

# 2021 Annual Report

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## OUR MISSION

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



**YOSEMITE  
CONSERVANCY.**

*Providing For Yosemite's Future*





# Your Gifts at Work

## 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

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While the world recovered in starts and stops in 2021, Yosemite Conservancy's donor-funded work hit the trail running and didn't look back. California Conservation Corps (CCC) members returned to the backcountry rehabilitating trails; infrared cameras collected images and data on mountain lions, Sierra Nevada red fox, and other wildlife; and dozens of kids from Central Valley and Bay Area schools entered the gates of Yosemite for the first time through the Parks in Focus and Adventure Risk Challenge programs. As fires burned throughout much of the West, stewardship of Yosemite's sequoias, black oaks, and sugar pines helped promote their resilience and longevity.

Resilience is at the heart of both the work of Yosemite Conservancy and Yosemite, itself: This is ancient land that has seen enormous change. Human influence on the natural environment is significant, but thanks to our supporters, there is good news to share, too — especially about efforts to ensure the continued resilience of Yosemite's plant and animal communities.

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PHOTOS: (COVER) © TOM STAHL, (ABOVE & TOP RIGHT) © COURTESY OF NPS.



## YOUR GIFTS AT WORK

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The **Pacific fisher**, a rarely seen Yosemite mammal, was **detected at 10 of the 26 camera arrays placed by researchers and had a total of 20 unique detections**, thanks to donor-funded research. The use of GPS tracking in multiple projects helps inform researchers of travel corridors and habitats, which then informs fire-management strategy. **Restoration projects have healed fragmented habitats from Wawona to Yosemite Valley to Lyell Canyon, and they will soon revitalize Ackerson Meadow**, which our donors helped purchase and donate to the park in 2016.

Neither this work — nor the innovation, adaptation, and perseverance that kept so many projects and programs moving forward in 2021 — would be possible without the support of the Conservancy community. We reflect on last year with immense gratitude for our donors, program participants, and bookstore patrons; our dedicated team; and our partners in the National Park Service and beyond, including at the University of California, NatureBridge, Adventure Risk Challenge, and elsewhere.

As the pandemic has shaped our lives during the past two years, we are better prepared than ever to adapt to uncertain conditions. We value the creativity, flexibility, and



PHOTO: © COURTESY OF NPS.

teamwork of our staff, partners, volunteers, and supporters in helping to keep people connected to Yosemite from near and far, and to ensure important work continues in the park. We bade farewell to 2021 with gratitude for everyone who cares for the Conservancy, as we continue pursuing our organization's mission — providing projects and programs that preserve Yosemite and enrich visitor experiences for all.

These highlights capture just some of the ways you made a difference in Yosemite in 2021. To learn more about how your support and participation helps the park, and to read more about our 2022 grants, visit [yosemite.org/impact](https://yosemite.org/impact).



PHOTO: © RHAA LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS.

## Welcome Center

Yosemite Conservancy gratefully acknowledges the following donors whose 2021 donations supported the Yosemite Valley Welcome Center at the Guardian Level or above.

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Ronald W. & Ann C. Berg  
Melanie & Mark Biersack  
City National Bank  
Dian "CJ" May Corneliussen  
Dana & David Dornsife  
Franklin & Catherine Johnson  
Don & Dorothy Lewis  
Manitou Fund  
Stephanie & Mark Robinson  
Thomas Shannon  
Ned & Carol Spieker  
Pam & Jim Starr  
Stephanie & Andrew Towell  
Peter & Virginia Van Kuran  
Clifford James Walker  
Walter R. Wallner Jr. & Jill Appenzeller  
Marilyn & Howard Whelan





## YOUR GIFTS AT WORK

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The multiyear project to rehabilitate the area at the base of **Bridalveil Fall saw dramatic progress in 2021**. Both park crews and construction contractors worked nearly all year to bring to life a redesigned visitor experience at this iconic Yosemite Valley destination, with major support from our donors. Work completed last year included improvements to trails and roads to address safety and accessibility, installation of utilities to support new restrooms, rehabilitation of parking areas to better serve the area's millions of visitors, and enlargement of viewing platforms so everyone can enjoy the fall throughout the seasons. Bus-specific parking, a new shuttle bus stop, and an orientation plaza at Bridalveil Straight were constructed to welcome visitors and help them enjoy their time in the park.

**A new loop trail at the base of the waterfall is nearly complete.** National Park Service trail crews constructed a boardwalk over sensitive wetland habitat and completed a new trail to offer visitors of all abilities stunning views of the fall. This loop trail will disperse visitor traffic, provide areas of rest and contemplation, and reduce crowding throughout the area.

The goal is to create an experience for visitors that is on par with the beauty of the area. Where visitors previously encountered limited views; uneven, narrow, and often-crowded trails; and poorly functioning parking areas; recent donor-supported improvements will allow people to fully enjoy one of the Valley's most iconic sites.

Thanks to donor support, the **Merced Grove of Giant Sequoias fire fuels abatement project was completed** with the help of Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions (CHIPS) crews. This work supports critical monitoring to help resource managers understand why adult sequoias are dying at unprecedented rates. It was done with greater urgency in the wake of recent fires and higher-than-typical sequoia mortality.

PHOTOS: © COURTESY OF NPS.

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PHOTO: © COURTESY OF NPS.

In summer and fall 2021, Tribal members and CHIPS crews — composed of local residents and Tribal members — worked on **restoring California black oak groves** in Yosemite Valley. They tended, cleared, and collected in preparation for pile and prescribed burning.

Black oak is a cultural keystone species for **the park's seven affiliated Tribes**. Groves in Yosemite Valley were planted, tended, burned, and harvested by Tribal members for centuries. The trees' original stewards were forcibly removed from this role — to the detriment of cultural traditions and the health of black oaks. Fortunately, with donor support, Tribal and CHIPS crew members will tend to oaks and prepare the groves for prescribed burns going forward. These activities will continue to re-establish relationships with these groves, promote seedling and sapling recruitment, and promote high-quality acorn production.

Thanks to your support, we were able “capture” **mountain lions** in the wild at 31 different camera locations throughout the park! **The 2021 season was focused on tagging this catalog of mountain lion images and conducting analyses.** The research team tagged **more than 144,000 images** in August alone.

Yosemite's songbird program **celebrated 31 years of monitoring in 2021** — making it the longest-standing MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) effort in North America. By the end of the season, more than **2,130 birds from 62 species were captured**, including the **first-ever capture** in the entire Yosemite MAPS dataset of a **vesper sparrow** at Big Meadow.

Surveys completed in July indicated that **bighorn sheep are recovering well from heavy winters** (2017–2018, 2018–2019), but they are facing mountain lion predation pressure in some areas. Current population numbers for the Yosemite herds include Gibbs with 54 bighorns, Warren with 18 bighorns, and Cathedral with eight bighorns.

Remote sensing camera detections and scat analysis bring the total number of the endangered **Sierra Nevada red fox detections within the park to 36 detections at 14 locations**. This data is also used in projects supporting mountain lions and Pacific fishers.



PHOTO: © AUSTIN DILLMAN.



## YOUR GIFTS AT WORK

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After the cancellation of in-person programming in 2020 due to COVID, Ask a Climber **returned in 2021** with interpretive walks at El Capitan telescope. This essential work was the most popular interpretive program in Yosemite in 2021, with **113 telescope programs, 10,480 contacted visitors, and 13 interpretive walks with 115 visitors.** The program also helped facilitate the climbing permit process, including education on climbing-specific Leave No Trace and safety practices, and appropriate route choices. Two additional climbing rangers were hired in 2021. Ask a Climber also collaborated with the interpretive park ranger/Indian cultural demonstrator on an **interactive display at El Capitan meadow** telling the story of Tu-tok-a-nu-la — the Indian name of the sacred mountain of El Capitan — and asking visitors to share what they find sacred.



PHOTO: © COURTESY OF NPS.



PHOTO: © COURTESY OF NPS.

In summer 2021, Yosemite Conservancy volunteers and NPS biologists worked together on a large-scale restoration project for which work will continue in 2022 and beyond. The goal? To fill an erosion gully up to 14 feet deep and 100 feet wide that has eroded soil, and is draining wetlands and limiting important habitat in Ackerson Meadow. Over five workweeks, **40 volunteers put in 900 hours** of time. The volunteer teams removed **175 5-gallon buckets'** worth of non-native, invasive plants, erected **three new beaver dam structures** (intended to slow flow and encourage sediment deposition), repaired **10 existing experimental beaver dam structures**, and collected **540 grams of native plant seeds** from lower-elevation meadows, which will be used for planting after restoration is complete.





PHOTO: © COURTESY OF NPS.

Our **volunteer program returned** in 2021, ensuring essential park support existed on trails, in day-use parking lots, and out in Tuolumne and Ackerson meadows, among other places. COVID restrictions required a reduced-capacity workforce of volunteers — only groups of 10 were allowed to work together, instead of our usual 22. But that didn't stop them from helping more than **250,000 people**. The day-use reservation system ensured volunteers could help the park where it was needed, and could offer focused support in key areas. From supporting PSAR (Preventive Search and Rescue) on the Mist Trail to offering key visitor information assistance, our volunteers provided essential support in Yosemite in 2021.

Despite the ongoing challenges of the pandemic, Yosemite Conservancy programming found creative ways to serve visitors in 2021 through our volunteer program, bookstores, art center, and adventures, **reaching more than 500,000 people**. With a deep enthusiasm for exploring Yosemite, our wilderness programs served more than 200,000 people. Outdoor Adventures provided meaningful interpretive programs to more than 6,600 participants, our visitor center bookstores assisted more than 45,000 people, and our art programs helped nearly 1,000 people explore their creativity. Thanks to the dynamic programming by our staff, we reached many more Yosemite-lovers across the country with interactive videos, virtual art classes, and Zoom-based enrichment opportunities.

PHOTO: © ALEXANDRU NAGY.







PHOTO: © COURTESY OF NPS.

Junior Ranger programmers put on their thinking caps to develop innovative ways to reach participants virtually and safely in the park, including using unique digital experiences as alternatives to in-person programs. Thanks to that creativity, there were **550 self-guided, in-person participants and nearly 155,000 participants in virtual** Junior Ranger programming, culminating in Junior Ranger Day, which garnered more than **half a million video views**. The Junior Ranger Day “Aventura” video **was the first bilingual video for the Yosemite social media program**. And our bookstores sold more than **20,500 copies of the Junior Ranger handbook**.

Donor support made it possible to host the inaugural **“Celebrating Chiura Obata” art event in Tuolumne Meadows**, a three-day celebration of the legacy of Japanese-American artist Chiura Obata and his time in Yosemite. The event will now occur annually, building on partnerships and foundations that were forged in 2021.

PHOTO: © COURTESY OF NPS.

## YOUR GIFTS AT WORK



PHOTO: © COURTESY OF NPS.

Donor-supported youth-programs, such as **Adventure Risk Challenge (ARC)** and **WildLink**, welcomed a return to in-park education. ARC provided immersive wilderness and literacy experiences for underserved youth from Merced and Fresno counties through its Community Leadership Program (CLP).

CLP had more than **40 participants in 2021**, totaling more than 7,150 participant-program hours, including nearly 5,860 in the park. Participants were offered 58 leadership and literacy workshops in school and eight weekend trips. On average, **CLP participants engaged in 178 hours each of leadership, literacy, and outdoor instruction in 2021**.





## Statement of Financial Position

As of Dec. 31, 2021

### ASSETS

#### Current Assets

Cash & Investments	\$25,125,003
Pledges, Receivables, & Other Assets	\$1,972,898

**Total Current Assets \$27,097,901**

Pledges Receivable, Net of Current Portion	\$206,985
Deposits	\$14,500
Land Held for Future Use	\$3,263,769
Investments, Net of Current Portion	\$5,829,975
Charitable Gift Annuities	\$165,008
Property & Equipment, Net	\$910,935

**Total Noncurrent Assets \$10,391,172**

**TOTAL ASSETS \$37,489,073**

### LIABILITIES

#### Current Liabilities

Accounts Payable & Accrued Expenses	\$993,879
Grants Payable to Yosemite National Park	\$4,630,434

**Total Current Liabilities \$5,624,313**

### NET ASSETS

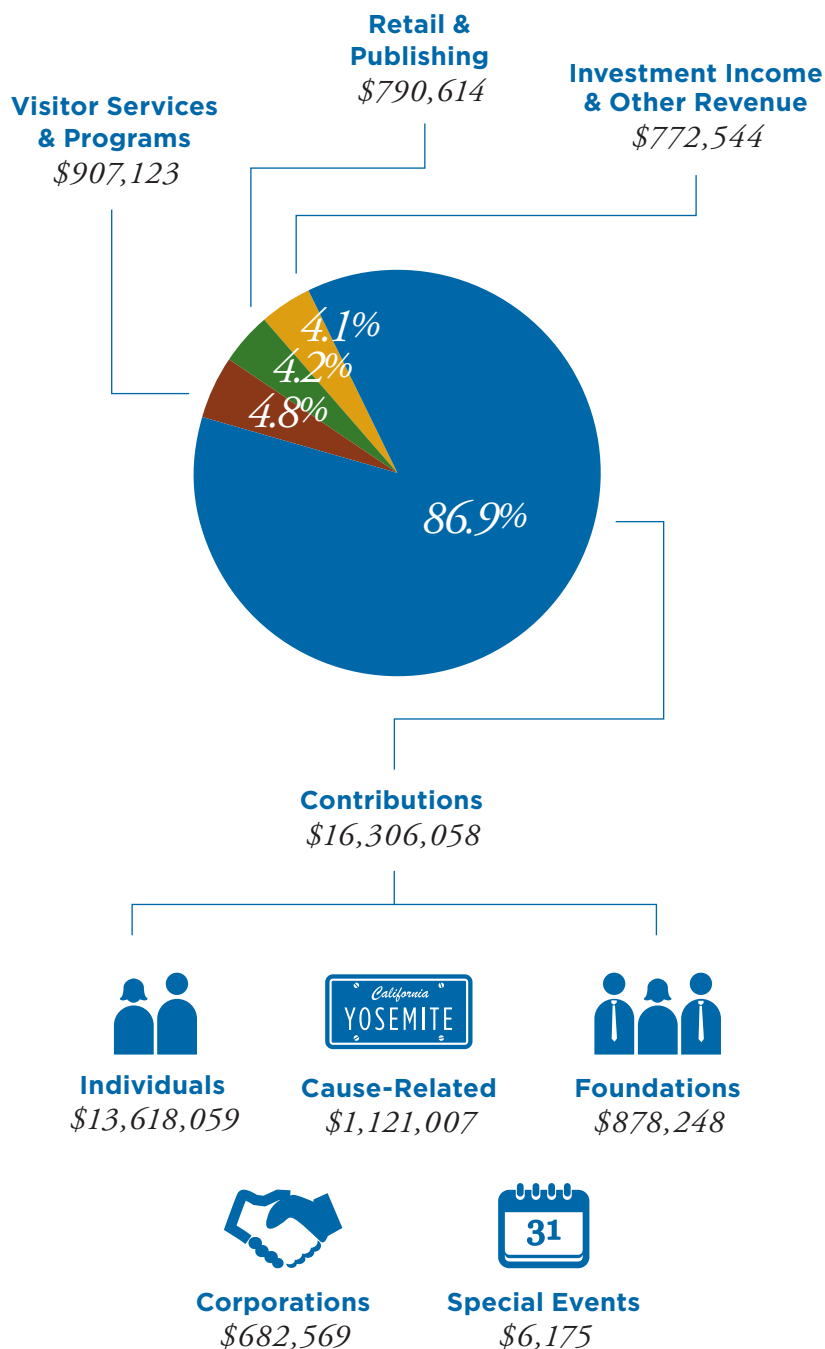
Without Donor Restrictions	\$22,201,932
With Donor Restrictions	\$9,662,828

**Total Net Assets \$31,864,760**

**TOTAL LIABILITIES  
& NET ASSETS \$37,489,073**

## Support & Revenue

\$18,776,339





## Statement of Activities

As of Dec. 31, 2021

### SUPPORT & REVENUE

Contributions	\$16,306,058
Retail & Publishing	\$790,614
Visitor Services & Programs	\$907,123
Investment Income & Other Revenue	\$772,544

**TOTAL SUPPORT & REVENUE \$18,776,339**

### FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

#### Program Services

Park Enhancements	\$8,252,917
Retail & Publishing	\$962,632
Visitor Services & Programs	\$2,792,452

**Total Aid to Park \$12,008,001**

#### Support Services

Administrative	\$1,493,712
Fundraising	\$2,739,641

**TOTAL EXPENSES \$16,241,354**

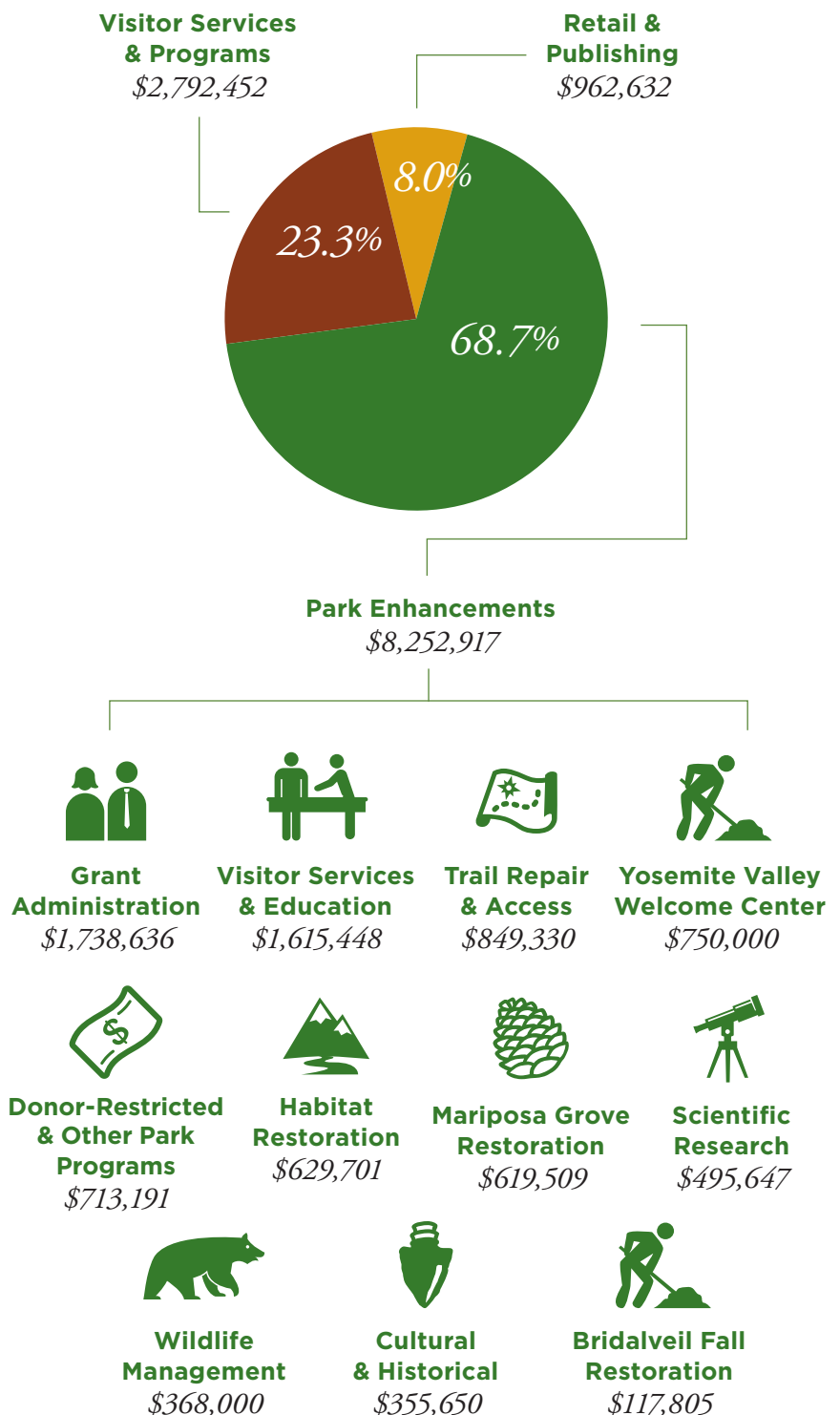
**CHANGE IN NET ASSETS \$2,534,985**

#### NET ASSETS

Beginning of Year	\$29,329,775
End of Year	\$31,864,760

## Aid to Yosemite National Park

\$12,008,001







“Attending various Conservancy programs and activities has helped us gain a better appreciation of Yosemite National Park and all it has to offer. Besides supporting major projects — such as the Mariposa Grove and Bridalveil restorations — we have been made aware of the many projects in wildlife management, such as reintroduction of big horn sheep, and education, with the publication of informative books for people of all ages. We are proud to support an organization working to preserve the natural life and the history of the area while also making it more accessible to more people.”

— **JIM & KENNA FENTON**  
John Muir Heritage Society

“Few places inspire like Yosemite. Growing up nearby, I’ve cherished many opportunities to share the park’s striking beauty with family, friends, and passers-by. The park affords so many moments of solitude — a powerful driver of personal growth and self-reflection. I’ve benefited tremendously from what Yosemite has ‘taught me,’ and I’m very eager to grow access to such opportunities for others — with a sustainable footprint, of course.”

— **PRANAV SUDESH**  
Future Leaders Advisory Circle  
& John Muir Heritage Society



“Yosemite is paradise, both for its awe-inspiring beauty and, for our family, generational memories that will continue beyond us. When we enter the park through the East gate, we get a feeling that, for a time, however brief, all worries evaporate.”

— **TIM & PATSY MARSHALL**  
Council & John Muir Heritage Society

PHOTOS: (TOP TO BOTTOM) © COURTESY OF JIM & KENNA FENTON. © ADAM GROSS. © COURTESY OF TIM & PATSY MARSHALL.



## COUNCIL MEMBERS

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As of Dec. 31, 2021

### YOSEMITE CONSERVANCY COUNCIL MEMBERS

#### CHAIR

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#### VICE CHAIR

Dana Dornsife\*

#### SECRETARY/TREASURER

Steve Ciesinski\*

#### PRESIDENT & CEO

Frank Dean\*

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Wally Wallner\* & Jill Appenzeller  
Jack Walston & Sue Estes  
Helen & Scott Witter

#### YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Superintendent Cicely Muldoon

*\*Indicates Board of Trustees*

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PHOTO: © MIKE REEVES.

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