC in the late 1990s to discuss whether a natural landscape could be brought to this rough urban setting. She gained the avid support of Joe Edmiston, executive officer of the SMMC, who saw this as a unique opportunity to do

something valuable for the inner city. A conceptual design team was assembled, headed by UC Berkeley landscape architecture professor Randy Hester, and numerous schemes were considered. Most important, local community members were invited to participate, and they enthusiastically made their desires known. Foremost in their minds was not a gym or soccer field, but a peaceful, natural setting in which to escape the surrounding industrial blight.

Some were skeptical, wondering how this park could avoid the effects of gang activities. But when it was proposed that a ranger be at the park at all times—twenty-four hours a day—those worries abated. The park is also enclosed by a beautiful eight-foot wrought-iron fence that at intervals includes decorative designs based on natural themes: butterflies, ducks, hummingbirds, coyotes.

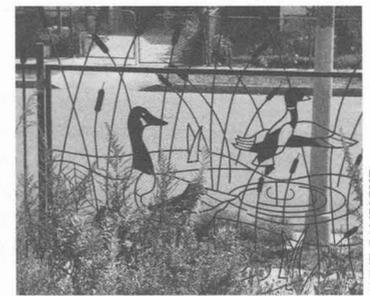
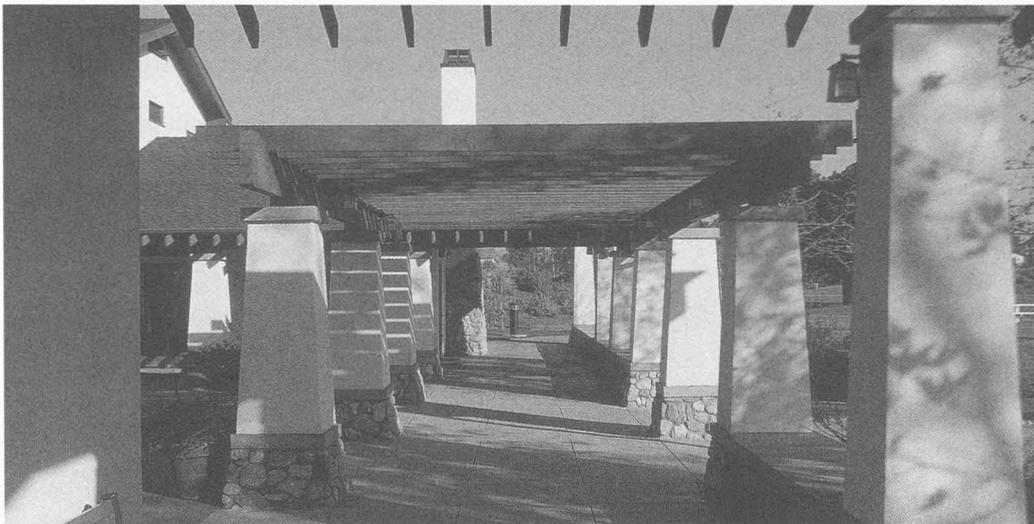
Groundbreaking for the \$4 million project (\$3 million of which came from bond money, the remainder from a special appropriation) occurred in January 2000. Trees were brought in, and native plants, and dirt: some 3,000 cubic yards of dirt were imported from Malibu. The dirt went into creating undulating hills and swales. River rocks line a running stream, whose water is pumped by a windmill atop one of the hills (the water courses down a small concrete spillway reminiscent of the L.A. River). Various plant communities—tended by two full-time gardeners—are featured, including oak savannah, purple sage walnut and

LAMB STUDIO



LAMB STUDIO

LAMB STUDIO



ANNE CANRIGHT

southern oak woodlands, and coastal sage scrub, through which a trail meanders. In the midst of these mini-biomes is a large grassy area with picnic tables that are available for birthday parties (reservations can be made a month in advance, and use of the site is free), and the stunningly beautiful Discovery Center with its expansive courtyard.

The Discovery Center (which has an upstairs apartment where the ranger, South Central native Luke McJimpson, lives) is airy and calming, with wood floors, elegant Craftsman-style light fixtures, and an interior sliding stained-glass door depicting an oak tree, all browns and greens and golds. On the walls are murals that explore the life cycle and anatomy of the coast live oak, oak

galls, the plants of the southern oak woodland, and the nature of plant communities. A small corner of an oak woodland is recreated life size, and a "learning hub," comprising ten display cases, focuses on natural life, asking "What is a mammal (insect, plant . . .)?" and providing answers.

The Discovery Center also features a large map showing the parks of the Santa Monica Mountains. These are not just splotches of green that local residents can dream about, however. The park sponsors weekly field trips, busing people at no cost to these distant sites for daylong excursions. Joshua Reyes, a part-time naturalist manning the information booth the day I visited, explained that anywhere from 15 to 78 people  
(continued on page 38)

**Top left:** The park's hills were built with soil from Malibu landslides.

**Top right:** This half-size windmill draws water for a fountain.

**Above left:** The courtyard of the Discovery Center

**Above right:** Ducks adorn the park's wrought-iron fence.



## Thanks to Californians

**T**HANKS, FELLOW CITIZENS, for passing Proposition 40, the California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Act of 2002. Thanks for voting to clean up our water and air, protect and restore our natural environment, reinvigorate our parks, and steer development away from our spectacular scenery and valuable farmland. Thanks for passing what the *Sacramento Bee* called “the cleanest piece of resource legislation to emerge from the California Legislature in years.”

Here at the Coastal Conservancy we have been working for more than 25 years toward these goals. With this vote the people of the state have told us they want us to continue and have given us the financial resources to do more. We will quickly put Proposition 40 funding to use for the State’s immediate benefit. In doing so, we will also prepare a better world for our grandchildren’s grandchildren, in hopes that they will lead better lives because of the good choice Californians have made.

Proposition 40’s \$2.6 billion is a small part of California’s annual budget, but it will do a tremendous amount of good. The Coastal Conservancy will receive \$200 million, plus \$40 million for the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program—close to the \$255 million we received from Proposition 12, the ballot initiative passed two years ago. That funding allowed us to catch up on needs that had built up during the lean budget years of the 1990s; this new money allows us to look to the future.

Here are some of the things we would like to do:

- Restore marshes and wetlands along all parts of California’s coast and San Francisco Bay. These tremendously productive environments are nurs-

eries for fish and essential habitats for millions of resident and migratory birds. During the next five years we have the opportunity to protect and restore tens of thousands of acres of coastal wetlands.

- Launch a major new initiative to open more of the coast to the public. We will continue our work to complete the California Coastal Trail, the San Francisco Bay and Ridge trails, and other regional and local trails that lead to the coast. We will

work to open new pathways to beaches and improve existing ones to make them accessible to everyone.

- Protect the watersheds of coastal rivers, including the majestic forests of the North Coast, the sloughs and farmland of the Central Coast, and the farmed and urbanized floodplains of the South Coast. This work will help to restore salmon, steelhead, and other fisheries, protect a variety of sensitive natural resources and farmland, and provide residents and visitors with new recreational opportunities.
- Add to parks, beaches, and other recreational lands throughout the coast and around San Francisco Bay. California is growing by more than 500,000 residents every year, and our parks are straining from the current demand.
- Revitalize urban waterfronts and piers. The tremendous commercial potential of waterfronts has been demonstrated in many of California’s cities. Lively, vigorous waterfronts benefit local economies and improve coastal residents’ quality of life.

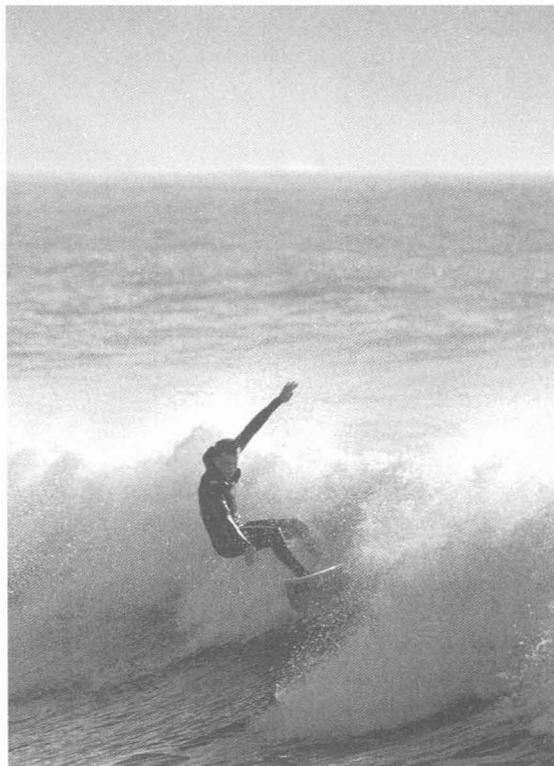


- Protect scenic open space and farmland. We have been endowed with some of the world’s most amazing natural wonders and most valuable agricultural land. It is our duty to pass on these gifts to future generations.

The Coastal Conservancy is a relatively small agency, based in Oakland. Since our beginnings more than 25 years ago, we have depended on local leadership and citizen involvement. We will continue to look to local communities to help identify coastal needs and work with us, in partnership with other public agencies, to accomplish our mutual goals.

Proposition 40 is excellent news coming at a difficult time for the nation. It is the beginning of a story we’ll continue to bring to you in the months ahead.

—Sam Schuchat



STEPHEN CORLEY

**Tuna Canyon Creek has a healthy ecosystem—something rare in southern California.**

## COASTAL CONSERVANCY NEWS

### SANTA MONICA MOUNTAIN CANYON LANDS PROTECTED

**R**ESOURCE AGENCIES have long sought to acquire Tuna Canyon, in the Santa Monica Mountains, for habitat protection and public enjoyment. The Coastal Conservancy took a major step toward that goal in January by approving \$2.5 million toward the purchase of two properties comprising 1,833 acres. The total estimated value of the properties is \$44.15 million. The Conservancy's major partners in these coordinated acquisitions are the Mountains Restoration Trust, Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, State Wildlife Conservation Board, and Los Angeles County, among others.

Tuna Canyon contains a rich mosaic of habitat, with chaparral, coastal sage, oak woodlands, and a year-round stream that cascades from 1,500 feet to its outlet in Santa Monica Bay. Among the wildlife it harbors are 19 species listed as rare, threatened, or endangered. From the upper ridges, distant mountain ranges and the coastline can be seen.

To acquire the first of the two properties, 417 acres between Malibu and Topanga Canyon Boulevards at the core of the Tuna Canyon Significant Ecological Area (SEA), the Conservancy worked with the Mountains Restoration Trust and landowner John Paul DeJoria, founder and president of Paul Mitchell Hair Care Systems. DeJoria donated nearly 90 percent of the \$13 million appraised value of the property. The Conservancy put up an additional \$1.5 million, and the rest came from the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority and the Fish and Wildlife Foundation. This key watershed and wildlife corridor is to be preserved in perpetuity.

The Conservancy also committed \$1 million to help the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority and Wildlife Conservation Board acquire

the adjacent 1,416 acres, known as the Mann Property, in upper Tuna Canyon and adjacent Pena, Pedra Gorda, and Las Flores Canyons, which likewise includes a large part of the designated Tuna Canyon SEA. These purchases will secure a new unbroken expanse of protected land extending westward from the recently expanded Topanga State Park toward open space areas in Malibu Canyon. The proposed Coastal Slope Trail is to run through this property, with ocean views for much of its 70-mile length.

—Jack Liebster

### SAVING A UNIQUE SAN FRANCISCO BAY ECOSYSTEM

**I**N NOVATO, near the mouth of the Petaluma River, one can find the only blue oak woodland in California known to exist right next to a salt marsh. It survives on what is now known as the Bahia Property, a 625.5-acre patch of land nearly surrounded by publicly owned marshes. The already high value of the land has grown since the discovery of Sudden Oak Death, for no blue oaks—which cover 214 acres of hillsides on the property—have so far succumbed.

The Marin Audubon Society is determined to protect this ecosystem by acquiring the property and passing it on to public resource agencies. In January, the Coastal Conservancy chipped in \$5.75 million, mostly from Proposition 12 bond funds, toward the \$18 million purchase price. The Marin County Open Space District has committed \$800,000, the Marin Community Foundation \$200,000. Marin Audubon is seeking to raise the remainder from other public and private sources.

The acquisition of the Bahia Property would significantly expand the size, habitat complexity, and wildlife benefits of adjacent uplands and wetlands,



MOUNTAINS RESTORATION TRUST

in part through the restoration of 333 acres of diked farmland that are no longer in use. If the opportunity to protect the land is lost, residential development will destroy upland refugia for the endangered salt marsh harvest mouse and disrupt other wildlife movement between uplands and wetlands. Also lost would be an opportunity to expand a system of marsh trails related to the Petaluma River.

Marin Audubon must raise the needed dollars by August 31. The City of Novato had approved a proposal for a 424-unit residential development on the Bahia Property, but in May 2001 citizens rejected it by a 70 percent vote on a voter initiative that also prohibited submission of a new application for one year.

Marin Audubon would transfer most of the property to public agencies, including possibly the Marin County Open Space District, California Department of Fish and Game, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

—Dick Wayman

### NATIONAL AWARD TO JIM KING

**J**IM KING, longtime project manager for the Coastal Conservancy, is one of seven people nationwide to receive the Environmental Law Institute's 2002 National Wetlands Award. He was honored for his 15 years of restoration work in the Tijuana River National Estuarine Reserve, in the field of Land Stewardship and Development.

## OTHER COASTAL NEWS

### COMPROMISE ON PLAN TO ERADICATE KILLER ALGA

**A**FTER 18 MONTHS of attempts to eradicate *Caulerpa taxifolia*, at a cost of \$1.3 million, the “killer alga” continues to threaten southern California coastal waters. This rapidly spreading alien seaweed was first found in Agua Hedionda Lagoon in San Diego County in the summer of 2000, and soon thereafter in Huntington Harbor in Orange County. Intense efforts by the Southern California Caulerpa Action Team (SCCAT), a partnership of federal, state, and local government agencies and other organizations, appear to be effective, but it may take up to five years of careful monitoring to be sure the threat has passed. In the Mediterranean, this strain of *C. taxifolia* has spread across many thousands of acres of the seafloor, smothering indigenous plants and poisoning many sea creatures.

In March the City of Carlsbad, after meetings with SCCAT and other concerned parties, proposed an interim management plan that attempts to balance the urgent need to eradicate the deadly alga with the demands of people who use the lagoon for recreation. The plan calls for closing parts of the lagoon to boaters on a rotating basis. A significant concern is that wakes and propellers of powerboats, along with fishing nets and lines, are considered

largely to blame for the rapid spread of the alga in the Mediterranean. European agencies failed to take the threat seriously in its early stages, and subsequent efforts to control the alga there have failed to keep it from spreading. It is also now spreading out of control in Australian waters.

In both Agua Hedionda Lagoon and Huntington Harbor eradication efforts have consisted of covering growths of *C. taxifolia* with plastic tarps that are sealed to the bottom, then injecting chlorine under the tarps. This seems to work fairly well, but new growths have sprung up outside the tarps, either from tiny pieces of alga that have broken off or from new offshoots from the rootlike rhizoids that spread under bottom sediment. Treatment of two infested pools adjacent to Huntington Harbor was held up for months by heavy rains that made diving impossible.

This strain of *C. taxifolia*, a clone of the one devastating the Mediterranean, was probably introduced by saltwater aquarium owners dumping their tanks into waterways. Many species of *Caulerpa* are popular aquarium plants, and although it is now illegal to sell or transport this strain, it remains likely that it will eventually be found elsewhere in California’s coastal waters.

—HMH

### JET SKI CONTROVERSY CONTINUES

**T**HE CONTROVERSY surrounding the use of motorized personal watercraft (MPWC), commonly known as “jet skis,” in our ocean environment was first noted in *Coast and Ocean* in Autumn 1996 and highlighted in Winter 1997–98. By that time, environmental groups in Marin County were in the midst of fierce battle with the MPWC industry over efforts to have jet skis banned from the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary (GFNMS). Proponents of the ban were concerned with the crafts’ adverse impacts on the sanctuary’s unique and abundant marine life, including several species of migrating whales and birds traveling near or to the Farallon Islands. On October 10, 2001, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) formally adopted new regulations that officially banned all MPWC use within the boundaries of the GFNMS.

Today the battle has shifted to the adjacent Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, where a similar MPWC ban is being advocated. Later this year *Coast and Ocean* will report on this and related issues as NOAA launches its long-awaited management plan review and update for both sanctuaries. Stay tuned.

—Tim Duff

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### HAWKINS PARK *continued from page 35*

come every Saturday morning at nine, eager for the escape. The most popular destinations, he said, are Pt. Mugu, Malibu Creek, and Franklin Canyon—“probably they like all the water at those places.” Some trips are so popular that people must be turned away.

In addition, the Discovery Center has a small library with books about nature, and the park sponsors various youth programs, including an after-school science homework club, the Junior Ranger Leadership Program, and a monthly nature craft workshop. The evening of the day I visited, Joshua was going to lead a campfire program, complete

with roasted marshmallows and ghost stories; he expected a good turnout.

I visited the park in the morning, after the bus had left for that day’s destination of Hansen Dam. A smattering of people were using the grounds: several adults and a teenage girl were running on the concrete paths that wind among the plant-covered hills; a couple was having a picnic brunch; a dad was kicking a soccer ball around with his two boys; and a child was getting the hang of training wheels. An advance group was decorating the picnic tables and hanging mylar Happy Birthday signs, preparing for a party. It was

peaceful and felt utterly removed from the industrial surroundings that, after all, were right across the street.

Augustus F. Hawkins is 94 years old now. He represented this South Central neighborhood from 1963 to 1991 in the U.S. House of Representatives, and his bust greets the visitor outside the Discovery Center. He stopped by the park a week before I was there. I don’t know what he said during his visit, but I have no doubt he is very proud of what his community has wrought in this park. It is a place of happiness and hope, nature and learning. It allows people to dream. ■



*From Abundance to Scarcity: A History of U.S. Marine Fisheries Policy*, by Michael Weber. Island Press, Washington, DC, 2001. 320 pp., \$55 (hard cover), \$27.50 (paper).

**T**HIS HISTORY of U.S. commercial fisheries policy from 1871 to the present is divided into two parts. In the first part, "Abundance," Michael Weber, a former special assistant to the director of the National Marine Fisheries Service, describes how federal policy initially emphasized research and development to expand fishing effort, deferring to states the responsibility for regulating and managing fisheries. Rather than protecting critical fish habitat, U.S. policy favored investment in fish hatcheries to mitigate damage from dams and logging.

In the second part of the book, "Scarcity," the author describes how excess capacity in fishing fleets and loss of critical habitat led to drastic declines in fish stocks. The federal government assumed responsibility for managing marine stocks in 1976, but it continued to subsidize construction of fishing vessels. "At the beginning of the twenty-first century," the author observes, "reducing fleets in a humane but resolute manner remained the great unfinished business of reformers." Weber advocates and discusses the use of Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs) and of cooperatives to accomplish this. Under ITQs, a set number of fishermen are granted a percentage of an overall catch quota. "Mechanisms such as ITQs or the cooperatives authorized for the Bering Sea pollack fishery are critical to preventing the socially irrational outcomes that arise from individually rational decisions to increase fishing power," he concludes.

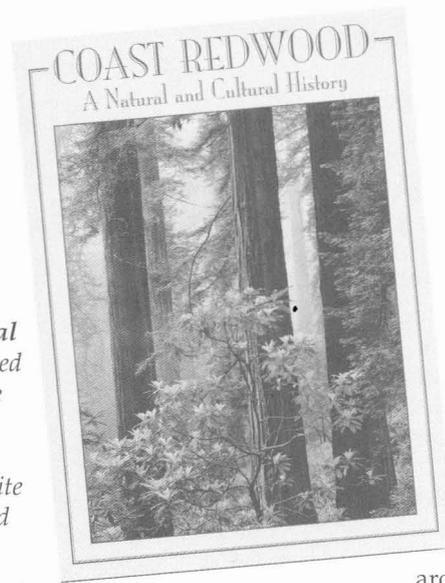
—Wesley Marx

*Coast Redwood: A Natural and Cultural History*, edited by John Evarts and Marjorie Popper. Cachuma Press, Los Olivos, CA, 2001. 230 color and 100 historic black & white photos, 228 pp., \$37.95 (hard cover), \$27.95 (paper).

**C**oast Redwood is a thorough treatment of these majestic trees and their place in nature and society. The breadth of coverage is exceptional, and the fine photographs on every page illuminate the text with beauty and clarity. The editors have done a fine job of integrating the contributions of authors from diverse areas of expertise—from plant ecology to history—into a consistently readable stream of text.

The first four sections of the book cover the botany and ecology of the trees and their habitats. This includes discussion of classification and taxonomy in historic context; the trees' life cycle and habit; the several singular habitats in which they occur; the roles of fire, flood, fog, and other natural forces; accompanying plant communities and the impacts of alien plants; wildlife in redwood habitats; and the connections between forests, streams, and fishes.

Sections five through seven deal with the interactions between redwoods and humans—the multitude of ways people have used the lumber, a look at the history and methods of redwood logging, the ongoing efforts to preserve redwood forests, the trees' role in the establishment of parks and reserves,



and an examination of a range of conservation and management practices. Many of these issues can

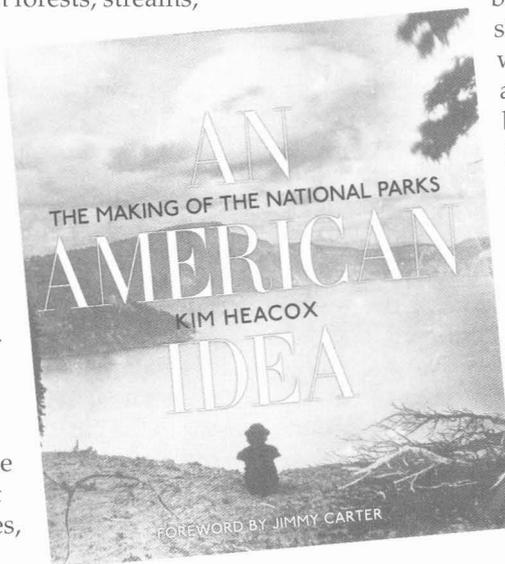
arouse people's passions, and it is to the authors' credit that they have presented a well-balanced, even-handed account of the forces at work, leaving it to readers to draw their own conclusions.

—HMH

*An American Idea: The Making of the National Parks*, by Kim Heacox. National Geographic, Washington, DC, 2001. 288 pp., \$35 (hard cover).

**I**N THIS VOLUME Kim Heacox, a former National Parks ranger, explores in considerable detail the forces, processes, and philosophies that led to the founding of the National Park System. This study is particularly important in light of current assaults on the parks by political and corporate interests.

Political and economic struggles have shaped the place of national parks in the nation's history from the beginning. Heacox shows that these wild lands have always been seen by some as places to be conquered and developed, or as worthless except for the resources that could be extracted from them. Fortunately, there were a few visionaries who anticipated the



impacts of man on the wild. John Wesley Powell, who led the first expedition down the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon, warned that "the American Southwest should not be settled heavily. . . . To do so would invite catastrophe. To live a sustainable life in the desert, people must abide by the laws of the absence of water. . . . He argued for strict limits. He painted no false hopes. . . . He gave good advice, honest to a fault. And nobody followed it" (p. 195).

Heacox also points to the influence of George Perkins Marsh, who in *Man and Nature* (1864) "indirectly offered an important ecological argument for the creation of national parks, something deeper than gee-whiz monumentalism. 'The earth is fast becoming an unfit home for its noblest inhabitant,' he said, 'and another era of equal human crime and human improvidence . . . would reduce it to such a condition of impoverished productiveness, of shattered surface, of climatic excess, as to threaten the depravation, barbarism, and perhaps even extinction of the species'" (p. 160).

The tales of the explorers who brought America's wild lands to international awareness were often met with disbelief and derision—the wonders of Yellowstone, Yosemite, and the Grand Canyon were beyond the ken of those who had not witnessed such landscapes. Heacox delivers samples of their stories, and looks closely at the tellers of the tales—an assortment of individuals nearly as remarkable as the exotic places they visited. Among them were painters and photographers who substantiated the explorers' descriptions. This book is illustrated with a wonderful selection of their work.

Perhaps most important, the author delves into the development of the American character and its unique relationships with the concepts of wildness and wilderness. The vastness and variety of the continent inspired (and required) new ways of thinking. "Whereas wilderness is a state of the land, wildness is the human relationship with that land—the implication being that without wildness we could retain no understanding of where we came from, and thus would have an

A story told by Jimmy Carter in his foreword to *An American Idea* seems poignant in light of current events:

"A personal high point in my own Presidency came in December 1980 when I signed the Alaska National Interests Lands Conservation Act, which more than doubled the size of our national park system. Getting to this point was a long and difficult struggle that at the time angered many Alaskans and powerful politicians. I remember that during a refueling stop in Anchorage, en route to Tokyo, the Secret Service suggested that I not leave the plane. They had heard that a group of angry Alaskans might create a serious disturbance.

"Twenty years later, I visited Alaska for the anniversary of the lands act and received an enthusiastic reception. The *New York Times* reported that 'instead of burning Mr. Carter in effigy and shouting obscenities as Alaskans have done in past visits, the crowds that greeted him in the twilight of summer hailed Mr. Carter as a hero and visionary for what has been called the greatest conservation act in American history.' The best part of our Alaska visit was watching almost 100,000 caribou surge around us in the vast expanse of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in their annual migration from the Arctic slope. I am proud to have helped make that sacred journey possible—hopefully, forever" (p. 9).

incomplete picture of where we were going; in time the world that nurtured us would perish" (p. 101).

Heacox looks at the philosophies—Puritan, Transcendentalist, Preservationist—that shaped national discourse and made the concept and realization of a national park system possible. He shows how these elements were essential to the creation and development of the National Park System, and how in many ways this monumental treasure embodies the soul of the nation.

—HMH

*Yellow Star Thistle: Managing an Invasive Alien Species, Xenobiota Xposures*, [www.xenob.com](http://www.xenob.com), \$20.

**I**N THIS THREE-PART VIDEO, Leif Joslyn and Xenobiota Xposures have compiled an impressive quantity of material on yellow star thistle biology, ecology, and control in California. We are raced through information on different approaches to managing this ugly threat to California's biodiversity, and given glimpses of the people who are doing the real work in a variety of situations.

Land managers of all types, from ranchers to agency biologists to smaller landowners, will find this a useful synopsis of different experiences and approaches. Fifty minutes cannot do this vast problem justice, but it certainly provides a helpful and illuminating overview of techniques, from mowing and hand removal to burning, grazing, and herbicide use. The point is made that these daunting problems do serve to bring people of all kinds into attentive focus on the state of the land.

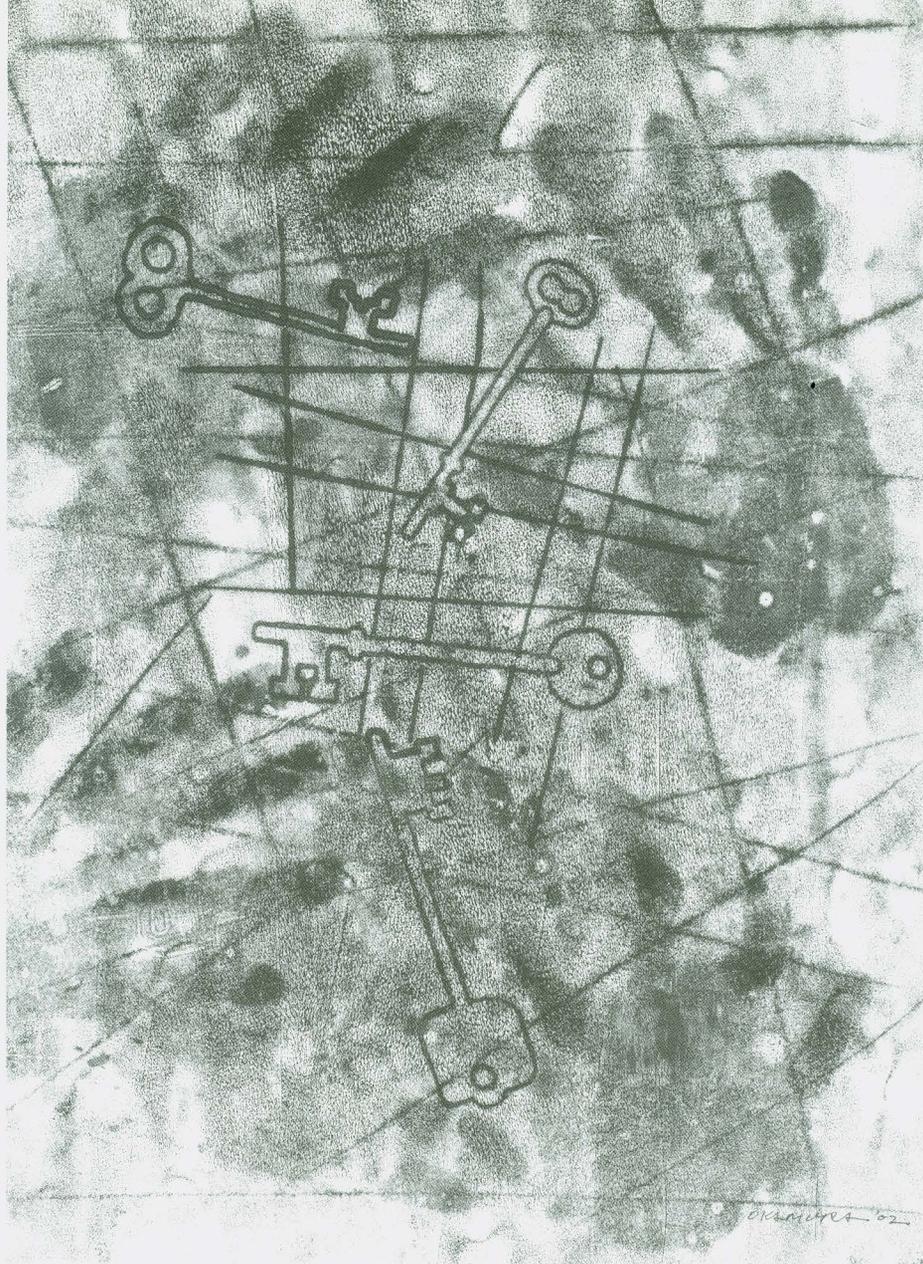
Part of a series on invasive exotics, which includes separate videos on pampas grass and tamarisk, this video is a most valuable training tool. A slightly disorganized, disjointed quality is understandable given the magnitude of the crisis and all its many aspects. I sat my crew down in front of this video, and the one on pampas grass as well, and passed out the popcorn. Nobody fell asleep.

Judith Larner Lowry, author of *Gardening with a Wild Heart* (UC Press 1999), owns Larner Seeds in Marin County. She cultivates native plant gardens.

*The California Coast: The Most Spectacular Sights & Destinations*, by Karen Misuraca, photography by Gary Crabbe. Voyageur Press, Stillwater, MN, 2001. 120 color photos, 160 pp., \$29.95 (hard cover).

**T**HOSE WHO HAVE traveled the California coast won't find many surprises here, but the lovely photos are sure to arouse fond memories. This is a handsome coffee-table book, with text more substantial than most, including some interesting sidebars that highlight coastal history and people.

—HMH



DROPPING KEYS

The small man  
Builds cages for everyone  
He  
Knows.  
While the sage,  
Who has to duck his head  
When the moon is low,  
Keeps dropping keys all night long  
For the  
Beautiful  
Rowdy  
Prisoners.

From *The Gift: Poems by Hafiz, the Great Sufi Master*, by Daniel Ladinsky.  
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# Coastal Conservancy

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