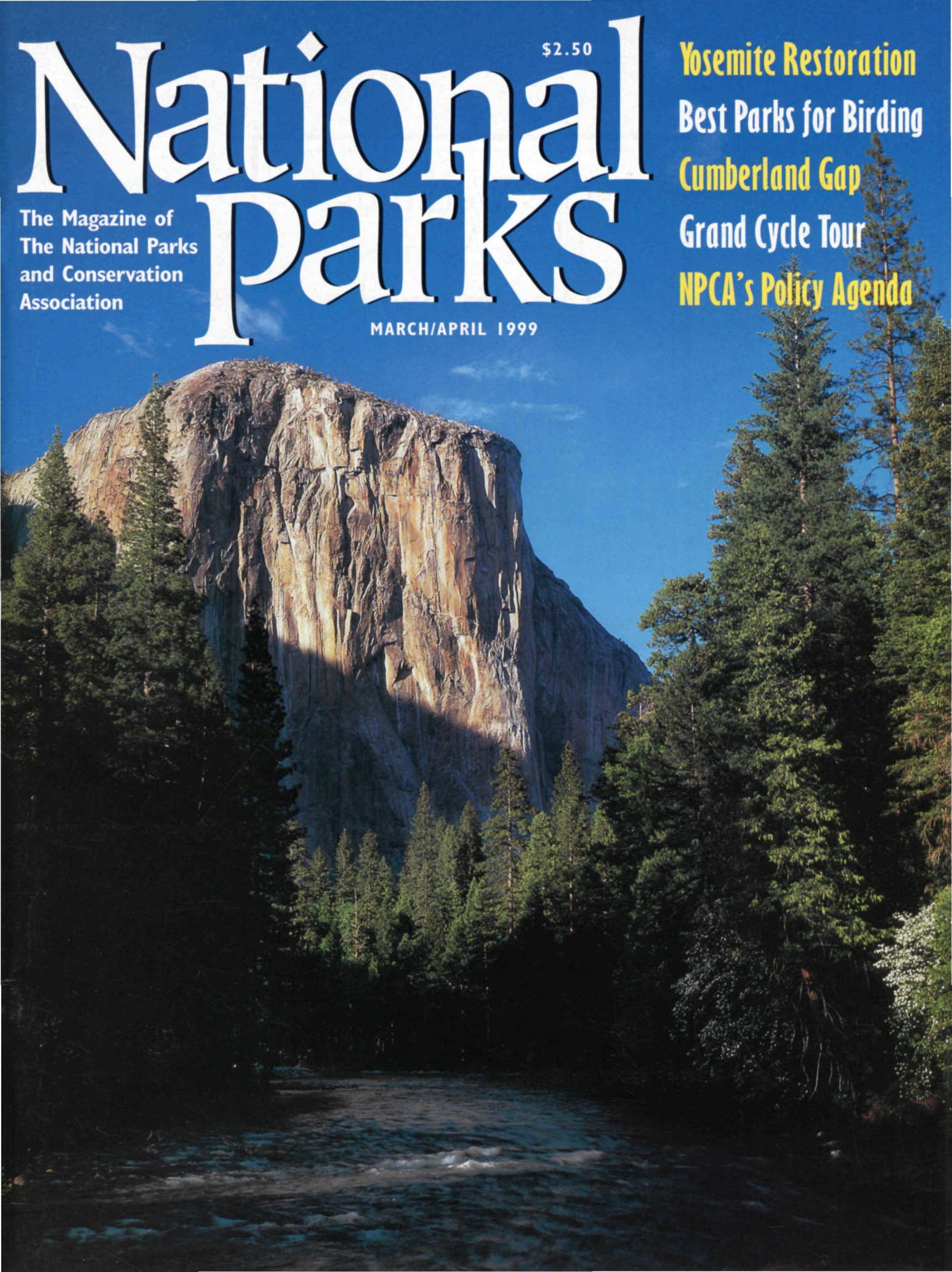
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The Magazine of The National Parks and Conservation Association
MARCH/APRIL 1999
Yosemite Restoration
Best Parks for Birding
Cumberland Gap
Grand Cycle Tour
NPCA's Policy Agenda

The Wetlands That Almost Disappeared.

In southern Louisiana, a vital wildlife breeding ground was endangered. Freshwater wetlands were vanishing. Leveeing along the Mississippi River had reduced the influx of fresh water and silt. But then, people working nearby partnered with the Fish and Wildlife Service to carve channels into the levees. Hundreds of acres in the Delta National Wildlife Refuge were restored. And so was nature's glorious nursery.

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People Do.

WNELSON

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National Parks

Vol. 73, No. 3-4
March/April 1999

The Magazine of the National Parks and Conservation Association

FEATURES

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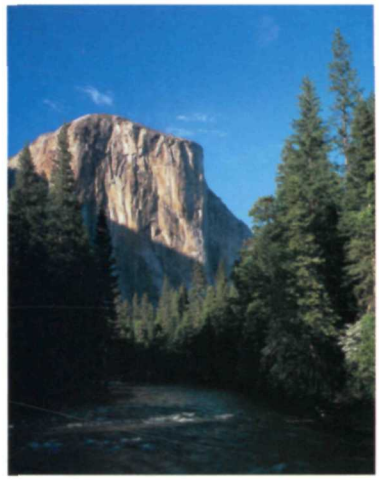

COVER: Park officials are reworking a plan to restore Yosemite Valley, two years after a devastating flood. The plan is intended to allow fewer cars into the valley. Photograph by Jeff Foott.

TOM & PAT LEESON

PAGE 26

DEPARTMENTS

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Founded in 1919, the National Parks and Conservation Association (NPCA) is America's only private non-profit citizen organization dedicated solely to protecting, preserving, and enhancing the U.S. National Park System.

M/A 99

Facing the Challenge

At Yosemite, park officials are addressing transportation as part of an overall planning process.

SCOTT SUCHMAN

THIS PAST fall, NPCA's Board of Trustees traveled to Yosemite Valley to get a first-hand look at traffic congestion and to discuss possible solutions with the superintendent. For years during the height of summer, cars have clogged the roadway leading into Yosemite National Park. Park planners were given an opportunity to rebuild its systems after a 1997 flood destroyed buildings and roadways within the park.

As reinforced in our article on page 22, the issues are complex and involve tradeoffs that not everyone will accept. Historic bridges may have to be removed to restore the natural flow of the Merced River, and making way for a transit station to reduce congestion may require paving undeveloped areas.

Even though none of the answers is simple, everyone must be willing to make a few sacrifices to achieve what we hope will be a brighter future for the park. Widening a road to allow for better bus travel can present a much more positive choice than leaving a narrow road on which only cars (and lots of them) can travel. Just as economic development can co-exist with environmental protection, transportation systems can be designed to complement and even improve the park experience.

The Yosemite transportation planning process is a great example of how park officials must begin to address transportation needs as part of their normal planning process. Many of our parks face the challenge of moving more people more efficiently with less impact and without degrading the park experience. Work in individual parks to improve visitor access must be coupled with efforts to evolve a transportation and access policy for our entire National Park System. Such a policy would encourage appropriate (even increased) visitor access, but in ways consistent with resource protection. NPCA is committed, through a new national program we are launching, to encouraging the development of such a policy.

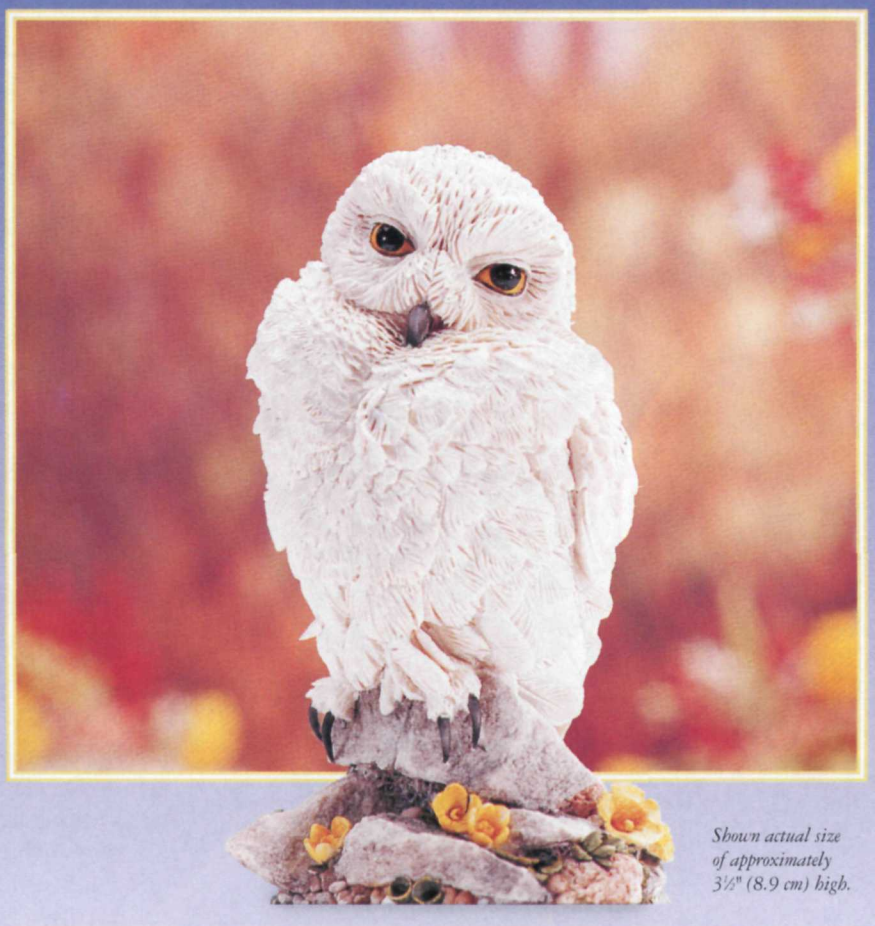
With this perspective, we joined our partners at the Natural Resources Defense Council and The Wilderness Society to meet with Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt last fall and encourage a more integrated approach at Yosemite. This approach is exemplified by the new Valley Implementation Plan, to be released this spring. This plan will allow decisions to be made in the context of overall restoration, improve coordination between local and park planners, and help planners better analyze how to manage use of private cars in the valley.

Our approach at Yosemite mirrors the approach we have adopted for our new, more focused organizational programs. In recent issues of the magazine, I have outlined some of these programs. I hope that you are as convinced as I am that this is the right strategy for our national parks and for NPCA.

Thomas C. Kiernan
President

An exclusive from the World Bird Sanctuary.

THE SNOWY OWL



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National Parks

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ABOUT NPCA

WHO WE ARE: Established in 1919, the National Parks and Conservation Association is America's only private, nonprofit citizen organization dedicated solely to protecting, preserving, and enhancing the U.S. National Park System.

WHAT WE DO: NPCA protects national parks by identifying problems and generating support necessary to resolve them. Through its efforts, NPCA has developed a base of grassroots support that has increased effectiveness at local and national levels.

WHAT WE STAND FOR: The mission of NPCA is to protect and enhance America's National Park System for present and future generations.

HOW TO JOIN: NPCA depends almost entirely on contributions from our members for the resources essential for an effective program. You can become a member by calling our Member Services Department, extension 215. The bimonthly *National Parks* magazine is among the benefits you will receive. Of the $25 membership dues, $3 covers a one-year subscription to the magazine.

EDITORIAL MISSION: The magazine is the only national publication focusing solely on national parks. The most important communication vehicle with our members, the magazine creates an awareness of the need to protect and properly manage the resources found within and adjacent to the parks. The magazine underscores the uniqueness of the national parks and encourages an appreciation for the scenery and the natural and historic treasures found in them, informing and inspiring individuals who have concerns about the parks and want to know how they can help to improve these irreplaceable resources.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE: A critical component in NPCA's park protection programs is members who take the lead in defense of America's natural and cultural heritage. Park activists alert Congress and the administration to park threats; comment on park planning and adjacent land-use decisions; assist NPCA in developing partnerships; and educate the public and the media about park issues. For more information on the activist network, contact our grassroots coordinator, extension 222.

HOW TO DONATE: NPCA's success also depends on the financial support of our members. For more information on special giving opportunities, such as Partners for the Parks (a monthly giving program), contact our Membership Department, extension 215. For information about Trustees for the Parks ($1,000 and above), bequests, planned gifts, and matching gifts, call our Development Department, extensions 146 or 243.

HOW TO REACH US: We can be reached the following ways: National Parks and Conservation Association, 1776 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20036; by phone: 1-800-NAT-PARK; by e-mail: npca@npca.org; and http://www.npca.org/ on the World Wide Web.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Preservation is Key

The first time I became convinced that someone could make a hobby of watching birds was in Nova Scotia after I observed a black and white seabird with brilliant red legs for more than an hour. It alternately swam on the surface of the ocean, dove beneath the water, and flew to the top of a craggy cliff. Roger Tory Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds* helped me identify the black guillemot.

That discovery began for me what has become an enthralling pastime, one that is shared by as many as a third of our members. Although my first introduction to birds was not in a national park, parks and other protected sites provide some of the most reliable places to find birds, as you will discover in Ro Wauer's article, beginning on page 26.

That reliability is not an accident. Many of our natural, and some of the historical, parks provide habitat that can be found nowhere else.

Our article focuses primarily on parks that provide invaluable nesting habitat for certain species of birds; but parks also offer important *resting* places for migrants and crucial feeding stations for hundreds of species. Even urban parks, such as Gateway National Recreation Area in New York and George Washington Memorial Parkway, which skirts Washington, D.C., provide valuable stopovers for hungry migrants.

Not all animals and birds can adapt to urban environments, however. Forest dwelling birds such as red-eyed vireos and whippoorwills, whose punctual call filled my childhood but not my adult summer evenings, are disappearing in part because of a loss of habitat.

It is crucial that our parks be maintained, not only for the creatures that live and rely upon these lands, but for the people who can appreciate them, and in that appreciation understand the importance of preservation.

Linda M. Rancourt
Editor-in-Chief

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Marine Resources and Managing Elk

Depleting the Oceans

Much of the human species views our ocean populations as a huge reservoir of flesh to be used by industry. Conservation groups motivated by compassion and respect for the ecology of the planet have pressed for new laws regulating the behavior of humans, but they have merely brought about the administration of laws for a more humane means of capture and killing.

We do not need conservation; we need preservation. That is why "Seeking Sanctuaries" [November/December 1998] touched me as a pertinent article. Nature is not an inexhaustible resource. We must learn to protect, not merely conserve, the ecology of our planet, or we risk losing all we have ever known.

Nicole Eskra
Socorro, NM

I want to thank you for the article on overfishing the ocean. Too often our oceans are overlooked in comparison to land wilderness areas. Too many citizens view the oceans as an inexhaustible resource. Conservationists must do a better job of educating the public. After all, how many people knew that 1998 was the Year of the Ocean?

In addition, efforts to add marine sanctuaries should be redoubled. There is no legitimate reason that there should be only 12 national marine sanctuaries. One of the major causes of overfishing is the fishing techniques that are often employed. Many of the techniques used capture fish and other marine life that are not intended for sale or use. Some techniques also destroy the physical structure of ocean habitats. The oceans are in trouble in many respects, and we must act soon to prevent irreversible damage.

Avi Patel
Baltimore, MD

I read with interest and disappointment "Seeking Sanctuaries." It seemed more a lament than a concrete solution to the collapse of worldwide fisheries. If our marine sanctuaries and national marine parks are open to commercial fishing and we cannot protect them, what hope do we have to protect major fisheries? The only way to rescue a seriously declining fishery is to stop or severely curtail fishing for a few years to see whether it will begin to renew. If the food chain has been severely interrupted via bycatch or because of severe habitat destruction, recovery may take longer. The only people who have the power to make this happen are the politicos. NPCA should be lobbying the president, Congress, and pertinent state legislatures and governors NOW!

Richard D. Hahn
Soldotna, AK

EDITORIAL REPLY: NPCA recognizes the critical role the parks can play in instituting marine zones as a type of "no take" refugia and agrees that commercial fishing in national parks is inappropriate. NPCA is proposing a national campaign for marine resource protection. Although the immediate focus of the campaign will be to improve and enhance marine resources within national parks, we will also use parks as a "teachable bridge" to educate the public and mobilize support to protect marine resources globally. The public must be involved in any effort to protect marine resources; otherwise, it will not be successful. NPCA maintains that strategies, such as the establishment of no-take zones, can be implemented on a scale sufficient to revive fish populations.

Managing Elk

The article on NPS' elk management dilemma ["What To Do About Elk," January/February 1999] clearly lays out most of the pieces of the problem. But allowing nature to control wildlife populations works well only when nature is left to her own devices. The warm and fuzzy view—that elk are magnificent and regal creatures to be admired in parks—also condemns them to risks of disease that the author discussed. It is a tragic disservice to the elk to treat them as some cross between a tourist attraction and livestock. Elk that are hunted on the national forests fare far better than those whose range includes national parks such as Yellowstone. Until it is able to establish a viable population of wolves, NPS could take a lesson from the U.S. Forest Service.

Kelly Andersson
Lake Montezuma, AZ

CORRECTIONS

The airport at Cape Cod National Seashore [September/October 1998 News] will not be jet-capable if it is expanded by the proposed amount.

The First Cavalry attacked the Nez Perce on June 17 at Lamata [From "Where The Sun Now Stands," January/February 1999]. Due to an editing error, the article misidentified the location of the attack. White Bird was not the only battle won by the Nez Perce during the four-month retreat to Canada. Many of the engagements were standoffs.

Write: Letters, NPCA, 1776 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Letters can be sent via e-mail to npmag@npca.org. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

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The saguaro cactus grows exclusively in the Sonoran Desert and provides moisture, shelter, and food for the park's surprisingly numerous animal species. Many birds, such as the Gila woodpecker and the gilded flicker, nest in the trunks of these prickly giants, making the park a fabulous birdwatching location.

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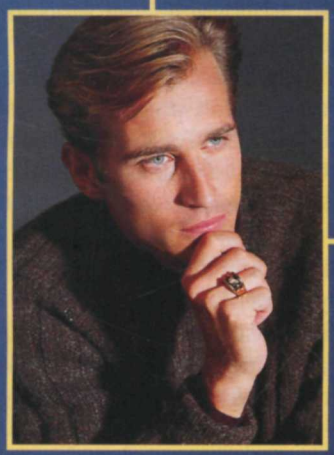

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BY KATURAH MACKAY

PRESERVATION

Historic Deal Protects Seashore

Funds released to buy substantial private tracts on island.

ST. MARYS, GA.—NPCA has facilitated a major agreement for Cumberland Island National Seashore that will release federal funds for land acquisition, park operations, enhanced interpretation, and preservation of historic resources on the island.

Sen. Max Cleland (D-Ga.), Rep. Jack Kingston (R-Ga.), and Rep. Ralph Regula (R-Ohio) came to an agreement on the plan devised by landowners, conservationists, historic preservationists, and others for the release of $6.4 million from FY 1998's federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The money will reimburse The Nature Conservancy (TNC) for securing the second and third portions of a five-phase acquisition on the island last year (see News, July/August 1998). The highly regarded land, known as the Greyfield North tract, stretches across the center of the island and contains approximately 1,148 acres of pristine oak forests, marsh lands, and undeveloped Atlantic beaches. The tract lies within the island's designated wilderness area and includes important cultural resources, such as a portion of The Chimneys, remnants of slave cabins that once housed workers at the Stafford Plantation.

"We have advanced the evolution of this island as a national seashore while dealing with a number of historic preservation and access issues rightfully raised by Cumberland Island residents," says Don Barger, NPCA's Southeast regional director.

DENIS DAVIS/NPS

The Chimneys stand as ghostly reminders of Cumberland Island's rich cultural history.

Timing of the completed purchase is critical: unless The Nature Conservancy exercises its options on the remaining two phases of the deal before April 1, the land will be reappraised at comparable sale value, rather than sold at the value negotiated in 1997. Barger believes the land would be sold for approximately twice what was negotiated two years ago—possibly an astounding $22.5 million.

At press time, and at current appraisal value, completion of the Greyfield North tract required $5.5 million in federal funds and $6 million in private funds, which TNC has committed to provide as part of the agreement. Purchase of the remaining tracts prior to April 1 will result in nearly $17.5 million in savings to the federal government and taxpayers.

The collaborative agreement, in which NPCA played a central development role, encourages the preservation of Plum Orchard, a 19th-century Georgian Revival-style mansion, and establishes a standard that will not increase impacts to wilderness resources from use of the main road to the mansion. The agreement allocates $1 million immediately to continue restoring Plum Orchard and offers a permanent increase in base funding to hire a historic preservationist and purchase necessary restoration supplies. An additional sum of $50,000 or more will begin enhancement of interpretive resources so that visitors can appreciate the island's diverse natural and cultural history.

Georgia lawmakers and Interior department officials commended local, regional, and national environmental organizations, including NPCA's Barger, "whose knowledge and expertise were invaluable to a successful conclusion of our efforts," said Cleland.

At press time, final negotiations were under way for release of the remaining $5.5 million to finish the project. The principal issue in the negotiation will be how to provide appropriate access to the historic resources within the wilderness area on the north end of the island, particularly to an area called "the Settlement." Although the existing structures were built in the 1930s and '40s, the area was originally established in 1890 to house African-American workers employed at Plum Orchard.

"It is absolutely critical to gain the release of the final $5.5 million," says Barger. "To do otherwise would be about as penny-wise and pound-foolish as you can get."

INITIATIVE

President Issues Green Agenda

Plan calls for full appropriation of conservation fund.

WASHINGTON, D.C.—In his "Lands Legacy" initiative, President Clinton has requested the largest ever one-year conservation investment from Congress—a $1 billion proposal to acquire threatened lands for public use using the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The proposal would also strengthen vigilance over marine ecosystems, preserve local green spaces throughout communities, and enhance protection at 17 national parks and monuments with permanent wilderness designations.

Financed by offshore oil and gas leases, LWCF was conceived as a way to use the depletion of one natural resource to pay for the protection of another. Decades have passed since LWCF was adequately funded by Congress for the purpose of acquiring federal lands and providing state grants for outdoor recreation. By FY 2001, the administration hopes to make the LWCF a permanent, fixed amount, not subject to yearly appropriations from Congress.

NPCA commended the Clinton Administration for establishing this precedent-setting initiative. "Under the current system, parks and other public lands have to fight for scraps from the federal budget every year," said NPCA President Thomas C. Kiernan. "That is not the way we should be protecting our country's most important natural and cultural resources."

Clinton's Lands Legacy initiative expands available funding for federal land acquisitions by an additional $442 million. Priorities on the administration's spending list include protecting acreage in the Mojave Desert and around Joshua Tree National Park and preserving forests and refuges in New England. Lands critical for restoration of the Florida Everglades ecosystem and historic parcels around Gettysburg and Antietam battlefields are also top concerns. Clinton requested that Congress grant permanent wilderness protection to 5.3 million acres within the backcountry areas of 17 national parks and monuments. Wilderness designation, which prohibits all motorized recreation, road construction, and resource extraction, offers the highest level of protection available for park resources.

Many of the areas Clinton highlighted, such as Yellowstone, Great Smoky Mountains, and Grand Teton national parks, were authorized for wilderness expansion more than 20 years ago under presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter. Because of competing political interests over the years, however, these areas have been waiting on congressional approval. NPCA speculates that a package bill could be introduced by a member of Congress on behalf of the administration that would address wilderness designation for the areas Clinton specified.

Having developed its own organizational "Marine Resources Initiative," NPCA supports Clinton's vow to improve the health of the nation's oceans and coasts. His plan requests $29 million to expand and safeguard national marine sanctuaries, $90 million to states to restore and protect coastal habitat, and $45 million to rejuvenate coral reefs, fisheries, and ocean habitats.

Clinton also addressed the disappearance of our backyard open spaces and cultural icons beneath the expansion of our modern day communities. In the last four years, states have received nothing from LWCF. "Lands Legacy" provides $588 million to state and local governments, private land trusts, and nonprofit groups for:

- ▶ land grants to establish greenways, wetlands, and wildlife habitat in local communities;
- ▶ grants for open space planning and "smart growth" development;
- ▶ easements for threatened farmlands and forests;
- ▶ grants to revitalize urban parks, a Park Service program unfunded since 1995;
- ▶ funds for habitat conservation to protect endangered species.

DEVELOPMENT

Resort Plans Pressure Park

Inappropriate proposal threatens elk habitat outside Mt. Rainier.

ASHFORD, WASH.—Resort developers plan to compress a 270-room hotel, conference center, golf course, 200 homes, 225 time-share condominiums, and a 40,000-square-foot shopping plaza on 400 acres of scenic open space only 11 miles from Mt. Rainier National Park.

Park Junction Partners, the development team promoting the $70-million resort, prepared a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for the project, but environmentalists rejected the document. NPCA, the National Park Service (NPS), the National Audubon Society, and other local and national groups found that the scale of the proposal was inappropriate for the location. Moreover, the EIS inadequately addressed the potential impacts of additional resort visitors on Mt. Rainier's natural resources. The park protects approximately 97 percent of its 235,612 acres as congressionally designated wilderness. More than 80 percent of visitors, however, tour the park and engage primarily in day-use activities in the remaining 3 percent of the park's front country.

"In some areas, visitors are inadvertently damaging natural resources by widening trails, establishing new unofficial trails, trampling fragile vegetation, and adversely affecting water quality in lakes and streams," wrote Mt. Rainier officials, as they commented on Park Junction's failure to address the cumulative impacts of increased visitation in the project's draft EIS.

Park Junction's proposal provides for limited recreation within the resort and indicates that conferences will not be held during the park's peak summer season. Conferences will operate, however, mainly during the park's off season—autumn and winter—drawing additional visitors to Mt. Rainier when many NPS facilities are closed and park staff is reduced. This off season provides a crucial time for natural areas to recover from heavy summer use, say Mt. Rainier officials. Furthermore, an estimated 78 percent of the park's regular visitation occurs during peak summer season from late June to early September. Park officials fear that the resort's ammenities, such as tennis courts, an 18-hole golf course, and shopping center, will draw an additional clinetele to the resort who will use the park during an already crowded time.

STEVE HUTCHENS

Many locals oppose a sprawling resort outside Mt. Rainier National Park.

"The draft EIS admitted that the resort facilities may not satisfy all the needs of their visitors," says Kirk Kirkland, a spokesperson with the Tahoma Audubon Society in Washington. "For this reason, the environmental and local community will mount a legal challenge to contest if this resort is really 'self-contained' and permitted in this area."

Congestion at popular visitor areas, such as Paradise, is already bothersome: the parking lot can hold 753 cars, but the lot, adjacent road segments, and surrounding shoulders typically bear more than 1,300 vehicles. Summer traffic backups at the Nisqually entrance induced resort developers to offer a shuttle system, connecting the resort complex to the park, that would accommodate their guests. NPCA believes the shuttle will usher more crowds into a finite recreational space rather than ameliorate the deepening human footprint on park natural resources.

"A shuttle system would only add to

the problem," says Kirkland. "The resort should provide additional recreation for its guests on its property, not simply dump more people on an already overburdened park."

Park officials have been interested in relocating some administrative buildings outside park boundaries and providing simpler lodging—not luxury accommodations—for its visitors. NPS has suggested that a smaller resort, without a golf course, would be more appropriate for the Park Junction site, particularly one that emphasizes a natural setting for wildlife viewing, hiking, bicycling, and cultural education.

Resort promoters think the complex will add improved lodging options for a more affluent clientele. "No other facility in the state offers 500 conference seats with the ability to serve breakfast, lunch, and dinner to all guests," says a resort publicist based in Portland, Oregon. "There are no upscale, class-A lodging accommodations in, or anywhere near, the park. It's a very rustic and economically depressed area."

Currently, retail space for gas stations, taverns, and grocery stores in the area totals a mere 35,000 square feet, with lodging hovering at 110 rooms. Although many of the resort's proposed businesses and services, including a medical clinic, would create jobs, the resort would also shift seasonal business away from the valley's long-established proprietors. In contrast, moving park facilities outside the park could increase sales and tax benefits to local communities without permanently carving up the area's rural landscape.

"The sentiment of the community has consistently been to keep development small, rural, and typical of what exists now," says Jerry Harnish, member of the local planning board and owner of Alexander's Country Inn, a 14-unit former homestead that offers hiking trails and opportunities for elk viewing. "This resort will pre-empt our years of community planning."

TAKE ACTION: This spring, opponents of the resort are scheduled to bring Park Junction's proposal before the Pierce County hearing examiner, who has the authority to demand conditions that will limit the resort's impact on the park. Please write letters to support a scaled-down alternative that is in keeping with a rural gateway community and protects park resources. Address: Kathleen Larrabee, Senior Planner, Pierce County Planning and Land Services, 2401 S. 35th St., Tacoma, WA 98409-7460.

NEWS UPDATE

▶ **HOMESTEAD RULING:** A Florida district court of appeals has reversed the state cabinet's consent for Miami-Dade County to redevelop Homestead Air Reserve Base, located directly between Everglades and Biscayne national parks. Filed by the Sierra Club Miami Group and the Tropical Audubon Society, the appeal charged that the county approved reuse of the base as a commercial airport before a federally mandated supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) was completed. A separate suit, filed by NPCA, the Sierra Club, the Izaak Walton League, and Friends of the Florida Everglades, will decide the validity of the SEIS, and the case is stayed pending completion of that document.

▶ **CLEAN AIR:** More than 20 years ago, Congress added a program to the Clean Air Act to remedy the air pollution that obscures the spectacular vistas in premier national parks and wilderness areas. In 1997, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed long overdue regulations to implement this program. Unfortunately, political pressure has kept the agency from making these regulations final. **TAKE ACTION:** Please write letters emphasizing that you want a strong final rule that requires states to restore the air in national parks within 50 years. Address: Carol Browner, EPA , 401 M St., S.W., Washington, DC 20460; The Hon. William J. Clinton, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20500.

VISITOR USE

Boaters Seek Park Access

Whitewater runners lured by churning rapids in Yellowstone.

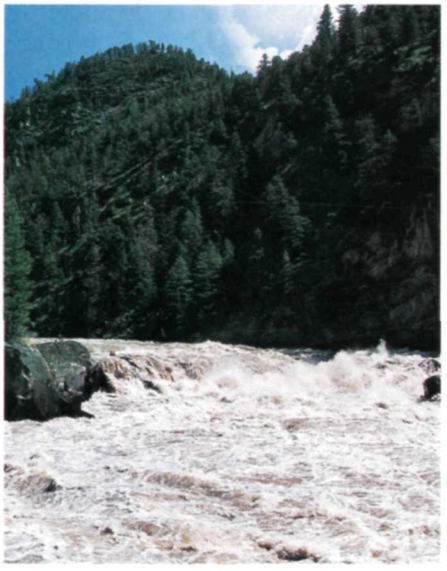
YELLOWSTONE N.P., WYO.—Faced with pressures from snowmobilers, crowded campsites, traffic congestion, and overflowing sewage systems, Yellowstone National Park now confronts one more human demand: whitewater recreationists. American Whitewater, a national nonprofit organization representing whitewater boaters, proposes opening four or more waterways in the park for recreational river running, a use not allowed by the National Park Service (NPS) since 1950.

"A 'me-first' attitude is knocking on the doors of our country's most cherished places," says Julia Page, a whitewater runner and outfitter based in Gardiner, Montana. "This attitude asserts the rights of individuals to recreate as they please while avoiding equal discussion of their responsibility to the park and its other visitors."

Boating on Yellowstone's rivers and lakes was reassessed in 1988, with the park affirming its earlier decision that this activity is inappropriate on Yellowstone's secluded waterways. A compelling reason for the continued ban: whitewater boating would draw more visitors and recreationists to the park at a time when its financial and environmental resources are under more strain than ever before.

The park's overextended staff, funding shortages, aging infrastructure, and crowded conditions attest to the debilitating burdens Yellowstone already bears.

"A legitimate and serious question arises in the discussion about opening Yellowstone National Park to whitewater rafting," says Marvin Jensen, assistant superintendent at the park. "That is: must all rivers in all places necessarily be open to whitewater rafting? Shouldn't there be rivers in some places where whitewater rafting is not allowed, and shouldn't Yellowstone National Park be one such place?"



JEFF AND ALEXA HENRY

Whitewater in Yellowstone River's Black Canyon appeals to boaters.

NPCA supports the Park Service in keeping whitewater boating—an activity that can be enjoyed on thousands of rivers and streams across the country—outside Yellowstone National Park. Some of the best whitewater in the United States flows through national recreation areas or affiliated units of the park system. The Gauley River National Recreation Area in West Virginia, the Obed Wild and Scenic River in Tennessee, the Charley Wild River in Alaska, and the Colorado in Grand Canyon National Park all offer class IV and V rapids to boaters.

American Whitewater recently presented a proposal to park officials to open the Black Canyon of the Yellowstone River, Gardner River Canyon, Lamar River, and Lewis River to kayaks and other human-powered vessels. They argue that such recreation will be managed cooperatively on a "limited" basis, is consistent with the purposes for which the park was established, and will not harm Yellowstone's resources. NPCA and other groups, such as the Greater Yellowstone Coalition (GYC), disagree.

"Is it appropriate to encourage a new form of recreation, without any historical ties to this setting, in a park already feeling the strain of too many people and too little funding?" asks Mark Peterson, NPCA's Rocky Mountain re-

BIG SPREAD

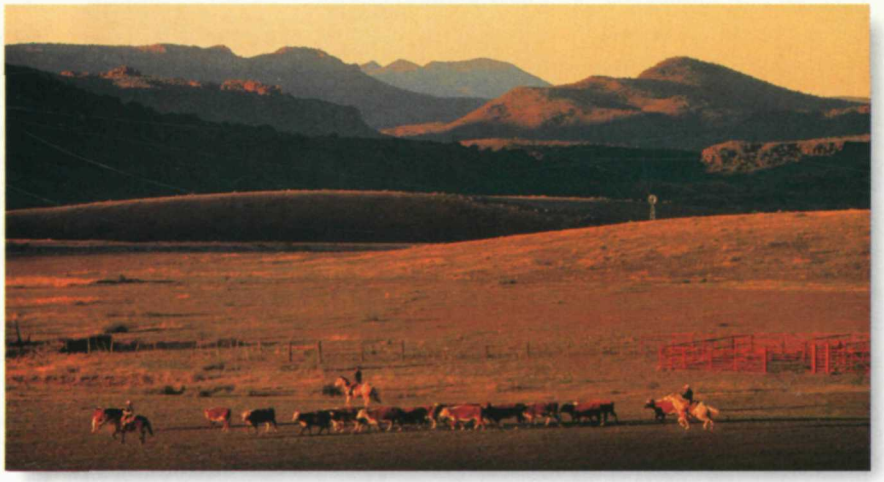
Texas

On Land

One ranch's fences stretch for 1431 miles.

The King Ranch is bigger than Rhode Island.

4 ranches once had over 1 million acres each.



Texas spreads out over 266,807 square miles. That's bigger than France, pardner.

By Sea

624 miles of coastline.

Annual average temperature is 66 degrees. (Ahhhhh)

One of the top 10 windsurfing centers in the world.

Not all of our guest beds are in rooms.

It's like a whole other country.®

Even the vacations are bigger in Texas. From ranches bigger than some states to beaches that cater to the state of complete relaxation, you'll find it all in Texas. It's more than you think. It's like a whole other country. For your free Texas travel guide, you can visit our web site at **www.TravelTex.com** or call us at **1-800-8888-TEX (Ext. 1140).** So give us a call, y'all.

TEXAS

REGIONAL REPORT

News Briefs from NPCA's Regional Offices

ALASKA Chip Dennerlein, Regional Director

▶ Glacier Bay National Park is finalizing plans to rebuild aging dock structures near the park entrance at Bartlett Cove. Due to the recent retreat of glacial ice, the land has rebounded approximately three feet, steepening pedestrian ramps at low tide. NPCA is keeping close watch to ensure that the constructed upgrades are necessary and consistent with park purposes. NPCA's vision is to enhance visitor use, while retaining the natural character of the cove, which is prime feeding ground for the endangered humpback whale.

HEARTLAND Lori Nelson, Regional Director

▶ In a breach of an agreement among federal, state, and local authorities, bulldozers have begun to grade historic property to lengthen a local street that lies within the designated boundaries of Keweenaw National Historical Park in Michigan. The agreement and federal law require that local authorities gain approval from the state historic preservation officer before altering the historic landscape. Although the local community receives federal funds to rehabilitate the historic district, park officials report that the community has repeatedly failed to consult with the Park Service on plans for the road extension. Four historic foundations have already been destroyed on property that the park had opted to acquire. ✍ **TAKE ACTION:** Alert the National Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to the destruction of nationally significant historic resources outside Keweenaw National Historical Park. Recommend that all federal funds be withheld from the community until rehabilitation plans are legally approved. Address: Dr. Laura Henley, Dean, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Old Post Office Bldg., 1100 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., #809, Washington, DC 20004.

NORTHEAST Eileen Woodford, Regional Director

▶ The Park Service has agreed to allow the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to expand an intersection at Manassas National Battlefield Park (see News, May/June 1998). In exchange for a permit to widen the intersection, VDOT has given the Park Service a portion of right-of-way elsewhere. The exchange agreement contains no assurances that VDOT will not seek road expansion near the Stone House in the future. NPCA argues that the exchange may violate compliance with section 4(f) of the federal Transportation Act because VDOT has failed to conduct a formal study to determine prudent and feasible alternatives to expanding the intersection.

PACIFIC Brian Huse, Regional Director

▶ As a result of thousands of letters from its members, NPCA has affected meaningful change in Park Service planning that makes a significant difference in resource protection. Over the past year, your letters played an integral role in management plans for Death Valley National Park, Mojave National Preserve, and especially in shaping the draft Valley Implementation Plan (VIP) at Yosemite National Park. More than 400 letters reached the Park Service from NPCA members. This tremendous outpouring has assisted the park in entering a new planning phase for Yosemite Valley (see page 22).

continued

gional director. "We think not."

In the past, other seemingly innocuous activities introduced to parks in small doses, such as snowmobiling and personal watercraft use, exploded in popularity and became difficult for parks to control once that use became entrenched among a vested constituency. Although rafting and kayaking are nonmotorized means of recreation, they will nonetheless grow in popularity with thrill-seeking visitors.

Whitewater rafting and kayaking have the potential to damage riparian riverbeds and unprotected Native American cultural sites during repeated launching and boat removal; create unmonitored trails for the scouting of rapids, camping, and observation points; degrade the tranquil backcountry for land-bound visitors by drawing spectator crowds; and perhaps most important, disrupt Yellowstone's wildlife.

"There's no mistaking why Yellowstone is so rich in wildlife," says Jeanne Marie Souvigney, GYC's park policy specialist. "Threatened species can still retreat to quiet river corridors without facing more pressure from kayakers and canoeists. Yellowstone's wildlife cannot afford the loss of this protection."

Page is disappointed with American Whitewater's view that Yellowstone's position on whitewater boating is a form of discrimination against kayakers, rafters, and canoeists.

"I do not feel that I have any *right* to run the rivers inside Yellowstone National Park," she says. "What I *do* feel is a responsibility to do my part for the park. Sure it would be a challenge to kayak the rapids of Yellowstone, Gardner, Lamar, and Lewis rivers. But it is a much more worthy challenge—and one we must all share—to keep Yellowstone healthy for future generations."

✍ **TAKE ACTION:** Public comment on American Whitewater's proposal is needed. Start now by writing letters and offering support for the park's long-standing position that whitewater recreation is not an appropriate use in Yellowstone. Address: Superintendent Michael Finley, Yellowstone National Park, P.O. Box 168, Yellowstone Park, WY 82190.

ADJACENT LANDS

Land Exchange Facilitates Dump

Scattered railroad parcels traded for prime public lands.

EAGLE MOUNTAIN, CALIF. — In a recent deal with Kaiser Ventures, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has exchanged 3,271 acres of tranquil desert canyon lands for several discontinuous parcels sprinkled along an old mining railway. A train will bisect these public lands while it hauls garbage to the Eagle Mountain landfill (see News, May/June 1998).

"This decision disappoints me entirely," says Ernie Quintana, superintendent at Joshua Tree National Park, which surrounds the proposed landfill site on three sides.

Quintana objects to the decision of BLM—a sister agency in the Department of the Interior—because "it encourages the development of the landfill and flies in the face of the National Park Service," he says.

If reactivated, the freight train carrying garbage will slice through an area of critical environmental concern known as the Chuckwalla Bench, land the federal government has been purchasing —with taxpayer money— for the protection of the endangered desert tortoise. The proposed Eagle Mountain Landfill also sprawls only a quarter mile from an aqueduct that provides drinking water to 15 million people.

Citizens for the Chuckwalla Valley, NPCA, and other groups have brought the land exchange before the Interior Board of Land Appeals, where a decision is pending.

TAKE ACTION: Write letters to Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, urging that he protect the desert beauty, endangered tortoise, and fragile resources in Joshua Tree National Park by reversing the land exchange completed by BLM. Address: The Hon. Bruce Babbitt, Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C St., N.W., Washington, DC 20240; phone: 202-208-6291.

REGIONAL REPORT continued

PACIFIC NORTHWEST

▶ Thanks to NPCA and local environmental groups, the National Park Service (NPS) has renegotiated a land exchange deal that has prevented developers from building 14 condominiums on a hillside bordering Lake Chelan in the North Cascades National Park complex. However, NPS has now offered to substitute the hillside parcel for one located in a floodplain with exceptional riparian habitat. This new exchange proposal actually allows the developer to scatter a comparable amount of development throughout the valley floor. NPCA is critiquing the environmental assessment for its incomplete analysis of impacts to natural resources and its failure to fully consider alternatives that would prevent the loss of parklands and values.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN **Mark Peterson, Regional Director**

▶ The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has approved a second drilling permit for Legacy Energy Corporation to search for oil in the Lockheart Basin, an area adjacent to Canyonlands National Park that is significant for its wildlife habitat and scenic beauty. NPCA views Lockheart Basin as a main component in the expansion and completion of Canyonlands' boundaries. Legacy's second and most recent permit allows initial drilling operations to commence this spring and summer, but the estimated success rate for oil discovery in the region is only 14 percent. NPCA opposes the degradation of the outstanding natural and recreational resources of the area for such a small chance of striking oil. ✍ **TAKE ACTION:** Write to the BLM state director and urge him to deny all future mineral lease applications adjacent to Canyonlands National Park. Address: Bill Lamb, BLM State Director, Box 45155, Salt Lake City, UT 84145-0155.

SOUTHEAST **Don Barger, Regional Director/Kim Swatland, Field Representative for South Florida**

▶ The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) are conducting an environmental impact study to establish an ecological reserve near Dry Tortugas National Park. Simultaneously, the Park Service is preparing a commercial services plan to guide park recreation and mitigate visitation pressures at this threatened marine park. NPCA supports both of these plans as precedent-setting initiatives to begin more thoroughly protecting imperiled marine resources around the nation. ✍ **TAKE ACTION:** Write a letter to support the creation of a contiguous reserve linking the FKNMS to Dry Tortugas, and support NPS in determining a carrying capacity for the park. Address: Micky Stubin, Dry Tortugas Plan, NPS/Denver Service Center, P.O. Box 25287, Denver, CO 80225-0287.

SOUTHWEST **Dave Simon, Regional Director**

▶ NPCA has urged the Park Service to deny a request to build a cellular phone tower at Grand Canyon National Park near Hopi Point, one of the popular overlook points along the canyon's south rim. NPCA cited a number of concerns, including: inadequate environmental analysis of the proposal; potential impacts to visitor experience values; and cumulative impacts—since the construction of one tower would probably lead to future requests at Grand Canyon and other national parks. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 exposes public lands to new pressures from tower companies seeking to use the geographic high points within the National Park System.

RESOURCES

Research Needed in Alaska Parks

Wildlife must have intensive monitoring after Exxon oil spill.

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA—Fervent clean up efforts and natural processes have lessened, but not obliterated, the effects of 11 million gallons of crude oil dumped in Alaska's Prince William Sound on March 24, 1989. The 10,000 square-mile disaster slicked the shores of state and national parks, left the nation with the highest death toll of mammals and birds ever recorded, and defiled extensive lands inhabited for thousands of years by native people.

In October 1991, settlements between state and federal governments and the Exxon Corporation resulted in an unprecedented $900 million for restoration purposes. The *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council was formed to oversee the expenditure of the settlement funds. As of December 1998, $313 million had been set aside to safeguard 567,000 acres of land, including protection of 30,200 acres that were added to Kenai Fjords National Park. These lands were selected and conveyed to the Nanwalek Native Corporation, which subsequently agreed to sell the acreage back to the National Park Service (NPS). Shuyak Island State Park, off the coast of Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge, was established with settlement funds, as well as the Alaska SeaLife Center, which offers public educational opportunities and marine research facilities in Seward.

Crude oil drifted with the ocean's current and wind, coating national park units, forests, wilderness areas, and refuges as far as 600 miles away.

"We shouldn't lose sight of how large this spill was and how far it reached," says Bud Rice, environmental protection specialist and NPS liaison to the Trustees Council, "especially when we can chemically fingerprint oil in national parks that came from the Exxon spill."

The Trustee Council's purpose does not *require* that settlement funds be spent

on federal lands, but at the same time, national park units in Alaska have received very little of the council's funds for recovery studies and species monitoring. The status of sea otters, killer whales, harbor seals, cormorants, loons, numerous varieties of fish and bivalve populations, and archaeological resources—to name a few—remain relatively unknown in park habitat affected by oil.

Many parks lack the staff to document the damage and apply for funds. At Kenai Fjords National Park, where permanent resource management staff totals three people, little can be done to assess species recovery. "In some parts of the park, you can walk on the beach and still get oil on your boots. It's very frustrating," says Mike Tetreau, resource management specialist at Kenai Fjords.

Rick Clark, chief of resource management at Katmai National Park, concurs. "This is an opportune time, ten years later, to reevaluate how the spill affected national park resources."

Several multimillion-dollar programs to monitor species recovery have been funded by the Trustee Council, such as the Department of the Interior's Nearshore Vertebrate Predator Project (NVP), developed to monitor species that feed in various parts of the ecosystem tainted with oil. Because these studies are conducted mainly in Prince William Sound, however, their results are not specific to park ecosystems along the Gulf of Alaska. Their analysis neglects the effects of different levels of oil in park waters, the status of wilderness resources, and crippled bird and wildlife populations that use park resources outside of the sound.

NPS must collaborate with researchers from the U.S. Geological Survey's Biological Research Division (BRD) for its scientific studies—a resource spread notoriously thin. Gail Irvine, a marine ecologist and biologist formerly with NPS who now works with BRD, says the decision was made early to concentrate studies and funding in the sound, where spill effects were expected to be most pervasive and where financial compensation would be greatest.

It's a very competitive process," says Irvine. "We have to dedicate the time and energy to apply for funds in order to keep our studies alive and running."

Irvine has proposed revisiting and evaluating oil-contaminated sites at several parks—a study previously deferred by the Trustee Council but funded at the end of 1998. Irvine will also test mussel beds that were last assessed for damage in 1995. This trickle of studies—rather than a substantial network of programs—is what currently exists to evaluate park ecosystems marred by oil.

The Trustee Council must decide how to allocate its Restoration Reserve Fund, a potential set aside of $150 million by the year 2002. NPCA and NPS recommend flexibility and balance in the expenditure of the fund, with protection of habitat for injured wildlife and resources as the best long-term endowment for the American public and the environment.

TAKE ACTION: Write to the Trustee Council and support flexible and balanced spending of the Restoration Reserve Fund on nationally significant areas affected by the spill. Address: *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council, Molly McCammon, Executive Director, 645 G St., Suite 401, Anchorage, AK 99501-3451; phone: 907-278-8012; e-mail: <restoration@oilspill.state.ak.us>.

AFTER THE FLOOD

Two years ago, a deluge of water coursed through Yosemite National Park, demolishing hundreds of human-made structures and giving the Park Service an opportunity to rethink development in the park. A recent rebuilding plan has drawn a lot of criticism and forced the Park Service to go back to the drawing board.

BY WENDY MITMAN CLARKE

WHEN THE RAINS came New Year's Day 1997, they fell long and hard upon the Sierra Nevada. Combined with warm weather and a thick snowpack, the three-day deluge turned the Merced River into a freezing maelstrom, causing the worst flooding of Yosemite Valley in 80 years and $178 million in damage to Yosemite National Park.

Now, two years or so later, it's not cold water in Yosemite that's the problem. It's the hot water in which the National Park Service (NPS) has found itself with its rebuilding plans. The original Valley Implementation Plan (VIP), designed to combine short-term rebuilding needs with long-term goals of reducing congestion, quickly generated controversy. The debate heightened with the splintering off of three affiliated projects—the housing plan, the Yosemite Lodge plan, and the Lower Yosemite Falls project.

Met with public discomfort at the least and outrage at the worst—and brought to a screeching halt by a federal judge's temporary injunction prohibiting construction—the Park Service has regrouped. At a December 7, 1998, news conference, held jointly with Department of the Interior, NPCA, The Wilderness Society, and the Natural Resources Defense Council, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt announced that NPS was pulling back the four separate redevelopment plans, combining them into one package, and would present a new version to the public in draft form in May. A final decision on the whole plan is to be made by autumn 1999.

"We have listened to public responses to previous planning proposals and we got the message loud and clear," Babbitt said. "It makes sense that we roll things into one comprehensive package that can be reviewed in total. Taken together, it will meet our expectations to restore natural areas and to protect resources while at the same time improving the quality of visitor experiences."

NPCA, which encouraged the Park Service to combine its disparate and controversial plans, praised Babbitt's decision. "The vision of a restored Yosemite Valley is still within our reach if we put the protection of natural and cultural resources first," said NPCA President Thomas C. Kiernan. "This consolidated planning approach will enable the Park Service to better consider the impacts that people and cars and buildings have on the natural setting.... We can't look at each problem individually. We must address the Yosemite Valley's health as a whole."

JEFF FOOTT

A 1997 flood provided an unexpected catalyst to revamp NPS' approach to development at Yosemite.

The new draft will refine changes planned decades before the flood of 1997, when park supporters and administrators realized that crowding and congestion were seriously affecting park resources. Even then, the number of private automobiles had reached unmanageable levels, and in the years since, visitation has more than doubled to 4.2 million annually. At peak times, the park resembles a shopping mall on Christmas Eve, with thousands of cars jockeying for places and visitors looking on from yet another queue.

So in 1980, after about 50,000 people and organizations provided feedback and suggestions, the Park Service completed the Yosemite General Management Plan (GMP). Its goals are simple yet grand: limit the human footprint in the valley by removing non-essential buildings and facilities, restore natural processes and environments, reduce traffic, and relocate employee housing and visitor accommodations as much as possible away from environmentally sensitive areas.

Praised as a progressive plan that acknowledged Yosemite as a national treasure worthy of bold management stra-

tegies, the GMP was to be used as the basis for further planning. But other than a 1992 Concession Services Plan—which many felt still permitted too much development—not much happened to further the GMP's lofty goals.

Then came the rains. In three days, flooding wrecked all of the employee housing in Yosemite Lodge and destroyed about half of the lodge's 495 rooms and most of the campgrounds. Dozens of buildings and more than seven miles of El Portal Road were damaged by the flood, and other roads and bridges washed away. A damaged sewage line severed the valley's sewer system from its wastewater treatment plant. About half of the valley's 900 campsites—and attendant roads and bathrooms—were flooded and covered with silt and debris.

JEFF FOOTT

In the aftermath of the Merced River flood, campsites were covered in silt and debris, sewage lines severed, and bridges washed away.

It was a colossal mess, but the Merced River had confirmed resoundingly what Park Service planners had laid out in the GMP—that buildings and roads in the river's floodplain should be moved elsewhere. Unlike the planners, Mother Nature didn't form committees to study how to do it. She just did it.

Brian Huse, NPCA's Pacific regional director, agrees that the flood "created a tremendous opportunity, because it reminded the Park Service that it hadn't implemented the 1980 GMP. It was an opportunity for us to go to Congress in conjunction with the Park Service and say, why throw good money after bad? Here's a chance to do it right this time; let's take what we learned with the GMP and use the flood as a catalyst."

The argument worked; Congress ponied up $176 million for the Park Service to develop the Valley Implementation Plan (VIP), which was to carry out the GMP's goals while rebuilding Yosemite Valley after the flood.

But a funny thing happened on the way to the VIP. Eager to repair the damaged employee housing and accommodations at Yosemite Lodge (the 1,200-square-mile park's center of operations and visitations), the Park Service separated the lodge redevelopment plan from the VIP and put it on its own fast track. And in its effort to speed the entire VIP, the Park Service set out its own vision of how transportation problems should be handled in the park—essentially superseding a regional transportation committee (the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation Strategy, or YARTS) with which it had been working since 1992.

When the draft VIP was released in 1998, the three-month comment period generated about 4,000 letters. That's a huge response, says Chip Jenkins, Yosemite's chief of strategic planning, and the reaction was not altogether positive.

"There was a rush to judgment," says Sam Davidson, senior policy analyst with the national climbing organization The Access Fund, one of several climbing groups that sued the Park Service over the lodge plan. "The Park Service was trying to take care of its contractual obligations with their concessionaire [who runs the hotel and concessions at Yosemite Lodge], and they're trying to provide public access and resource conservation. And they are trying to do it too quickly. And I think the message is nothing in Yosemite can be done quickly. It's too important."

The VIP would restore 147 acres in the valley's east end to natural conditions. Eighty-two acres would be redesigned and 38 acres newly developed for relocated facilities. The Park Service also proposed building a 20-acre parking area at Taft Toe (in the valley's west end), where day visitors and people approaching the valley on a YARTS busing system—now scheduled to begin on a trial basis the summer of 2000 with 16 buses—would stop and board a valley shuttle bus system.

"Currently all the parking is scattered on the east side of the valley," says Jenkins. "There's this network of roads, and parking is scattered. So people go to one parking lot and they can't park there, and they drive somewhere else and they can't park there, so there's this constant churning of cars."

Jenkins says the Park Service wants to consolidate parking at Taft Toe and then move most people onto shuttle buses—helping meet the goal of reducing traffic in the park. Only those staying overnight in Yosemite would be able to bring their vehicles into the park, and once they'd checked in, they too would be required to park their cars and ride the valley shuttle buses.

But many argued that building a

huge parking lot at Taft Toe to reduce congestion and then restore land in the already developed east end is simply robbing Peter to pay Paul. Others are frustrated because initially the National Park Service had said the parking area would be temporary, to be slowly phased out as YARTS' busing plan assumed greater capacity. YARTS, however, had already decided it could operate a bus system only part-time, essentially between Memorial Day and Labor Day. That meant the Taft Toe parking lot would have to be permanent.

"The public was not convinced and couldn't accept how the Park Service could say they were going to decrease vehicle traffic in the valley by building a huge parking lot," says Huse. "The analysis in the VIP did not support the Park Service's case."

And Patti Reilly, a Mariposa County supervisor and member of the YARTS management board, says YARTS had never envisioned a system of mandatory busing but rather a voluntary system based on incentive to get people to use buses. When the Park Service announced that part of the VIP, she says, "YARTS got thrown off kilter."

But what really landed the Park Service in hot water was its lodge redevelopment plan. The Park Service proposed moving 210 buildings and replacing 440 of the original 495 rooms at the lodge—282 motel rooms, 96 cottage rooms, and 60 cabins. A new north access road would be constructed around the lodge's perimeter, farther south than the existing road and closer to the Merced River (a federal wild and scenic river), along with new bicycle and walking paths and about eight acres of parking (the same as what is now available but in different areas). To consolidate employee housing in one area, 204 dorm rooms with 304 beds would be rebuilt away from the floodplain near an area known as Camp Four.

Though the Park Service had modified the plan based on public comments, the approved version left many feeling betrayed. "There was dialogue; they had always been polite," says Greg Adair, a founder of Friends of Yosemite Valley. "But the idea became they were going to be polite and ignore us."

MICHAEL MACOR/*SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE*

Massive flooding confirmed that buildings and roads located in the Merced floodplain should be relocated.

The proposed development at Camp Four—what the Park Service calls Sunnyside—became a rallying point for the climbing community. Treated with reverence among climbers, Camp Four is "the world's single greatest climbing area," says Davidson of The Access Fund. Mostly wooded and composed of 38 campsites packed closely together, Camp Four is also the park's last walk-in campground and is valued for being quiet, secluded, and inexpensive.

The plan to move employee housing adjacent to Camp Four would consolidate housing into two dorms—one of them three stories tall. The plan also calls for 48 new motel-type units in Swan Slab Woodlands, a treasured bouldering area nearby. All the housing would be north of Northside Drive, which for many park activists is a sort of Maginot Line beyond which the valley is undeveloped and, they believe, should remain so.

But Jenkins says people can't have it both ways: at one mile wide and seven miles long, sandwiched between vertical walls, there is very little area within Yosemite Valley that is not either in the floodplain or within the rock fall zone. Camp Four offered a place to consolidate employee housing and build new guest rooms out of the floodplain—as the GMP requires—and also out of the rock fall zone.

Still, climbing groups and Friends of Yosemite Valley, feeling they had exhausted negotiations with the Park Service, filed suit opposing the lodge redevelopment plan.

Meanwhile, the Sierra Club was engaging in similar negotiations and coming to the same conclusions. In August it filed a federal lawsuit, claiming the VIP violated the National Environmental Policy Act and that separating the plans made it impossible to accurately assess the effects on the park as a whole. It also said the Park Service should have looked more closely at other rebuilding options and should have more fully analyzed the environmental effects on the Merced River.

In October, U.S. District Court Judge Charles Breyer agreed with enough of the Sierra Club's arguments that he issued a temporary injunction against construction. Faced with the judge's decision and mounting opposition, the National Park Service realized it needed a new, comprehensive approach.

NPCA's Huse says the new plan will accomplish several goals: avoid court-imposed delays, allow decisions to be made in the context of overall valley restoration, improve coordination between YARTS and park planners, and help planners better analyze how to manage use of private cars in the valley.

It also will let the Park Service come up with a plan that will be easier for everyone to understand, says park planner Jenkins. But people need to realize, he says, the hardest work lies ahead.

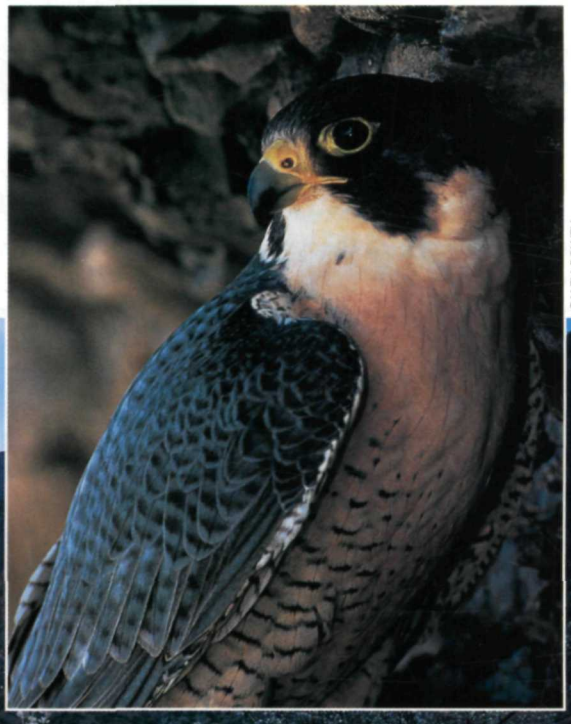
"It's only seven miles long and one mile wide, and there are interest groups that want campgrounds and interest groups that want lodging, and we have to have a visitor's center—how do you fit all that stuff in while still allowing natural processes to take place?" he asks. "What people are going to have to figure out is there's what people want, and there's what people can live with that ultimately makes Yosemite Valley a better place. And there are going to be tough tradeoffs to make."

WENDY MITMAN CLARKE *lives in Maryland and last wrote for* National Parks *about the All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory at Great Smoky Mountains National Park.*

PARKS *are for the* BIRDS

National parks provide invaluable habitat for a variety of species of birds, and consequently, provide some of the best spots to observe them.

BY ROLAND H. WAUER



GALEN ROWELL

WILLARD CLAY

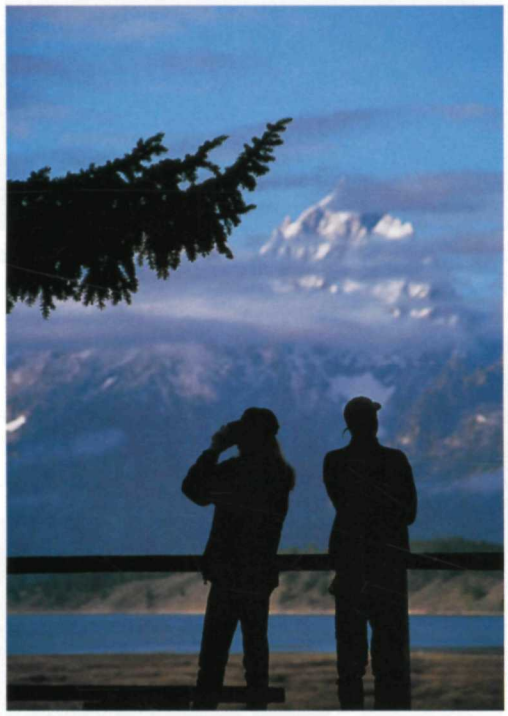
WOULD WE STILL have the ivory-billed woodpecker, the great auk, and the heath hen if the principal populations of those now extinct species had lived in one of the U.S. national parks?

The question is impossible to answer for certain. But the case of the peregrine falcon is suggestive. Following severe declines during the DDT years, the only remaining U.S. populations of peregrines south of Alaska were those within a handful of our large, remote national parks: Big Bend in Texas, Zion in Utah, Grand Canyon in Arizona, and Mesa Verde, Dinosaur, and Black Canyon of the Gunnison in Colorado. Even the long-term nesting peregrines at Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee and North Carolina had disappeared by 1972, the year DDT was outlawed in both the United States and Canada.

Why the western parks, but not Great Smoky Mountains? Although Great Smokies is only half the size of most western parks, the answer is more related to park shape and location. All of the Smoky Mountains peregrines fed at least part of the nesting season on prey taken outside the relatively narrow park, and all moved south for the winter months into the eastern lowlands where they preyed principally on birds from agricultural lands and waterways polluted by DDT as well as other chlorinated hydrocarbons.

The western peregrines, on the other hand, usually were full-time residents of their respective parks, preying primarily on such resident birds as jays, quail, pigeons, and doves. They only occasionally came in contact with contaminated prey, such as shorebirds and waterfowl, that had spent a portion of their lives in areas of significant biocide use.

Essential requirements for peregrines, however, are very different from those for most other birds, like the many neotropical migrants that nest in those same parks. The larger parks, such as the Great Smoky Mountains, have fairly well-maintained viable populations of neotropical migrants, although some have declined in smaller units. Although long-term information on bird populations in parks is insufficient for adequate comparisons, some data are available. Breeding bird studies conducted at Great Smoky Mountains in the late 1940s and repeated in 1982 and 1983, for example, revealed no evidence of widespread decline of neotropical migrants. However, within the fragmented environment of Rock Creek Park in Washington, D.C., breeding bird studies from 1947 through 1978 found that six migrants—yellow-billed cuckoo, yellow-throated vireo, and the northern parula, black-and-white, hooded, and Kentucky warblers—were completely lost, and a few other species—Acadian flycatcher, wood thrush, red-eyed vireo, ovenbird, and scarlet tanager—had declined by 50 percent.



RICK POLEY

The undisturbed habitats of national parks, such as Grand Teton in Wyoming, make them ideal birdwatching locations.

Although the national parks cannot protect neotropical species on their wintering grounds, they do provide relatively undisturbed habitats, free from agriculture and grazing, major developments, and biocides. And they provide essential nesting sites for native species, including endangered, threatened, and rare birds, as well as colonial nesting species. The parks also provide stopover and staging areas for extensive populations of migrating waterfowl and other birds in winter.

Although the large national parks are somewhat immune to many causes of avian decline, development inside boundaries for camping, accommodations, and roads and trails may create risks. These developments often result in habitat fragmentation that permits access to such non-native competitors as house sparrows and European starlings, such predators as feral cats and dogs, and such social parasites as cowbirds, a species that lays its eggs in other birds' nests. The majority of parks are also subject to external threats, the most pervasive of which is air pollution, and overuse by groups and individuals, including those who care the most for the beauty, isolation, animals, and plants within these often fragile ecosystems.

Among those groups are birders and other nature lovers who value the parks as choice locations for experiencing nature. Although latitude and topography play a significant role in determining avian distribution, relatively undisturbed habitats are also a key to where birds can be found. And the best of these environments are more numerous in the national parks than almost anywhere else.

In a sense, many of the birds in those park habitats, like the proverbial canary in the miner's cage, are indicators of the good health of those areas. Viable populations of spotted owls, for instance, occur only in undisturbed conifer forests like those in the Olympic and Redwood parks. Harlequin ducks may serve as the indicator species at Olympic, Mount Rainier, and North Cascades. White-tailed ptarmigans provide that service at Mount Rainier and Rocky Mountain; Colima warblers and lucifer hummingbirds at Big Bend; wood storks, limpkins, short-tailed hawks, and white-crowned pigeons at Everglades; and bridled quail-dove at Virgin Islands.

But which of the 378 park units are the "best" for birding? The answer is

Big Bend has provided a haven from pesticides for peregrine falcons.

rather complicated. The following is a systematic approach to addressing that question. First, more than six dozen national park units have a bird checklist of 150 or more species. Three park units—Big Bend National Park in Texas and Point Reyes National Seashore and Redwood National Park in California—lead the pack with totals of 450, 440, and 401 species, respectively. An additional 12 units are home to 300 or more species.

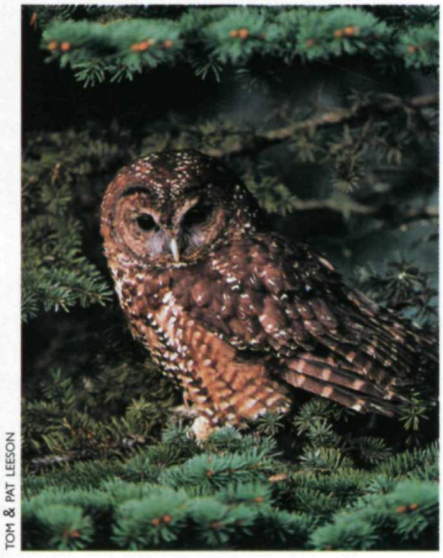
Second, although total numbers of recorded birds provide an initial indication of avian diversity, the number of species that nest within the park boundary is probably a better indicator of environmental diversity. The leading park in this important category is Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore in Michigan with 160 species; Glacier National Park and its sister park, Waterton, in Canada, is a close second with 159 species; and six additional units report 145 or more. Each of these areas contains multidimensional ecosystems protected by size, remoteness, or both.

WILLARD CLAY

Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore in Michigan is one of the best sites to view nesting waterbirds, warblers, and raptors.

TOM & PAT LEESON

TOM & PAT LEESON



TOM & PAT LEESON

Seeing rare birds in national parks is an indication of a healthy ecosystem. From top clockwise, white-tailed ptarmigans, spotted owl, and male harlequin ducks.

Within the total nesting numbers, however, a look at three groups of breeding birds—waterbirds, raptors, and warblers—not only increases one's understanding of the diversity of habitats, but also provides a birder's perspective on the parks. The birds within these three major groups usually receive the greatest attention from birders.

Eleven park units boast 30 or more species of nesting waterbirds. Included in this group are birds such as wading birds, shorebirds, and waterfowl. Atop this list are Glacier Bay National Park in Alaska with 42 species and Cape Hatteras and Cape Lookout national sea-

shores in North Carolina combined with 40 species.

Nesting hawks and owls—almost always considered indicators of nondisturbed habitats—are often high on a birder's list of priority species. Thirteen park units support 17 or more nesting raptors. Grand Teton ranks first with 21 species of breeding hawks and owls.

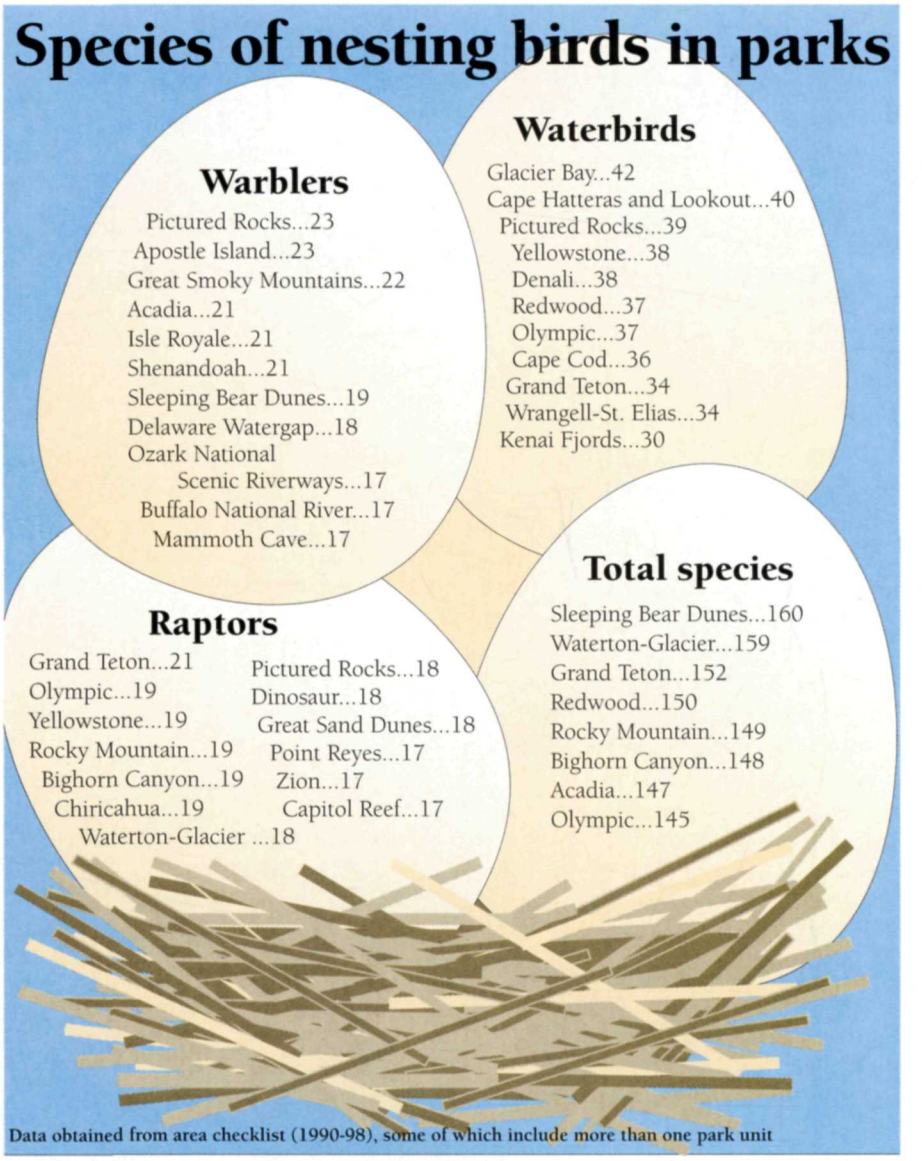
Finally, warblers make up the last group of breeding birds. Typically these are neotropical migrants that have long been researched as part of ecosystem declines throughout North America and in the tropics. This group of brightly colored birds has probably attracted more attention than any other—not only because they spend the majority of their lives in Mexico, South, or Central America, where they are subjected to numerous forms of environmental degradation, but also because they are so appealing to birders everywhere. Eleven park units support 17 or more nesting warblers. Pictured Rocks and Apostle Islands national lakeshores in Michigan and Wisconsin, respectively, lead the nesting warbler count with 23 species.

If we, therefore, take the five categories of total species, total nesting species, and numbers of nesting waterbirds, raptors, and warblers, we can conclude that four park units, each with three "high" category rankings, must be considered the "best" of the overall birding parks. These are Olympic, Acadia, Grand Teton, and Pictured Rocks. Six additional top birding parks, with two "high" categories each, are Redwood, Glacier, Yellowstone, Sleeping Bear Dunes, Rocky Mountain, and Bighorn Canyon.

Although high category numbers certainly provide a first and second cut at which parks offer the best birding, one final category must be considered. This category—which is perhaps the most important to the more experienced birder—considers where certain rarities or endemics might occur. For instance, the Colima warbler occurs nowhere in the United States other than Big Bend National Park. And Big Bend is also a most likely place for finding such other U.S. rarities as the zone-tailed hawk, lucifer hummingbird, crissal thrasher, and varied bunting. So, although that park does not support high populations of nesting waterbirds and warblers and has only moderate numbers of raptors, it is an especially popular birding park because more species have been recorded there than in any other park. Big Bend, in fact, attracts far more birders each year than most of the higher rated parks.

The same could be said for several other parks. Birders searching for spotted owls, for instance, have the best chance at Redwood and Olympic. Kittlitz's murrelets are most abundant at Glacier Bay. Mountain quail are most likely at Lassen Volcanic, Yosemite, and Sequoia-Kings Canyon, all in California. Trumpeter swans can be expected at Yellowstone and Grand Teton. Cave swallows are most obvious at Carlsbad Caverns. Gila woodpeckers are most numerous at Saguaro and Organ Pipe Cactus. Boreal chickadees occur regularly at Acadia. Snail kites, short-tailed hawks, white-crowned pigeons, and mangrove cuckoos are most likely at Everglades. And brown boobies, brown noddies, and Antillean nighthawks are a sure thing only at Dry Tortugas.

The national parks play a huge role in protecting ecosystems and habitats as well as providing nature lovers with marvelous birding sites. The vast majority of these individuals are nonconsumptive users who are there to observe and learn about the park and its birdlife. That type of use is exactly what the national parks are all about!



ROLAND H. WAUER, *a member of NPCA's Board of Trustees, last wrote for* National Parks *magazine about the decline of neotropical species.*

View to the Future

A historic agreement between the National Park Service and a mining company has helped to preserve one of the most famous views in history.

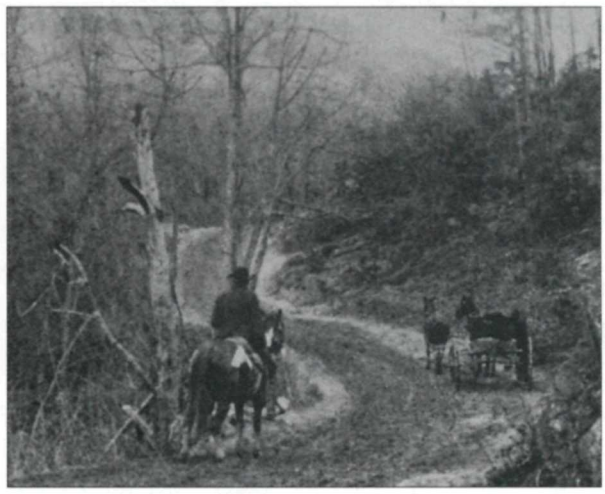
BY CHRIS FORDNEY

FOR HUNDREDS of thousands of weary, wagon-borne settlers, it was their first view of the West beyond the Appalachian Mountains—a majestic sweep of mountains, valleys, and forests that hinted at the boundless expanse, rich resources, and untamed dangers of the American frontier.

More than one million people return every year to Cumberland Gap to retrace the pioneers' route through the great natural passage across the mountain chain. They stand at the Pinnacle, a 2,440-foot-high overlook in Cumberland Gap National Historical Park above the old Wilderness Road, and look west into Kentucky and Tennessee, the land that held such promise for early Americans.

The Pinnacle is one of the most visited and panoramic places in the park, but only one segment of the view remains that resembles the landscape seen by pioneers and Civil War soldiers. For the past six years, that view has been threatened by plans to strip-mine coal from a mountain ridge just across the valley from the overlook. Such a blasting of the landscape would have left ugly scars across a great vista of American history and impeded efforts to rehabilitate the gap to its original condition—a multimillion-dollar process now under way. "Our concern was that this mine was going to end up right in the most scenic viewshed in the park," says Mark H. Woods, park superintendent.

But after six years of sometimes contentious disagreement, the Park Service and the mining company, Appolo Fuels, signed a historic agreement in the fall of 1998 that will protect the view. In part, what made the agreement possible was the solid front presented by the National Park Service (NPS), NPCA, and the people of nearby Middlesboro, Kentucky—many of them descendants of mining families—who refused to give up on the idea that the view was as much a part of the park and as important to its story as the gap itself.



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Nearly 300,000 pioneers moved through Cumberland Gap from 1780 to 1810. It became an essential trade route for people settling the West.

Under the settlement reached in October, Appolo Fuels agreed to stop work on a three-mile-long strip mine before it comes around a ridge and into the immediate view from the Pinnacle. The ridge is so close to the overlook that visitors would have been able to see men working on the mine, says Don Barger, NPCA's Southeast regional director. The company will also restore the land disturbed by that mine to its "approximate original contour" and reforest it, the settlement states. That's a major re-engineering requirement and an improvement over the reclamation of many mines, which are allowed to revert to open pasture, says Barger.

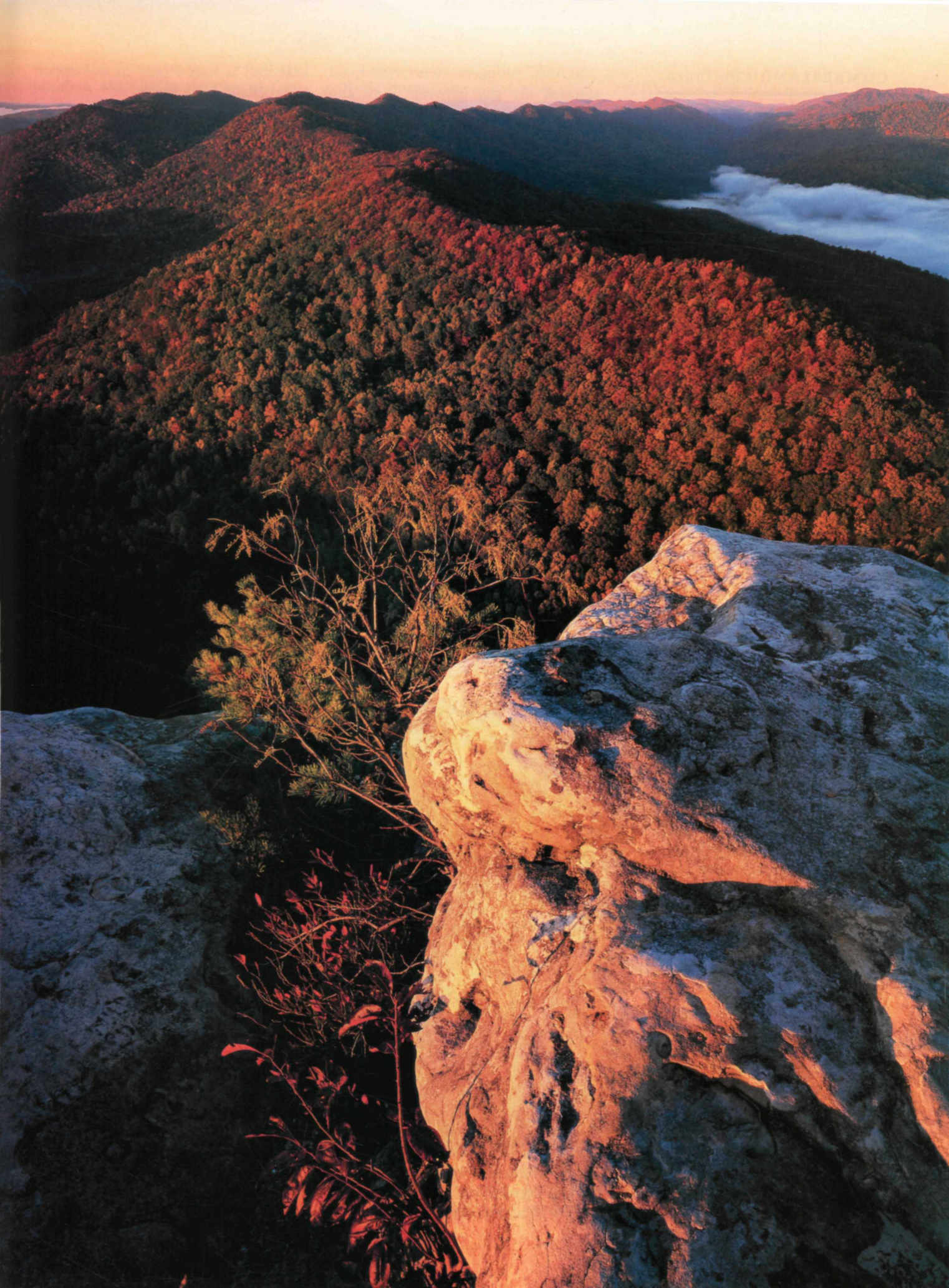
The settlement also prevents the company from digging deep into the mountain for coal after the surface seams have been stripped. That will protect the underground water sources so vital to the purity of Fern Lake, one of the last pristine water sources in the mountainous region. In exchange, NPS agreed not to contest permits for Appolo mines on two other mountains. The Park Service and the state of Kentucky are working on a memorandum of understanding to establish what constitutes an adverse impact on a national park unit, which would require denial of the permit.

Particularly significant for the Park Service is the part of the agreement requiring Kentucky authorities to consult with superintendents when mining companies apply for permits on land within five linear miles of a park unit. That helps fix vague language in the 1977 federal surface mining law that allowed Kentucky officials to decide on their own whether mining would have an "adverse impact" on the historical park.

"We got most of what we wanted," says Barger. The settlement sets "a very important precedent that will be used again and again."

For settlers moving west, the Pinnacle was the first glimpse beyond the Appalachian Mountains.

LAURENCE PARENT



Reaching this settlement is as important for the past as for the future, because Cumberland Gap lies at a key geographical nexus in American history. The 20,000-acre historical park straddles the ridge of Cumberland Mountain, which forms the border between Virginia and Kentucky. Its headquarters and visitor center are at Middlesboro, near the point where Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee meet. Apart from the Pinnacle, the main attractions are 50 miles of hiking trails and the Hensley Settlement, an abandoned mountain community from the turn of the 20th century that has been restored by NPS.

The park's most important quality, however, is its significance as a portal for early settlers moving into Kentucky. Cumberland Gap "truly was the very first doorway to the West," says ranger Carol Borneman.

The first explorer credited with finding and writing about the gap was Thomas Walker, a Virginia doctor and land speculator. He and five companions sought to survey 800,000 acres in 1750 for the Loyal Land Company, whose investors included Peter Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson's father. At the time, southeast Kentucky formed the hunting grounds for several Indian tribes, and clashes would become more frequent as settlers poured into the area.

Walker's journal reveals an astonishing richness and variety of animals and plants. He tells of men and horses being bitten by snakes and records close encounters with Indians. He recounts finding coal and a salt lick crowded with buffalo. By the end of their two-month trek, his party had killed 13 buffalo, eight elk, 53 bears, 20 deer, four wild geese, and about 150 turkeys, "besides small game. We might have killed three times as much meat, if we had wanted it."

But the Cumberland Gap will always be most associated with Daniel Boone, who is credited with blazing the trail that later became the Wilderness Road. Boone's strength and courage in the face of adversity were an example for the 300,000 pioneers who streamed through the gap between 1780 and 1810 and fanned out into the interior.

By the 1830s, the gap had declined in importance as the Mississippi River was opened to navigation and canals penetrated the Appalachian barrier farther north. During the Civil War, the gap was viewed as a strategic passage and was held and fortified by both sides at different times. However, the region was unsuitable for the large-scale movement of armies, and the main federal thrust into the Confederacy came instead at Chattanooga, Tennessee.

This rich and colorful history, however, was not the only impetus behind the agreement. At the foot of the mountain ridge is Fern Lake, a body of water so pure that it has served as the source for a Coca-Cola bottling plant in Middlesboro since 1907. Many people feared that acidic runoff from the mining would pollute the lake, also the source of drinking water for the town's 11,000 residents, and that higher levels of sediments and metals would pose health risks, particularly for children and the elderly. In addition, scientists feared for the health of the blackside dace, a threatened fish that lives in Fern Lake and is found only in the upper Cumberland River basin.

The controversy that led to the settlement ironically opened new links between the management of the park and Middlesboro, which was created in the late 19th century by a British company eager to tap the region's coal reserves. The town never really understood why it had such clean water from Fern Lake, Barger says. An environmental impact study revealed the delicate geological features that form a natural filter for the water that flows into the lake, and consequently there is a "deeper sensitivity and appreciation for that park" among people in the town, says lawyer Stephen Cawood, a longtime resident.

All of these important aspects were on Mark Woods' mind when he arrived as the new park superintendent in January 1997, following his previous job as deputy superintendent of Virgin Islands National Park. Woods expected his major focus would be the project to restore the Cumberland Gap to the way it looked when settlers passed through. The previously simmering mining controversy had, everyone believed, been resolved the previous September when Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt declared 214 acres on the Tennessee side of the Fern Lake watershed off-limits to mining. His declaration followed a two-year environmental impact study conducted by the U.S. Office of Surface Mining that determined mining would affect the quality of the water.

"It looked like it was over, then literally within a few weeks it was back on the radar screen," Woods says. Appolo Fuels had filed for a permit to mine on 138 acres of the watershed that extends into Kentucky, even closer to the Pinnacle. This time the federal government, which regulates mining in Tennessee, would be unable to step in because the state government performs that function in Kentucky.

The chain of events in Tennessee that led to Babbitt's action had begun with a petition filed by NPCA and Middlesboro, arguing that the Fern Lake watershed was a fragile area with vulnerable historical, cultural, scientific, and aesthet-

ADAM JONES

Because a tunnel has replaced the existing road across Cumberland Gap, visitors can now walk the trail as settlers did 100 years ago.

ic features. Subsequently, a permit application was filed in the state of Kentucky and appealed by NPS and later joined by NPCA and Middlesboro. The appeal cited a little-known provision of the federal surface mining law that requires consultations with Park Service managers before permits are granted for mines that would have an "adverse impact" on a park unit. But in June 1997, the Kentucky Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Cabinet approved Appolo Fuels' permit over those objections, apparently deciding on its own that the mining would not adversely affect the park.

The approval of the mining permit prompted the Lexington *Herald-Leader* to point out that parts of the Kentucky government seemed to be working at cross-purposes to each other. "It seems strange to have one agency of state government spending millions each year to lure tourists to the state, while another agency is approving destruction of the view from one of Kentucky's best known tourist attractions," the newspaper stated in an editorial.

The Park Service appealed the permit approval, again joined by NPCA and Middlesboro. The case was referred to an environmental hearing officer for Kentucky, Vanessa Mullins, who concluded that the mining would indeed have an adverse impact on the historical park and that the state had failed to consult with the Park Service as required by law. She recommended that the mining permit be rescinded, but that action was not taken by James E. Bickford, Kentucky's secretary for natural resources and environmental protection, who felt that a "full hearing" on the case was needed, according to spokesman Mark York. Yet Mullins wrote in her ruling that both the state and Appolo Fuels declined to put any evidence before her to counter the Park Service's claims of an adverse impact.

Mullins' ruling has become an important document for the Park Service because it recognizes that activities outside a park's borders can degrade an aesthetic quality like a historical view. Appolo's mining "would impair a visitor's ability to experience the view as it would have been seen by early settlers and Civil War lookouts," Mullins wrote.

The debate over the mining had become increasingly acrimonious and appeared headed for court in early 1998. Then came a breakthrough. Appolo Fuels showed a sudden willingness to settle, a move that still puzzles people connected to the case. "All of a sudden they made a decision to talk to us that had no obvious explanation," says Cawood, a lawyer representing NPCA.

CHUCK SUMMERS

The Cumberland Gap Tunnel, a key part of the rehabilitation project, replaced a dangerous stretch of road.

Another lawyer for NPCA, Thomas Fitzgerald, said that "it took a while for all of the parties to realize that some sort of mediated resolution was in everyone's interest." A crucial factor in the agreement, he added, was the solid front put up by the Park Service, NPCA, and the people of Middlesboro. "That's the highlight of this—the way they hung together and the courage they showed," Fitzgerald said.

Face-to-face discussions also allowed the parties involved to establish human contact after years of being on opposite sides of public hearings and press accounts. "Once we all started talking, we realized there was common ground," Barger says. "All of a sudden we're human beings to each other." The president of Appolo Fuels, Gary Asher, had been concerned that his opponents were out to shut down his company, and once those fears were put to rest, everyone was able to focus on the historical park, Barger says. Asher "had a genuine interest in trying to protect the park," he said.

Woods won the National Park Service's 1998 superintendent of the year award for his role in the mining fight. And, to Woods' greatest satisfaction, the settlement has allowed him and his staff to turn their attention back to their major focus of restoring the Cumberland Gap.

The most ambitious part of the rehabilitation effort has been completed. The Cumberland Gap Tunnel, a 17-year, $232 million effort that replaced a dangerous, two-lane stretch of U.S. 25 East that wound through the gap, opened two years ago.

The $13 million remaining rehabilitation project, which ranger Borneman described as "the largest of its type ever undertaken by the Park Service," contains several additional parts. One part will develop and interpret other aspects of the gap's history, including its use first by Native American tribes such as the Iroquois, Cherokees, and Shawnees, and even its early history as an animal migration route. Other parts are miles of new trails and the opening of Cudjo's Cave, an underground cavern privately owned as a tourist attraction until its purchase by the Park Service four years ago. Finally, the plan will restore the last link of the old Wilderness Road, a crushed, stone path that carried settlers south from the Great Valley of Virginia and then snaked along the Cumberland Mountain to the gap.

Providing an opportunity for visitors to walk along the Wilderness Road and experience the same anticipation and joy of the early settlers is central to the park's master plan. With the view from the Pinnacle now safe, even Daniel Boone would be proud.

CHRIS FORDNEY *is based in Winchester, Virginia. He last wrote for* National Parks *about the new National Prisoner of War Museum at Andersonville, Georgia.*

Pedaling in the Parks

Bicycling, an increasingly popular pursuit, provides an environmentally friendly way to tour parks.

BY CLAY JACKSON

One of the lowest points in the Western Hemisphere, Badwater is eerier than usual on a cold night with a full moon illuminating Death Valley. It is hard to imagine a more remote place and the sense of vulnerability the scene evokes. In the distance, a light appears coming from the direction of Furnace Creek on the main north-south road of Death Valley National Park in California. As the light rounds a curve, it becomes clear that the light belongs to a lone bicyclist laboring in the cold night air.

The cyclist is one of about 170 in the "Death Valley by Moonlight" tour sponsored by Badwater Adventure Sports. The tour originates from Furnace Creek and is divided into three segments among which bikers can choose. The longest segment is a 35-mile round-trip from Furnace Creek to Badwater.

Designated vehicles keep watch over all registered participants, and food and water are available at three rest stops. This past July, one ride attracted 50 people even though temperatures hovered all night around 115 degrees Fahrenheit. Extreme heat is common six months out of the year, and riders should be sure to carry plenty of water. In Death Valley all riding is on paved roads, but because of the park's remoteness and the tour's hour, the roads are for the most part free of traffic.

Death Valley may be one of the safest and most spectacular places to bicycle in the National Park System. The park's uncrowded roads—except on holiday weekends—wide-open vistas, and gentle grades make for excellent cycling.

Bicycling offers an alternative way to view national parks. For the best cycling, visitors should choose a trip to match their experience and ability, stay on designated trails and roads, and observe safety and traffic rules. Following are some options for superior biking experiences.

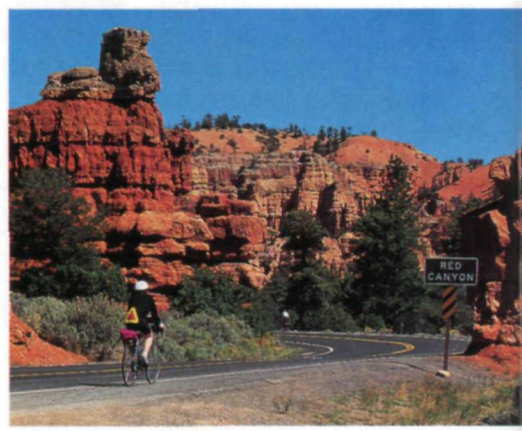
Bryce Canyon

The exposed edge of the Paunsaugunt Plateau erupts into a fantastic display of bizarre shapes and pastel colors at Bryce Canyon in Utah. Vehicles and bicyclists share the narrow roadway that hugs the rim, which is 18 miles out and back. The last eight miles of the main park road have undergone reconstruction and now have wider shoulders allowing safer passage for cyclists. By the end of the decade, the remainder of the park's roads will undergo similar widening.

"Within the first couple of miles there are pullouts and wonderful viewpoints. You can pull off the roadway, lock up your bike, and go hiking," says Cheryl Schreier, management specialist. For families biking in the park, Schreier says a series of loop roads originating from the main road within the first three miles are less crowded and safer.

Because of its 8,000–9,000-foot elevation, Bryce Canyon receives heavy snowfall during the winter, so visitation is heaviest in the summer. Bicyclists have less crowded roads to contend with during the off months of May and October, which is best for fall colors. Wildflowers peak in July and August.

More than a dozen companies offer guided bicycling tours of Bryce Canyon and can be accessed by searching the web under bicycle touring.



A bicyclist heads to Red Canyon near Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah.

Bryce has two campgrounds: North Campground, open year-round, and Sunset Campground, open from late April through mid-October. Bryce Canyon Lodge operates from April 1 to November 1 and has a restaurant, gift shop, and post office. For more information, contact Bryce Canyon at www.nps.gov/brca.com or 435-834-5322.

Zion

Zion National Park in Utah has begun the transition from a bastion of the automobile to a park favoring pedestri-

CLAY JACKSON *lives in Harbor City, California, and last wrote about fossils for* National Parks *magazine.*

ans and bicyclists. In 1996 the first phase of a new transportation plan for Zion Canyon was completed with the ribbon-cutting of the paved Pa'rus pedestrian/bike trail. The two-mile path parallels the main road beginning at the South Entrance and links up with the Upper Canyon Scenic Drive. The trail crosses the Virgin River four times and is beautiful in autumn when the foliage takes on spectacular hues.

"Zion is not very bike-friendly at the moment," admits Denny Davies, chief of interpretation. Among the concerns are the narrow and winding canyon roads and the crush of cars. The plan is to eliminate cars April through October from all but the first two miles of Zion Canyon by May 2000. Bicyclists will then be able to bypass the initial two miles via the Pa'rus Trail and connect with the Scenic Drive, which will be limited to shuttle buses, lodge guests, bicyclists, and hikers. Bike riders will be able to complete an 18-mile Zion Canyon round-trip with a fraction of the traffic encountered now.

Zion offers a number of other advantages to bicyclists. The nine-mile ride from the South Entrance to the road's terminus at the Temple of Sinawava is a gentle climb of only 450 feet. Bicycling in the park is possible every month of the year, although both summer and winter are subject to extreme temperatures. Unlike most canyons in the National Park System, Zion offers visitors a bottom-up perspective from the floor of the canyon. The entrance fee for those who bike into the park is halved.

Overnight visitors can stay in the park at one of two campgrounds, which are near the park's south entrance. Campgrounds have grills, picnic tables, and restrooms. Tent and recreational vehicle (RV) sites are available for a nominal fee. Zion Lodge offers rustic cabins or rooms. The lodge, open year-round, has a restaurant, snack bar, and gift shop. Zion Canyon Campground is in the town of Springdale, which also has motels, inns, and bed and breakfast establishments. For more information about the park, call 435-772-3256. For information about accommodations, call the Chamber of Commerce at 435-772-3757.

BEN DAVIDSON/BACKROADS; RANDI HIRSCHMANN

View from Zabriskie Point at dawn beyond Manly Beacon and the Panamint Range, Death Valley National Park, California.

Grand Canyon

The Grand Canyon is among the eight natural wonders of the world and is visited by more than five million tourists annually. On the South Rim during a busy summer day, bicyclists may have to share roadways with up to 6,500 vehicles. So the best and safest bet is the West Rim Drive, which is closed to private vehicles from mid-March to mid-October. The West Rim Drive leads to several spectacular overlooks providing inspirational canyon views.

Cyclists must share the road with shuttle buses and should pull off the road and dismount, allowing larger vehicles to pass.

Under its 1995 General Management Plan, Grand Canyon National Park will be moving away from auto-based transportation toward mass/alternative transit by the start of the next millennium. The Greenway Trail System, a key element in the new transportation infrastructure, will be a boon to cyclists, pedestrians, and equestrians. The Grand Canyon Greenway will include 73 miles of paved and unpaved multi-use trails on both the North and South rims. The nearly $1 million that Grand Canyon National Park recently received from the Department of Transportation as part of the National Millennium Trails Project has been earmarked to construct a six-mile bike path from Tusayan to the Canyon View Information Plaza.

Much of the new greenway system on the South Rim will originate from the information plaza, scheduled for completion in September 2000. The rail system is expected to be completed in the spring of 2002. Under the new transportation plan, visitors will leave their cars outside the park at Tusayan and take a light rail system to the information plaza. There, visitors will have a full menu of choices of where to go and by what means. They will then embark on foot, bicycle, or alternative-fuel bus. The South Rim Greenway system will be accessible from the new plaza. Bicycle rentals are not yet offered in the park, but will be offered from the plaza when it is completed. Visitors with their own bicycles will be able to pedal to the greenway from the Tusayan parking lot.

Overnight visitors have a variety of lodging from which to choose, including campsites, motels, historic lodges, and yurts, tent-like structures. Grand Canyon Lodge is on the North Rim,

along with about 80 campsites. On the South Rim, visitors can choose from half a dozen lodges and more than 350 campsites. For more information, call 520-638-7888. Camping reservations can be made by calling 800-365-2267.

Rock Creek

Imagine that another work week has arrived, so you jump on your bicycle and head downtown—but the commute seems like a dream. Instead of a concrete jungle, you ride through a mature 1,700-acre hardwood forest next to a pristine boulder-choked stream with Civil War-era and 19th-century historic sites along the way. For bicycle commuters traveling through northwest Washington, D.C., the scene is a reality. Rock Creek Park, one of the largest natural urban parks in the country, offers a scenic alternative for both commuters and weekend bicyclists. On weekends, parts of Beach Drive are closed to motor vehicles, making way for bicyclists, walkers, and joggers.

Trails passing through Rock Creek Park are part of a larger system of bike trails that wind through Washington, D.C., and into Maryland and Virginia. The Mount Vernon trail that runs alongside George Washington Memorial Parkway in Virginia provides bicyclists with a paved, nine-foot wide, multi-use path. The 18-mile trail follows the Potomac River to George Washington's estate at Mount Vernon, Virginia. Bicyclists can view downtown monuments from the Virginia side of the river. The trail is being upgraded with interpretive pullouts on local history, directional pullouts, water fountains, and phones every two miles. The route is rolling and wooded its entire length.

All of the trails through Rock Creek Park and along George Washington Memorial Parkway offer a view of the springtime floral displays, including the cherry blossoms at the Tidal Basin in late March and early April. The pathways are heavily used on the weekends.

For information on George Washington Memorial Parkway bike path, call 703-289-2530. For information on Rock Creek Park, call 202-426-6829.

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Delving in the Dirt

Ancient earthen pits puzzle archaeologists working near historic Potomac River boathouse.

BY KATURAH MACKAY

Riverfront real estate was in high demand on the Potomac River before European settlers decided to build their villages and plantations along its banks. Archaeologists working at Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park (C&O Canal) in Washington, D.C., have unearthed intriguing storage pits and nearly 60,000 artifacts along a portion of the Potomac River that raise confounding questions about the ancient people who once inhabited the area.

Before the Park Service could begin flood repairs and visitor access improvements at Fletcher's Boathouse near Georgetown, archaeological investigations were conducted in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act. The likelihood of finding prehistoric sites around the boathouse was high: previous remains were found near the adjacent Capital Crescent Trail, and the area would have been tremendously rich in riparian resources.

The large storage pits and their contents date from approximately 1 to 200 A.D., based on indicative ceramic wares found within them. Such pits reflect a more sedentary lifestyle for this time period, known as the Middle Woodland, than previously documented by archaeologists. Similar pits have been found elsewhere on the East Coast, but none is older than approximately 1,000 years. Large pits were more commonly used in the Late Woodland period by people who cultivated corn and squash, which required storage to last through the winter. The nine large pits at Fletcher's—each of which measures approximately six to seven feet in diameter and five feet in depth—puzzle archaeologists because they strongly imply a settled riverine lifestyle before corn, squash, and other crops were introduced in the Middle Woodland period. What were the pits used for, why were they so large, and why did people continue to dig new ones?

JEFF HARBISON

A wealth of organic and hand-made artifacts were found within these odd pits.

"Nothing like these very large, 2,000-year-old underground storage pits has ever been found in the Potomac Valley," says Dr. Stephen Potter, regional archaeologist for the Park Service's National Capital Region. "This discovery will require archaeologists in the mid-Atlantic region to rethink our entire analysis of the Middle Woodland period."

Pottery sherds and organic materials found within the pits further speak for the ancient people who used the river. Finds include numerous pieces of coiled earthenware vessels, imprinted with a knotted net design or cord-wrapping; their style and manufacture point to a date of approximately 1 A.D. Several fragments of well-polished shale were also uncovered, some bearing drilled holes so that they might be worn decoratively around the neck. Cooking vessels and tools found in several hearths and pits date from as early as 2500 B.C.

Soil samples removed from the site date from between 12,000 and 14,000 years ago, which indicates that even farther beneath the pits may be evidence of still older cultures—perhaps dating to approximately 4000 B.C. The stratified layers at the site most likely mean that the people who dug the Middle Woodland pits were digging through trash from people who occupied the area thousands of years before them. Middle Woodland trash and older fill then became mixed.

"This very exciting new archaeological discovery adds greatly to the richness of our resources and our ability to educate the public about man's past occupation and use of the Potomac River basin," says C&O Canal Superintendent Doug Faris.

Archaeology persists as a valuable tool throughout the National Park System: It enhances the scope of interpretation and forces the agency to take responsibility for the missing cultural pieces hidden beneath our public lands.

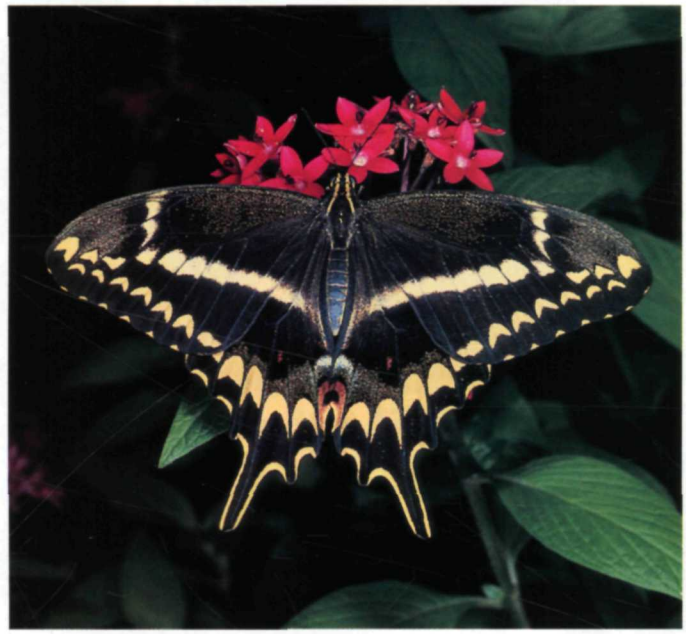
KATURAH MACKAY *is news editor for* National Parks *magazine.*

Taking Wing

The dedication of a zoologist has helped save this beautiful butterfly found at Biscayne National Park.

BY ELIZABETH G. DAERR

SHRINKING HABITAT, an onslaught of deadly pesticides, and an occasional natural disaster landed the Schaus swallowtail butterfly on the endangered species list. In 1984, there were fewer than 70 known in the wild, and it was likely that this beautiful insect might disappear. But a dedicated zoologist and an amazing natural resilience have allowed this butterfly to survive, though its fate is not yet certain.



THOMAS C. EMMEL

About 1,200 Schaus swallowtails survive today.

The Schaus swallowtail butterfly is named for William Schaus, a physician and butterfly enthusiast who came to Miami in 1898 to treat yellow fever victims. Though the Schaus closely resembles its common cousin, the giant swallowtail, a smaller, three-inch wingspan allows it to weave easily through its forest habitat of southern Florida and the Florida Keys. To avoid predators, which include birds, lizards, and spiders, the Schaus has evolved with the ability to stop in midair and fly backwards—a defense that few butterflies have.

An adult Schaus lives five days but spends an entire year metamorphosing from an egg deposited on a torchwood or wild lime plant. The emerging caterpillar gorges itself on the leaves—its only known food—and then encases itself for a ten-month dormancy. As heavy rains saturate the forest in April and May, adult butterflies emerge to feast on guava nectar, cheese shrub, and wild coffee blossoms, and quickly reproduce.

Today, visitors to Biscayne National Park need to look closely to view these spectacular creatures in the wild. As a rare species, the butterflies are highly sought after by collectors, and for this reason park management will not disclose the location of the colonies at the park.

Most of the 1,200 Schaus swallowtails that survive today owe their existence to Dr. Thomas Emmel, a zoologist at the University of Florida, who was called in by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1984 to inventory the species. When he found only 70 butterflies, Emmel suspected that loss of habitat, due to rampant development outside Biscayne and Everglades national parks, was not solely responsible for the species' decline. He and his team of students discovered that the amount of pesticides used to kill mosquitoes in the area were also killing butterflies and other insects. "This issue called attention to other nontarget species that were being harmed," he said. "These discoveries with the butterfly are important to study because they provide clues as to what is happening in the environment."

Pesticides were eventually banned in and around the parks, but Emmel feared that the population remained at extreme risk of extinction. In June 1992, he began a captive breeding program by collecting 100 eggs from Biscayne. Two months later in the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew, Emmel's team found only 17 Schaus swallowtails. From the original eggs and a few gathered later, Emmel's team has been able to release butterflies and pupae three times.

Emmel plans to do another inventory this year and believes that the butterfly's status will be upgraded to threatened if the population reaches 2,000. "This butterfly is a survivor," he said. "Given the slightest amount of help to overcome human-caused hazards, the Schaus swallowtail is capable of bouncing back and doing quite well."

ELIZABETH G. DAERR *is editorial assistant for* National Parks *magazine.*

The Preservation Challenge

Maintaining the park system requires leadership from Congress, the Clinton Administration, and the Park Service.

BY WILLIAM J. CHANDLER

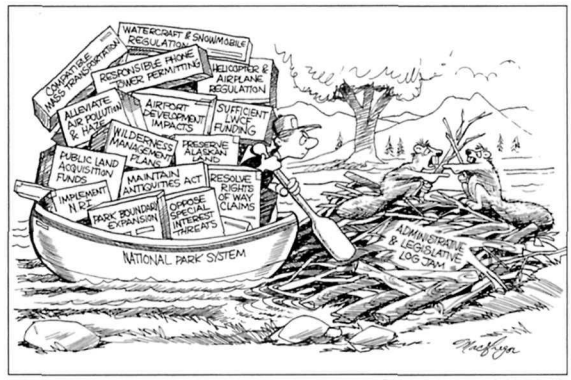
THE UNITED STATES has one of the finest national park systems in the world. Encompassing more than 83 million acres, the system includes 378 sites that preserve some of the nation's most magnificent landscapes, ecological resources, and cultural and historic areas. The National Park System beckons visitors to study our nation's development, reflect on our democratic freedoms and institutions, learn more about our leaders, and personally experience the geological and ecological treasures of our continent.

As the nation's population and economy continue to grow, development and commercialism has crept up to the parks. Threats include overcrowding, air and water pollution, inadequate mass transportation systems, poorly drawn boundaries, uses of adjacent lands that harm park wildlife and vistas, and burgeoning use of motorized recreational vehicles.

Maintaining our system of parks in perpetuity requires farsighted management policies, adequate legal protection for park resources and values, highly trained personnel, and optimum levels of funding. In face of these needs, NPCA has launched new programs to assess park funding needs, determine the status of a park's resources, offer solutions for transportation, and regulate inappropriate uses.

WILLIAM J. CHANDLER *is NPCA's vice president for conservation policy.*

But an advocacy group can do just so much. Preserving the parks requires effective bipartisan leadership from Congress and the administration. To that end, NPCA challenges the administration and Congress to effectively solve the problems threatening the parks. Here is what our association believes must be accomplished over the next two years to stem the tide of threats.



DOUGLAS MACGREGOR

NPS must significantly improve its management of park resources and continue to aggressively identify and preserve nationally significant resources. More than half of the park system's 83 million acres are wilderness or potential wilderness, yet only 16 percent of the parks have plans to manage these lands. The rest should complete plans by the year 2002. In addition, 5.3 million acres of parkland that have been recommended as wilderness should be designated by Congress.

More than four million acres of land within the park system are privately owned. Buying the land is necessary to protect parks from incompatible development and to make them fully accessible to the public. NPS needs about $200 million annually for the next ten years to complete already designated parks. Congress and the administration must ensure that NPS has these funds.

NPS has drafted a multi-year Natural Resources Initiative to upgrade scientific research, and improve the inventorying, monitoring, and effective stewardship of natural resources. The Park Service should aggressively promote and implement this initiative, which is critical to redressing the service's historical emphasis on promoting tourism and visitor accommodations. NPS devotes an insufficient percentage of its budget to programs that benefit natural and cultural resources. Park funding in general requires augmentation to meet demonstrated needs.

Some existing park units merit boundary expansions to incorporate related resources or better protect core resources, such as Canyonlands National Park in Utah, where about 500,000 acres of additional lands should be added. Potential new units that would conserve our natural and cultural heritage also should be studied.

Last year, Congress proposed weakening the Antiquities Act—one of the most effective conservation laws ever enacted. The proposal, which may not have died completely, would have curtailed the president's ability to swiftly

continued on page 42

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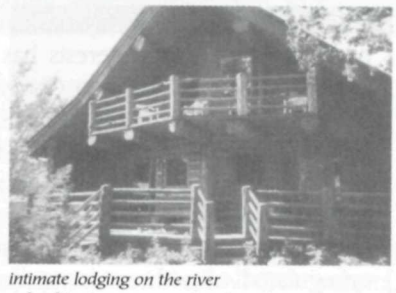

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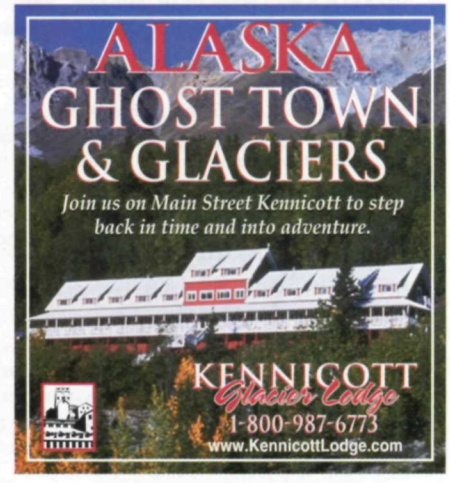

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and decisively preserve natural and cultural resources on federal lands. Its bipartisan use by 13 presidents has led to the establishment of 105 sites and areas, including Grand Canyon National Park. NPCA asks Congress to maintain the integrity of this act.

Legislation to give away, trade, or sell parklands to private interests has been introduced in the last two Congresses. Should similar bills be introduced in the 106th, Congress should reject them, and the administration should vigorously oppose them.

In Alaska, a wave of development and unregulated uses threatens to degrade the 13 large natural parks. If that happens, the opportunity to preserve these wild areas as unspoiled whole ecosystems will be lost. In addition, the law regulating the preservation and use of Alaska lands is under attack. The administration and Congress must oppose attempts to open parks to unregulated use of snowmobiles or recreational vehicles. Congress should provide no additional funds or authority for a northern access route into Denali National Park. An existing road is adequate to appropriately serve park visitors.

The issue of claimed rights-of-way in Western and Alaska national parks must be resolved either by regulation or legislation that validates legitimate claims and protects the environment.

Congress also must deal sensibly with the telecommunication industry's desire to erect cellular telephone towers across America to provide emergency "911" access. Although current law allows towers to be erected on federal lands, including parks, NPS should retain its authority to deny a tower application, if the tower has the potential to damage resources, harm park values, or conflict with visitor use.

Many development decisions on lands near parks are made by other federal agencies. The administration should require all federal agencies to consider the impacts of their actions on the parks. The Federal Aviation Administration needs to revise its environmental review standards and procedures to ensure that no airports are expanded or built without full consideration of their impact on affected parks.

Finally, the administration and Congress should stop delaying the promulgation of an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulation to deal with air pollution sources that cause haze problems in many parks. Visibility in Great Smoky Mountains National Park has been reduced 60 percent since 1948; on especially bad days, visitors can see less than one mile. EPA should issue, and then enforce, a strong regulation in 1999 to address the problem.

The administration must develop new transportation policies that are compatible with park resources and values, while better serving visitors. In particular, mass transportation systems need to be established in several national parks such as Zion, Yosemite, and Grand Canyon.

NPS should promulgate a systematic regulation prohibiting the use of personal watercraft in parks unless they are deemed acceptable through a special regulation for each affected park. Likewise, there should be a moratorium on all snowmobile use in the parks in the lower 48 states until NPS develops adequate standards and guidelines for determining under what conditions use can be allowed without negative impacts on resources.

At least 55 parks experience the noise and intrusion of low-flying helicopters and airplanes engaged in "flightseeing." The administration is developing a new regulation requiring the preparation of air tour management plans. This regulation should be completed in 1999 and implementation begun. In addition, Congress should pass legislation making these regulations permanent.

If the president and Congress work together on the agenda described, tremendous gains can be made for park preservation and management. If they don't, the public will continue to witness the decline of one of America's greatest assets. NPCA members can help by tearing out this article and sending it to their senators and representatives, along with a note asking them to get involved in protecting the parks.

NPCA Notes

BY ELIZABETH G. DAERR

1998 Mather and Douglas Awards Presented

▶ Three individuals have been recognized by NPCA for their exceptional commitment to the nation's national parks in 1998. Denis R. Davis, superintendent of Cumberland Island National Seashore, was awarded the Stephen Tyng Mather Award for his efforts to establish a wilderness management plan at the seashore amidst formidable opposition.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Davis was instrumental in gaining support from island residents, conservationists, and preservationists to implement the island's wilderness management plan, which was authorized by Congress in 1982 but has been delayed because of heavy local opposition.

Davis was presented his $2,500 award in December at the annual conference of the Association of Park Rangers. The award is given annually to an individual who demonstrates initiative and resourcefulness in promoting and protecting natural and cultural resources within the National Park System.

NPCA's Marjorie Stoneman Douglas Citizen Conservationist of the Year Award was presented to Frank and Audrey Peterman for their efforts to engage African Americans in outdoor recreation, environmentalism, and conservation of the nation's parks.

BENCHMARK STUDIES

The Miami couple is involved in a variety of activities aimed at getting minorities to enjoy and appreciate the great outdoors. In addition to launching a monthly travel newsletter for African Americans, *Pickup & GO!*, they have been instrumental in galvanizing a minority constituency to support the massive restoration plan at Everglades National Park.

At the award ceremony held in January at NPCA's "Mosaic in Motion" conference, NPCA President Thomas C. Kiernan remarked, "Their work has inspired the current efforts of NPCA and the National Park Service to strive so that *all* citizens enjoy and understand our national parks."

The $5,000 award is given each year to a citizen activist who has provided exemplary leadership on national park issues.

NPCA Website Offers New Features

▶ As spring starts anew, so will NPCA's website, with updated features that promise to make it easier to navigate and more convenient to use. Members will now be able to access their accounts to renew memberships, change addresses, make donations, or use the *National Parks* magazine index to search for past articles. And for the first time, members will be able to use the NPCA website to send e-mail and fax messages directly to members of Congress, the president, and agencies seeking public comment.

In addition, new regional program pages will allow users to gain access to information on critical issues occurring in specific parks around the country. The redesigned website will be launched in mid-March.

Adams Named New Senior VP

▶ Sandra A. Adams has been named senior vice president for Development and Communications to shape the public message for NPCA. Formerly with The Wilderness Society, Adams comes to NPCA with more than 20 years' experience in education, development, and environmental issues.

"I have been in love with the national parks since I was six, when my father piled our family into our Nash Rambler and drove us from Erie, Pennsylvania, to Phoenix, Arizona, stopping at every park we could along the way," Adams said. "It is an incredible thrill to join NPCA's efforts to protect these magnificent places."

Barriers to Park Use Addressed at Conference

▶ The first conference discussing the challenges of race and diversity in Amerca's national parks was held in San Francisco, California, January 13-16. "America's Parks-America's People: A Mosaic in Motion," a conference co-sponsored by NPCA, the National Park Service (NPS), and the Student Conservation Association (SCA), brought minority community groups, businesses, and foundations together with NPS to address barriers to minority use of national parks.

More than 500 participants, many of them representing Latino, African-American, American Indian,

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and Asian communities, helped identify issues that minorities feel discourage their ability to take advantage of the outdoor and cultural experiences national parks offer. NPCA staff reported that the event helped to create new approaches to promoting racial diversity within the park system. Examples include hiring more minorities to work in national park units and cultivating conservation partners from minority community groups and educational institutions.

Most important, the conference confirmed the intense level of interest among minority communities to become engaged in conservation issues, said Iantha Gantt-Wright, NPCA's cultural diversity manager.

Gantt-Wright received an award from NPS Director Robert Stanton that recognized her efforts in advancing diversity.

NPCA Thanks You for Writing

▶ Thanks to the NPCA members who responded to the November/December 1998 News story on the potential development of a private backcountry lodge and access road within Denali National Park, Alaska. The Park Service received approximately 500 letters encouraging it to purchase the land before it was developed. The property owner said recently that NPCA's article and the response from citizens nationwide have influenced his willingness to consider selling the property to NPS.

NPCA members also responded overwhelmingly to support a temporary ban on snowmobile use in the wilderness area of Denali National Park until a final ruling is issued from the Park Service. Snowmobile advocates have been lobbying to open the wilderness section of Denali by changing the interpretation of language in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), which limits snowmobile use to traditional uses, such as subsistence fishing, berrypicking, and travel to and from villages and homesites.

The Park Service reported that NPCA members were the primary respondents, and 1,259 out of the 1,442 comments received supported the temporary closure.

March for Parks 1999 Schedule

▶ More than 600 marches are expected for NPCA's 10th annual March for Parks April 22-25. Held in conjunction with Earth Day, March for Parks enables people across the country to raise awareness and funds for parks and open spaces. To find a march near you, call 800-NAT-PARK, ext. 225 or check out our website at www.npca.org.

Desert Giants

This park is located in one of the harshest climates in North America, yet hosts a variety of plant and animal life.

JAMES RANDKLEV

THIS PARK'S NAMESAKE, often recognized as a symbol of the Southwest, is found in only one desert and provides the backbone of an entire ecosystem. With intense competition among plants and animals for limited food and water—only 12 inches annually—approximately one in 40 million seeds of this plant survive to adulthood. This park is home to the javelina and the Gila monster Have you visited this park? Do you know which one it is? (ANSWER ON PAGE 10).

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