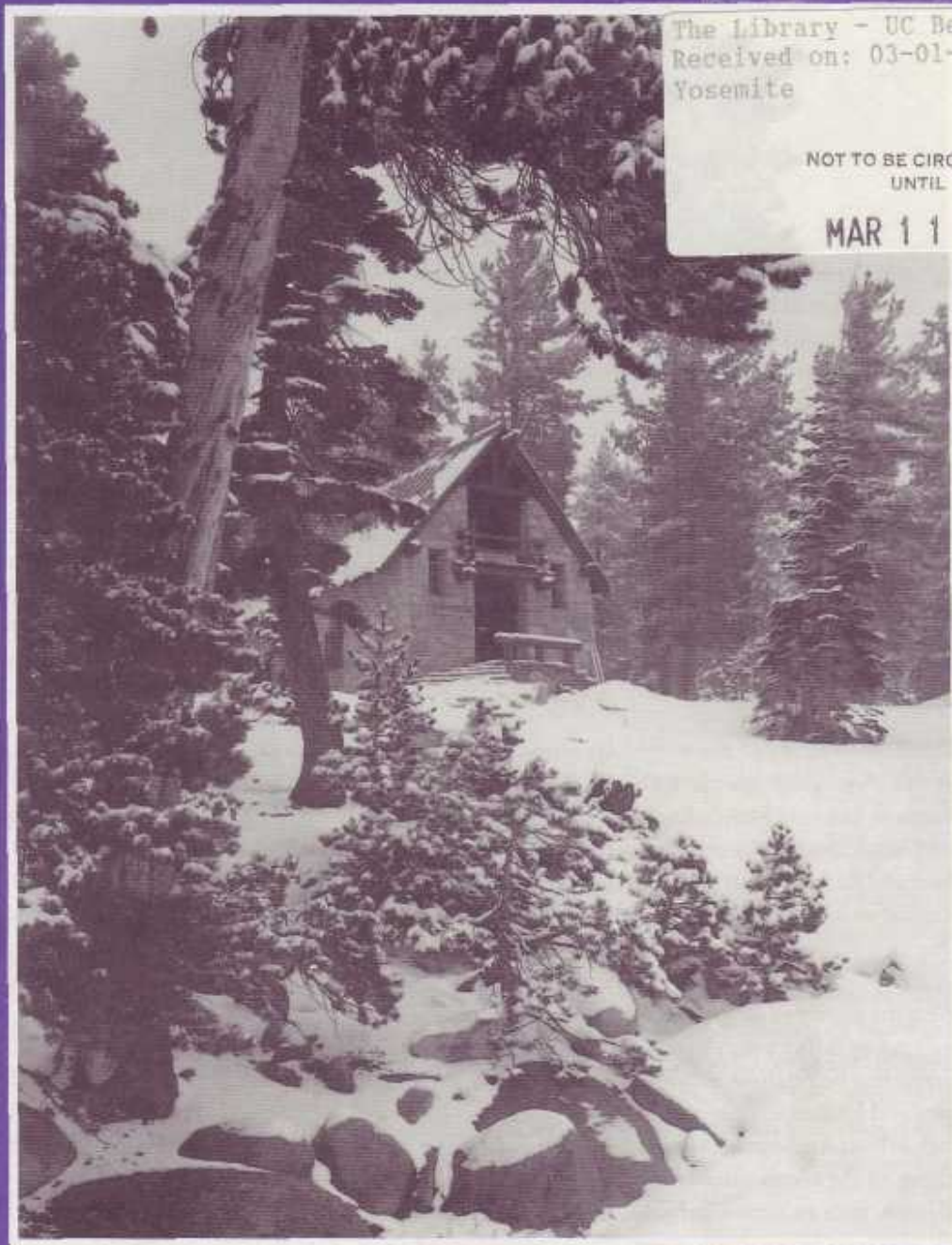


Yosemite

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Winter in the Backcountry



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In the recently published The Perfect Art: The Ostrander Hut & Ski Touring in Yosemite, author Howard Weamer describes the colorful life and times of the stone building constructed in the backcountry in 1940 by a CCC crew. Drawing on his 20 winters as the hut's caretaker, Weamer relates many intimate glimpses of cross country skiing, stormy weather, anxious searches, and careful observations of the winter world, as well as detailing the hut's official history. Located approximately 10 miles into Yosemite's wilderness area and accessible only by skiing in with a backpack, Ostrander Ski Hut offers unique pleasures that most park visitors and YA members will never experience. Accommodating 25 overnight visitors at a time, the hut is usually full on weekend nights and frequently sparse on weekday nights. What follows are excerpts from The Perfect Art, that reflect on two of those pleasures: the chance for periods of restorative solitude as well as the opportunity for lively conversation and camaraderie. Weamer draws on his own entries from the hut's daily log as well as those of other hutkeepers. The images of Ostrander Ski Hut on the cover and throughout the article, unless otherwise noted, are by Howard Weamer who is a professional photographer as well as hutkeeper.

SOLITUDE

Solitude is such a rare feature of modern life and such a recognized element of self knowledge, that those who welcome it are assumed to have attained something special.

A life in splendid isolation in spectacular wilderness is a cornerstone of the ranger myth. In the popular mind, rangers are distantly related to the trapper, miner or sailor, with personalities forged by hardship, and manifesting self-reliance and fortitude. No more. Isolation at Ostrander is as rare as rangers in patrol cars are common, occurring most frequently during storms when roads and trails are blocked by snow. And what miner would not gladly have traded his shack for a bombproof stone hut, the wood supply cut largely by someone else, full cupboards, a fine library and a short-wave radio for emergencies?

This snow should end a nineteen day streak with none in but three good friends. Came in last night, snow frozen to hair and beard, clinging to the back of uncovered hands. Started fire upstairs, got tea and shortbread, book and Bach, and was certain Western civilization had reached no higher development on the planet.

(Howard Weamer 12/16/77)

With the ability to be alone for a time any day, simply by walking or skiing a hundred yards in any direction, it is strange that being alone in the hut is so special, yet both visitors and hutkeepers are enchanted by having the hut to themselves. An hour or two of uninterrupted quiet, lounging on the sunny balcony in a beanbag chair with a good book, with an occasional gaze across the lake to the

ridge, is as soul-filling as a sunset or a good tour. Up to the point. While aloneness is not loneliness, cabin fever is very real.

I have been here, inside, in the room, alone, too long, and this afternoon, when the snow stopped blowing sideways, I bundled up and padded around in booties. Much to love to ski, the meditative aspects, to approach and leave the lake closely for long periods without cold feet, far out-where the joys of gliding and cruising. I went to the edge of the lake to look at the Point, just visible behind the lake's blowing snow sheets, then headed for the Clark Ravine view ridge. Snags are always magnetic, particularly on the gray days when trunk colors stand out. And there is some need to be where it was windiest and wildest, to let the snow filter down through the protective lodgepole and turn me as white as the rest of the world. Then in the silence of the red fir below the hut, until I picked up the sound of the outflow, a spring cascade after all that rain, five feet across, icicles off every bank.

(H.W. 1/15/80)

While both the isolation/privacy and the company of conversation are prized, days alone are frequently no different as a zero with a "happy face" smile inside.

Nobody at the hut or lake or anyplace, for all I know. Nice, clear, quiet night. Venus dangling under an early moon. Still I think too much about too little. It's a good time to be nobody.

(Dave Norris 1/23/77)



No chores done, no photographs taken, no books read or any fragments of thought unified, a truly excellent day to be alive.

(D.N. 1/24/77)

Though even modern science admits that the materialism we worship is 99.9999 percent empty space, and meditators seek a mental silence, in a culture obsessed with doing things and acquiring things as a measure of success, it is difficult to recognize or verbalize the value of nothing:

The last day of the year...I don't think anybody's coming in tonight to raise hell like last year and I'm glad...I am in more of a kick-back, reflective mood. Living up here has that effect on me I guess. The beauty and natural silence overwhelm me here; quite often I wish more people would come up to enjoy it, the trees, the wind, the natural beauty. How do you ask people, though, to walk out into the trees and listen to...nothing?

(Joe Evans 12/31/73)

The dominant chord in nature is not sound at all, but silence. Ostrander offers the opportunities, whether it be a windless forest soundproofed by snow, or the center of the lake on a cold, starry night. But the silence we hear is in inverse proportion to the sounds we make—the

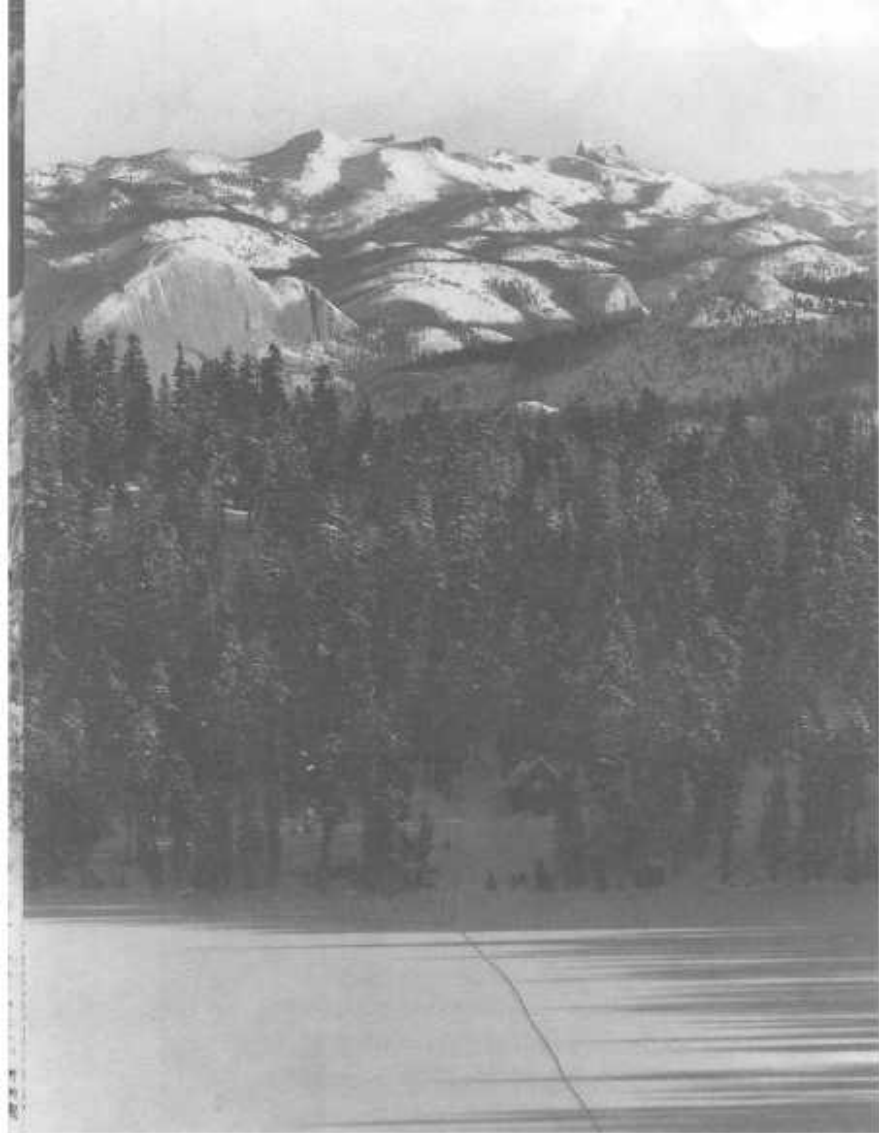
scratching of skis, the whine of fishscales or mohair, our labored breathing, the fatigue that dulls awareness, the chatter of a group, or our own mind's static—all obscure one of Ostrander's great experiences.

It is only in the silence that one hears the music of the hut. The roof whangs with temperature changes, the stairs ring, the floor drums and a drop of water falling into the stove shoots through me, reminding me forever how little I truly hear.

*Winter rain
the clatter on the metal roof
Dissolving hopes for snow*

CONVERSATIONS

A long tenure at a job as unusual as caretaking the hut does turn you into a curiosity. Being in an approachable public position (the kitchen door is closed only for showering), leads to many questions which undoubtedly have a familiar sound. Like the Buddhists' bell, heard as clearly on the fiftieth ring as the first, I try to see the meditative exercise in repetition, and answer conversationally, though large numbers in the hut make this impossible. And, particularly in mid-bite, we occasionally feel trapped:



Interesting conversation with an expert on everything who would ask questions and not listen to answers.

(George Durkee 3/20/87)

Conversations of a full hut rise like hot air into the sanctuary silence of the room—REI, Gore-tex, velcro, Synergy, first-aid, Fischer—necessities of the well-heeled weekend tourer. And some good rich laughter.

(H.W. 1/14/78)

On the other hand, the potential for memorable evenings is great. Ostrander is a temporary retreat from one of our culture's fundamental illnesses, a lack of community. Without knowing each other's stories, there can be no trust, and without trust, we descend into the suspicion, fear, and litigious paranoia endemic to this country. I remember walking through the silent streets of small Midwest towns thirty years ago, looking through the windows at family after family, facing the glow of a screen silent, unresponsive, and alone. Without the technological crutches that "entertain," Ostrander presents a rare opportunity for conversation or games with friends and new acquaintances. Though ethnic and class differences a

In a vintage photo from the Yosemite Park & Curry Co. Archives, Mary Curry Tresidder, an early hut enthusiast, is at right rear.



*The hut is quiet and I can hear the wind outside rising from the SW.
Probably midnight, and 5 of us finished an insane dice game, based on lying and deception.*

light within the group of recreational ski tourers, some fascinating lives surface around the long table at the hut.

A crisis in my personal life was mitigated tonight. I've been feeling increasingly bored with the predictability of my life, especially with the predictability of my social encounters...But enter the party of four, one of which was here for New Year's eve. Such a refreshing change—new people, interesting people, providing conversations which were not based solely on my experiences ("How did you ever get this job?") rather were really conversations. I believe that one of the real advantages of this job (and I told them) is the interaction with interesting people, people with some similar interests to mine but living lives totally apart from mine. Not predictable. One is a poet,

one an experienced mountaineer but a health-science student, one a witty woman with an exceptionally kinky childhood, one a gentle mountain person, with a bent towards feminism and friendliness.

(Anne-Marie Rizzi 1/26/75)

One of the deepest, continuous philosophical discussions ever in the hut—probably five hours, focusing, spinning off, coming back, a Nietzschean evolutionist/materialist versus a mystical biochemist, and an instructor in the Great Books program and four of his students, who were more used to extended philosophical discussions than the rest of us. Certainty versus uncertainty, materialism versus faith, progress versus stasis, epistemology—all the big



*The dominant chord in nature is not sound at all, but silence.
Ostrander offers the opportunities, whether it be a windless forest soundproofed by snow,
or the center of the lake on a cold, starry night.*

ones, all the historic arguments surfacing, the history of western thought played out in front of the stove at Ostrander Lake Ski Hut.

(H.W. 12/18/84)

Sat in the sun and finished Land Above the Trees, did some yoga, talked to a few ravens, told NPS stories tonight—the great wood scam, the Dope Lake incident, the Master Plan, MCA and the “Sierra” TV series. And my boss compliments me in his evaluation for doing good NPS PR work! Unexpectedly talked politics until



11:30 or so with three others; found ourselves in complete sympathy with each other, a rare interchange.

(H.W. 1/22/79)

I had wondered last night, watching the ridge go black and white in the dusk, whether I had seen it too often—it's still very exciting, just familiar. Then I asked S.B., psychotherapist, dean of a medical school, now film maker, what the subjects of his films were: “Joseph Campbell: The Hero's Journey”! We have spent some fascinating hours talking, as the wind blew the snow sideways. We just felt filled up. We could not have been in a richer intellectual environment, with more wonderful people.

(H.W. 12/20/88)

Many conversations, rewarding though they may be intellectually, are still among the visitors we may never see again. Over the years, numerous friendships have developed, and the kitchen is filled with familiar faces.

Mike L. in at noon, great to see him, looks like a trip to Utah in early March for some powder; Mike W. in at dark, his third day out, with a black, nationally ranked marathon runner, who was exhausted. A bowl of ramen fixed him up—lots of laughs in the kitchen. In between an agreeable, intense conversation with an ex-parole board member now raising goats in Davis for cancer research. Another visitor remembered a ski we had taken together 10 years ago as the best he had ever had — more strokes this year, more laughs, more games—more people.

(H.W. 1/4/88)

Fine dinner with Art and Phyllis, in for about four days—salad and garlic bread, shortbread and strawberries and whipped cream, and champagne. The blessing of wilderness poverty.

(H.W. 12/25/78)

Midwinter nights are long, so a variety of games invariably covers the table, mingling with the conversation. As the height of the Jenga blocks approaches the th



oretical limit, conversation ceases, no one bumps the table, and everyone holds their breath, waiting for the crash. And adults still play Monopoly! Chess collects kibitzers on snowy afternoons and long evenings. There is the rare game of Charades or Pictionary that engages the entire hut in wickedly clever and always hilarious antics. It's wonderful how creative we can be when we can relinquish our best selves to an electronic alien.

The hut is quiet and I can hear the wind outside rising from the SW. Probably midnight, and 5 of us finished an insane dice game, based on lying and deception. These guys have developed pauses, stutters, all sorts of devious misrepresentations, and sometimes the dice conspire, producing an implausible combination, so it's a lot intuition and superstition. We all won one game. Amazingly funny, as you see someone else trying to figure out a position you're glad you're not in, or come up with a winner against all odds. So many shadings of expression; so

much evaluation of each other. And so simple—you'd never suspect it went so deep...Went for a long moonlight walk on the lake, then T and R came back from making four moonlight runs in the bowl on perfect snow, and B joined us to talk on the porch. I was hatless. It was just too beautiful to go inside or sleep.

(H.W. 3/6/89)

This crew, now 30ish, uses the hut like few others. For a decade now, they take five midweek days around a moon, sleep late, pour buckets of water over each other on the front porch in the sun before a huge breakfast, throw the Frisbee or kick hack on the lake, take an easy tour, not to ski but to reach a viewpoint, stay out way past sunset, enjoy a late gourmet dinner, then games and play by moonlight—a truly inspired use of Ostrander.

MAPPING YOSEMITE'S FUTURE

There are many unique views of Yosemite. Some vistas are world famous, but none are quite like Joe Meyer's as he sits in front of his computer terminal. On the screen is a map of Yosemite, filled with a rainbow's spectrum of color. More than a pretty picture, the image in front of Meyer is a product of an important tool used in park management. Meyer is the Geographic Information System (GIS) specialist for Yosemite. In this capacity, he brings high tech expertise to the park.

From the vantage point in front of his terminal, Meyer can see a perspective of Yosemite that few people have opportunity to view. Although his responsibilities are not well known to the general public, the role of the GIS has an increasing impact upon the park and its visitors. GIS uses hardware and software to collect, analyze and display spatial (or mapped) imagery. When layers of different thematic imagery are presented juxtaposed upon one another, this map can provide easily digested information to researchers and park resource managers. The map presents complex spatial relationships in a way that is quickly understood.

The simplest use of GIS is to make custom maps — e.g. a map of Yosemite Valley showing anything from utility corridors to scenic vistas. The most complex use of GIS is to create new data by analyzing existing data — e.g. habitat for a critter that is found at only a certain elevation, in forested areas, near perennial streams but not near lakes.

"Until recently, it was necessary for an organization using GIS to hire a computer geek like me to coax a few results from an intimidating computer."

"Maps have always been used for the management of the park," Meyer says, pointing to a typical topographical map. "For years those maps were printed on paper. By their very nature these maps were static and unchanging." Meyer swivels in his chair and looks at the image on the computer screen. "The GIS can create a map of any area,

at any scale, integrating the relevant information for given task and eliminating the irrelevant. Yosemite dynamic, and GIS is well suited for dynamic issues."

The computer literate may be interested in some of the specifics of the system. The GIS computer system housed in the annex of the Yosemite Research Center in El Portal. It is comprised of five (soon to be six) Sun Unix workstations. These workstations utilize two GIS programs: GRASS, and Arc/Info. Those less technically oriented people, who view the computer as something akin to a magical box, only need to know that the workstation is based on a computer slightly larger than a home desktop model, but much more powerful.

INTEGRATING DATA

Although a computer can manipulate information at astounding speed, the quality of the results is only as good as the data fed into it. Entering information is time consuming and expensive. But once the data is initially entered, it can be updated with relative ease. Data material can come from several sources. Topography information comes in digitized form from standard topographic U.S.G.S. maps. Data is increasingly collected by remote sensing devices, such as aerial photography and LANDSAT satellite imagery.

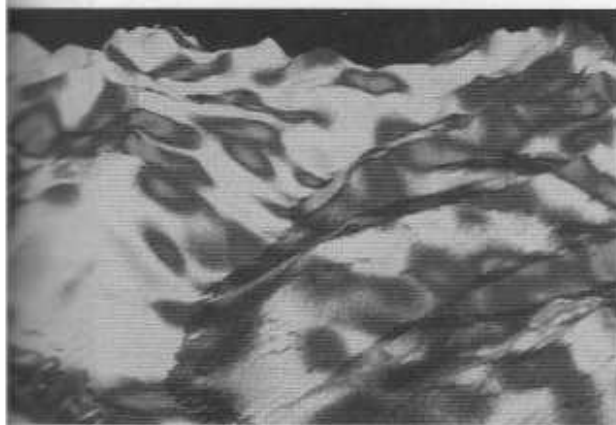
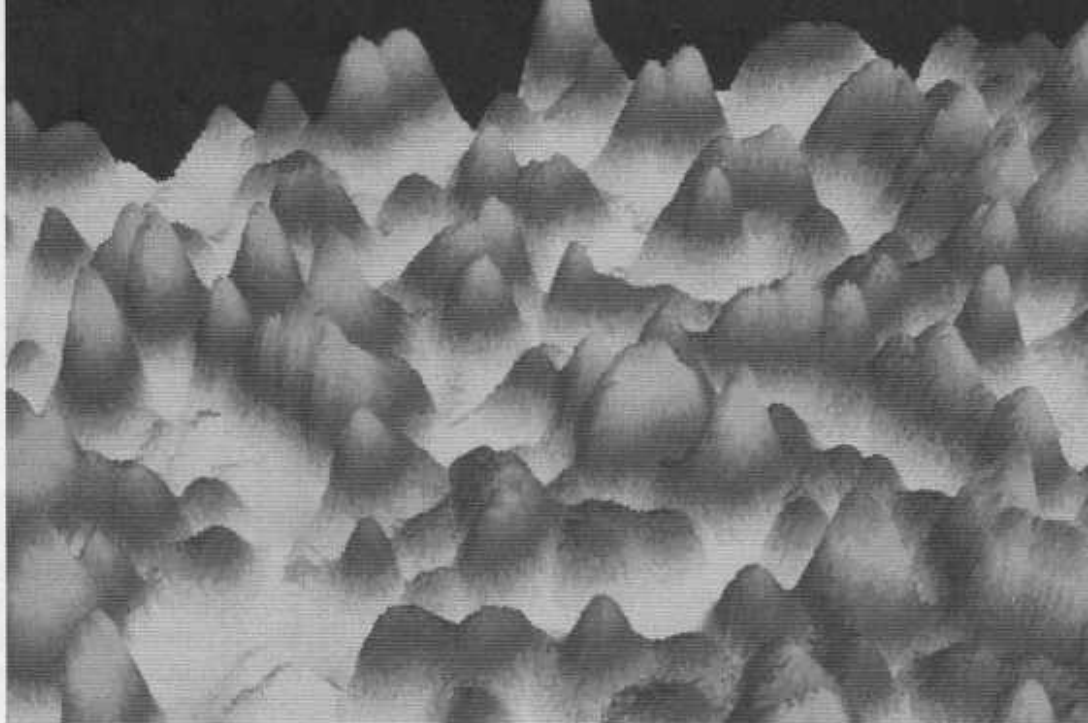
Remote sensing devices are an efficient way to enter data, bypassing human operators. Even in the field researchers utilize satellite assistance. Using GPS (Global Positioning System), a hand-held navigational/informational device, scientists in the field can precisely mark and measure sites as a satellite accurately records their location coordinates. Deriving their position from NAVSTAR satellites, GIS can map: archaeological sites, historical structures, species locations, trails, etc. This information can then be instantly transferred to the GIS workstation.

As we approach the next millennium, GIS will undoubtedly become a key management tool for park planning. Not only is the amount of information housed within GIS increasing, so are the number of people accessing that data. Before the use of computers, research information was scattered and uncoordinated. Results from isolated research studies can now be added to the computer warehouse of information, ready for retrieval when needed for evaluating management actions. The computer is rapidly erasing the line between pure and applied science.

Meyer, who has a degree in computer science, explains

To right, a GIS map of lightning strikes in Lyell Canyon south of Tuolumne Meadows. The high peaks show the areas where lightning is most likely to strike.

Below, the same information superimposed on the topography of Lyell Canyon.



"Until recently, it was necessary for an organization using GIS to hire a computer geek like me to coax a few results from an intimidating computer. But the trend in GIS is toward user-friendly software that doesn't require specialized GIS training."

During the fall of 1995, the GIS research moved one step closer to bridging the gap between scientific research and mainstream park management. The GIS annex is now connected through a parkwide computer network to many of the management and resource offices. Using lap top computers and special GIS software (ArcView), park staff will be able to access data stored in the more powerful computers at the Research Center. By manipulating variables, managers can predict the consequences of proposed ideas.

In what ways will GIS assist park management? Three earlier GIS applications can provide insight into the variety of ways computer imagery can benefit the park.

FORECASTING FIRE

Jan van Wagtenonk, a research scientist working in Yosemite since 1972, pioneered the use of GIS at Yosemite and throughout the Park Service. When a GIS workstation was donated by SUN Microsystems to the Park Service in 1990, van Wagtenonk was quick to recognize its potential benefits in fire management. Van Wagtenonk, along with researchers in other federal agencies, developed a GIS program to help predict fire behavior.

Before the computer could spew out fire behavior predictions based upon data analysis, many elements affecting fire had to be laboriously entered into the computer. The data included: weather, vegetation types, fire fuel models, fire history, and topography. Once fire variables were entered, their effects on each other could be modeled. A record of occurrence of lightning strikes was obtained from the Automated Lightning Detection System operated from the Boise Interagency Fire Center. With this information, GIS is able to make statistical predictions indicating where lightning-started fires are most likely to occur.

As more data has been included into the fire model, the complexity of the program has increased. Currently, the fire model divides the park into nearly seven million small 30x30 meter squares. Each square is a miniature model of the important factors in predicting fire behavior. When a fire occurs, fire managers type its location along with the extended weather forecast into the computer. With this information, the computer can generate a map showing the predicted fire behavior in four hour increments. This up-to-the-minute information can help decision-makers determine whether to suppress wildfires



Wildlife sensitivity in Yosemite Valley. Using this map, park managers are able to determine which areas are the most sensitive to development.

or allow them to continue burning.

The fire model is not only used in managing wildland fires; it has an important application in successfully conducting prescribed managed burns—those fires actually started by Yosemite fire personnel as a management tool. Before conducting a prescribed managed fire, GIS maps are prepared to indicate special concerns such as topography, fuel models, culturally significant sites and endangered species habitat. The model can then be used as a guide in creating a prescribed burn that will reduce dangerously high fuel loads while protecting sensitive resources. As van Wagtenonk states in his analysis of GIS in fire management and research, GIS applications can assist in “fire planning, suppression operations and post-fire rehabilitation efforts.”

LAND USE PLANNING

Land use issues are always complex, but especially so in a national park where heavy visitor use must be balanced with protection of the natural resources. Such issues are addressed in the Yosemite General Management Plan (GMP) which was released in 1980. Since its release, the GMP has been augmented with the Valley Implementation Plan (VIP). The VIP is considered a more detailed approach to planning concerns in Yosemite Valley. A large part of this sophisticated approach can be credited to the use of GIS as a planning tool. The VIP uses 12 themes derived from four broad areas of concern: Biotic Resources (sensitive habitats, vegetation, etc.), Scenic Resources (scenic vistas, GMP scenic areas), Geo-Hazards (flood plains, rock fall zones) and Cultural Resources (cultural landscapes, historic districts, archaeological sites).

Areas within the valley were rated for each of the twelve themes indicating the impact that development would have upon that specific area. Hazard areas were immediately eliminated because of safety concerns. The twelve themes were then layered upon the map illustrating complex spatial relationships. The final product was a sensitivity map of Yosemite Valley indicating areas in which development would severely impact fragile ecosystems.

HUNTING FOR HABITATS

Without leaving the confines of his small computer space in the Research Center, Meyer can make significant progress in locating rare and endangered species in the field. Given the characteristics which make up suitability of the habitat of a particular species, Meyer can generate maps showing likely locations in the park to detect hard-to-find species of flora or fauna.

In 1988, a team of researchers used GIS-generated maps to assist in locating sites favored by the great gray owl. The great gray owl, found in California only around the environs of Yosemite, is considered to be one of the rarest species of birds in California. Locating nesting sites of the owl is difficult; not only is the gray owl rare, it is secretive, too. In the search for the gray owl, the computer-rivalled binoculars in its ability to locate this elusive breed of bird. Data was entered into the program regarding meadows and surrounding forest vegetation of favored nesting sites. The resulting map narrowed the scope of field studies to the most likely sites. The survey discovered twice as many owls as were previously known to inhabit the Yosemite area, doubling the number from 26 to 52 birds.

In the search for the great gray owl,
the computer-rivalled binoculars in its
ability to locate this elusive breed of bird

With the speed of a few keystrokes, Meyer can change his view from a historical perspective of the park to a view of Yosemite's future as predicted by a programmer model. He does not, however, sit in front of a crystal ball. The Geographic Information System is one of the newest tools for protecting one of the oldest treasures on earth. But the GIS system is only a tool to be used in the stewardship of the park. Yosemite's future rests not with computer programs but with the wise management of the national treasure. The fate of the park lies within the heart and hands of a nation of people who realize that the National Park System is a priceless treasure, worthy of continued support and commitment.

Jeff Lahr, who resides in Santa Maria, teaches social studies at the junior high level, and spends his summers in Wawona as a ranger naturalist. He contributed the article on his research in the Winter, 1995 issue of Yosemite.

JELLYFISH KILL MORE PEOPLE

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The California mountain lion has an image problem. Once a big-eyed, bewhiskered symbol of the vanishing wild, the cougar has recently been portrayed as the fur-bearing equivalent of a serial killer. Since the 1994 deaths of two women—the first people killed by cougars in California in 85 years—mountain lion sightings and encounters, both real and imagined, have made front page news up and down the state. And some experts believe the media hype has unfairly exaggerated the danger this reclusive cat poses to the public.

"Mountain lions have become the big bad wolf. They're the victims of media and political sensationalism," said Bill Yeates, president of the Mountain Lion Foundation, a Sacramento-based group that led the 1990 fight for Proposition 117, which imposed a ban on hunting mountain lions. "Every time a lion is sighted, the media does a pretty good job of scaring Californians about their wildlife," said Yeates. "When we first started promoting Proposition 117, people I talked to were delighted when they found out mountain lions lived in their state. They loved the idea that California could still

support mountain lions." That sentiment apparently has changed, even though jellyfish, lightning, dogs and bees each account for more fatalities in North America than mountain lions, according to wildlife experts. "Look at all the people who die from dog attacks and bee stings," said Michael Sewell, a Marin wildlife photographer who specializes in taking shots of predators, including mountain lions. "We hear very little about them."

"Mountain lion attacks are like the neighbor who buries his wife in the back yard. It doesn't happen often, but when it does, we hear about it for days. Come to think about it, we have more guys burying their wives in their back yards than we do mountain lion attacks." But Jeff Weir, assistant deputy director of state Fish and Game, said the extravagant coverage given lion attacks is not necessarily out of line, given the potentially horrific consequences of such an assault.

"I think in some cases the media has overstated the concern, and sometimes they have inadvertently mixed their facts up," said Weir. "The accuracy has not been consistent." Nevertheless, said Weir, "there is legitimate rea-



Janice Clark/courtesy of PAMS

son to pay attention to the dangers. When people get stung by bees, they may die of an allergic reaction. But when you get killed by a mountain lion, it's because you've been bitten in the back of the head and your innards have been eaten. There's a qualitative difference."

Citing public safety concerns, Governor Wilson signed a bill this year asking voters to repeal Proposition 117 in a March ballot initiative. Since 1890, there have been ten reported attacks in California involving twelve victims; eight of the attacks have taken place during the past ten years. Five people have died in the attacks, including the two killed last year. An estimated 6,000 of the big buff-colored cats now live in the state, up from 2,000 in 1972. With the lion population multiplying, encounters with humans have increased. With each recent encounter, media attention has increased.



Dutcher Film Productions

In most cases the true nature of the big felines has been distorted, say experts, through the tendency of the media to anthropomorphize wild animals—to attribute human motivations to their behavior. Wildlife authorities emphasize that mountain lions are neither benign Disney caricatures nor ravenous monsters craving human flesh, but complex predators struggling to survive.

"In this as in many situations, journalists need to remember a sense of proportion," said Tom Goldstein, dean of the graduate school of journalism at the University of California at Berkeley. "They need to be more expert, and they need a sense of context and history.

When views fluctuate wildly, reporters should take the time to secure a deep understanding of the situation."

The anti-cougar mood pervading the state capitol and the media also seems to be contributing to increasing numbers of mistaken sightings and false claims of attacks. "We've had about 20 sightings in recent months, but we've only confirmed one," said Benicia police Lieutenant Mike Daley about mountain lions in the East Bay.

And earlier this month, a reported attack on a Napa County turkey hunter yielded no physical evidence of the encounter. Robert Nakatani, Jr. said two mountain lions approached as he was calling wild turkeys. One of the lions pounced on him, Nakatani said, biting his foot. Nakatani said he was able to shoot and wound the animal, injuring his own foot in the process. But Department of Fish and Game trackers found no lion hair, blood or tissue at the site. Fish and Game investigators dropped the case after a few days, saying that they should have found some evidence if an attack had taken place.

Although Nakatani's story was considered thin by wildlife experts from the beginning, the alleged encounter set off Northern California's latest round of anti-lion publicity. Cougar advocates complain that first reports of the December 2 incident led television news shows and were played prominently in some newspapers, but less attention was paid to the subsequent revelation that Nakatani's tale was riddled with inconsistencies.

"The media makes it seem like the state is crawling with mountain lions, when most dedicated hikers spend their entire lives without even seeing a track," said Sewell. "And as relatively rare as lions are, seeing one should be a thrill, not a reason for fear." Sewell said he was driving with a park ranger at the Point Reyes National Seashore recently "when we were flagged down by a jogger who asked us with terror in his eyes if he were in any danger from a mountain lion attack. It's sad, because all the disinformation is preventing people from enjoying the outdoors." Sewell said reasonable caution should be exercised in lion country but added that the chances of being attacked are extremely remote, which he says is not being adequately conveyed to the public.

EDITOR'S NOTE: "Cougar: The American Lion," a slide program focusing on the biology, ecology, behavior and management of mountain lions in California, will be presented by Kevin Hansen (wildlife biologist and author) at the YA Spring Forum on March 30, 1996.

MOUNTAIN LION RESEARCH BEGINS IN YOSEMITE

Last year Yosemite's wildlife biologists received more than 100 reports of mountain lion sightings in Yosemite Valley. In a few cases, the lions displayed atypical behavior such as sleeping in a campsite in Upper Pines Campground and dragging a dead coyote through the Curry Village tent cabins. As a result, concerns over balancing the safety of visitors who come to Yosemite each year and protecting the mountain lions who inhabit the park prompted biologists from the National Park Service and the National Biological Service to meet and discuss the issue. The conclusion: although anecdotal observations have provided some insight into basic mountain lion ecology during the past few years, scientific information is needed to develop a sound program of mountain lion management. This is when Yosemite wildlife researchers step into action.

The mountain lion issue is an example of how wildlife research assists the National Park Service in its mission to preserve and protect the natural resources in our national parks. In this case, park management must decide how to balance visitor safety with perpetuating a healthy, naturally functioning population of these magnificent animals. Park Service policy requires that resource management decisions have a sound scientific basis, so it is up to wildlife researchers to provide this data.

IDENTIFYING THE ISSUES

Research biologists from the National Biological Service (NBS) work with Yosemite's wildlife management staff to identify and address resource issues. After assessing information needs, researchers design studies to answer specific questions. In the case of mountain lions, they might ask: Does the mere presence of mountain lions pose a threat? Is apparent habituation to humans widespread throughout the population or limited to a few individual animals? Are humans contributing to apparent changes in mountain lion behavior? How can the animals' behavior clues be used to evaluate the level of risk to humans? Researchers then attempt to answer these questions by developing and testing a variety of possible explanations.

One hypothesis is that lions using Yosemite Valley differ from lions elsewhere. Based on biologists' knowledge about mountain lion ecology, researchers hypothesize

that lions using the Valley are younger transients searching for an open territory. These animals are typically undernourished and underweight and may be inhabiting Yosemite Valley because the high density of people makes it marginal habitat for older, more mature lions. Alternatively, mountain lions may be attracted into the Valley because access to human food has created artificially high populations of raccoons, coyotes, and mule deer. These animals, along with pets, provide a rich, easily available prey base for lions. It may also be possible that lions inhabiting Yosemite Valley are so accustomed to seeing people that they no longer have an innate fear of humans.

RESEARCH IN THE FIELD

To further address these hypotheses, research biologists propose capturing and installing radio transmitters on mountain lions in Yosemite Valley where they will compare the behavior and ecology of this group with a control group in Yosemite's Pate Valley. By collecting feces on a regular basis, they can determine if there are dietary differences between the groups. DNA from the fecal samples will also be used to identify and characterize the diets of individual lions. When the lions are captured, researchers will collect information on their age and sex to determine if certain ages and sexes of lions are more likely to behave one way or another. They will also document how lions react to people in Yosemite Valley and compare it with reactions of lions in Pate Valley. Once the study is completed, Yosemite resource managers will then be provided with results, recommendations, and alternatives.

The proposed mountain lion study, financed by the Yosemite Fund, is typical of other wildlife projects conducted in Yosemite. To date the list of species studied includes bighorn sheep, black bears, peregrine falcons, great gray owls, mountain beavers, white-tailed ptarmigan, and Belding ground squirrels. Currently, research is in progress on bats, brown-headed cowbirds, and amphibians. In all these instances, wildlife research has been designed to enable the park's resource managers to make informed decisions about preserving and protecting Yosemite's priceless wildlife resources.

Les Chow is a research biologist for the NBS in Yosemite.



INTO THE WILDERNESS: AN ARTIST'S JOURNEY

PAINTINGS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHEN LYMAN. TEXT BY MARK MARDON.

Steve Lyman, whose paintings are featured here, will be giving a presentation and signing copies of his new book at the YA Spring Forum, March 30, 1996.

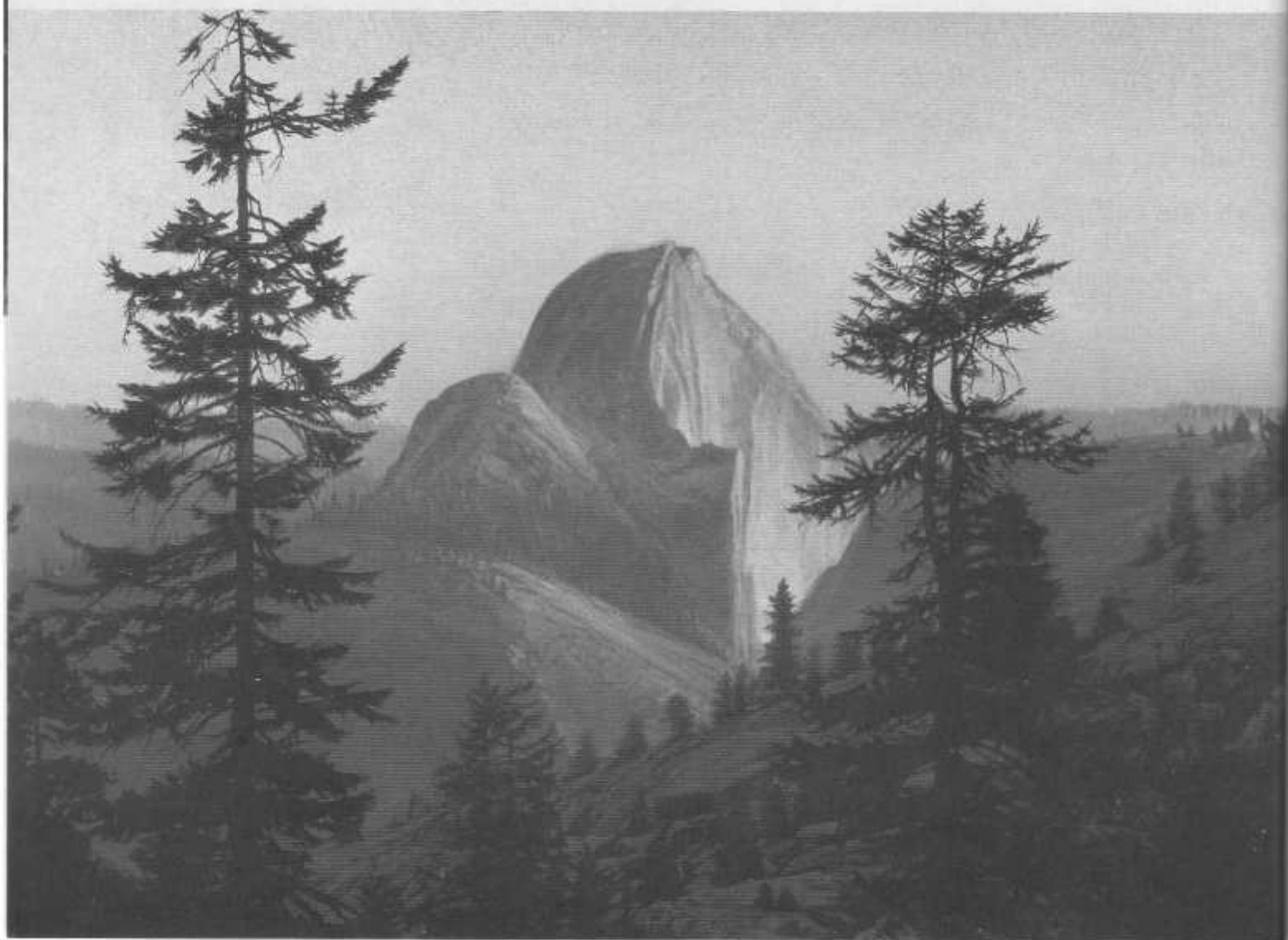
In looking for artistic inspiration, Steve has trained himself to look beyond the obvious. He is as much inclined to turn his attention to the seemingly insignificant plants, animals, and rock formations he encounters along the trail as he is to focus on "megafauna" such as bears and wolves. He prefers to consider himself to be not a "wildlife artist" *per se*, but a painter of wilderness. He views the natural world not as a series of static portraits but as a dynamic process, the sum of many parts all intricately entwined, the wholeness of which can only be hinted at and painted about.

"I want to make my images timeless and ageless," he says, "to portray the depth of wisdom and longevity the wilderness possesses. It's constantly being reborn. I'm

adopting Muir's language of the earth as alive, to be treated with respect and love, not as a material resource or as something for us to conquer."

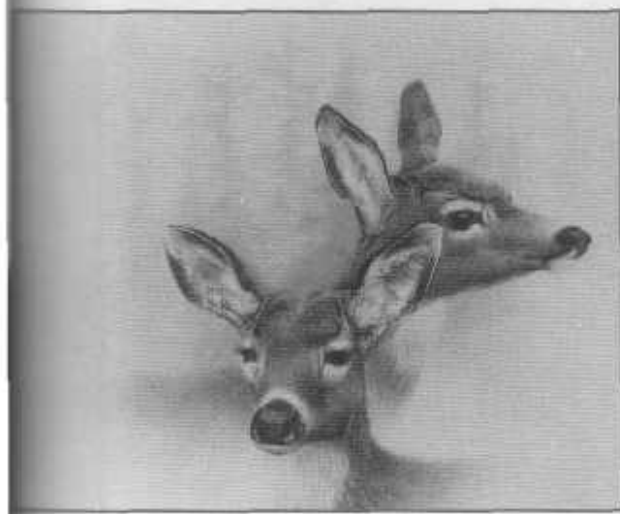
"This grand show is eternal," wrote Muir. "It is always sunrise somewhere; the dew is never all dried at once; shower is forever falling; vapor is ever rising. Eternal sunrise, eternal sunset, eternal dawn and gloaming, on seas and continents and islands, each in its turn, as the round earth rolls."

When Steve does depict bears and wolves, it's often in a way that subordinates them to their surroundings. They appear as diminutive forms in a vast landscape, or as shapes camouflaged amid wild brambles or behind a screen of tender flowers and grasses. The settings



Steve's paintings put wildlife in perspective while enhancing the shapes of mountains, streams, trees, clouds, snowfall, flowers, and many other elements that comprise the *dramatis personae* of the wilderness stage. They play out their diverse roles in the grand spectacle of nature as everything from supernumeraries to chorus members, from second-string players to star performers.

The only actors not visibly playing a role in Steve's paintings are humans. The decision to exclude people is a conscious one. "At this point, in history," he says, "we're destroying wilderness rapidly. I want to portray an ideal that's opposite what's really happening today. I'm not saying that humans shouldn't be in the wilderness, or couldn't fit, or don't belong. I know that we can. For hundreds of thousands of years, people lived in the wilderness and didn't ruin it. But in the last 150 years, we've developed the power to destroy it. There are many very good artists who paint people—Native Americans and mountain men, for instance—in the wilderness. I feel I'm best at portraying a wilderness without a human influence or intrusive presence."



Spring Forum Set for March 30

YA's annual Spring Forum is scheduled for Saturday, March 30, 1996, in Yosemite Valley. This popular member event will feature a full day of informative presentations on a variety of topics such as Yosemite history, natural history, resources, and management.

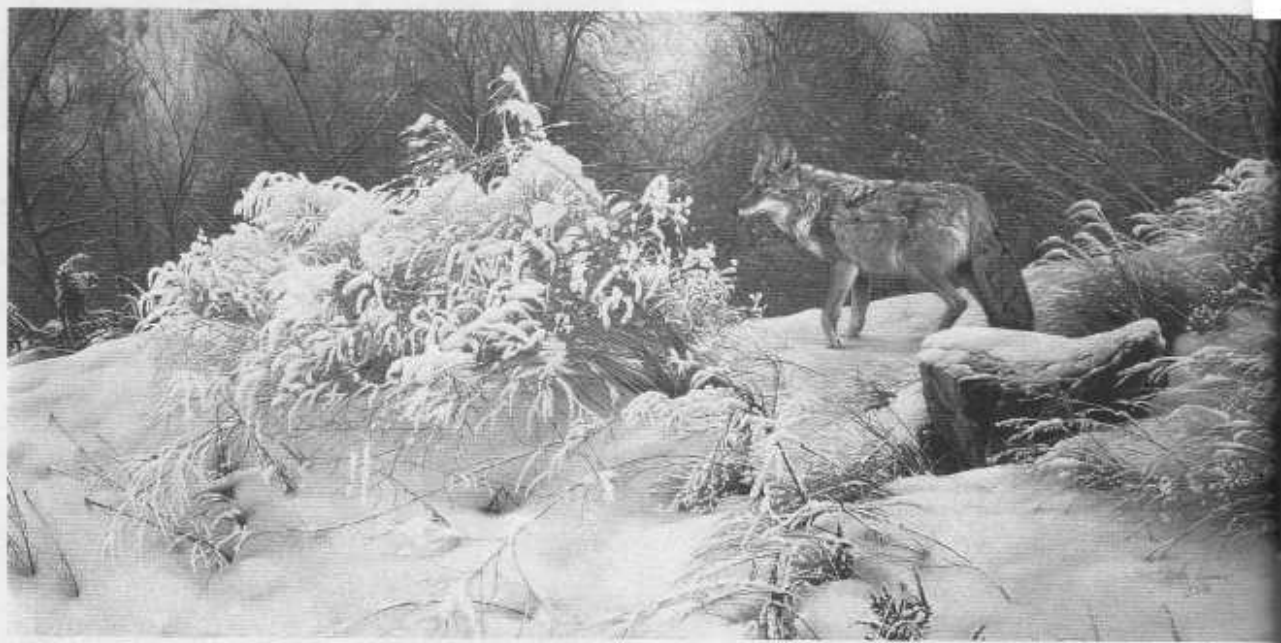
The day begins at 9:00 a.m. with a check-in to receive name badges in front of the East and West Auditoriums behind the Valley Visitor Center. There will be a series of concurrent sessions throughout the day with a break for lunch on your own. Members can choose from a variety of hour-long talks, slide shows, and walks (weather permitting). At 5:00 p.m. members and speakers will gather for a wine and cheese hour.

Among this year's speakers is wilderness artist Stephen Lyman whose paintings are featured in a handsome new book entitled *Into the Wilderness, an Artist's Journey*. Dianne Ganner, from the Fresno Wildlife and Rehabilitation Center will treat members to a presentation centered around live birds of prey. Mountain lion expert Kevin Hansen will share his research and separate fact from fiction about the life and habits of cougars. Renowned climber Mike Corbett will return to share his expertise on the history of climbing. Pete Devine, Education Director of Yosemite Institute, will take folks on an early morning bird walk. Historian and YA seminar instruc-

tor Stan Hutchinson will lead members "In the Footsteps of John Muir." Many other programs are planned focusing on the park's wildlife, archaeology, historical architecture, and much more.

Members have already received details about the Spring Forum by mail, including a reservation form for lodging in the park. Everyone is encouraged to pre-register for the event by returning the card from the mailing along with \$10 for each person attending. All those who pre-register will receive a finalized agenda in the mail shortly before the event.

If you have any questions, please call Holly or Connie at (209) 379-2317.



ASSOCIATION DATES

March 30, 1996: YA Spring Forum, Yosemite Valley

July 21-27, 1996: YA Work Trip, Tuolumne Meadows

August 4-10, 1996: YA Work Trip, Tuolumne Meadows

August 25-31, 1996: YA Work Trip, Sunrise area

September 7, 1996: 21st Annual Meeting, Wawona

September 22-28, 1996: YA Work Trip, Yosemite Valley

October 6-12, 1996: YA Work Trip, Yosemite Valley

209/379-2317

If you're planning a trip to Yosemite and have questions, give our phone line a call between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. We don't make reservations, but we can give appropriate phone numbers and usually lots of helpful advice.



Volunteer in Yosemite!

YA members who enjoy working with the public and have extended periods of

Volunteers Needed for Member Worktrips

The successful and popular YA Member Worktrips are now in the planning stages. Each year YA offers this opportunity for members to volunteer for a five day revegetation project under the supervision of the Resources Management Division of the National Park Service, which relies almost entirely on volunteer labor to accomplish a variety of restoration projects. Now in its ninth season, the YA Worktrip Program provides some of that much-needed labor and is a cooperative venture with several other organizations. The Yosemite Institute contributes the leadership and food service, the National Park Service directs the projects, and the Yosemite Concession Services Corporation donates the crucial financial underwriting that makes it all possible.

For the 1996 season, there will be five worktrips. Tuolumne Meadows will be the location for two of the summer trips, **July 21-27** and **August 4-10**. The popular backpacking worktrip to the Sunrise Lakes area will take place **August 25-31**. And Yosemite Valley will be the setting for two fall worktrips the weeks of **September 22-28** and **October 6-12**.

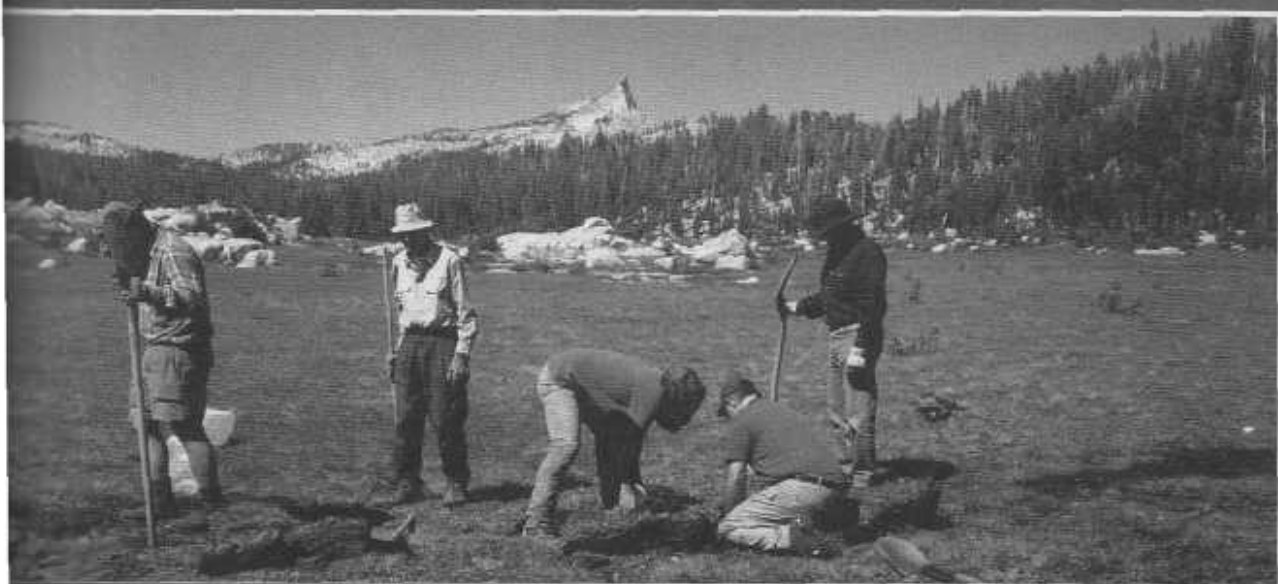
In each of the trips, 15 members camp together in special tentsites from Sunday afternoon to the following Saturday morning. The actual work schedule goes from Monday to Friday with a day off mid-week. Participants bring their own camping equipment and personal gear; all meals are provided by the Yosemite Institute.

Worktrip participants need to be in good health. There will be a variety of jobs during the week, and many can be physically demanding, especially at higher elevations. Despite the hard work involved, members take pride in providing the crucial volunteer labor for restoration projects and are grateful for the opportunity to "give something back" to the park. If you are interested in signing up for one of these trips, write or call Holly or Connie at (209) 379-2317.

time at their disposal might like to participate in the Volunteer program in Yosemite Valley or Tuolumne Meadows. From April through October the Association needs approximately 30 volunteers in Yosemite Valley to staff both the membership booth and the Museum Gallery and to introduce and operate the Visitor Center's Orientation Slide Show. The Gallery work involves keeping track of visitation and answering questions about the exhibits and the park. The Orientation Slide Show is presented in the West Auditorium to welcome visitors and provide an introduction to Yosemite. At the membership booth, volunteers answer numerous visitor inquiries and, when appropriate, describe the work of the Association and encourage membership. Last summer the volunteers enrolled more than 500 new members. These volunteers stay in shared campsites in the Valley for at least a month, work a 5 day work week, and receive a stipend of \$6 per workday.

In Tuolumne Meadows, volunteers serve as hosts at the semi-private campground and assist the Park Service naturalists by answering visitor questions. The Tuolumne season is shorter — from the end of June through August. Volunteers need to plan for a commitment of 4-6 weeks and stay in a tent, small camper or van in the Tuolumne Meadows Campground. Like the Valley volunteers, they work a 5-day work week and receive a stipend of \$6 per workday.

If either of these positions interests you, please write or call (209) 379-2317 for an application.



SEMINARS '96

The catalog is out! Join one of the excellent instructors who will be leading a small group to explore and learn about Yosemite's grandeur. The spring jaunts and a foothill wildflower course taught by Mike Ross in the Merced River Canyon are expected to fill quickly, so sign up soon. A foothill birding class will give participants a chance to see a flurry of visiting and resident birds; several new Yosemite Valley spring walks will hike to waterfalls, look at the meadow azaleas, and revel in the glorious greening meadows.



Summer backpacks are abundant in '96 for beginners through advanced hikers. New classes (which include indoor lodging) are planned at White Wolf and Crane Flat. Outdoor photo workshops abound, starting in February — from beginner to professional levels of expertise. Several drawing and painting



courses are offered in 1996, the earliest starting late April. Interested in journal writing? Sign up for one of the new nature writing workshops scheduled in Tuolumne Meadows this July.

Enroll in classes soon, as most fill early in the year. Ask for Penny or Lou in the YA seminar office (209/379-2321) if you have any questions. We look forward to helping you enjoy an outdoor learning vacation in your favorite national park!

Alsup and Eckart Re-elected to YA Board

Incumbents Bill Alsup and Bob Eckart have been re-elected to new six year terms on the Yosemite Association Board of Trustees. Nominated by committee, Alsup and Eckart were unopposed for their seats and, as provided in the Association's by-laws, declared winners without the balloting process.

Bill Alsup is a resident of Oakland and Midpines and has been hiking and photographing the Sierra and Mariposa region since 1974. An attorney for the San Francisco firm of



Morrison & Foerster, Bill attended Harvard Law School and both served as a law clerk for Justice William Douglas and worked as a civil rights lawyer in Mississippi early in his career.

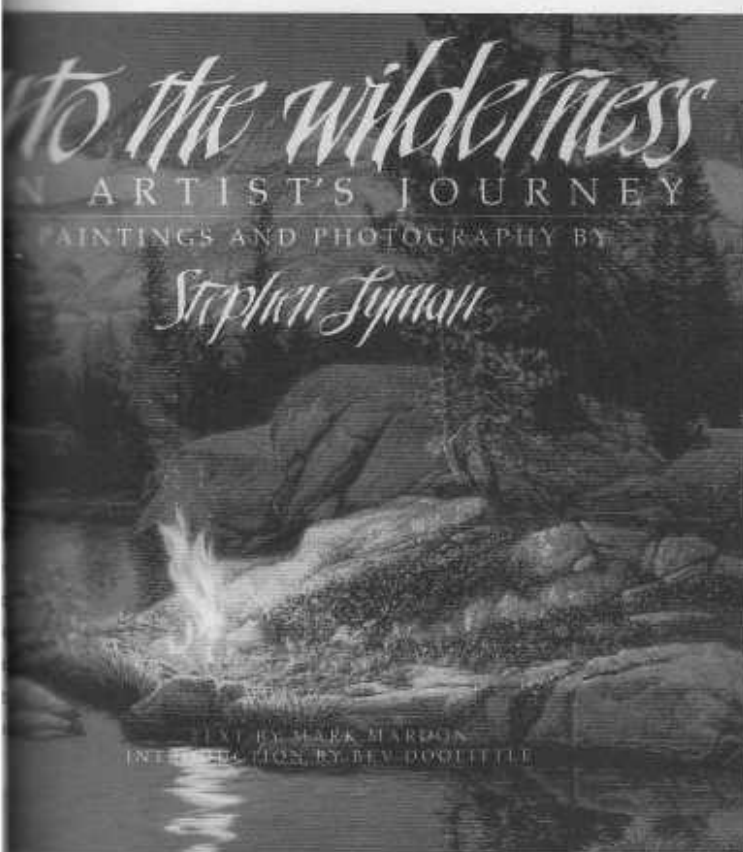
Devoted to Yosemite, he was one of the founding members of the Yosemite Restoration Trust serving on its board as well. In 1988, the Association published *Such A Landscape!* in which his photographs illustrated the 1864 Brewster expedition. An active board member, Bill has written a number of articles for the members' journal and has also led three wilderness photo backpacking trips for YA involving camps at remote and scenic places.

Bob Eckart has a long personal history with Yosemite. Both he and his wife grew up in the park in the 1940s and attended the local grammar school. He received a BA degree from University of the Pacific and an MBA from the University of California. While residing in the Bay Area, he and his family spent much of their free time back in Yosemite. In 1980 they returned to live in Mariposa County and Bob became the Vice-President and Credit Administrator of the Yosemite Bank.

Bob has expressed gratitude to Yosemite for giving him "tremendous physical and spiritual pleasure by providing a spectacular and unparalleled environment in which to recreate and refresh the senses." He looks forward to continuing to serve on the Board of the Yosemite Association which he sees as "one of the park's grand guardians."

The Association Board of Trustees is clearly fortunate to continue to benefit from the talents and energy of these able men.





**20493 Into the Wilderness—
An Artist's Journey**

*Paintings and photography by Stephen Lyman and
text by Mark Mardon.*

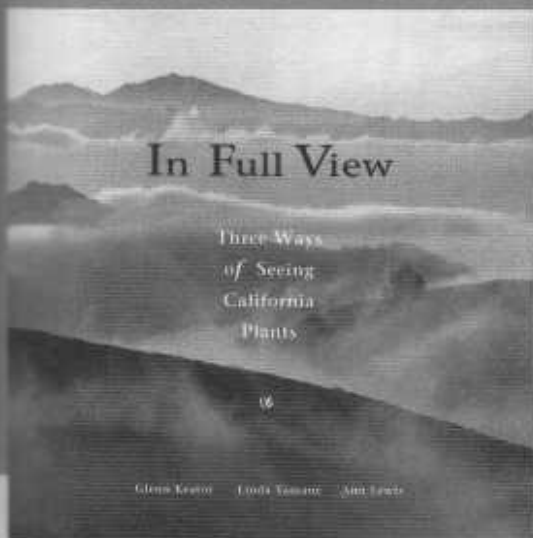
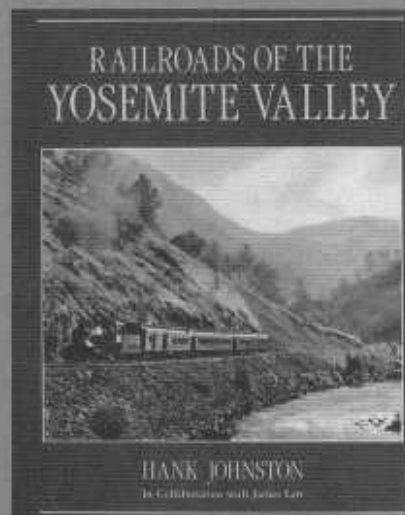
Artist Lyman has spent much time in Yosemite, learning its special secrets and painting all its aspects from wildlife to wilderness. Through his art and photography, this book takes readers into wilderness very few have experienced, both in Yosemite and elsewhere. Enhanced by the words of former *Sierra* editor Mardon, Lyman's imagery of deep woods, water, mountain tops, and grizzly bears is extraordinary and joyous. The beautiful, full-color illustrations make this a remarkable book, full of surprises and pleasures. Artist Bev Doolittle has contributed an introduction, 180 pages, over 125 color paintings and drawings, The Greenwich Workshop, 1995. Cloth, \$40

01700 Railroads of the Yosemite Valley

by Hank Johnston in collaboration with James Law.

This is a reprint of a classic historical work detailing the intriguing story of the four short line railroads that operated in the Merced River canyon to serve Yosemite National Park. Originally published in 1963, the volume offers a wealth of photographic material, including over 200 black and white images of trains, tracks, stations, and related structures and objects. Because the advent of the automobile meant the demise of all four railroad lines, *Railroads of the Yosemite Valley* documents an important chapter in California history never to be known again. The remarkable collection of photographs brings the narrative richness and life.

206 pages, Yosemite Association, 1995.
Paper, \$19.95



**20456 In Full View—Three Ways of
Seeing California Plants**

by Glenn Keator, Linda Yamane, and Ann Lewis.

This is a fascinating treatment of California plants, combining the perspective of botanist Keator and that of Native American scholar Yamane, with collage illustrations by artist Lewis. Included is three-pronged coverage of such plants as Douglas iris, poison oak, stinging nettle, wild strawberry, willow, pine, and more. Besides traditional botanical information, the authors contribute historical data, Native American usages and nomenclatures, and even poetry about the various species. What results is a rich, imaginative, and excitingly full view of the plants of California. 96 pages, b & w photos and collages, Heyday Books, 1995. Paper, \$12.95

07800 Yosemite Wilderness Pin.



Here's a beautiful enamel pin commemorating Yosemite's unparalleled wilderness. The latest in the series of pins for all of California's wilderness areas, it's circular in shape with a beautiful high country scene rendered in blues, grays, and greens. A real treasure for collectors. Approximately 1 inch in diameter. \$4.00

The Perfect Art

The Ostrander Hut & Ski Touring in Yosemite

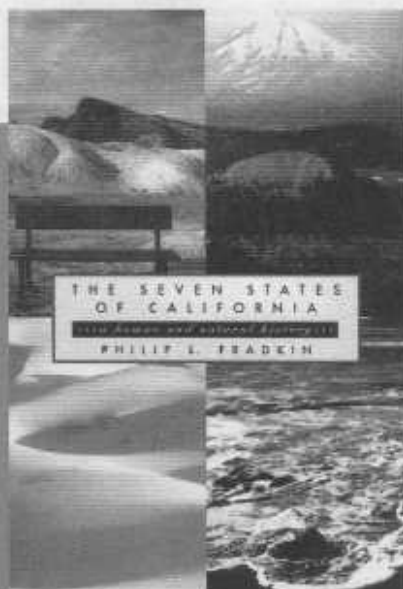


BY HOWARD WEAMER

27250 The Perfect Art—The Ostrander Ski Hut & Ski Touring in Yosemite

by Howard Weamer.

This is a personal history of the Ostrander Hut and winter sports in Yosemite told by photographer and long-time hut-keeper Weamer. He chronicles the events that lead to the construction of the hut, then writes about its use over the years. Drawing on his twenty winters in the backcountry, Weamer provides personal and intimate stories of travel, searches, personalities, animals, aesthetics, and the joys of day-to-day existence in Yosemite wilderness in winter. Numerous photographs, many in color by the author, are included along with a pull-out mini poster identifying the various peaks and landmarks that make up "The Ostrander Panorama." The book is quirky, humorous, and inspiring. 144 pages, 106 photos (many in color), pull-out poster, Howard Weamer, 1995. Paper, \$24.95



31150 The Seven States of California—A Human and Natural History

by Philip L. Fradkin.

Here the author examines California's multiple landscapes and the different states of mind of its people in an attempt to define the essence of our country's most populated state. Dividing California into seven distinct ecological and cultural provinces, he selects one emblematic feature from each upon which to hang a series of little stories about natural objects and human characters. Fradkin then proceeds clockwise around the state with stops in the Mojave Desert, the Sierra Nevada, Mount Shasta, Humboldt Bay, the Central Valley, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. It's a rich, exuberant portrait of California from a fresh and candid perspective. 474 pages, Henry Holt and Company, 1995. Cloth, \$30.00



400 Sierra Nevada Field Card Set
Illustrated by Elizabeth Morales

These handy field identification cards depict the most commonly seen birds, mammals, trees, and wildflowers in the Sierra Nevada region. Illustrated with color drawings and including information about the size, habits, and other field marks of each, the cards are unbreakable, waterproof vinyl plastic and fit conveniently in one's daypack or glove compartment. Particularly helpful for newcomers to Sierra as regularly observed flora and fauna can be quickly identified. Four plastic cards printed on both sides. Yosemite Association, 1991 and 1992. \$11.00

07505 Yosemite Association Baseball-Style Cap.

Our YA caps are made of corduroy with an adjustable strap at the back so that one size fits all. The cap is adorned with a YA logo patch, and comes in dark blue, forest green and maroon colors. The cap is stylish and comfortable, and wearing it is a good way to demonstrate your support for Yosemite. \$9.95 (please specify color)



07510 Yosemite Association Mug.

This distinctive and functional heavy ceramic mug feels good with your hand wrapped around it. Available in two colors (green and maroon), it's imprinted with our logo and name in black and white. Holds 12 ounces of your favorite beverage.



\$6.50 (please specify color)

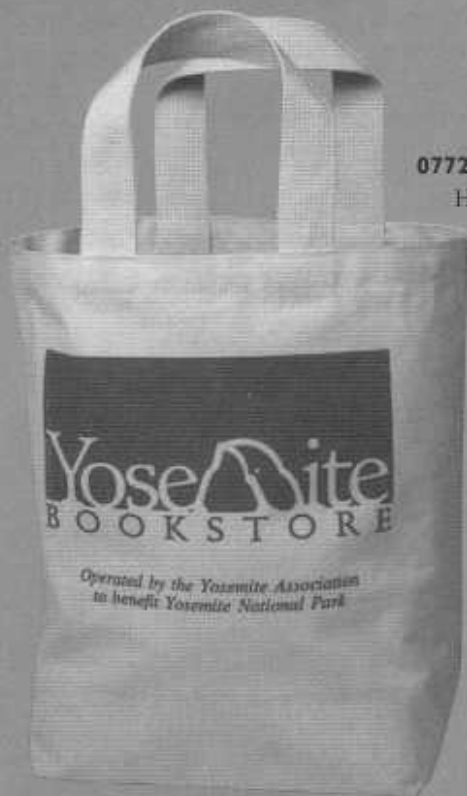
07516 Yosemite Association Patch.

Our Association logo is embroidered on colorful, sturdy fabric for placement on daypacks, shirts, blue jeans, jackets, or wherever! The newly-designed patch is available in three attractive colors: dark blue, forest green, and maroon. \$3.00 (please specify color)



07720 Yosemite Bookstore Book Bag.

Here's YA's handy book bag made from durable 100% cotton fabric with a sturdy web handle. Cream-colored, it's imprinted in blue with the Yosemite Bookstore logo. Fine craftsmanship and generous oversized design make this a bag you'll want to take everywhere. Conserve resources with a reusable book bag. Approximately 17 x 16 inches. \$8.95



Order Form

Credit card orders call: (209) 379-2648 Monday-Friday, 8:30am-4:30pm

Qty.	Color	Description	Price Each	Total

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Card No: _____ Expires: _____

Subtotal:	
Less 15% Member's Discount:	
SUBTOTAL A:	
7.25% Sales Tax (CA customers only):	
Shipping Charges:	\$3.95
TOTAL ENCLOSED:	

New Campground Reservation System Begins

On January 15, 1996, the reservation system for Yosemite campgrounds underwent significant changes. Mistix, the company which had previously handled campsite reservations, has been sold to a new parent company called Destinet. In response to the increasing volume of calls and dissatisfaction with the reservation system, the National Park Service requested that changes be made in the reservation system for all parks.

In this new system, reservations will become available on the 15th of each month for a one-month "window" four months in advance. On January 15, reservations with starting dates from May 15 through June 14 became available. Since this is the beginning of the new system, all start dates from January 15 through June 14 went on sale.

On February 15, reservations with starting dates from June 15 through July 14 (plus anything from February 15 through June 15 that was still available) would go on sale. On March 15, dates from July 15 through August 14 become available, and on April 15, August 15 through September 14 goes on sale.

Unlike the previous system in which people had to call exactly eight weeks in advance of each starting date, once callers get through the phone lottery, they will have a whole month of starting dates available. If their first or second choice of dates is already full, they may still have an opportunity to make some reservation. This new system is designed with the hope that it will cut down the volume of incoming calls by allowing people to make another choice instead of requiring them to call back each day. This system will also allow people to plan well in advance of their vacations.

Telephone reservations for Yosemite Campgrounds are made by calling 800/436-7275. Hours are 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily, October 1 to February 29. From March 1 to September 30, the hours of operation are 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays and 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekends. Reservations may also be made in writing to: DESTINET, 9450 Carroll Park Drive, San Diego, CA 92121.

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