

# YOSEMITE CONSERVANCY

AUTUMN.WINTER 2020 :: VOLUME 11.ISSUE 02





**YOSEMITE  
CONSERVANCY**

*Providing For Yosemite's Future*

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**OUR MISSION**

*Yosemite Conservancy inspires people to support projects and programs that preserve Yosemite and enrich the visitor experience for all people.*

**PRESIDENT'S NOTE**



When we wrapped up our May magazine, Yosemite had been closed for several weeks, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The park reopened in June, with new safety measures and a temporary reservation system in place. Our naturalists started leading trips again, ensuring hikers stayed safely apart and wore masks when needed. Our wilderness team processed thousands of permit applications. National Park Service researchers, educators and restoration crews pushed forward with donor-supported trail repairs, wildlife surveys, exhibits and more.

Meanwhile, the Conservancy dug into the fact that the way we often portray Yosemite — as a refuge from the stresses of the wider world — doesn't always hold up. Yosemite isn't immune: not to the coronavirus, not to climate change, and not to the many factors that can affect perceptions of and experiences in national parks, from the history of parks established on the lands of displaced people, to barriers hindering accessibility and inclusion in parks today.

Our mission guides us to preserve Yosemite's resources and enrich visitor experiences — and that means for everyone. But parks, including Yosemite, are not always welcoming for, relevant to and inclusive of all.

By late summer, fires raged across the West, including in and around Yosemite. As eerie orange light bathed the Valley, the urgency to "sow seeds of inclusion," to borrow a phrase from ranger Shelton Johnson, cut through the haze. The future of public lands, and of our shared habitat, depends on all of us caring about the natural world — and about making everyone feels welcome, represented and connected in outdoor spaces, especially in national parks.

In this issue, you'll read about projects our donors have supported that promote diversity, relevancy and inclusion in Yosemite. Our NPS colleagues discuss the need to tell untold stories, learn from Indigenous communities, and create opportunities for young people to experience nature. One story transports us to the annual Adventure Risk Challenge "Voices of Youth" event. Another dives into efforts to commemorate Chinese history in Yosemite.

There are many stories missing from these pages. As the park's partner, we have an opportunity to help everyone feel more welcomed and represented in Yosemite, and in the fields of conservation, philanthropy and outdoor recreation. This includes supporting projects that prioritize diversity and inclusion, amplifying voices historically underrepresented in parks, and championing the idea that diverse knowledge and experiences strengthen our collective ability to protect healthy ecosystems.

We believe in Yosemite's power to inspire and to bring people together. Thank you for being part of Yosemite's future.

*Frank Dean*

Frank Dean, President



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NOTES FROM THE FIELD:

# Spring Solitude

BY CORY GOEHRING,  
*Yosemite Conservancy Lead Naturalist*

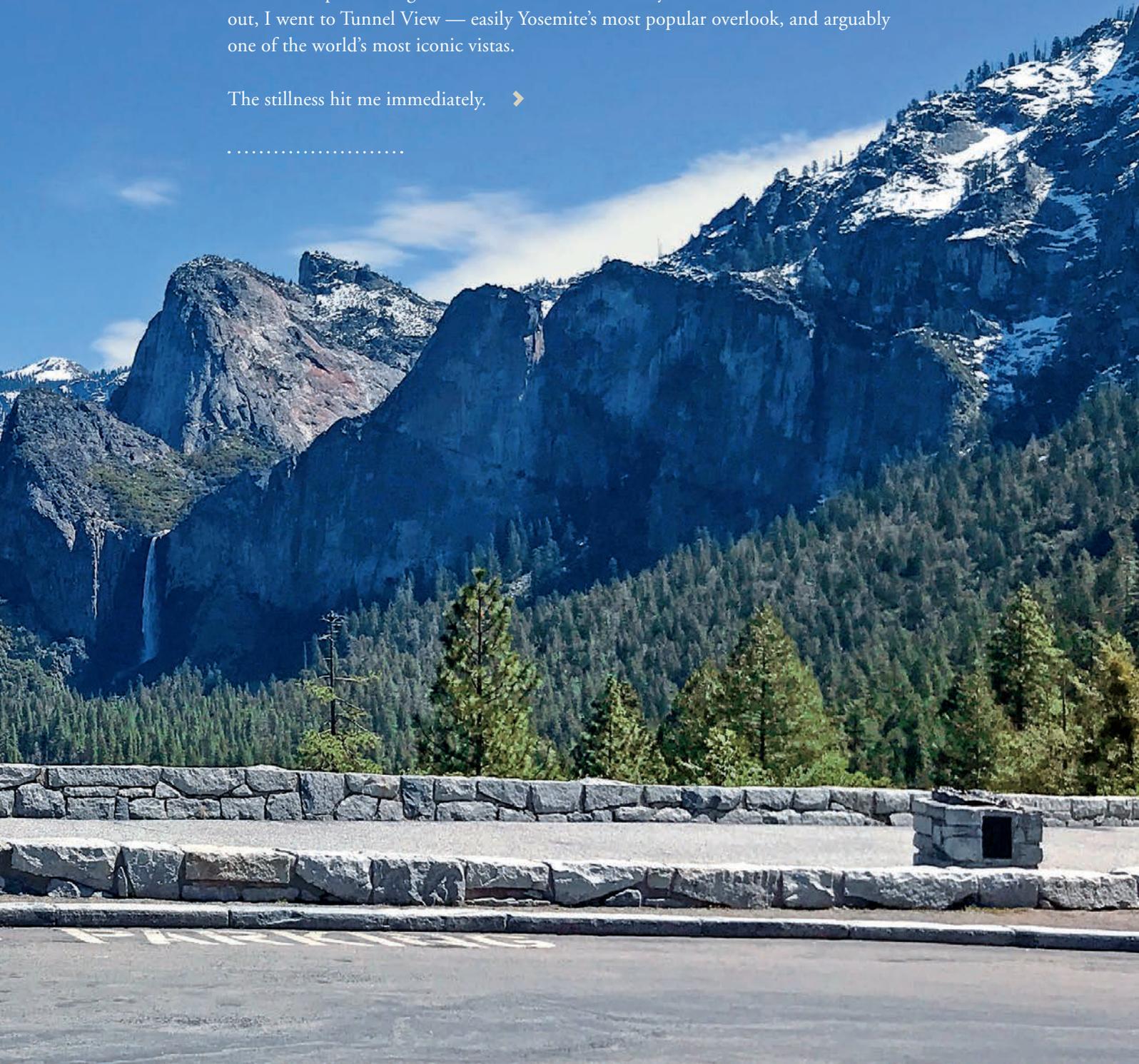


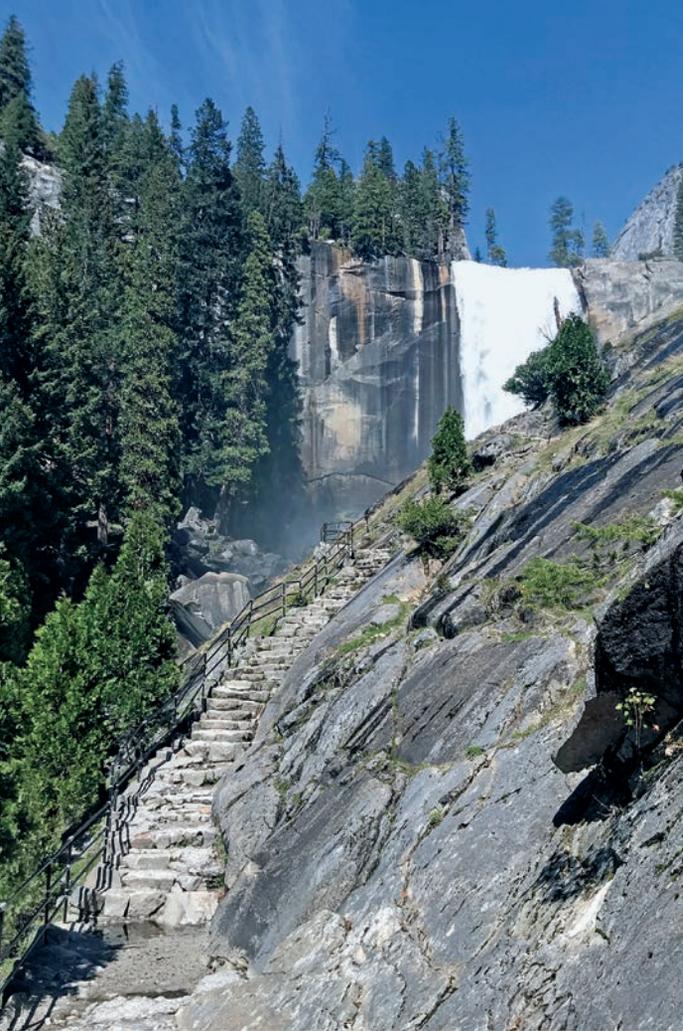
**O**n **March 20, 2020**, Yosemite closed temporarily to the public. Inside the park boundary remained several hundred black bears; thousands of arthropods; nearly 1,400 varieties of vascular plants; dozens of species of birds, bats, snakes, butterflies and amphibians; abundant mule deer; and a handful of human residents, including one Yosemite Conservancy lead naturalist.

As elsewhere, those of us within the park spent weeks sheltering at home, as the COVID-19 pandemic grew across the state and country. When it was safe to venture out, I went to Tunnel View — easily Yosemite’s most popular overlook, and arguably one of the world’s most iconic vistas.

The stillness hit me immediately. >

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Normally, people from around the world flock to Tunnel View in every season to admire the scenery. Cars honk alerts to pedestrians, and tour bus brakes exhale loudly, as passengers stream out toward the overlook's stone wall. Open-air trams roll into the parking lot, while interpretive rangers talk to visitors about trees, waterfalls and granite walls.

But on this April day, it was quiet. Every parking space was open. As I stepped out of my car, the only sound I heard was the engine cooling down after the climb from Yosemite Valley. Then my ears picked up the *whoosh* of wind rushing through the mile-long Wawona Tunnel, pushing me toward the viewing area. I watched a white-throated swift dance in acrobatic aerial movements, showing off to its audience of one. Trees swayed, as the cool wind swept toward Yosemite Valley.

As I settled into the strangely still landscape, I noticed a sound I'd never heard at Tunnel View, in my 13 years of living in Yosemite: Bridalveil Fall flowing down the Valley's south wall, more than a mile away.

Throughout the park, Yosemite's biodiversity was on display. Coyotes and bears roamed in meadows. Peregrine falcons nested on cliffs where they hadn't been seen before. Lupine bloomed, and scarlet snow plants emerged.

Yet everywhere I went, something was missing. The absence of people struck me, again and again. Roads were clear, trails were quiet. No families in RVs slowing to take in views they had researched and dreamed about. No adventure-seekers experiencing the thrill of their first hike to Vernal Fall. No awestruck sightseers at Glacier Point. No exclamations of wonder in myriad languages at the base of Yosemite Falls.

As an educator, I missed the opportunity to share this place with others, to talk about ecology and geology and history, to help people deepen their relationship with the environment and find inspiration here to take care of the natural world everywhere.

And that day at Tunnel View, as I listened to birds and wind and water, a feeling rushed over me, as fast as melting snow gushing into the Tuolumne River, or a car speeding through Wawona Tunnel, all gas, no brakes. I was alone, for the moment, but millions of humans had stood in that exact spot. Yosemite's first people might

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**TOP** An unusual sight: As snowmelt surged over Vernal Fall this spring, the Mist Trail's famous stone steps, usually crammed with hikers, stayed empty. **MIDDLE** This fuzzy bear cub was one of numerous wildlife sightings during the closure. Park rangers and residents reported that bears and other animals were meandering more openly than usual in the absence of cars and crowds. **BOTTOM** Cory Goehring was excited to get back to educating visitors when the Conservancy's Outdoor Adventures resumed in June, shortly after the park reopened. On all programs, including this August backpacking trip, participants and guides follow special COVID-19 precautions, such as wearing face masks when it isn't feasible to stay six feet apart.



**ABOVE** “Secretive bobcats are not often seen, but they have become more conspicuous since the park closure,” a post on the park’s Facebook page reported in late March, adding that wildlife were using roads and pathways usually frequented by humans.

have passed through this area and looked out at the wide valley of Ahwahnee. In 1851, the members of the Mariposa Battalion saw the valley’s granite-walled meadows from near this place, during a campaign to force out the area’s Indigenous people. African American Buffalo Soldiers, the nation’s first park rangers, might have paused here in the early 1900s. This view had born witness to millennia of stewardship, and to displacement, destruction and development. Its beauty helped inspire the legislative groundwork for today’s system of parks and public lands.

In June, Yosemite reopened. Tunnel View is again bustling with activity. Visitors wearing face masks and standing safely apart gaze over pines, meadows and the winding Merced, toward distant Half Dome and Clouds Rest, perhaps letting worries lift for a few moments.

Yosemite is home to five life zones; to diverse plants and animals, including unique species of bog orchid and pseudoscorpion, endangered bighorn sheep, and the rare Sierra Nevada red fox; to lakes, wetlands, giant sequoias and oak woodlands; and to thousands of years of human connection to land and life. Spending time in Yosemite during the temporary closure made me realize, more than ever before, how much people are part of this park. I hope that everyone who visits Yosemite today embraces the chance not just to observe its beauty and biodiversity, but also to contemplate and learn from its complex history, to consider the generations of people, going back millennia, who have cared for and shaped this place, and to nourish a sense of appreciation and responsibility for the natural world well beyond the park boundary. ■

# Yosemite Conservancy Adventures

Experience Yosemite on an Outdoor or Custom Adventure.

Join us to backpack, bird-watch, snowshoe, stargaze and more.

- ✓ Half-, full- and multi-day options.
- ✓ Always led by experienced naturalists.
- ✓ Bookings include park entry.
- ✓ Program fees support Yosemite.



Learn more at [yosemite.org/adventures](https://yosemite.org/adventures)

SHARING YOSEMITE'S

# Chinese HISTORY

Curiosity is often at the core of uncovering history. For Yosemite ranger Yen-Yen Chan, curiosity about Chinese history in the park has led to a decades-long journey of unearthing and sharing stories that might otherwise have gone untold.

Chan's enthusiasm for studying Chinese history in Yosemite was sparked in 1993, when she was working as a park intern in Tuolumne Meadows and was surprised to learn that Chinese workers had played a central role in building the famous Tioga Road.

Many years later, after returning to work as a park ranger, Chan was asked to lead a Yosemite Association program focused on the history of Chinese workers in the park. She agreed, and jumped into research.

Chan learned that Chinese immigrants began to move to the West



Coast in the 1840s, often seeking opportunities in the gold rush to support their families in China, where social and environmental disasters were ravaging many regions. California's Foreign Miners' Tax of 1850 forced Chinese immigrants to search for work beyond gold mining, including in agriculture and railroad construction.

In Yosemite, Chinese immigrants made up most of the workforce that built the Wawona Road — during just 18 weeks, in winter, using only handpicks and shovels — and the Washburn Road, in southwestern Yosemite. The latter road is long gone, but its history lives on in the Conservancy-supported Washburn Trail to Mariposa Grove.

And, as Chan had learned in 1993, Chinese laborers helped build the 56-mile Great Sierra Wagon Road, today's Tioga Road, in the 1880s. The crew worked in rugged terrain on foot, without machinery, using dangerous blasting powder to clear the route and hand tools to build retaining walls. According to one report, 250 Chinese-American and 90 European-American laborers completed the road in just 130 days.

Through her research, Chan also learned about an early 1900s building in Wawona that had once housed a laundry run by Chinese workers, and later became a carriage shop. Through the years, the building had fallen into disrepair,

and much of its history was lost with it.

When donors Sandra and Franklin Yee learned about the Conservancy's 2019 grant to the National Park Service to restore the laundry building as part of the Pioneer Yosemite History Center, they were so inspired that they decided to significantly increase their support by making a generous major gift to fully fund the work.

Park preservation experts repaired windows, eaves and siding; rebuilt the front porch; and removed modern plumbing and electrical utilities, with the goal of returning the building to its original state. The project also included adding educational exhibits about Chinese history in the park.

For the Yees, funding the laundry restoration was an opportunity to honor Chinese-American history, the immigrant story and their own family's deep personal connections to Yosemite. Sandra's parents, Hogan and Ruth Wong, bought a cabin in Wawona in 1953, and her family has visited the park every summer since 1949. Today, Yosemite remains a touchstone for the Yees' children and grandchildren, and it is a place to honor their ancestors.

Thanks to Chan and the Yees' curiosity and passion, stories of Chinese history in Yosemite are coming to light, in Wawona and beyond. ■

“It is the perfect project for us, to support the Conservancy’s work and commemorate Chinese history in Yosemite.”

— SANDRA & FRANKLIN YEE  
Yosemite Conservancy Donors



**OPPOSITE** Yosemite Conservancy donors Sandra and Franklin Yee stand by the Wawona cabin that has been in Sandra's family since the 1950s. **ABOVE** The Yees supported a Conservancy-funded project to restore this historic Wawona building, which originally housed a Chinese laundry. The restored building will be used to educate the public of the role Chinese immigrants played in the park's early years. A new educational exhibit will introduce visitors to people like backcountry chef Tie Sing (pictured at right), one of many Chinese workers whose stories are woven into Yosemite's history.



# Yosemite's New Climbing Exhibit

BY RYAN KELLY,  
Yosemite Conservancy Projects Manager

Yosemite's Valley Visitor Center has been closed since spring, as a pandemic safety precaution, but when it reopens, visitors will find a new resource: the Climbing and Stewardship Exhibit, which weaves together human and natural history to show how experiences on Yosemite's rock walls, domes and peaks connect people to the park and inspire stewardship. The exhibit was installed in June, after months of planning and production.

I got involved with the project in 2019, when representatives from the National Park Service, American Alpine Club, Yosemite Climbing Association and Yosemite Conservancy started to plan the exhibit. What images, objects and information capture the essence of climbing in Yosemite? How can the exhibit tell an inclusive story that invites and inspires all visitors to discover their own wilderness adventure?

**LEFT** A crew installed photos, informational panels and artifacts for the new "Climbing and Stewardship" educational exhibit in the Valley Visitor Center this summer.

PHOTOS: © YOSEMITE CONSERVANCY/RYAN KELLY



The exhibit begins with a 9-by-12-foot image of El Capitan, stitched together from more than 2,000 photos and overlaid with climbing routes. The huge photo prompts a question: How can an exhibit capture big-wall climbing in the confines of the visitor center? After all, an average ascent of 3,000-foot-tall El Capitan takes three to five days!



Where do big-wall climbers sleep? What tools are necessary for a safe and successful climb? The exhibit includes gear from past and present, such as a heavy-duty “haul bag” and a portaledge — a suspended platform climbers set up as a cliffside camping spot.



The exhibit team landed on key themes, including climbing history, life on the wall, techniques, safety and stewardship. This section on how climbing has evolved features an image of Lonnie Kauk on an exceptionally difficult route that was established by his father and went unrepeated for decades. The panel touches on the larger story of Lonnie’s family and the Indigenous people who still call the Yosemite area home.



In addition to featuring photos, stories and historical artifacts, the exhibit invites visitors to learn the basics of climbing techniques and terminology, and to test out their problem-solving skills, just like climbers do on a wall.

I hope you enjoyed this sneak peek! The exhibit will be ready to welcome people when it’s safe for the visitor center to reopen. In the meantime, I hope your own outdoor experiences, in Yosemite or elsewhere, inspire you to keep learning about and taking care of the natural world. As the exhibit’s final panels remind us, how you go — with curiosity, care and respect for the environment and fellow travelers — is as important as where you go. ■

# A PARK *for* ALL



**B**efore coming to Yosemite — where he has worked as a ranger for more than two decades — Shelton Johnson spent his inaugural National Park Service years in Yellowstone, home to the famous Roosevelt Arch, which welcomes visitors with the phrase: “For the benefit and enjoyment of the people.”

Today, Johnson clearly remembers those engraved words — and sees persistent gaps in “the people” who visit, work in and have access to Yellowstone, Yosemite and other parks. “The sustainability of national parks is at risk if not all ‘the people’ feel a connection to public lands,” he says, noting that “the people” means the U.S. population at large, in all its cultural, ethnic, gender and physical diversity.

“This is a critical time to plant seeds of inclusion that can grow during the next 20 or 30 years,” Johnson says.

One of the challenges Johnson and others are working to address is identifying the barriers — often invisible, intangible and deeply tied to history — that have resulted in people of color being underrepresented in park visitation. (In July 2020, ABC news reported that, according to the most recent 10-year NPS study, only 23% of park visitors identified as people of color, while they account for 42% of the U.S. population.)

How can the NPS in Yosemite — and its partners, including the Conservancy — ensure the park reflects the diversity of its country and state, and is as welcoming and inclusive as possible for everyone who wants to visit?

A key component, Johnson says, is making sure people see park staff who represent a range of ethnicities, gender identities and physical abilities, especially those working in public-facing roles. “First impressions matter,” he says. “We have to make sure visitors see themselves in the staff they meet.”

Another essential element: ensuring stories about Yosemite go beyond standard narratives about park history, conservation and outdoor recreation. Sabrina



PHOTOS (ABOVE) © CAROLYN BOTTELL (RIGHT) © NO LIMITS YOSEMITE

Diaz, Yosemite’s chief of interpretation and education, notes that bringing in diverse voices helps shatter the “lens of implicit bias” that can shape which stories about the park are told.

Yosemite ranger Yenyen Chan, who has played an instrumental role in researching the history of Chinese workers in the park (read more on p. 8), agrees that telling more complete, less known stories about the park is crucial. “National parks aren’t just places to recreate in nature, they are also places where we share important stories of our country’s diverse cultural history,” she says.

In recent years, Johnson, Diaz, Chan and their colleagues have focused increasingly on ensuring Yosemite is relevant to and inclusive of diverse visitors. In July, Johnson took on a new role as Yosemite’s community engagement specialist, through which he’s focusing on increasing awareness of and access to the park for populations underrepresented in Yosemite, especially from nearby communities. He’s also working on a series of podcasts and an interactive app about Black history in Yosemite.

Diaz has helped guide numerous projects focused on making educational and trip-planning resources more accessible to visitors who speak languages other than English. For example, with Conservancy support, park staff launched *Aventura Yosemite*, a bilingual program in Yosemite Valley that offers educational activities in Spanish and English, and they are translating park materials and videos into Spanish, Mandarin and Korean.



TOP Yosemite National Park covers nearly 760,000 acres of federally protected land, teeming with superlative mountains, waterfalls and trees, and steeped in millennia of complex human and natural history. With support from Conservancy grants, Yosemite rangers are working to ensure the park is increasingly relevant to, and inclusive of, diverse visitors. ABOVE Ranger Shelton Johnson speaks to participants of the 2017 donor-supported “No Limits Yosemite” program. Johnson has spent decades working to make parks more relevant and inclusive. His new role focuses on engaging communities that are underrepresented in Yosemite.



**ABOVE** Ranger Yenyen Chan speaks to hikers who headed to the park in 2019 for the Yosemite-Sing Peak Pilgrimage. Chan participates in the annual journey to Sing Peak as part of her commitment to studying and sharing the history of Chinese workers in Yosemite — including the story of renowned backcountry chef Tie Sing, the peak's namesake.

The park has made progress on sharing stories that go beyond the best-known conservation narratives, such as those of Clare Marie Hodges, the first woman to work as a ranger in Yosemite; of Japanese artist Chiura Obata; and, thanks to Johnson's extensive research and outreach, of the African American Buffalo Soldiers who served in the West more than a century ago. Conservancy supporters are contributing to the effort, through projects focused on finding and sharing stories of women from Yosemite's past, researching African American history in the park, and honoring the voices of the Indigenous tribes of Yosemite. (Read more about Yosemite's affiliated tribes on p. 15.)

Conservancy donors play an essential role in supporting the park's efforts to advance relevancy, diversity and inclusion, Diaz says, including by supporting initiatives such as the Yosemite Leadership Program (YLP), which helps undergraduates — primarily students from the University of California, Merced — experience Yosemite, learn about environmental stewardship, and explore and pursue careers in public lands.

In recent years, donors have provided more than \$3.8 million to support YLP, WildLink, Adventure Risk Challenge, Parks in Focus and other programs that connect young people from under-resourced communities with park-based experiences.

Government funding helps the park open visitor centers and run some educational programs, Diaz notes, "but it does not allow us to create beautiful exhibits, or bring back to life the Chinese laundry building in Wawona, or invite underrepresented audiences for trips in the park — that is all Conservancy donors."

As Diaz, Johnson and Chan reiterated, and as we at the Conservancy firmly believe, there is much more work ahead. There are more stories to tell, and more voices and perspectives to learn from, especially those that traditionally have been overlooked in conversations about conservation and outdoor access. Yosemite Conservancy is committed to ensuring the park is inclusive of all, and we couldn't do it without the support of our donors. ■

# Yosemite's FIRST STEWARDS



**ABOVE** Bark-covered umachas, built as part of a larger, ongoing project to re-establish a cultural space for affiliated tribes in Yosemite Valley.

The area covered by Yosemite National Park is part of the homeland of seven Native American tribes: the Bishop Paiute Tribe, Bridgeport Indian Colony, Mono Lake Kootzaduka'a Tribe, North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians of California, Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians, Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation, and Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians.

For millennia — long before map lines and the notion of owned acres demarcated the geography — the ancestors of today's tribal members lived and travelled in the Sierra Nevada, from the eastern Sierra to areas known today as Tuolumne Meadows, Yosemite Valley, Hetch Hetchy and Wawona, and into the western foothills and beyond, as they gathered and hunted, visited friends and family, and took care of the land and water that sustained them and all life.

When miners, ranchers and homesteaders flooded the Sierra in the mid to late 1800s, many Indigenous people were killed or forced onto sometimes short-lived reservations, their food sources and homes destroyed, and their children sent to boarding schools for cultural assimilation, a brutal practice that continued into the 1970s and whose effects are still felt today.

The tribes endured genocide, eviction and exploitation. But their presence as caretakers of the land is not consigned to history. Today's tribal members continue the stewardship traditions of their ancestors, including languages and stories as diverse as the peaks and valleys of their homeland, but they all share an intrinsic connection to each other and to the park, as its original, continuing and future stewards.

For decades, the seven tribes have worked together, as the “traditionally associated tribes and communities of Yosemite,” and with the National Park Service, to continue stewardship of their homeland.

Federal law requires the NPS to consult with tribal

governments, sovereign nations, on projects that may affect archeological sites and places of religious and cultural significance. Liz Williams, Yosemite's cultural anthropologist and tribal liaison, facilitates those consultations. She cites an increased focus on educating park staff about the intergovernmental relationship, including by attempting to incorporate elements of traditional ecological knowledge, such as prescribed burning, into park resource management.

Ultimately, Williams says, the relationship between the park and the tribes is about taking a collaborative approach to caring for natural and cultural resources. “We have a lot to learn and a lot of work ahead of us,” she says. “Yosemite Conservancy's support is critical in this mission.”

NPS and Yosemite Conservancy representatives have consulted with tribal members on restoration projects, such as at Mariposa Grove and Bridalveil Fall. One outcome of those collaborations is educational signs written by tribal members that share stories and ecological insights.

In 2019, the seven tribes completed a book, *Voices of the People*, which features contributions from each tribe, covering history, personal recollections, environmental stewardship, and a common thread of resilience and hope for the future. The book, which is not yet publicly available, gathers vital tribal perspectives on Yosemite's past and present that aren't captured in popular, often Eurocentric narratives about the park.

Learning from and working with the tribes on education and conservation is critical to the future of Yosemite, Williams says — and to ensuring visitors are aware of its first, and continuing, stewards. As the seven tribes wrote on a sign that now stands in Mariposa Grove: “As you walk through this park, remember who walked here before you, and who will walk here after you. We ask that you respect this place, so that our people can continue to enjoy these lands like our ancestors have.” ■



## ARC STUDENTS FIND THEIR Voices in Yosemite

**O**n a Wednesday evening in late July, more than 250 people watched online as Jasmine Marquez introduced a live-streamed YouTube event: the annual Adventure Risk Challenge “Voices of Youth” celebration.

Years earlier, Marquez had participated in Adventure Risk Challenge (ARC), a program for California high school students that blends outdoor education with literacy and leadership. Now, as an ARC alumna and member of the program’s Young Professional Board, she reflected that

ARC helped her navigate through college and into a rewarding career, and positively affecting her, her family and her community “like a tiny ripple effect that turns into a roaring wave crashing onto a beach.”

For more than a decade, Yosemite Conservancy donors have supported ARC, helping dozens of students participate in academic-year activities and a multiweek Sierra Nevada summer course. The COVID-19 pandemic prompted ARC to adjust its programming, but the experience has been as powerful as ever.

After Marquez spoke, the camera view transitioned to a stage in Oakhurst, California, where ARC Executive Director Sarah Cupery Ottley explained the unique circumstances of the 2020 “Voices of Youth.” Normally, the ARC summer students would be reading to a packed house. With gatherings limited due to the pandemic, they were instead speaking in person to their fellow participants and a handful of ARC employees — and, it turned out, to the largest audience in the event’s history.

The eight Guerrerx, as the 2020 ARC summer-course participants dubbed themselves — it’s a gender-neutral version of the Spanish word for “warriors” — had started their monthlong journey in early July, when all participating students and staff had tested negative for COVID-19 and come together in an isolated “bubble” for four weeks of learning and adventuring, from their southern Yosemite base camp to the remote backcountry.

Despite pandemic precautions, the core elements of the summer course remained intact: The students spent 15 days backpacking in the Yosemite and Granite Chief wildernesses, challenged themselves on ropes courses and rock walls, learned to read maps and pitch tents, interviewed community leaders, and completed hundreds of hours of academic coursework. As one student, Tony Marquez, explained, learning outside in a tightknit group

made for an inspiring educational experience: “I cannot express how different it feels here versus in a classroom,” he said. “When you feel the support that everyone is bringing ... it’s really empowering.”

And, fulfilling a key part of the ARC experience, they composed metaphorical poems, drawing on observations of the natural world to describe deeply personal experiences.

On the Oakhurst stage, the first student presenter stepped to the microphone, looked out with a smile and began to read: “I am a colony of ants ...”

For the next 35 minutes, the students spoke through the evocative lenses of sequoias, fire, flowers, sunlight and moonlight. After each poem, cheers erupted from the in-person audience, and it’s safe to say that rapt at-home viewers were clapping and smiling along with them.

Thanks to your support, the 2020 ARC students have been able to continue benefiting from a meaningful program, to find their voices among Yosemite’s waterfalls and peaks during an especially tumultuous year — and to inspire people far beyond the Guerrerx group with their confidence and courage. ■



To learn more about ARC and read blogs from this summer and past years, visit [adventureriskchallenge.org](https://adventureriskchallenge.org)



**OPPOSITE** The eight Adventure Risk Challenge 2020 summer course students started their journey together with a weeklong backpacking trip in Yosemite. To ensure the safety of all involved, ARC required staff and students to follow strict safety measures and test negative for coronavirus before the course. During the course, they traveled together in a “bubble,” interacting in person only with one another. **ABOVE** Writing and public speaking are core parts of the ARC experience. While in Yosemite, the 2020 students participated in writing workshops, captured observations in journals, and worked on the metaphorical poems that they presented at the online “Voices of Youth” event at the end of July.

“We know the role nature plays in the development of the whole child, and in our development as grownups.”

— CARMEN BOGAN

Author of *“Where’s Rodney?”*

# Q&A

WITH CARMEN BOGAN



**ABOVE** “Children’s books should reflect our society,” Carmen Bogan says. Bogan is an award-winning children’s book author and the founder of Dream On Publishing. She also spent 12 years working with the California Department of Health, where she focused in part on the role parks play in public health.

In 2017, Yosemite Conservancy published the children’s book *Where’s Rodney?*, about a young Black child who visits a big park. As the award-winning critically acclaimed book continues to fly off our shelves, we checked in with author Carmen Bogan about *Where’s Rodney?* and what’s next for her writing.

**Q ::** What inspired you to write *Where’s Rodney?*

**A ::** While working for the California Department of Public Health, I collaborated with Michele Gee, chief of interpretation and education for the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. She told me about a little brown boy and his family who lived in San Francisco’s Bayview-Hunters Point area and got to see Crissy Field and the Presidio for the first time through one of Gee’s programs. They were amazed at the beauty and majesty, and astonished that it was right there in their own city. That story inspired me to write the book.

**Q ::** Why did you choose to send Rodney to a park?

**A ::** I’ve met many kids like Rodney. When I was in elementary school in Compton, “Rodney” was the smart, antsy kid who seemed to take pride in hiding his genius. He wanted to be outside, but he couldn’t imagine going to

any park, let alone a national park. In his experience, parks were dangerous. *Where’s Rodney?* shows what happens when that child has the chance to touch nature, and how a single experience can change someone’s perspective.

**Q ::** This book features one main character, but that’s not the whole story. Who, and what, is *Where’s Rodney* about?

**A ::** *Where’s Rodney?* is about environmental justice. It’s about all children in underserved, under-resourced communities. Some have a park within walking distance, others don’t have access to any outside spaces. Sometimes there are parks around, but they’re not safe, or there’s limited transportation. Reading diverse books expands children’s perspectives, develops their understanding of our collective humanity and helps them appreciate diversity. When given the choice, authors and publishers should ensure multiculturalism in books is the rule rather than the exception.

**Q ::** What response has the book received?

**A ::** This story has touched the hearts of so many children and adults. We know the role nature plays in the development of the whole child, and in our development as grownups. It’s heartbreaking to know some children can’t have that experience.

The most heartwarming response I have gotten is from Black children. They love the book but are fascinated by

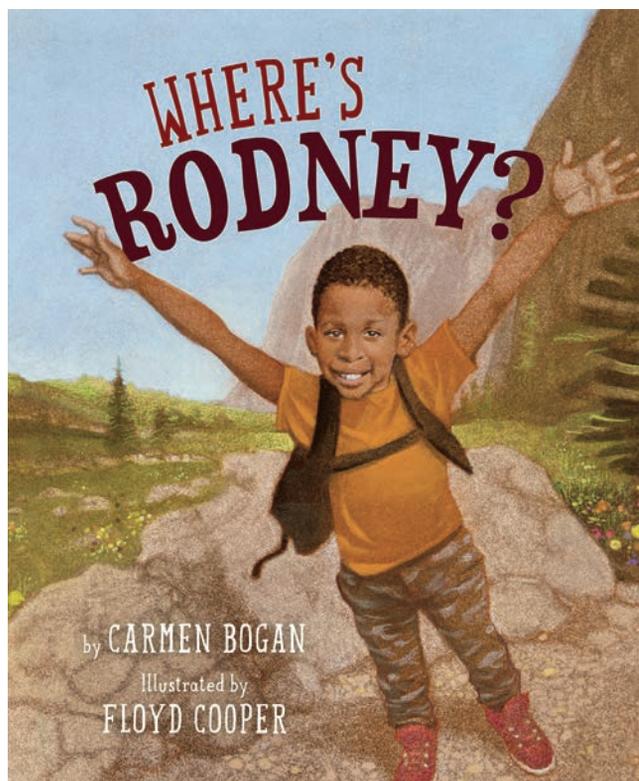
the fact that a Black person is the author! Some come up to me and say, incredulously, “You wrote *Rodney?*”

**Q ::** What’s next for you? We heard you’ve been working on a new project?

**A ::** Yes, *Tasha’s Voice* is a companion to *Where’s Rodney?*. I’m so excited about it. Tasha is a quiet, somewhat shy girl who visits that same park on the same day as Rodney. Being in the park helps her to find her voice. The book carries a valuable message to girls about the importance and power of their voices. Rodney might even make an appearance! ■

 This interview has been edited for length and clarity. Read an extended Q&A with Carmen Bogan at [yosemite.org/wheres-rodney](http://yosemite.org/wheres-rodney).

**RIGHT** Since its publication in 2017 *Where’s Rodney?* has been named a Junior Library Guild Selection, a Kirkus Reviews Best Book and a Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC) Children’s Choice. *Where’s Rodney?* will be released as a paperback and ebook in February 2021; meanwhile, Bogan and illustrator Floyd Cooper are working on a companion book, *Tasha’s Voice*, which is due out next year.



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online purchases only.



# Meet the Team: Hannah Yee

If you contact Yosemite Conservancy these days, you'll likely interact with Hannah Yee, our development and donor services assistant. Hannah grew up in San Francisco and fell in love with Yosemite on family trips to the park. She joined the Conservancy team in 2019, just a few months before our offices closed due to the pandemic.

Whether welcoming people to our San Francisco office or, now, working from home, Hannah plays a pivotal role in our communications and operations. Her work includes helping colleagues; answering countless calls, emails and letters from Yosemite fans; supporting our monthly giving program; and more.

Hannah has gotten to know many of our supporters — here's your chance to get to know her! We asked Hannah about...

**... her connection to Yosemite and public lands.**

I love spending time outside, hiking, swimming in rivers and observing wildlife. Visiting Yosemite and other parks has made me appreciate public lands and has helped fuel my passion for protecting the environment, fighting climate change and spreading awareness about endangered species.

**... why she joined the team and what inspires her work.**

I knew I wanted to work for a health or environmental nonprofit after college. I was especially drawn to the Conservancy's support of programs focused on youth from under-resourced communities, because I think empowering people to connect with nature is so important.

I love connecting with our donors and hearing their Yosemite stories. At the same time, learning about challenges facing public lands, from droughts to deforestation, motivates me to keep doing the work I do!

**... what she's learning, and hoping to share, at the Conservancy.**

Despite telecommuting for most of my time at the



Conservancy, I've learned what it means to work collaboratively. I'm excited to continue learning how I can use my skill set to help protect Yosemite and the environment.

Beyond my interest in public lands, I'm an artist, dancer and gardener, and I have a background in museum ethics. I love to combine passion with creativity — I hope to inspire others to do the same. I care deeply about environmental, racial and social justice issues, and I believe preserving our past, protecting our environment and ensuring a livable future are interconnected.

**... why it's important for people to experience places such as Yosemite.**

Our only Earth is in crisis. It's crucial for people to connect with nature, so they can be inspired to protect the environment. I hope the Conservancy continues working to ensure that Yosemite is a park for people of all backgrounds, and that the park continues to inspire people to protect nature for future generations. ■

Stay tuned for more "Meet the Team" features on our website and in future magazine issues!

PHOTO (ABOVE) © COURTESY OF HANNAH YEE PHOTOS (MIDDLE LEFT) © JAMES MCGREW (BOTTOM LEFT) © ROBB HIRSCH (RIGHT TOP & MIDDLE) © COURTESY OF NPS.

# You Make a Difference

## 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

**U**nderstatement of the millennium: 2020 hasn't gone quite as expected. Some grant-funded projects were shifted or delayed. We canceled volunteer programs, art workshops and theater shows. Conservancy staff set up a walk-up bookstore in the Valley, managed a suddenly all-online wilderness permit system, and stepped up to embrace new ideas and responsibilities.

Tumult aside, we're delighted and grateful to have been able to help hundreds of people connect with Yosemite through safe, naturalist-led outdoor adventures; the PSAR station on the Mist Trail; and custom art classes this year; to stay in touch with our community online, and to make progress on important projects in the park.

So far this year, your support has helped our National Park Service partners ...



... **protect diverse wildlife**, including by installing 60 new bear-resistant food lockers in Wawona, releasing more than 100 endangered Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frogs in high country lakes, and monitoring 15 peregrine falcon nest sites.



... **restore habitat in eastern Yosemite Valley**, by building a boardwalk and planting native vegetation to reconnect fragmented wetlands near Lower River Amphitheater. The restored area could support vulnerable wildlife such as California red-legged frogs.



... **repair trails throughout the park**. NPS and California Conservation Corps crews improved trails in the Valley, and near Tamarack Flat and Sunrise Lakes. The Yosemite Climber Stewards worked on climbing-route approach trails in Tuolumne Meadows.

... **keep people safe and moving**. In addition to the usual focus on hiking and swiftwater safety, the Preventive Search and Rescue program introduced pandemic-specific precautions, such as one-way Mist Trail use.

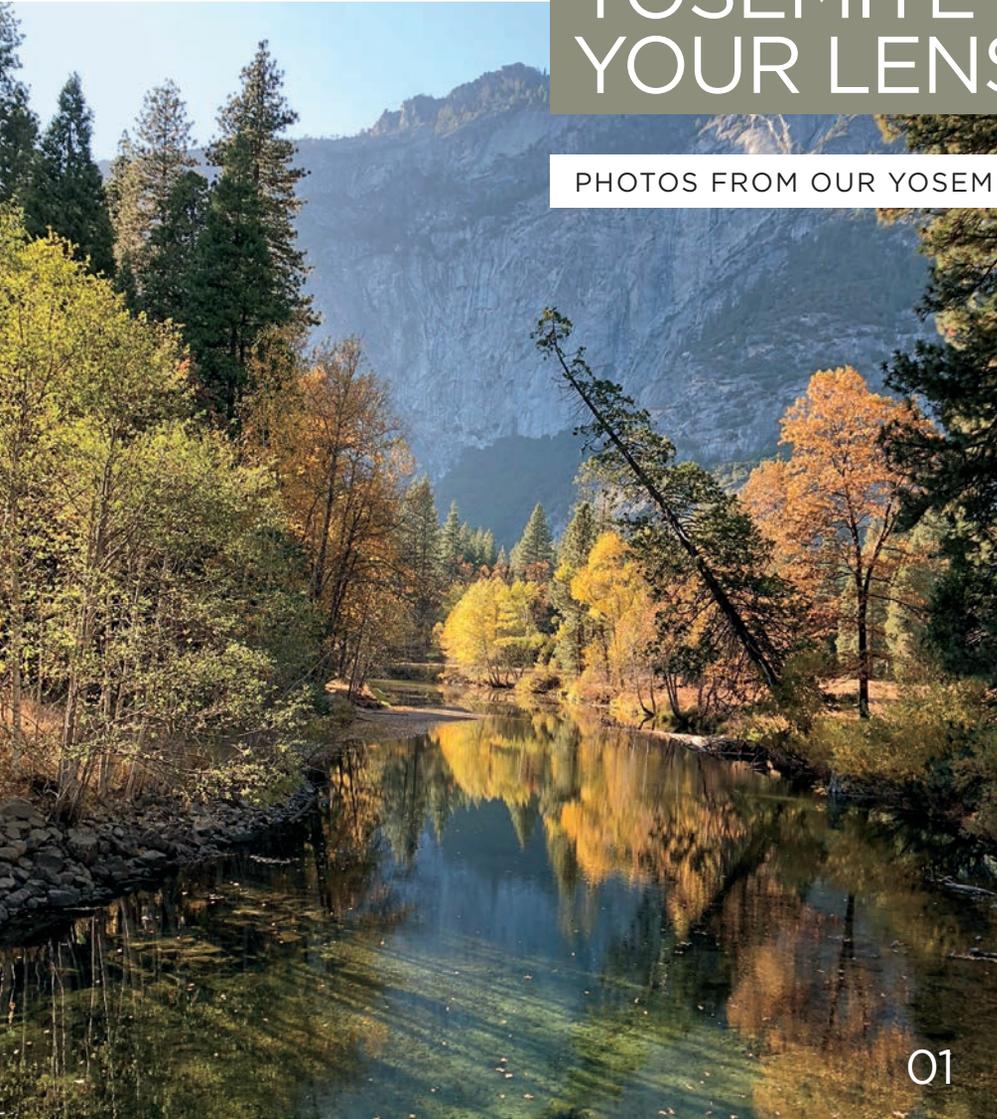


... **get creative with online education**. With in-person options interrupted, the Yosemite Leadership Program, Junior Rangers and other youth programs offered virtual activities; and the Parsons Memorial Lodge Summer Series presenters shared talks and readings via video.

... **and much more!** Read more highlights from 2020: [yosemite.org/2020-highlights](https://www.yosemite.org/2020-highlights)

# YOSEMITE THROUGH YOUR LENS

PHOTOS FROM OUR YOSEMITE COMMUNITY



- 01** Autumn on the Merced  
PHOTO © JOAN LOMBARD
- 02** Praying Mantis  
PHOTO © RICHARD GASKILL
- 03** Night Sky at Glacier Point  
PHOTO © NATHAN BRAUNER
- 04** Lembert Dome Reflections  
PHOTO © KATE HALDRUP

Thanks for sharing your shots, Yosemite fans! To see more photos of the park, and share your own, follow us on social media:

-   @yosemiteconservancy
-  @yoseconservancy
-  flickr.com/groups/yosemiteconservancy

**YOSEMITE CONSERVANCY**

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CONSERVANCY**

# Ways to Give

**THERE ARE MANY WAYS** you and your organization can support the meaningful work of Yosemite Conservancy. We look forward to exploring these philanthropic opportunities with you.

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Naming Yosemite Conservancy as a beneficiary in your will, trust or retirement account ensures the park remains well-preserved and accessible. Your gift will become part of the legacy fund, which makes meaningful work possible far into the future.

To find out how you can leave a legacy for Yosemite, contact Catelyn Spencer at [cspencer@yosemite.org](mailto:cspencer@yosemite.org) or 415-434-8446 x319

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