

THE FOOTHILL ADVOCATE

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SIERRA • FOOTHILL



• CONSERVANCY •

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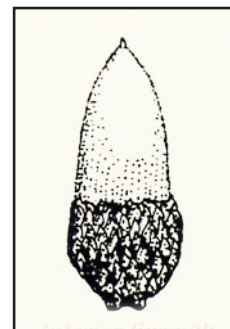


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Live Oaks thrive in the central Sierra

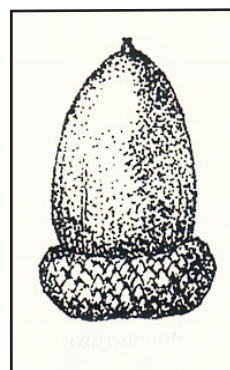
In the previous issue of The Foothill Advocate I wrote about the three deciduous species of oak trees that commonly occur in the Sierra foothills: the valley oak, (sometimes called the water oak), the blue oak and the black oak. I emphasized the importance of looking at the acorns when attempting to distinguish them. Now it's time to learn about the so-called live oaks—that is, those oak trees that retain their leaves all year 'round. This should be easy, for there are only two of them.

The live oak that most people are likely to see because it is so common is the interior live oak (*Quercus wislizenii*). It is a broad, densely-branched tree with smooth gray bark and a full canopy of short, narrow leaves that are dark green in color. Sometimes the leaves are toothed along the margins, especially those that are new growth on a branch that had been previously cut back, but usually the leaf margins are smooth. The leaves are thick and highly resistant to water loss. The acorns are long (up to 1 ½ inches) and narrow. They sit in cups with thin, overlapping scales. Although you may see examples of interior live oaks almost anywhere, they most commonly grow in low-lying places where they can get plenty of water. Look for them especially along creeks and on the floors of valleys.



Interior live oak

The second of the two evergreen oaks, the canyon oak (*Quercus chrysolepis*), is much harder to describe because its appearance can be so variable. Where conditions are favorable, these oaks can grow to be seventy feet tall and four feet or more across at the base, but the more usual growth form in our area is one of a medium-sized spreading, multi-trunked tree growing outward from steep, boulder-strewn slopes. The leaves are a bit broader in outline than those of interior live oaks and they differ further in that, while they are dark green above, they are gray or pale blue beneath, with minute golden or silvery hairs. But the thing that most firmly sets the canyon oak apart from its cousin the interior live oak is its acorns. Canyon oak acorns are one to two inches long with broad bases, and their cups are saucer-shaped, golden in color, thick and corky—quite unmistakable. If you're hiking along a foothill trail and suddenly come across these tiny golden saucers littering the forest floor, look up and check out the canyon oak that you've stumbled upon. It's definitely worth a second look.



Canyon oak

An especially fine place to look for canyon oaks is Yosemite Valley. You will find them rimming the valley, hugging the base of the valley walls. The trail up toward the top of Yosemite Falls passes through an almost-pure stand of canyon oaks.

Peg Smith

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The Sierra Foothill Conservancy is a non-profit public benefit corporation under Internal Revenue Service Code Section 501(c)(3) and California Revenue and Taxation Code Section 23701d. Contributions are deductible for federal income tax purposes.

A new preserve at Bean Creek

Take Highway 49 north out of Mariposa, turn right at the Forty-niner town of Coulterville, and then go up the road a few miles to Greeley Hill. Turn left in Greeley Hill and shortly the forest on your left will open up to a meadow. You have found Sierra Foothill Conservancy's newest acquisition, the Bean Creek Preserve. This 80 acre piece of meadow was donated to SFC through the generosity of owners Ken and Teri Pulvino in December of 2010.

Meadows are an important part of the Sierra Nevada ecosystem. There are many species of Sierra Nevada plants and animals that are found almost exclusively in or near meadows. For many others, meadows play an essential role in their life cycle. Over the years Ken Pulvino has recorded 108 species of birds on this small meadow. Pretty impressive for such a small place.

I have walked the meadow three times in the last two months. New green shoots of meadow plants are already peeking up through the grass. Peg and I are looking forward to adding to the list of plants already started by Ken and Teri. I am sure we can get Jane Pritchard to join us.

Meadows serve a vital role in holding winter water in their saturated soils and releasing it slowly through our dry summers. They help keep our mountain creeks and rivers running longer into the summer months. The creeks and rivers in turn provide habitat for pond turtles, fish, frogs and other water dependent species (like fly fishermen?)

For many years the Pulvinos have been working with other local citizens to publicize the fact that John Muir passed right through this area on his first trip to Yosemite. The group has already had Highway 132 designated as the John Muir Highway. Plans are under way to raise money for a John Muir Center in Coulterville and to add more land to the 80 acre preserve. SFC is joining in this effort but it is primarily led by northern Mariposa County residents.

Your first chance to view the preserve will be on June 4th during the 2nd annual John Muir Festival. Dedication of the Bean Creek Preserve will begin at 10 a.m. with a John Muir reading to follow. Afterwards, you may walk in the footsteps of John Muir on a nature walk led by Rodney Olsen, naturalist and biology instructor at Fresno City College. In addition to tours of Bean Creek, the festival will include Bower Cave tours lead by the Northern Mariposa County History Center and an art show at the Northern Mariposa County History Center. Please register for the Bean Creek Preserve Dedication and Nature Walk on our website www.sierrafoothill.org or call Gretchen in the Mariposa office at (209) 742-5556. Spaces are limited! Bring the family for a fun weekend in the northern corner of Mariposa County.

Chuck Peck

SFC winter and spring classes and hikes

Hikes and classes are open to the public; reservations are required. Classes are \$10 for members, \$20 for members' families, \$5 for student members, \$15 for non-members or \$30 for their families. There is a suggested \$5 donation for hikes. To sign up for classes or hikes, go to www.sierrafoothill.org. You may also call 559-855-3473 for Fresno area or 209-742-5556 for Mariposa area events. Bring lunch and water; hiking shoes or boots are a good idea for both classes and hikes. Hikes begin at 9 a.m. except where noted.

Saturday, March 6: Beginning Orienteering on the McKenzie Preserve: Amie Mazzoni will help you learn how to navigate without your GPS. This class will teach basic map reading, compass basics, and back country route planning. **9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**

Saturday, March 12: McKenzie Preserve Open House. Bring family and friends to have a picnic, explore on your own, go to the table top, or hike the Discovery Trail. **9 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

Sunday, March 13: McKenzie Preserve Member Day. A special day just for members, their families and friends. **9 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

Saturday March 19: Wildlife on the McKenzie Preserve. Master falconer Cat Kroschell, herpetologist Mary Morgan and a special guest from Cat Haven will bring examples of foothill wildlife and talk about their lives. Good for families with children. Bring water and snacks and hike to the picnic area. **9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**

Saturday March 19: An Evening of Science, Sights and Supper at the McKenzie. A very popular hike and class led by geologist Craig Poole and biologist Rodney Olsen. Hike to the table top, enjoy the sunset and a picnic. Flashlight and hiking shoes are a must! Meet at the preserve at 4 p.m. sharp. \$35.00.

Saturday, March 19: Wildflowers of the Merced River Canyon. Learn about native plants from author and naturalist Michael Ross. The trail is noted for spectacular wildflowers and native rock gardens. Meet at the El Portal gas station to carpool. **9 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

Saturday, March 26: Photography on the McKenzie Preserve. Join nature photographer David Hunter for a day of practical nature photography tips and tricks. The class is for all skill levels. Bring your camera and a snack. **9 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

Sunday, March 27: Wildflowers on the McKenzie Preserve. This very popular class is taught by botanist John Stebbins. You will see beautiful flowers, including rare vernal pool species, and great scenery. Six mile round trip to the top of the table **9 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

Sunday, March 27: The Ewell Fine Gold Creek Open House. The Ewell Preserve is spectacular in the

spring with wildflowers and redbuds lining the creek. Park and enjoy a scenic 1.5 mile hike down to the creek; bring a picnic lunch to enjoy with family and friends. Some parking will be available at the creek. The event will be hosted by the Ben Ewell family. **10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

Sunday, April 3: McKenzie Preserve Member Day. Another day for members and their friends to enjoy the preserve. **9 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

Saturday, April 9: Natural History of the McKenzie Preserve. Biologist Rodney Olsen, geologist Craig Poole and anthropologist Allen Beck will talk about plants, animals, rocks and archeological sites on the preserve. Includes a six mile round trip hike to the top of the table. **9 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

Sunday, April 17: Birding Striped Rock. Join naturalist Len McKenzie for a day of exploring the birds and flora on SFC's conservation easement. Bring binoculars for this 3 mile hike. Meet at the Mariposa County Fairgrounds parking lot. **8 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

Friday, April 22: McKenzie Preserve Open House & Earth Day. Bring family and friends to picnic, explore and hike the preserve. **9 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

Saturday, April 16: Intermediate Orienteering on the McKenzie. Amie Mazzoni will build on the skills learned on the beginner class including an orienteering course. **9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.**

Fresno area hikes:

Sunday, February 27: Table Mt. Table Top

Saturday, March 5: Black Mt. Easy.

Sunday, March 6: Table Mt. Loop. Advanced hike.

Saturday, March 19: Fine Gold Creek. Easy.

Sunday, March 20: Table Mt. Table Top

Saturday, March 26: Tivy Wildflower. Easy.

Saturday, March 26: Tivy Mt. Summit. Advanced hike, 8 a.m.

Sunday, March 27: Fine Gold Creek

Saturday, April 2: Black Mt.

Sunday, April 3: Table Mt. Table Top

Sunday, April 10: Tivy Mt. Summit. 8 a.m.

Mariposa area hikes:

Saturday, February 26: Clarks Valley. 10 a.m.

Saturday, March 12: Von der Ahe easement. 10 a.m.

Saturday, April 16: Trabucco Ranch 10 a.m.

Friday, April 22, Earth Day: Striped Rock. 9 a.m.

Mark your calendars for our two big events!

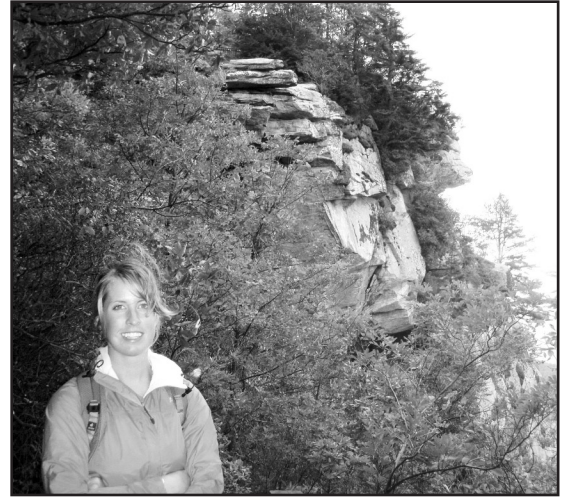
Sunday, May 8 is our annual Mother's Day Open House on Black Mountain.

Our annual fundraising dinner will be May 21.
(note change of date)

Meet our new Americorps Assistant

Gretchen Coll will be serving as the Stewardship and Education Assistant for the Sierra Foothill Conservancy in the Mariposa office. She is responsible for volunteer recruitment, organizing hikes and classes on SFC's conservation easements, assisting with educational and outreach programs, monitoring properties with conservation easements and supporting land protection initiatives. Gretchen grew up in the small town of Kingsport, TN where she spent her childhood exploring the Appalachian Mountains fostering her love for the outdoors. She attended Oglethorpe University in Atlanta, GA, where she majored in Biology and competed in varsity volleyball. After graduation, Gretchen headed to Charleston, SC to live near the beach, start graduate school and explore her interests in the environmental field. While completing her Master of Environmental Studies degree at the College of Charleston, Gretchen lived on Dewees Island, a private, environmentally focused community only accessible by ferry. As a resident wildlife technician, she worked with the Environmental Program Director to complete numerous species surveys, wetland restoration projects, invasive species removal, impoundment water testing and GIS projects. Gretchen also spent her summers as the sea turtle technician for Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge, the largest sea turtle nesting rookery north of Florida. After graduating from the College of Charleston, Gretchen worked for the Department of Natural Resources in the Marine Turtle Conservation Program. During this time, she participated in sea turtle nesting data collection, aerial surveys, necropsies of stranded turtles, and discovered her passion for working with volunteers.

Gretchen is thrilled to be the new AmeriCorps member in Mariposa and cannot wait to learn more about the Sierra Nevada and its specific environmental issues. She believes this opportunity will provide her with great work experience while also allowing her to truly make a difference during her year of service. In her spare time, she enjoys biking, hiking, reading, gardening, cooking, and traveling as much as possible.



News from the SFC office

SFC has recently been recognized for exemplary contributions to community service and service learning at CSU Fresno. Over the past few years SFC has worked directly with the Richter Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning to provide meaningful service projects and internships. Now in our third season, SFC continues to partner with Fresno State and High Sierra Volunteer Trail Crew to provide students, faculty and alumni with the opportunity to build new trail as well as maintain existing trails. This semester's project will take place April 2nd on the McKenzie Preserve. In addition, students continue to serve through marketing projects, as leaders in our education program, as crew members in video production projects, and as ambassadors for the organization. Sierra Foothill Conservancy takes pride in its partnership with Fresno State and values the many volunteers and supporters that continue to play a vital role in the organization.

We are happy to report that the Intermountain Rotary Club generously donated \$700 so we can have a big new sign at the entrance to the McKenzie Table Mountain Preserve. We appreciate our local Rotary supporting land conservation efforts in our area!

The SFC Board of Directors has recently welcomed several new members who are making our organization even stronger. They are Paul Beare, Dean of the College of Education at Fresno State; Eric Cole from Baker, Manock and Jensen; Bea Olsen, a Forest Service wildlife biologist; and Virginia Osborne-Gutierrez, instructor in the biology department of Fresno City College.

Bring your family and friends and join the 11th Annual Sierra Foothill Conservancy Fundraising Dinner at the scenic Beal Ranch at Academy & Bullard in Clovis. Come to celebrate meeting our milestone of reaching 20,000 acres of protected lands in our region. This year we will be highlighting the Miller Black Mountain Preserve and our expansion project. We will be enjoying a delicious barbeque meal by Merritt Catering and music by the Sierra Riders, and as always there will be many interesting auction items for you to enjoy while helping SFC grow and thrive.

Sierra Foothill Conservancy

Annual Financial Report

July 1, 2009—June 30, 2010

This Statement of Financial Activities and accompanying charts represent the Conservancy's 2009-2010 fiscal year as stated in our financial statement audited by Heberger & Merritt, Inc. CPAs. Land acquisition includes SFC's two new preserves: Haslett Basin, donated by Ted Martin and Feliciana Mountain funded by PG&E. The Land Stewardship Grants include an endowment of \$145,500 for the Feliciana Mountain Preserve and a \$48,000 grant from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy for fencing to protect riparian habitat on the Fine Gold Preserve.

June 30, 2010 Balance Sheet

ASSETS:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Cash & Cash Equivalents | 176,847 |
| Investments | 1,162,455 |
| Grants Receivable | - |
| Prepaid Expenses and Other Assets | 40,675 |
| Property and Equipment Net | 295,424 |
| Conserved Land | <u>6,275,512</u> |
| Total Assets | <u>7,950,913</u> |

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS:

Liabilities:

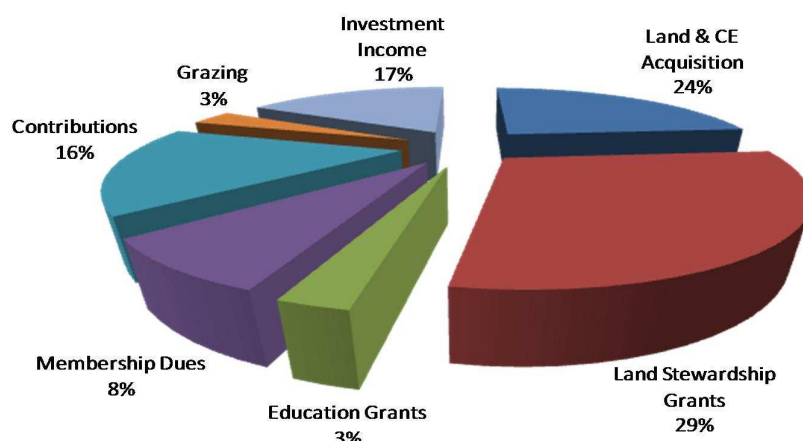
| | |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| Accounts Payable | 12,192 |
| Accrued Expenses | <u>18,599</u> |
| Total Liabilities | 30,791 |

Net Assets:

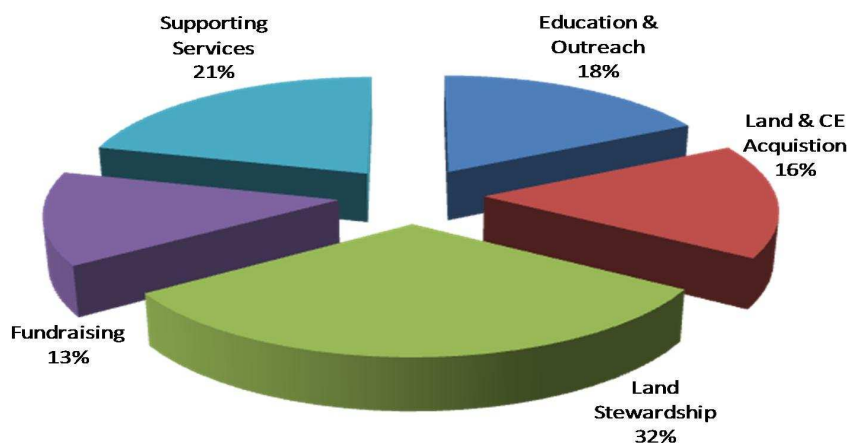
| | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Unrestricted: | |
| Undesignated | 453,301 |
| Board Designated | <u>506,770</u> |
| Total Unrestricted | 960,071 |
| Temporarily Restricted | 984,719 |
| Permanently Restricted | <u>5,975,332</u> |
| Total Net Assets | <u>7,920,122</u> |

Total Liabilities & Net Assets **7,950,913**

Income:



Expenses:



Fairies have been dancing in our grass

If you have been walking around in the foothills this winter, you have probably noticed that it has been a banner year for mushrooms. On our modest acreage we have had at least ten different varieties, from the usual puffballs and various “little brown mushrooms” to false morels and a big shelf of orange chicken of the woods growing on an old live oak tree. I am a very amateur mushroom observer, but with some study of handbooks and the collection of a spore print, I did identify some large unattractive specimens to be Black-edged Pluteus.

My major project was to find out about the remarkable 5 inch mushroom which made up two big “fairy rings” under our oaks. Fairy rings are an arc or circle of mushrooms which expand from a central point. (The folk tale is that the mushrooms grow where fairies have danced in a circle.) The ring in the photo, which was 8 feet in diameter, turned out to be Cloudy Clitocybe, a mushroom often found in big rings, which is described as “edible but far from incredible.” (But some look-alikes are poisonous.)

Mushrooms propagate by means of spores which fall on the ground, and when conditions are favorable send out filaments called the mycelium which may live for years in the soil.

The definitive handbook for local mushroom fanciers is David Arora’s Mushrooms Demystified. In it he points out that fungi are nature’s recyclers, reducing dead matter in the soil to the building blocks of new life. Some fungi also form symbiotic relationships with the rootlets of plants, aiding the plants in absorbing minerals and providing resistance to certain diseases. And some are delicious!

Sallie Mook



A fairy ring of Cloudy Clitocybe mushrooms

The grasslands, foothills and forests between Yosemite and Kings Canyon National Parks provide land for farms and ranches, a home for native plants and wildlife, and a source of clean water. The Sierra Foothill Conservancy honors our natural and cultural heritage by protecting these resources and ensuring that present and future generations will continue to experience and enjoy the land in this region.

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