

YOSEMITE CONSERVANCY

AUTUMN.WINTER 2013 :: VOLUME 04.ISSUE 02

Ensuring the Future of Yosemite's Trees

INSIDE

Habitat Restoration Protects Yosemite's Iconic Trees

Youth Crews Preserve Trails and Wilderness

Expert Insights into the Next Generation of Giant Sequoias

Q&A with a Yosemite Trails Insider





**YOSEMITE
CONSERVANCY**

Providing For Yosemite's Future

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Providing for Yosemite's future is our passion. We inspire people to support projects and programs that preserve and protect Yosemite National Park's resources and enrich the visitor experience.

PRESIDENT'S NOTE



Protecting Yosemite's Trees

Each year, I witness Yosemite's landscape gradually adjusting to the seasons, transforming from snow-capped granite peaks in the winter to the shimmering, green meadows of the summer. Nowhere are these vivid changes more evident than in Yosemite's trees, particularly during the fall, when the leaves put on a brilliant show of colors.

In this issue, we are bringing you stories about Yosemite's trees and their special role in the park, both as photographic icons and essential habitat. Thanks to your dedicated support, this year brought many opportunities to safeguard trees, such as the California black oak and the giant sequoia, for the future. Ecologist Dr. Bill Kuhn describes how black oaks are an indispensable natural and cultural resource, and we bring you the latest on the Mariposa Grove restoration project.

Read about other ways your gifts are preserving and protecting Yosemite. Trails Supervisor Dave Kari explains what it's like to care for the vast trail network. Discover how youth trail crews are improving your hiking experience and how a legendary Valley trail is being restored for better access. See photographs of the beautiful — but threatened — great gray owl. Learn how work at Ostrander Ski Hut is preserving the rustic character of this historic cabin.

Without you, our work would not be possible. Your dedication to this amazing place ensures everything we love about Yosemite will endure for future generations. Thank you for your support.

See you in the park,

Mike

Mike Tollefson, President

COVER PHOTO A great gray owl perches on a branch during a snowstorm in Yosemite.

PHOTO BY © RYAN BYRNES



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VOLUME 04.ISSUE 02

ABOVE Half Dome in autumn.

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ENSURING *the Future* OF YOSEMITE'S TREES



As the temperatures cool and days get shorter, Yosemite's trees herald the changing of the seasons, putting on spectacular displays of orange, yellow, pink and even purple. Yosemite's diverse landscape is home to dozens of species of native trees, such as the California black oak and giant sequoia. These trees provide food and shelter for wildlife throughout the winter months and shady picnic areas for families during the summer. The future of Yosemite is intertwined with the health and well-being of its trees, which is why protection efforts are currently underway to safeguard these treasures for the future. ➤

“The end result is a slowly declining population, with insufficient numbers of young trees to replace the lost adults.”

— DR. BILL KUHN

Ecologist, Yosemite National Park

The iconic black oak trees in Yosemite Valley are not only a beautiful hallmark of the landscape, but they are also an important cultural and biological resource. “Oak woodlands in California are thought to have the highest species diversity of all plant-community types, since the acorn supports so many wildlife species, such as insects, birds, rodents, deer and others,” says Bill Kuhn, an ecologist for Yosemite National Park. “When American Indian tribes inhabited the park, they utilized the black oak acorn as a primary food source, and [the acorns] are still considered culturally important.”

From the California black oak populations in Yosemite Valley to the majestic giant sequoias of the Tuolumne, Merced and Mariposa groves, the longevity and health of these trees demonstrate all that is best about Yosemite’s incredible natural resources — and our duty to protect them for future generations. The Mariposa Grove was considered such an irreplaceable treasure that President Abraham Lincoln signed the Yosemite Grant Act in 1864 to protect it. Thanks to that historic act, threatened wildlife species, such as the Pacific fisher and spotted owl, have a protected sanctuary in the grove, while visitors can marvel at the largest living things known to humans.

Decades of increasing visitor use and changing environmental conditions have taken their toll. For example, black oak stands in Yosemite Valley are declining due to low seedling-survival rates. “Very few seedlings survive more than a few years, due to heavy grazing by deer and rodents,” Kuhn explains. “The end result is a slowly declining population, with insufficient numbers of young trees to replace the lost adults.”

To protect the black oaks, Yosemite Conservancy donors are funding a project to investigate the role of animals in the



OPPOSITE PAGE MAIN A stand of California black oak trees in Cook’s Meadow display brilliant fall colors. **OPPOSITE PAGE INSET** A volunteer shows off a California black oak seedling before it’s planted in Yosemite Valley. Scientists will track seedling growth during the next several years to determine causes of low survival rates. **ABOVE** A volunteer plants a new black oak seedling in Yosemite Valley. The cage pictured on the left is intended to prevent deer from disturbing the seedling, while the smaller cage being handled by the volunteer protects roots from rodents.

survival of black oak seedlings. In 2013, Conservancy work week volunteers planted hundreds of seedlings throughout the Valley and helped park scientists observe and record causes of low survival rates. “Planting and protecting the acorns is labor-intensive and could not have been done without the assistance of dozens of volunteers,” Kuhn says. “Volunteers also assisted in collecting data on the size and structure of black oak groves, which is vital to understanding how much restoration may be needed.”

In addition to the black oaks, Conservancy donors are funding a major data-collection effort in the Merced and Tuolumne giant sequoia groves. This project is investigating the size of the reproductive population and assessing potential conflicts with roads and trails. Students from schools with environmental education programs are playing an important role in collecting data and learning how healthy groves contribute to a healthy ecosystem. In the Mariposa Grove, the Conservancy continues to fund a multiyear project to reverse the detrimental effects of development, while protecting the fragile ecosystem and improving the visitor experience.

You can help protect Yosemite’s trees by not feeding deer and rodents, whose populations may be increasing due, in part, to the availability of human food. Keeping off fragile root systems will also stop soil erosion and trampling. Together, we can ensure Yosemite’s trees continue to inspire future generations in the same way President Lincoln was inspired to protect them as a national treasure for all time. ■

A person wearing a blue hard hat and a brown uniform is bent over, working on a rocky trail. They are in a grassy field with many rocks. In the background, another person in a blue hard hat and brown uniform is also working on the trail. The scene is outdoors, likely in a park or wilderness area.

Restoring our YOSEMITE

YOUTH CREWS PRESERVE TRAILS & WILDERNESS

The next time you're hiking in Yosemite, take a closer look at the trail. You might notice intricate stonework, such as rock walls that fit together seamlessly or drainage features diverting water away from the trail. Other work is designed to go unnoticed, such as inappropriate campsites restored or informal trails removed. The excellent quality of Yosemite's trails and habitat is possible, thanks to the efforts of Youth in Yosemite Programs trail and restoration crews each summer. These diverse crews range from youth assisting with habitat restoration projects in Yosemite Valley to young adults working in the backcountry for weeks and even months. In the process, youth learn to be leaders and active participants in preserving and protecting natural places — lessons they carry with them for a lifetime.

One crew of Student Conservation Association (SCA) interns focuses on wilderness restoration, such as removing non-native plants, inappropriate backcountry campsites, and informal or "social" trails. During a 35-day period this summer, crews surveyed approximately 24,000 acres of wilderness, rehabilitated 500 inappropriate campsites and restored at least 3,000 feet of social trails. Youth work alongside National Park Service trail crews, who serve as mentors and provide valuable life lessons that inspire many youth to consider careers in resource management. Thanks to their efforts, backcountry visitors can experience more of the "wild" in wilderness.

The Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) recently completed its 42nd year in Yosemite, where it has been introducing young people to the values of hard work and trail rehabilitation.

During the summer, youth crews restored trails throughout the park, including at Tuolumne Meadows, Glacier Point, Yosemite Valley and Ostrander Lake. Participants learn the rewards of being good environmental stewards and take these lessons home to their communities. Many youth would have limited access to Yosemite without these programs.

"I have had the experience of a lifetime living and working in Yosemite," says YCC participant Chris, a 17-year-old from Herndon, Va. "I would like to thank the Conservancy and all the YCC staff for making this opportunity possible." Organizations such as the S.D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation are generously supporting youth trail programs such as the YCC.

Younger students are learning about restoration in Yosemite Valley. Partnering with the National Park Service and NatureBridge, the Conservancy makes it possible for youth to restore moss-covered boulders at the Happy Isles Nature Center. Vandals had etched words and symbols into the ancient mosses, exposing the bare granite underneath and creating an eyesore. Students are testing different techniques to find the most appropriate method to restore this popular trailhead into a memorable welcome to the wilderness.

The future of Yosemite depends on today's youth learning to steward our public lands. Your support helps make these youth programs possible, providing once-in-a-lifetime opportunities for the next generation of park stewards. By giving to the Conservancy, you are not only helping improve the lives of young people, you are also contributing to the preservation of Yosemite's wilderness character. ■



BEFORE



AFTER



OPPOSITE PAGE California Conservation Corp crews restore trails in the backcountry. **ABOVE LEFT** An illegal fire ring in the backcountry prior to restoration by SCA crews. **ABOVE MIDDLE** SCA crews removed the illegal fire ring and restored the wilderness character of the area. **ABOVE RIGHT** Middle-school students assist in restoring moss-covered boulders near Happy Isles in Yosemite Valley.



PHOTO: © JOE MEDLEY

Protecting Yosemite's Great Gray Owls

PRESERVING THIS MAGNIFICENT SPECIES FOR THE FUTURE

If you've heard the telltale "whoop" of a great gray owl in Yosemite, you are among the lucky few to hear the call of one of California's rarest birds. Recent research, funded in part by Yosemite Conservancy, has revealed the Sierra Nevada is home to its own distinct, but fragile, subspecies. This year, Conservancy donors are continuing to help protect the great gray owl. By understanding owl population sizes and trends, we are making significant progress in reversing the decline in population, ensuring future generations will also experience the owls' distinctive "whoop."



Learn more about volunteer opportunities at
yosemiteconservancy.org

LEFT Past research, funded in part by Yosemite Conservancy, enabled park scientists and collaborators to determine the Sierra Nevada population is genetically distinct. Conservation efforts are currently underway to protect this rare subspecies.



PHOTO: © JOE MEDLEY.

ABOVE In 2012, thanks in part to funding from Yosemite Conservancy donors, park scientists found the first ever California great gray owl nest in a lodgepole pine snag. Owl nests usually are associated with fir forests, so this finding indicates the species may be more adaptable than previously thought. **BELOW** The great gray owl's distinctive piercing yellow eyes are accentuated by large facial disks, the largest of all raptor species.

PHOTO: © JOE MEDLEY.



PHOTO: © ANN SIMPSON.

ABOVE The rare and endangered great gray owl is the largest of all owl species. Once fully matured, this juvenile owl may stand as tall as 2 feet with a 5-foot wingspan. **BELOW** Scientists are using a combination of noninvasive techniques to protect Yosemite's great gray owls. Nesting locations are being identified by placing passive recording devices along the edges of meadow habitat, while molted feathers (pictured) are being genetically analyzed to determine population trends.

PHOTO: © COURTESY OF NPS.



PLANNING FOR THE NEXT MILLENNIA

SURVEY PROVIDES ESSENTIAL DATA TO PROTECT

THE NEXT GENERATION OF GIANT SEQUOIAS

BY DR. BILL KUHN, ECOLOGIST, YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

ABOVE White fir seedlings growing next to a mature giant sequoia tree in Tuolumne Grove. **TOP RIGHT** A giant sequoia cone is very small relative to the size of mature trees. Inside, the seeds are roughly the size of oatmeal flakes.

The majestic giant sequoias have stood watch over the changing landscape of Yosemite for millennia. Each year, thousands of visitors gaze up at them and marvel at their size and beauty. Yet we lack a full understanding of their condition and the actions needed to preserve and protect them for the future.

In 2013, the first comprehensive assessment of the status and health of the Merced and Tuolumne groves is underway to shed light on these treasured trees. Yosemite National Park is home to three giant sequoia groves: Mariposa, Merced and Tuolumne. Yosemite's groves of giant sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) are part of 75 naturally occurring groves throughout the Sierra Nevada, descendants of a once-widespread ancestral species.

The first comprehensive published survey of Yosemite's giant sequoia groves occurred in the early 1930s. At that time, there were very few seedlings and young saplings, due to decades of fire exclusion. In the 1960s, ecologists came to a consensus that fire was a natural disturbance in the Sierra Nevada. More than a century of fire-suppression efforts had resulted in a modification of plant-community composition and tree densities, including a decrease in the number of sequoia seedlings. Controlled fire management was implemented in the groves beginning in 1970.

In 2010, Mariposa Grove was revisited to survey and map the entire population, eventually documenting approximately 5,800 trees, from seedlings only a few years old to monarchs that are 2,000–3,000 years old. This year, attention is focused on the Merced and Tuolumne groves to determine if other actions are needed to preserve them.

“The majestic giant sequoias have stood watch over the changing landscape of Yosemite for a millennia.”

— DR. BILL KUHN
Ecologist, Yosemite National Park



BOTTOM RIGHT A volunteer measures the trunk of a giant sequoia tree in Merced Grove.

Using surveying equipment, all trees are being mapped and measured. Once the surveys are complete, the population structure will be compared with what would be expected in a healthy population. We will investigate whether recent fire history has resulted in new seedling establishment, as well as the overall ecological health of the groves, including wildlife use, rare plant presence, location of wetlands, changes in tree composition and density, and evidence of unsustainable human impacts to trees and soils. Based on the results, recommendations will be made for future management actions to protect the trees and enhance grove health.

At the conclusion, the project will offer, for the first time, a clear picture of the status of our giant sequoia groves and a road map of where to go to conserve these wonderful trees for the inspiration and enjoyment of future generations. ■



DR. BILL KUHN is a vegetation ecologist and landscape ecologist who has been with the National Park Service in Yosemite National Park for the past eight years. His research interests, management objectives and restoration projects have included oak population demography and patterns of recruitment, patterns of non-native plant species' distribution and abundance, projected changes

to vegetation based on predicted climate changes, giant-sequoia population demography and assessments, California black oak restoration, and wildlife-plant trophic dynamics.

YOSEMITE CONSERVANCY is providing a grant to fund the giant sequoia surveys in the Merced and Tuolumne groves. Data collected from these surveys will allow park scientists to make recommendations for a comprehensive management plan, including possible restoration efforts. The Conservancy also continues to fund a multiyear restoration project in the Mariposa Grove to preserve and protect giant sequoias for ecological benefit and improve the visitor experience in the park's most popular grove.

“Yosemite Conservancy donors ensure historic trails will be around for the next generation of hikers.”

— DAVE KARI
Trails Supervisor

Q&A

WITH A
YOSEMITE
INSIDER



ABOVE Dave Kari on the Mist Trail with Vernal Fall in the background.

As trails supervisor for Yosemite National Park, Dave Kari has explored most of the park's 800 miles of trail, from popular Yosemite Valley trails to less-visited backcountry areas. Kari began his Yosemite adventure in 1981 as a member of a California Conservation Corps (CCC) youth trail crew. Having found a passion for trail work and protecting the natural environment, he joined the National Park Service and has remained in the park ever since. He has the enviable job of making a living while hiking in Yosemite, ensuring trails are safe for visitors, while protecting the park's resources.

Q :: What makes Yosemite's trails so special?

A :: Yosemite's trail system is an amazing gift that has been passed down from previous generations. It allows easy access to visitors and includes incredible dry-stone masonry built in the most spectacular scenery.

Q :: What are the most common types of trail restorations?

A :: Our crews restore a lot of trail ruts through meadows.

We also repair failed retaining walls and eroded trail surfaces. Most of the time, visitors don't even see the beautiful stonework that provides them with stable, level footing — and that's how it should be. The work we do is beautiful, but ultimately it is about access.

Q :: What special skills and techniques are needed to be a member of a trail crew? How long have some of your crew members been working in Yosemite?

A :: Some trail-crew members have worked in Yosemite for more than 30 years. They are extremely skilled in dry-stone masonry and have an incredibly strong work ethic that allows them to focus on a job for weeks at a time in the backcountry. Because of the time we spend working together in remote places, the ability to get along with others is crucial.

Q :: How do youth crews contribute to protecting trails and wilderness?

A :: Youth crews help maintain historic trail corridors by brushing them, cleaning drainage features, repairing retaining walls and camouflaging social trails. In the process, they learn skills for future work endeavors. Nearly 80 percent of our staff started in youth programs, which shows how important these programs are for inspiring future park stewards.

Q :: Do you have a favorite Yosemite trail & why?

A :: My favorite backcountry trail is Jack Main Canyon, because that's where I spent my first summer in the Sierra and where I first experienced living and working on a trail crew.

Q :: How would you describe the role of Conservancy donors in ensuring trails are restored?

A :: The role of donors is critical. The work we are doing is important to saving existing historic trails. Without the contributions of the Conservancy, many of these trails would have fallen into a state of disrepair, some quite probably rendered unusable. Yosemite Conservancy donors ensure historic trails will be around for the next generation of hikers. What an incredible gift.

Q :: What can visitors do to protect trails and wilderness?

A :: Visitors should stay on trails and avoid cutting switchbacks. ■



ABOVE Dave Kari accompanies the pack stock on an early-season logging run to Parker Pass in Yosemite's high country.

“Yosemite’s trail system is an amazing gift that has been passed down from previous generations.”

— DAVE KARI

Trails Supervisor, Yosemite National Park

Sequoia Society Give Yosemite Your Monthly Support.

You can give a small amount each month to make a bigger impact in Yosemite. Monthly donors provide a reliable source of funding the park can count on throughout the year. Join the Sequoia Society today.

Use the enclosed envelope, or visit us online at
yosemiteconservancy.org/monthly

New Projects for 2013*

CULTURAL & HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Ensuring a Reliable Source of Native Plants: A Partnership with the Tuolumne Band of Mewuk Indians	\$29,233
Preserving History: Restoring the Yosemite Valley Cemetery	\$72,967
Rehabilitating Ostrander Ski Hut	\$63,355
Sharing Traditions Exhibit: History of Cultural Demonstrators in Yosemite	\$102,090

HABITAT RESTORATION

Mariposa Grove Restoration	\$1,845,658
Preserving the California Black Oak in Yosemite Valley	\$77,982
Removing Invasive Plants from Yosemite	\$77,125
Wilderness Restoration with SCA Crews	\$199,975

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Protecting Songbirds & Inspiring Visitors	\$37,057
Protecting Yosemite's Giant Sequoia Groves	\$54,345

TRAIL REPAIR & ACCESS

Gaylor Lakes Trail Restoration	\$98,150
Improving Visitor Access to Trails: CCC Internship	\$63,000
John Muir Trail and Habitat Improvements in Lyell Canyon	\$232,500
Legendary Valley Trails Restoration	\$360,950
Restoring Popular Climbing Trails	\$60,650
Tenaya Lake Trail Restoration: South Shore	\$148,610
Trail Rehabilitation by CCC Crews	\$606,836
Youth Crews (YCC) Restore Trails	\$384,205

VISITOR SERVICES & EDUCATION

A Class Act: Enhancing Park Stewardship for the Class of 2016	\$56,085
Adventure to Leadership: Youth Development Program with ARC	\$95,000
Ask A Climber	\$35,100
Buffalo Soldiers in Yosemite Film	\$51,000
Junior Ranger Program	\$123,420
New Trail Information Panels: Yosemite Valley Visitor Center	\$50,600
Parks In Focus: Youth Photography Program	\$18,000
Parsons Memorial Lodge Summer Series	\$30,000
Restoring the Boulder Garden at Happy Isles	\$17,429
Restoring Yosemite's Iconic Scenic Vistas	\$98,871
Teens Connect to Yosemite through WildLink	\$30,000
Wilderness Education Center at UC Merced	\$115,220
WildLink Alumni Explore Careers in Yosemite	\$12,900
Yosemite Guide Mobile App	\$63,600
Yosemite Leadership Program Summer Internship	\$125,065
Yosemite Nature Notes Web Video Series	\$48,000

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Protecting Yosemite's Great Gray Owls	\$67,015
Recovery of the Rare Pacific Fisher	\$116,263
Saving the Sierra Nevada Yellow-Legged Frogs from Extinction	\$100,891

TOTAL **\$5,788,811**

*Total project funding is included for multi-year projects.

Color represents 2013 Youth in Yosemite Programs.

THE PACIFIC FISHER

INNOVATIVE TECHNIQUES TO SAVE A RARE SPECIES



ABOVE & RIGHT A motion-detection camera captures a glimpse of the elusive Pacific fisher in its native forest habitat.

Why did the fisher cross the road? This sounds like a joke, but park scientists are looking into this very issue to save the Pacific fisher. The medium-size forest mammal has disappeared from more than half its former range in California and is a candidate for the endangered species list. Unfortunately, vehicle collisions account for a high portion of fisher deaths, so a safer option for crossing busy roads is needed for the species to recover.

In 2013, the Conservancy is providing funds to establish wildlife-crossing structures in drainage pipes underneath busy roads. These "critter crossings" provide safe passage, allowing the fisher to move through key habitat areas.

"We are pleased to provide funding to Yosemite Conservancy for the Pacific fisher, given the importance of protecting Yosemite's wild heritage," says Jamie Williams, president of the Wilderness Society. Conservancy donors, such as the Wilderness Society, are making a tangible difference in protecting Yosemite's rare wildlife. ■

YOSEMITE'S 150TH ANNIVERSARY

INSPIRING GENERATIONS



LEFT The official logo of the 150th anniversary of the Yosemite Grant Act. **ABOVE** Galen Clark, pictured here in Mariposa Grove, was named "guardian of the grant" for his role in establishing the Yosemite Grant in 1864.

On June 30, 2014, Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Grove will mark 150 years of preservation. We are commemorating this milestone with a year of special events to honor this remarkable anniversary.

Your support provided funding for a landmark documentary celebrating the anniversary, *Yosemite: A Gathering of Spirit*, produced by filmmakers Ken Burns and Dayton Duncan. Join us for the film premiere in Los Angeles on Dec. 8, 2013, and participate in an exclusive Q&A with the producers. We are also publishing Dayton Duncan's *Seed of the Future: Yosemite and the Evolution of the National Park Idea*, an inspiring historic account of the movement to preserve Yosemite for future generations.

Activities in the park and its gateway communities will include art exhibits, speaker series and festivals. Yosemite Conservancy bookstores will offer beautiful handmade mugs and other merchandise to commemorate this special occasion.

We are proud to be part of these events that honor our past and encourage visitors to appreciate the birth of the national park movement. ■

FILM PREMIERE

Yosemite: A Gathering of Spirit

Join us for the premiere of *Yosemite: A Gathering of Spirit* on Dec. 8. Two special showings will take place at Paramount Pictures Studios in Los Angeles. Tickets must be purchased in advance.



To learn more and purchase tickets, visit

yosemiteconservancy.org/filmpremiere

LEGENDARY VALLEY TRAILS

REHABILITATING YOSEMITE'S MOST POPULAR TRAILS



ABOVE Conservancy funding made it possible to restore the popular Valley Loop Trail, so all visitors have easier and safer access. **LEFT** A National Park Service trail crew cuts rock on the Yosemite Falls Trail.

The mention of iconic Valley trails, such as the Mist Trail or the Four Mile Trail, immediately conjures up happy memories for many visitors. Due to the popularity of these trails, Conservancy donors are funding rehabilitation projects to ensure visitors of all ages and abilities can safely access them, despite heavy use, while protecting this special environment.

In 2013, the Conservancy is providing a grant to the National Park Service to restore a portion of the Valley Loop Trail from Lower Yosemite Fall to Camp 4. When completed, the trail will be handicapped-accessible and clearly delineated, eliminating the need for hikers to create a network of informal trails. Directional signage is being installed to provide better orientation for visitors around Swan Slab, a popular climbing area near Camp 4. Your support makes this work possible — thank you for your dedication to Yosemite's trails. ■

PHOTOS: © COURTESY OF NPS

PHOTOS: © JOSH HEILING



SAVING IRREPLACEABLE TREES

MARIPOSA GROVE RESTORATION

On any given day, thousands of visitors can be seen craning their necks at the towering giant sequoias in the Mariposa Grove. Many people may not realize the health of these trees is declining, due to decades of development that has affected hydrology and soil, as well as the visitor experience. If future generations are to appreciate the beauty of these millennia-old behemoths, preservation efforts must begin now.

Conservancy donors are funding a multiyear project to restore giant sequoia habitat, while providing the highest quality visitor experience. This project will reverse decades of detrimental effects, including soil erosion, pedestrian and vehicle traffic, and aging parking areas and roads.

In 2013, planning and design is underway to relocate infrastructure, restore habitat and develop visitor-management strategies to re-establish the dignity of these irreplaceable monarchs. Together, we are preserving one of Yosemite's most treasured resources. ■

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LEFT The Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias contains some of the largest living things on the planet.

YOUTH TRAIL STEWARDS

CALIFORNIA CONSERVATION CORPS RESTORE TRAILS

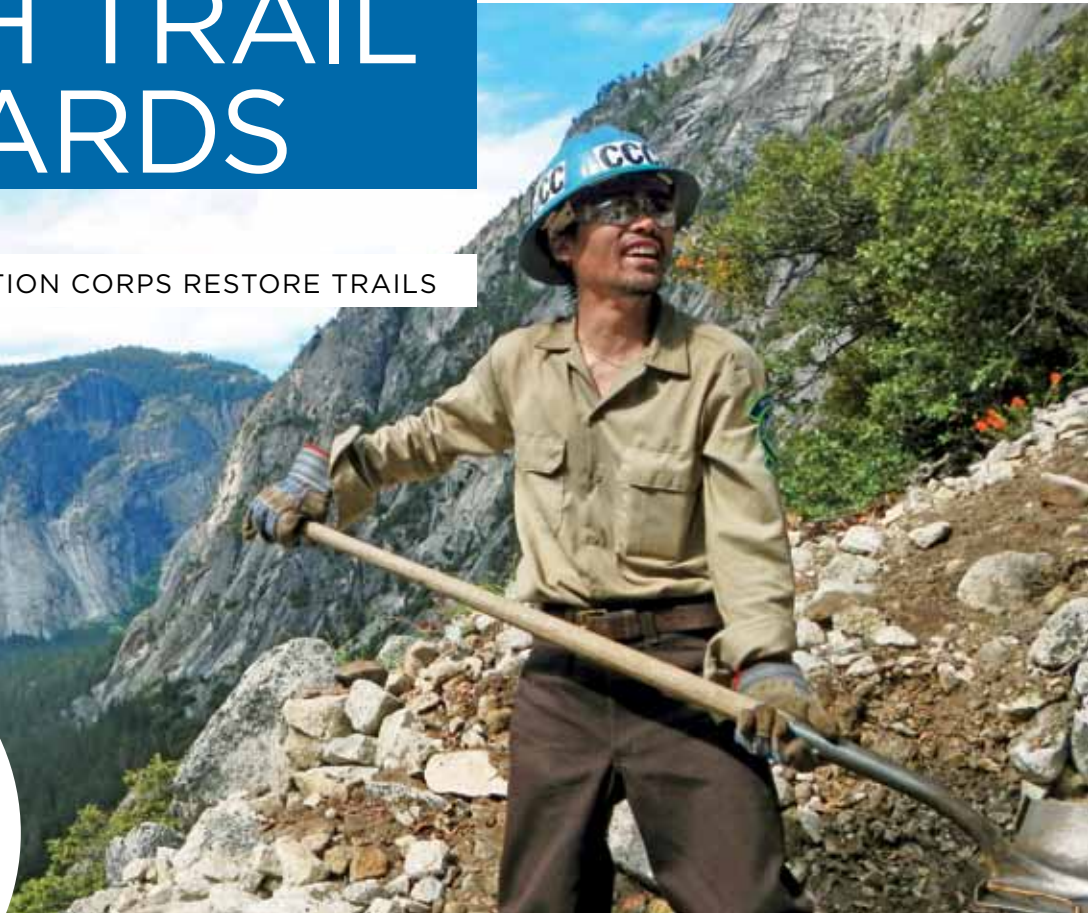


BEFORE



AFTER

BEFORE Prior to CCC restoration efforts, this backcountry trail section is not clearly delineated and could pose a safety hazard to hikers. **AFTER** Terraced steps were installed by CCC crews in this post-restoration image of the same backcountry trail section.



ABOVE A CCC crew member shovels rocks to clear a trail. Crew members spend weeks in the wilderness to ensure trails are safe for visitors.

Each summer, youth crews return to Yosemite as part of the California Conservation Corps (CCC), where they spend weeks in the backcountry restoring trails and protecting natural resources, ensuring we all have a better, safer Yosemite experience.

In 2013, CCC crews rehabilitated trails and restored rock walls, stone steps and drainage features in the Tuolumne Pass area and throughout Tiltill Valley. The experience not only provided immense value to the park, but it also changed participants' lives.

"The program has certainly changed the way I see myself. Physically, mentally, emotionally: I never thought I could be this strong," says Angela, 19, from San Diego. "It has given me a strength and confidence I never could have found anywhere else."

Many CCC youth-crew members go on to work for the National Park Service, carrying on their legacy of trail restoration. Thanks to your dedication, today's youth are becoming tomorrow's park stewards. ■

Everyone
has a favorite
Yosemite
story.

YOSEMITE STORIES

150 YEARS OF STORIES IN YOSEMITE



ABOVE Author Dayton Duncan in Yosemite, April 2009. **TOP RIGHT** Covers of *Seed of the Future* and *Inspiring Generations*.

One of winter's greatest joys is curling up with a warm cup of cocoa and a good book. Yosemite has always inspired great stories, and the Conservancy is proud to publish two new books celebrating the 150th anniversary of this remarkable place.

Award-winning filmmaker, master storyteller and honorary park ranger Dayton Duncan's *Seed of the Future: Yosemite and the Evolution of the National Park Idea* is a lively history of the often-tumultuous beginnings of the preservation movement, lavishly illustrated with more than 100 landscape and archival images. Featuring such visionaries as James Mason Hutchings, Galen Clark, Frederick Law Olmsted, John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt, this volume commemorates the 150th anniversary of the Yosemite Grant Act and captures the amazing story of Yosemite.

Everyone has a favorite Yosemite story. To keep and share those memories, the National Park Service and Yosemite Conservancy have collaborated on a humorous and heartfelt collection, penned by park staff, the local community and visitors. *Inspiring Generations: 150 Years, 150 Stories in Yosemite* will inspire smiles of recognition and many trips to the park. ■



Your support of our publishing program ensures our stories endure.

Visit yosemiteconservancy.org/shop for these and other fine books and gifts.

PARADISE RESTORED

RENEWING A CHERISHED YOSEMITE RETREAT

Nestled on the edge of a glacial cirque, beside a stunning crystal-clear lake, sits a rustic stone ski hut that is a beacon for weary skiers intrepid enough to make the 10-mile trek from Badger Pass Ski Area at Yosemite National Park.

For more than 70 years, Ostrander Ski Hut has been a paradise for Yosemite ski enthusiasts. At a time when most ski resorts aren't complete without restaurants, spas and other indulgences, this rustic cabin delights visitors with its simplicity. Instead of a valet, visitors are greeted by a warm fire, a single bunk room to be shared with friends, and an affable hut-keeper.

This past summer, work was funded to rehabilitate the hut by replacing water tanks to improve water quality, repairing a dilapidated wood shed that had become vulnerable to rodents, and restoring architectural features. The original countertops of solid planks of sugar pine have been refinished, while the stone mortar and lodgepole pine beams that are essential to the historic character of the building have also received much-needed repairs.

“Ostrander Ski Hut is a backcountry treasure that deserves our support and protection.”

— ALICE TENSCHER-DUNBAR
Longtime Hut Visitor

OPPOSITE PAGE A welcome sight to weary skiers, Ostrander Ski Hut features original 1940s-era stonework and lodgepole pine beams. **ABOVE** The pristine ridges that surround Ostrander Lake are an ideal place for downhill skiing and snowboarding.

“This project will preserve the historic Ostrander Ski Hut experience that has been enjoyed by generations of visitors,” says Rod Kennec, exhibit specialist. “By repairing external structures and restoring original features, we have preserved the architectural character of the hut, while addressing the comfort and safety of visitors.”

“Much of life happens here, young and old come together, new friendships are kindled, and history and traditions are made,” says Alice Tenschler-Dunbar, who has been visiting the hut for 20 years. “Ostrander Ski Hut is a backcountry treasure that deserves our support and protection.”

With your support, we will ensure historic Ostrander Ski Hut remains an enchanting winter getaway for generations to come. ■

 **Reservations** at Ostrander Ski Hut are now available by lottery. Learn more at yosemiteconservancy.org.



ABOVE Alice Tenschler-Dunbar (second row, second from right, in baseball cap) has been visiting Ostrander with her friends for more than 20 years. They have forged lifelong friendships on the trail and created annual traditions around the table at Ostrander Ski Hut.

PHOTOS (LEFT TO RIGHT) © JANI LEPPÄNEN © JANI LEPPÄNEN © ALICE TENSCHER-DUNBAR



2012 Annual Report

A Special Message from the Chair & President

Last year marked a busy and fulfilling year for the Conservancy. Our ambitious vision, combined with your dedication, produced amazing results: We were able to preserve and protect Yosemite National Park, while enhancing the visitor experience. Your donations affected Yosemite in countless ways, from preserving trails to providing visitor-service programs and much more. Above all, we recognize our work is only possible because of your enduring commitment to this national treasure.

You helped us make great strides on 2012's two signature projects: restoring the East Beach at Tenaya Lake and Youth in Yosemite. Together with the National Park Service, we celebrated the restoration at East Beach, where revitalized wetlands are thriving, and where visitors of all abilities can stroll along the new, accessible trail to Tenaya Lake. Your generosity also allowed us to support nine Youth in Yosemite Programs. Young people learned valuable outdoor and leadership skills, which helped them fulfill personal and career goals even after they returned to their communities.

OTHER NOTABLE 2012 ACHIEVEMENTS INCLUDE:

- \$8.4 million in aid was provided to Yosemite for project grants and programs
- 40,000 Conservancy donors made a difference for Yosemite's future
- More than 10,000 bear canisters were rented, keeping bears wild and visitors safe
- 15,000 acres of wilderness were surveyed by youth crews
- 58 project grants and visitor-service programs were funded, ranging from trail and habitat restoration, to cultural-resource protection, to enhanced visitor services

Your deeply personal connection to Yosemite is helping ensure this spectacular place is preserved and protected, so future generations can experience the same wonder.

See you in the park,

John Dorman, *Chair*

Mike Tollefson, *President*



Please enjoy highlights of our 2012 annual report.

The full-length report can be viewed on our website at yosemiteconservancy.org/annual-report

Your Gifts at Work

How You Made a Difference

Yosemite is your park. That's why we are committed to ensuring your generous gifts go to work preserving and protecting Yosemite today and for the future. Everywhere you look, you can see the results of your commitment. You made it possible to restore vital wetland habitat, protect wildlife and expand life-changing youth programs.

In 2012, your gifts funded 58 project grants and visitor-service programs. Bears and visitors stayed safe, thanks to an electronic bear-monitoring program. A comprehensive invasive-plants survey helped protect Yosemite's beautiful wildflowers, and legendary Valley trails were improved for safer and easier access. In 2012, our expert naturalists, photographers and artists led 40 year-round Outdoor Adventure programs. Our theater



PHOTO: © KEITH WALKLET.

ABOVE Your gifts ensure programs, such as the popular Junior Ranger program, are available to more children.

lineup included new and innovative live shows, while more than 2,000 visitors participated in outdoor art workshops. Whether it's improving the visitor experience or protecting natural resources, you made a difference in Yosemite.

Our Support is Everywhere



Everywhere you look in Yosemite, your gifts are making a tangible difference. From songbird research in Hodgdon Meadow, to Mariposa Grove restoration in Wawona, to live theater performances in Yosemite Valley, your gifts are preserving and protecting the park, while enhancing the visitor experience.

- Tenaya Lake's East Beach
- Youth in Yosemite
- Historic Sachse Springs Cabin Restoration
- Legendary Valley Trails Restoration
- Outdoor Adventures
- Protecting Songbirds & Inspiring Visitors
- Protecting Yosemite's Bears Through Electronic Monitoring
- Publishing
- Volunteers
- Wilderness Center
- Yosemite Theater LIVE!

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The amounts presented here are derived from Yosemite Conservancy's audited financial statements for the year ending Dec. 31, 2012. A copy of the audited financial report is available on request.

Statement of Financial Position

As of Dec. 31, 2012

ASSETS

Current Assets

Cash & Investments	\$15,020,473
Receivables & Other Assets	\$2,406,619

Total Current Assets \$17,427,092

Pledges Receivable, Net of Current Portion	\$909,273
Furniture & Equipment, Net of Accumulated Depreciation	\$240,230
Land Held for Future Use	\$764,200

TOTAL ASSETS \$19,340,795

LIABILITIES

Current Liabilities

Accounts Payable & Accrued Expenses	\$683,312
Grants Payable to Yosemite National Park, Current Portion	\$648,030

Total Current Liabilities \$1,331,342

NET ASSETS

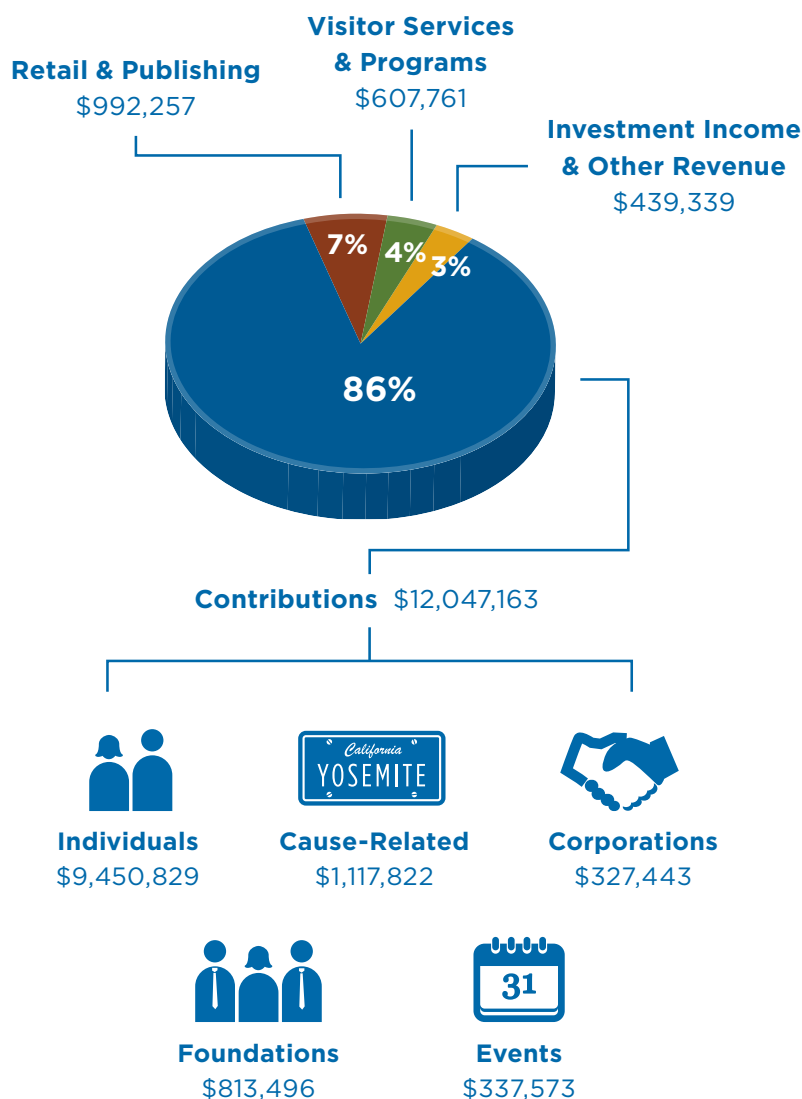
Unrestricted*	\$12,751,314
Temporarily Restricted	\$4,244,430
Permanently Restricted	\$1,013,709

Total Net Assets \$18,009,453

TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS \$19,340,795

*Reserves are maintained to meet future grant obligations to Yosemite National Park.

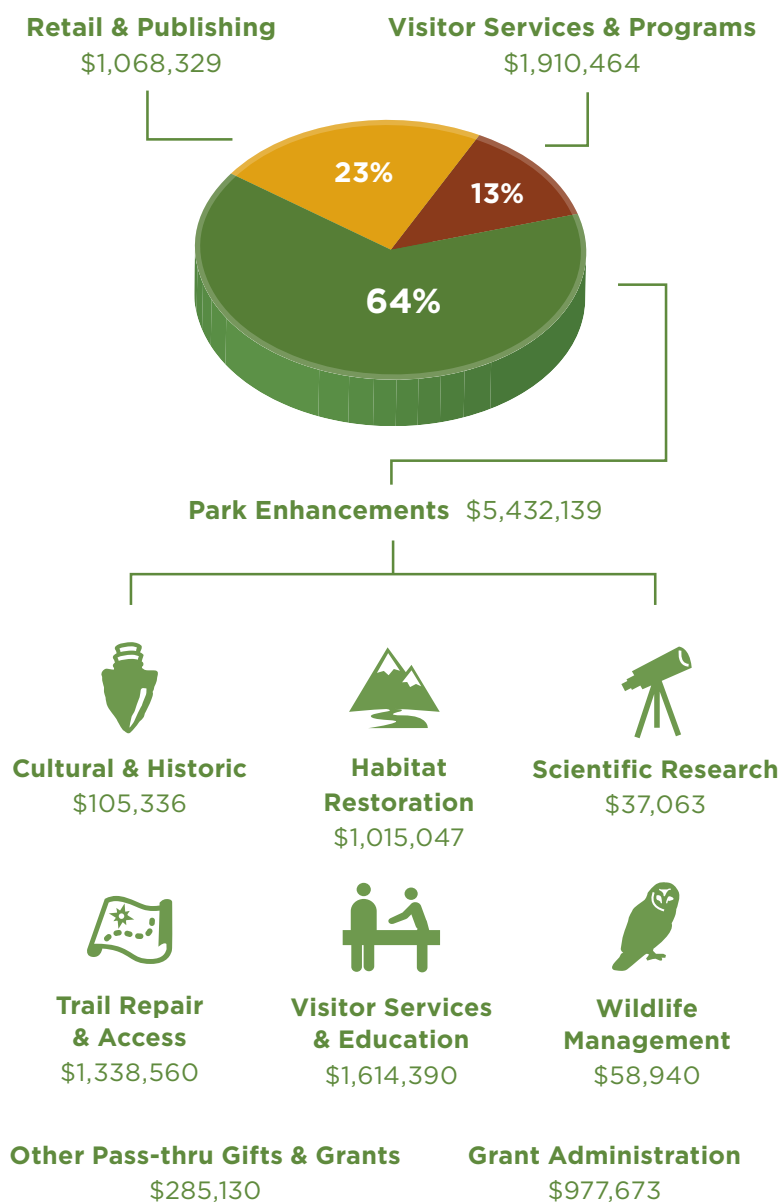
Support & Revenue \$14,086,520



December 31, 2012

Aid to Yosemite National Park

\$8,410,932



The amounts presented here are derived from Yosemite Conservancy's audited financial statements for the year ending Dec. 31, 2012. A copy of the audited financial report is available on request.

Statement of Activities

As of Dec. 31, 2012

SUPPORT & REVENUE

Contributions	\$12,047,163
Retail & Publishing	\$992,257
Visitor Services & Programs	\$607,761
Investment Income & Other Revenue	\$439,339

TOTAL SUPPORT & REVENUE **\$14,086,520**

EXPENSES

Aid to Park

Park Enhancements	\$5,432,139
Retail & Publishing	\$1,068,329
Visitor Services & Programs	\$1,910,464

Total Aid to Park **\$8,410,932**

Administrative	\$670,810
Fundraising	\$2,382,019

TOTAL EXPENSES **\$11,463,761**

Volunteers Make a Difference in the Park

Volunteers make important contributions to Yosemite National Park. From rehabilitating campgrounds and restoring meadows to providing information to visitors, volunteers are essential to enhancing the visitor experience in Yosemite. In 2012, Yosemite Conservancy volunteers assisted more than 400,000 visitors and dedicated more than 18,000 hours in service to Yosemite National Park.

Thank you to our dedicated volunteers!



\$400,000 in support was provided to Yosemite in the form of volunteer service.



PHOTO: © KEITH WALKLET.

ABOVE Support from The Wollenberg Foundation helps fund projects such as the restoration of the trail to Lower Yosemite Fall, including handicapped accessibility, educational exhibits and interpretive signage.

The Wollenberg Foundation: Continuing a Family Tradition of Philanthropy

Yosemite Conservancy is grateful for the many charitable foundations that help preserve Yosemite for future generations. Some of these generous funders have been giving for decades. One such longtime supporter is The Wollenberg Foundation.

David Wollenberg, the current managing trustee of the foundation, is proud to continue the tradition of philanthropy started by his grandfather. “Yosemite has always been a special place for my family,” he says, recalling a childhood camping trip to Yosemite and the famed Firefall from Glacier Point.

“Yosemite is a place worthy of preservation,” David says. “I appreciate that Yosemite Conservancy exists to fill in the gaps that cannot be covered by the National Park Service’s budget.” He cites the renovated Lower Yosemite Falls trail as an example of Conservancy projects that enhance the visitor experience. “The Wollenberg Foundation supports Yosemite Conservancy so the park will be in ideal condition for future generations.”

“I appreciate that Yosemite Conservancy exists to fill in the gaps that cannot be covered by the National Park Service’s budget.”

— **DAVID WOLLENBERG**
Yosemite Conservancy Donor



ABOVE The Isaef's are inspired by Mariposa Grove and many other places in the park during their biannual visits.

Give from Your Heart

Yosemite is Greg Isaef's church: the mountains its walls, the trees its spires. "It's like being inside a cathedral," he says. "It's where I go to redeem and reclaim myself. It reinvigorates my soul."

Greg introduced Roberta, his wife of 32 years, to the park while they were still dating. They, in turn, have brought friends and family, sharing it with the next generation. "It's something we pass on like a baton — the love of the mountains, the trees," Roberta says. They visit twice a year: once to The Ahwahnee, once to a cabin in Wawona.

The Isaef's feel a deep responsibility to sustain the place they love so much and see the difference the Conservancy makes throughout the park. As longtime donors, they recently increased their giving to become Guardians in the John Muir Heritage Society.

"Everybody *can* make a difference," Roberta says. "It's something Greg taught me: When you care so deeply about something, you give from your heart."

PHOTO: © ANNETTE BOTTARO WALKLET.

Your Yosemite Legacy.

We all remember our first experience in Yosemite: how we marveled at the timeless beauty and watched the glow of sunset reflected on the Valley's granite walls. Your legacy gift will ensure Yosemite remains the glorious treasure it is today.

To find out how you can leave your legacy to Yosemite, contact Darlene Bellucci at dbellucci@yosemiteconservancy.org or 415-434-8446 x 318.



ABOVE Darryl Ott poses with his Yosemite Conservancy license plate, which reads, "HF DME."

Memories Inspire Monthly Giving

Darryl Ott wears his heart on his license plate. In more than six decades of visiting Yosemite National Park, first with his parents, now with his children and grandchildren, the Bay Area native just can't choose one favorite memory. "The Firefall, the wildlife, Bracebridge dinners, the beauty — the whole ambiance, really," he says.

Darryl, who remembers "when Mirror Lake was actually a lake," became a financial supporter more than 15 years ago. "I realized it was time to start *giving* after so many years of *getting* from the park," he says. Darryl recently became a member of the Sequoia Society of monthly donors. "I like the monthly giving program," he says. "It makes sure the gift is made automatically, and I don't have to remember."

Speaking of memory, there *was* that one nighttime hike: "We hiked to the top of Half Dome under a full moon; that was pretty special." Darryl is reminded of that hike every time he walks to his car, where his license plate reads, "HF DME."

PHOTOS: © SUZY HASTY

Love Yosemite. Show the World.

Yosemite Conservancy receives a portion of revenue from the sale and renewal of every Yosemite license plate. Buying a California specialty plate is a great way to show the world your love of Yosemite, while supporting projects and programs that preserve Yosemite National Park.

Order your plate today at:
yosemiteconservancy.org/support-us

Already have a plate? Let us know:
info@yosemiteconservancy.org

Habitat Restored by Conservancy Volunteers



LEFT Conservancy volunteers complete a week-long restoration project to plant black oak seedlings in Yosemite Valley. **RIGHT** Julie Sornberger measures California black oaks in Yosemite Valley during a volunteer work week.

From her first visit to Yosemite six years ago, Julie Sornberger was so amazed at the Valley's beauty, that she insisted her parents fly out from the East Coast so they could share in her amazement. Since then, she has volunteered numerous times and built a deeper appreciation for the ways visitors can help preserve and protect Yosemite.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO BECOME A CONSERVANCY VOLUNTEER?

Volunteering provides me with one week to spend time in a place I love. Through volunteering, I hope to maintain Yosemite in a natural state, so it will be here in the future for us all to enjoy.

YOU RECENTLY FINISHED A WEEK RESTORING CALIFORNIA BLACK OAKS. WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THIS EXPERIENCE?

Spending so much time with the black oaks, I recognized how few "adolescent trees" exist. If we don't find a way to protect saplings, they will not regenerate.

WHAT WOULD YOU TELL SOMEONE WHO IS INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING IN YOSEMITE?

Do it! It is a great way to spend time in the park and meet people who enjoy it as much as you do. Volunteering provides the opportunity to help keep Yosemite as beautiful in the future as it is today.

Thank you to Julie Sornberger and all the dedicated Yosemite Conservancy volunteers who give their time to care for Yosemite National Park.



Learn more about volunteering with Yosemite Conservancy at our website: yosemiteconservancy.org/volunteer

150 YEARS of INSPIRING GENERATIONS

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

The Birth of the National Park Idea

Yosemite Conservancy, along with corporate, philanthropic and civic leaders, commemorates the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Yosemite Grant.

Thank you to our
generous sponsors:

Anniversary Sponsors

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MARK AND CINDY PIGOTT

Teddy Roosevelt Sponsors



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GOLDMAN

& THE

JACOBS FAMILY

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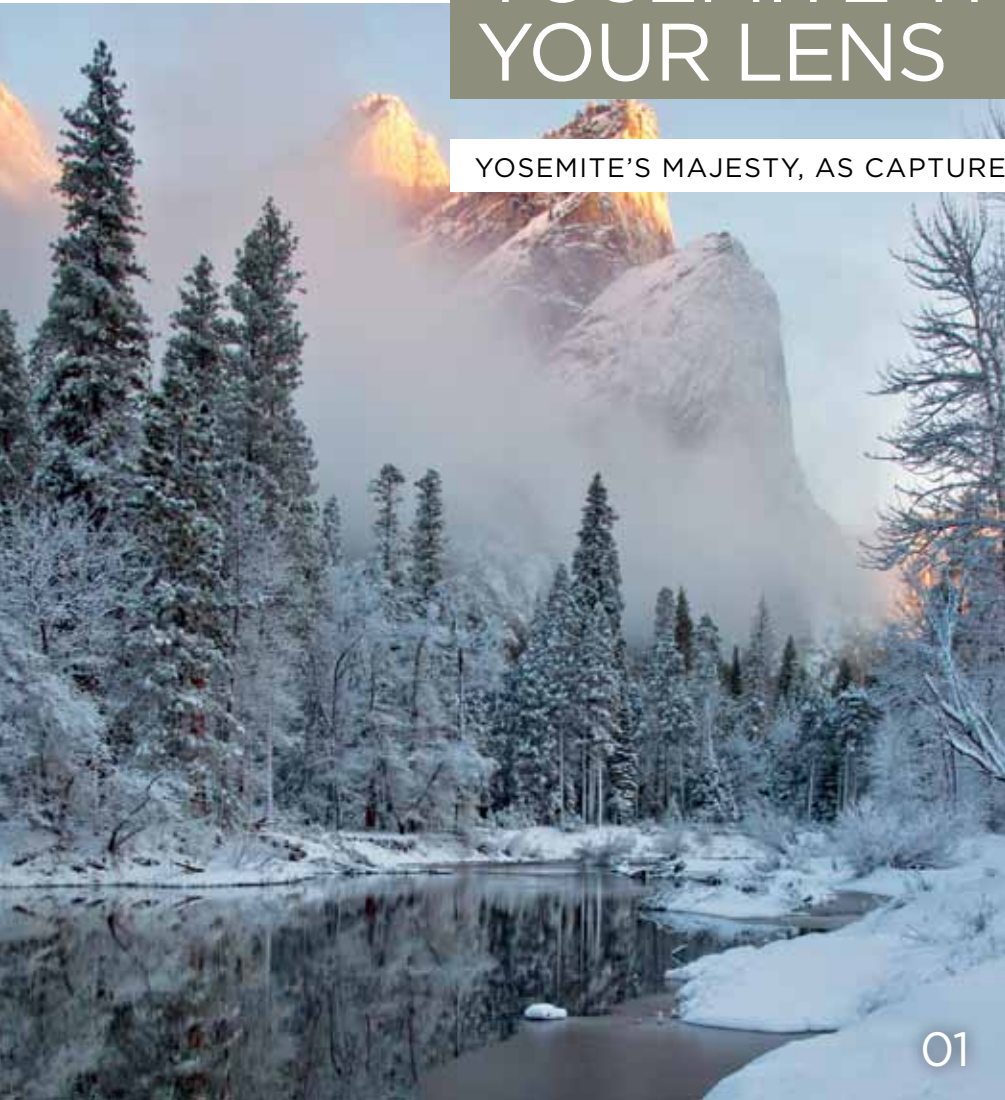
For corporate and foundation funding opportunities, contact Patrick Heryford

415.434.8446 x 328 or

pheryford@yosemiteconservancy.org

YOSEMITE THROUGH YOUR LENS

YOSEMITE'S MAJESTY, AS CAPTURED BY OUR SUPPORTERS



01 Three brothers and the Merced River

PHOTO BY © SCOTT PUDWELL.

02 Swinging Bridge cottonwood tree in autumn

PHOTO BY © ROBIN BLACK.

03 Winter day at Tenaya Lake

PHOTO BY © STEVE CASTRO.

04 White weasel at Cook's Meadow boardwalk

PHOTO BY © KRISTAL LEONARD.

Do you have a special memory you would like to share?

We love to see photos from your first or 100th visit to Yosemite. Our staff will select a few for printing in each issue of *Yosemite Conservancy*.



Visit Yosemite Conservancy on **Facebook** or **Flickr**, and share any photos of a special place you like in Yosemite, or email your photo submission to community@yosemiteconservancy.org

YOSEMITE CONSERVANCY

Magazine of Yosemite Conservancy,
published twice a year.

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Autumn/Winter 2013 :: Volume 04 Issue 02 ©2013

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YOSEMITE
CONSERVANCY

It's Easy to Connect with Yosemite Conservancy

CONTACT US

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800-469-7275 or 415-434-1782
Fax: 415-434-0745
info@yosemiteconservancy.org

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Learn how your gifts have supported
Yosemite. Visit our website and
sign up to receive our monthly
newsletter.
Visit yosemiteconservancy.org

WAYS TO SUPPORT

Friends of Yosemite

Protecting the beauty and wonder of
Yosemite for future generations.
Visit [yosemiteconservancy.org/
friends-yosemite](http://yosemiteconservancy.org/friends-yosemite)

Sequoia Society

Making a monthly donation is an
easy way to make a lasting difference.
Visit [yosemiteconservancy.org/
sequoia-society](http://yosemiteconservancy.org/sequoia-society)

John Muir Heritage Society

Investing in Yosemite's future
with generous gifts of \$1,000 or
more annually.
Visit [yosemiteconservancy.org/
john-muir-heritage-society](http://yosemiteconservancy.org/john-muir-heritage-society)

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Learn about sponsorship opportunities
for your organization.
Contact Patrick Heryford, institutional
giving officer, at 800-469-7275 x 328
or pheryford@yosemiteconservancy.org

Gifts of Stock

Make a significant contribution to
preserve and protect Yosemite.
We want to thank you for your gift.
Please contact Darlene Bellucci at
800-469-7275 x 318 or
dbellucci@yosemiteconservancy.org
to notify us of your gift.

Joseph Le Conte Legacy Society

Leave a lasting legacy to Yosemite.
For more information about making
a legacy gift, contact Darlene Bellucci
at 800-469-7275 x 318 or
dbellucci@yosemiteconservancy.org

Gifts in Honor

Inspirational gifts that help provide
for Yosemite's future.
Visit [yosemiteconservancy.org/
gifts-honor](http://yosemiteconservancy.org/gifts-honor), or for more information,
contact us at 800-469-7275 or
info@yosemiteconservancy.org

Gifts in Memory

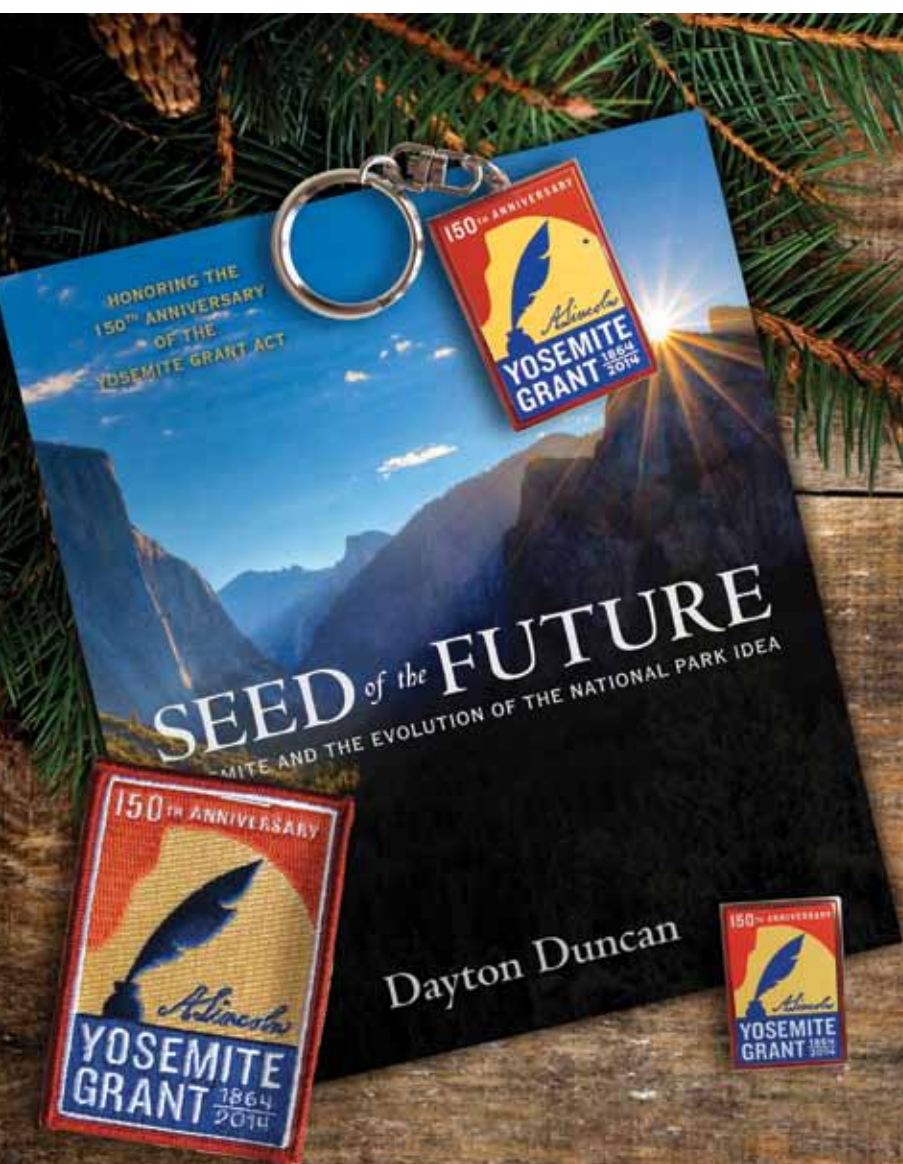
Recognize a loved one with a
special gift that protects and
preserves Yosemite.
Visit [yosemiteconservancy.org/gifts-
memory](http://yosemiteconservancy.org/gifts-memory), or for more information,
contact us at 800-469-7275 or
info@yosemiteconservancy.org

VOLUNTEER
OPPORTUNITIES

Greet park visitors, restore meadows,
or repair trails.
Visit [yosemiteconservancy.org/
volunteer](http://yosemiteconservancy.org/volunteer), or call 209-379-2317.



Yosemite Conservancy
101 Montgomery Street, Suite 1700
San Francisco, CA 94104



Give Gifts that Honor 150 Years of Preservation.

In 2014, Yosemite will mark 150 years of preservation. Celebrate this holiday season and ring in the new year with gifts that commemorate this special milestone.

Purchases made at the Yosemite Conservancy store support our work in the park and help ensure its preservation for generations to come.

**Receive a 15% discount with code
HOLIDAY2013.**

**Shop now at
yosemiteconservancy.org**

Code valid through Jan. 31, 2014;
online purchases only.