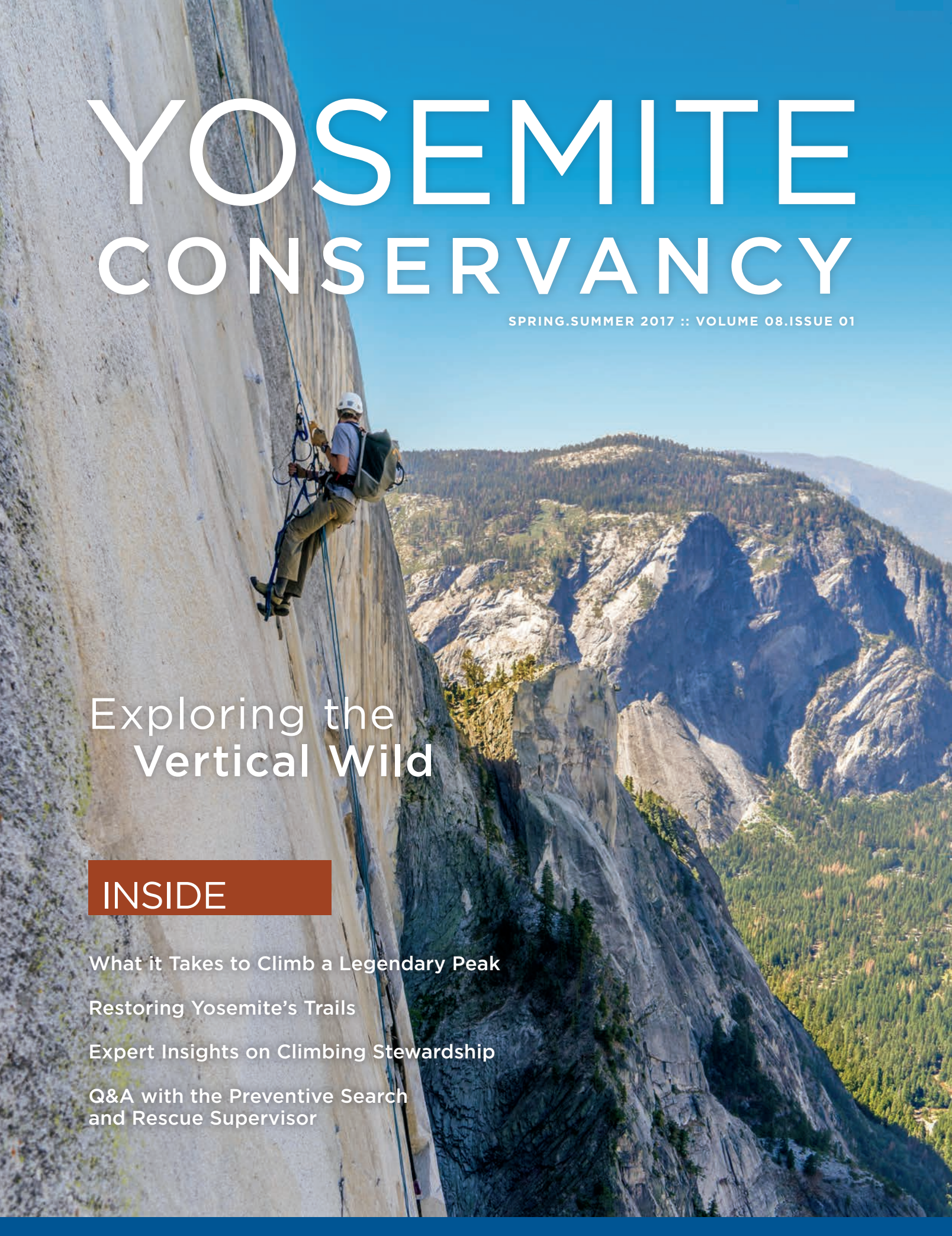
YOSEMITE CONSERVANCY

SPRING.SUMMER 2017 :: VOLUME 08.ISSUE 01



Exploring the Vertical Wild

INSIDE

What it Takes to Climb a Legendary Peak

Restoring Yosemite's Trails

Expert Insights on Climbing Stewardship

Q&A with the Preventive Search and Rescue Supervisor

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.

PRESIDENT'S NOTE

Climbing Yosemite

First-time visitors to Yosemite are often awestruck when they notice rock-climbers on El Capitan. That anyone could climb so high on such sheer cliffs is amazing.

Yosemite is inspiring, and it also brings out the explorer in all of us — such as the urge to see a waterfall up close or hike to the top of a dome to see the view. The skilled rock-climbers drawn to Yosemite are no exception; the sheer, clean granite walls are considered some of the best climbing in the world.

One of my favorite Conservancy-funded activities is our Ask a Climber program in El Capitan Meadow. Just look for the rangers in the meadow or by the bridge to answer your questions, and peer through their telescope at the climbers on the big wall.

In the following pages, you will find some insider tips on exploring Yosemite, including what it takes to climb a legendary Yosemite peak. There are also insights from rangers about vital programs funded by Conservancy donors, including Climbing Stewardship and Preventive Search and Rescue. Don't miss the inspiring article on disabled climbing with my friend Mark Wellman, and consider signing up for one of our guided Outdoor Adventures hikes this season.

With Yosemite's waterfalls at full volume this year, we encourage you to plan your trip for off-peak days to avoid the crowds, and look for some of our exciting new Yosemite books, including *Celestial Yosemite*, during your visit.

See you in the park!

Frank Dean

Frank Dean, President

COVER PHOTO Greg Stock, Yosemite's park geologist, draws on his climbing skills to explore the sheer face of Half Dome.

PHOTO: © COURTESY OF NPS.

PHOTO (RIGHT) © KRISTA LEONARD.

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ABOVE Lights hung by rock-climbers illuminate a path on Half Dome's southwest side.

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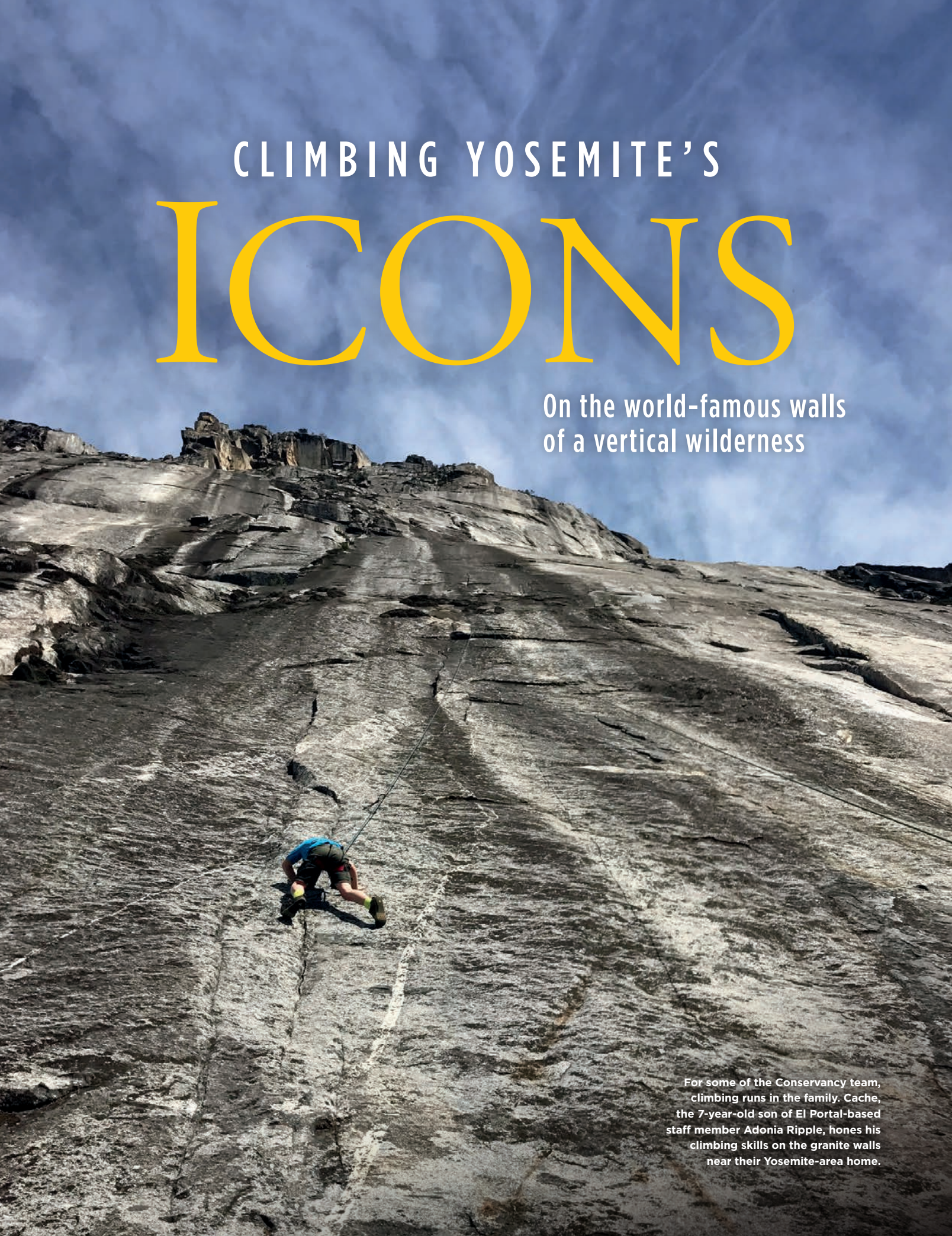
CLIMBING YOSEMITE'S ICONS

On the world-famous walls of a vertical wilderness



For some of the Conservancy team, climbing runs in the family. Cache, the 7-year-old son of El Portal-based staff member Adonia Ripple, hones his climbing skills on the granite walls near their Yosemite-area home.

PHOTO: (LEFT) © ANDREW "BOOTS" DAVENPORT.

Yosemite's granite cliffs and peaks are legendary in the global climbing community. For those curious about climbing but not ready to rope up, Ask a Climber, a Conservancy-funded program, offers an enriching look at the vertical world. Stop by El Capitan Meadow this summer to ask your big-wall questions — and in the meantime, get a jumpstart on some key climbing topics.

WHAT'S THE HISTORY OF CLIMBING IN YOSEMITE?

In 1869, the year John Muir completed the first ascent of Cathedral Peak, California's state geologist declared Half Dome "perfectly inaccessible"; six years later, George Anderson made it to the top.

In 1958, a team "topped out" on El Capitan (slang for climbed to the top), shattering its unattainable status during an era marked by innovation on the walls and tension with rangers on the ground. Today, the once-contentious rapport has evolved into a collaborative relationship that respects the sport, while promoting safety and stewardship. Thanks to your support, climbers can volunteer as ambassadors and caretakers of the vertical environment through a Climbing Stewardship program, and as members of the park's Search and Rescue team.

HOW DO YOU SCALE A CLIFF?

To start, do your homework. The Yosemite Decimal System grades routes based on difficulty, from 5.0 (novice) to 5.15 (elite). Will you use devices for leverage (aid climbing) or rely on your own body for momentum (free climbing)? Are you heading out for a few hours or a few days?

Grab your gear, including specialized shoes, ropes, protective gear, harness and helmet. For multiday climbs, bring bags to hold your supplies (and your waste), plus a portaledge to sleep on.

Ready to "send" your route? Pick your starting roles: Partner 1 carries the rope up, securing it at anchor points along the way; Partner 2 controls the slack from the ground, feeding it through a belay device. Once the lead reaches a ledge, the roles switch: Partner 2 climbs, collecting the anchoring equipment, as Partner 1 belays from above. When the partners meet on the ledge, you've completed one pitch.

Work upward, pitch by pitch, until you "top out." Enjoy the view and the satisfaction, and then rappel or hike back to earth.

HOW DO CLIMBERS CARE FOR THE VERTICAL ENVIRONMENT?

While the Valley itself is not federal Wilderness, its granite walls received that designation in 1984. Within that vertical Wilderness, vibrant ecosystems thrive. Plants and tree frogs peek out from cracks. Peregrine falcons nest on ledges, their presence a reminder of successful efforts, made possible in part by Conservancy grants, to reintroduce and protect a species that teetered on the edge of extinction.

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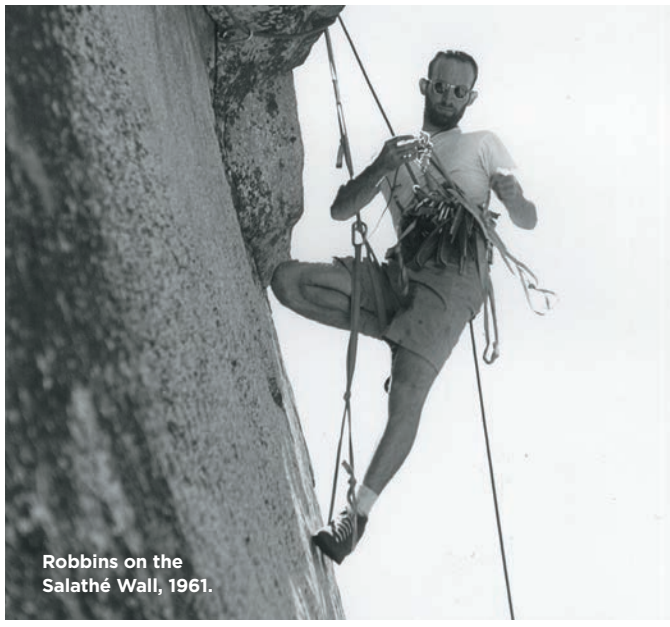
PHOTO: © TOM FROST, COURTESY OF ROYAL ROBBINS, LLC.



Robbins on the Salathé Wall, 1961.

ROYAL ROBBINS, a pioneer in Yosemite's climbing community and a member of the Conservancy's Council, passed away in March 2017 at the age of 82.

In the words of Bob Bennitt, our current board chair: "In the view of many, Royal was the most important climber of his era. His leadership of the clean climbing movement transformed and improved the world of climbing forever. To me, Royal was even bigger than all of his many accomplishments on the great walls of Yosemite. He was real, and down to earth, sincere and honest, warm, caring, and genuinely interested and curious. I think I will remember his resonant voice and ready smile most of all."

The Conservancy family is ever grateful for Royal's loyalty and generosity.

TRANSFORMING TRAILS AND LIVES

Young adults grow through a season in Yosemite

ABOVE During their season in Yosemite, California Conservation Corps participants connect with the wilderness while restoring and exploring trails around places such as Smith Peak.

For nearly two decades, Conservancy donors have supported the California Conservation Corps (CCC) trails program, enabling hundreds of young adults to experience and restore Yosemite's incomparable wilderness. The park's CCC crews have completed thousands of miles of trail work throughout the years; in 2017, they expect to add 128 miles to that total.

Yosemite's CCC trail season starts in early spring. Participants, who range in age from 18 to 25, begin with a month of trail repair basics in the Valley and Hetch Hetchy, before striking out for the backcountry. This year, one group heads north to the Tuolumne watershed; the other steers south to the Merced. During the next five months, they will hone tangible skills, taking tips from

PHOTOS: (LEFT) © COURTESY OF NPS. (TOP RIGHT) © YOSEMITE CONSERVANCY. (MIDDLE RIGHT) © COURTESY OF NPS. (BOTTOM RIGHT) © YOSEMITE CONSERVANCY.

"Nothing else instills self-improvement and environmental values with the same effectiveness."

— 2016 PARTICIPANT
California Conservation Corps (CCC)

resident experts, as they split and move boulders, build stone walls (held together by physics, not cement), and fill ruts forged by feet and flowing water.

Their work benefits hikers and natural resources. High-quality trails encourage people to stay on delineated paths, preventing the vegetation loss, soil compaction and other damage caused when humans trample fragile terrain. Drainage features prevent erosion and protect water quality, ensuring healthy habitat for plants and animals downstream. Yosemite crews use nonasphalt, regionally sourced surface material, providing a sustainable alternative to less permeable tread that can be repurposed as needed.

Five months in Yosemite's backcountry also can have a profoundly positive effect on the participants, themselves. A season of restoring wilderness trails, coupled with evening classes and weekend adventures, helps instill a strong awareness of the value of public lands and the impact humans have on nature. Working with a team in a physically and mentally challenging environment nurtures collaboration, communication and fresh perspectives. More than 90 percent of 2016 participants surveyed said the program had changed their lives in a positive way, and they'd learned more about themselves and about getting along with others.

"I learned how to approach challenges with a can-do attitude," a 2016 participant wrote, adding this assessment of the program: "Nothing else instills self-improvement and environmental values with the same effectiveness."

The next time you're hiking in the backcountry, remember this: Embedded in the steps and water bars are the stories of young adults who took a chance on a season in Yosemite and emerged with new skills, a new outlook and a new understanding of the importance of protected lands — thanks to your support.

Learn more about the CCC crews and their experience restoring — and being restored by — Yosemite's backcountry in this blog post: **yosemiteconservancy.org/ccc.** ■

A CCC member splits wood at base camp in Foresta. Crews start out working on trails in more developed parts of the park before heading to the backcountry.

As part of their Yosemite experience, CCC participants learn key trail restoration techniques, such as how to split and shape rocks.

Before and after images capture one CCC member's transformation from, in her words, "nervous" to "accomplished." See more: yosemiteconservancy.org/ccc.

Mirror Lake

Reading the Rocks

IMAGES OF A FEW OF OUR FAVORITE YOSEMITE STONES

Yosemite's official designation as a national park goes back only 127 years, but many of the features that first inspired that protection have been around for millennia. From soaring peaks that draw our gaze ever-upward, to boulders dotting polished granite slopes, geologic features tell powerful stories of the natural forces and human lives that have shaped the park. Icons such as Half Dome and El Capitan offer a fascinating — and much-studied — window into Yosemite's past, but we're going beyond the classics to highlight a few lesser-known features.

Leaning Tower

Olmsted Point

Pounding Rocks

Mt. Hoffmann

Matthes Crest

MIRROR LAKE

This small rock in the shallow, seasonal waters of Mirror Lake drew Yosemite photographer George Fiske's eye in the 1880s and remains a popular camera subject (and balancing spot) today.

OLMSTED POINT

At Olmsted Point, visitors admire Half Dome while climbing on erratics. These boulders, distinct from surrounding rock, were carried by ancient glaciers and deposited when the ice melted.

LEANING TOWER

The Leaning Tower, which forms the right (western) flank of Bridalveil Fall, is a popular destination for Yosemite climbers looking to tackle their first big wall.

POUNDING ROCKS

For generations, American Indians living in Yosemite used pestles and pounding rocks to process acorns and berries — dietary staples. The mortar cavities are still visible on boulders in the Valley.

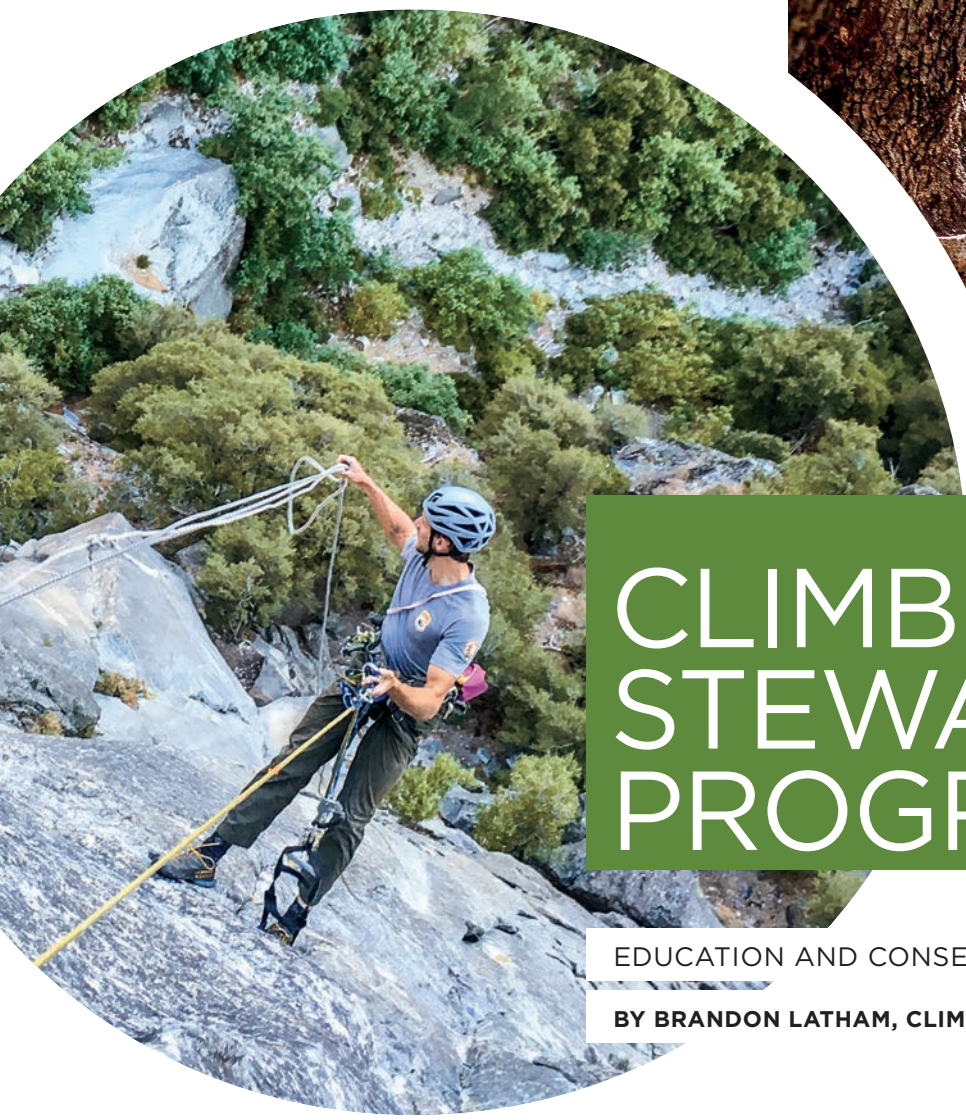
MT. HOFFMANN

Mt. Hoffmann, named for an early Sierra Nevada cartographer, rises high above May Lake at the park's geographic center, offering panoramic views and prime marmot habitat.

MATTHES CREST

Today, the serrated, mile-long Matthes Crest is a popular Cathedral Range traverse for skilled climbers; during Yosemite's glacial days, the craggy ridge was a *nunatak* (island) rising above the ice.

PHOTOS: (Mirror Lake) © GEORGE FISKE (1880s).
(Olmsted Point) © KEITH WALKLET. (Leaning Tower) © CAROLYN BOTELL.
(Pounding Rocks) © KEITH WALKLET.
(Mt. Hoffmann) © JON SULLIVAN (PD PHOTO.ORG).
(Matthes Crest) © ALICIA MARTINEZ.



CLIMBING STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

EDUCATION AND CONSERVATION ON AND OFF THE GROUND

BY BRANDON LATHAM, CLIMBING RANGER, YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

LEFT Yosemite's Climbing Stewardship team helps keep the walls pristine; here, a ranger cuts leftover rope from a route in the Valley. **MIDDLE** Park staff, interns and volunteers work together to improve access to popular climbing routes, such as this approach trail to Washington Column.

Yosemite's official Climbing Stewardship program launched in 2012, but the idea behind it — forging ties between climbers and the National Park Service (NPS) to benefit people and the park — is decades old. Wayne Merry, part of the trio that completed the first El Capitan ascent in 1958, used his dual role as a climber and ranger to strengthen park–climber relationships, and helped establish the volunteer Search and Rescue program that launched my own NPS career.

Today, the links Merry and other early, unofficial climbing rangers forged anchor the stewardship program, which has grown from a grassroots initiative into a professional operation focused on education and environmental protection. Conservancy grants have propelled the program's evolution, in part by helping us engage talented volunteers to amplify our efforts.

Our climbing volunteers come from all over the country and all stages of life, but they are united by shared passions for Yosemite, climbing and conservation. From

PHOTOS: (TOP LEFT, MIDDLE & RIGHT) © COURTESY OF NPS. (BOTTOM RIGHT) © AL GOLUB.

May through October, they pour that passion into outreach and stewardship. A typical day might start with an El Capitan visit, to talk to climbers and clean up accidentally dropped gear or trash, followed by an afternoon running "Ask a Climber," the Conservancy-funded program in El Capitan Meadow that draws thousands of visitors — including climbers who wander over from Camp 4 to pose questions or peer through the telescopes. Face-to-face time helps reinforce the program's credibility within the climbing community. We're not sitting at a desk writing policies; we're outside and on the walls, sharing important information and listening to their concerns.

Volunteers also support emergency operations, host "Climber Coffee" gatherings and help address one of the biggest concerns we hear from climbers: confusing networks of user-generated approach paths at popular routes. Thanks to Conservancy support, we have been addressing that issue by creating well-delineated, sustainable access trails.

Despite its name, the Climbing Stewardship program extends far beyond rock walls. Many principles we share apply to the horizontal wilderness, such as tips for staying safe, managing waste or using designated trails. From an education standpoint, climbing is a great vehicle for teaching all visitors about the geology, ecology and history of Yosemite's world-famous landscape.

Thanks to you, Yosemite's Climbing Stewardship program is growing stronger every year and has inspired similar initiatives in other parks. As you read this, our 2017 volunteers are embarking on another season of educating visitors, restoring trails and, of course, climbing. Stop by El Capitan Meadow, and ask them a question! ■

PROJECT SUMMARY

Climbing stewards began in 2012 as a grassroots program to supplement the small number of climbing rangers and address the growing need for habitat preservation in Yosemite's climbing areas. Thanks to Conservancy donors, grants to the "Ask a Climber" program and to repair climbing trails have provided critical support. This year, direct funding of the Climbing Stewardship program allows climbing rangers to increase the depth and breadth of their work. Thanks to your support, the program not only builds local stewardship, but reaches out beyond Yosemite, working with industry partners and climbing organizations to grow a culture of collaborative caretaking of our public lands.

BRANDON LATHAM is a climbing ranger in Yosemite. He started out as a climber exploring routes in Colorado, including in Rocky Mountain National Park. An internship in Yosemite led Latham to volunteer with the Yosemite Search and Rescue team for seven seasons. He learned about formalized climbing management while working for the climbing program in Denali. With this experience, Latham returned to Yosemite in 2014 as a climbing ranger and helped lead the development of the Climbing Stewardship program. This season, he's handing over the reins of the climbing program and returning to his roots in Search and Rescue.

"Because of Yosemite Conservancy, PSAR is a vibrant and successful program."

— ALAN A. HAGEMAN
Preventive Search & Rescue Operations Supervisor

Q&A WITH A YOSEMITE INSIDER

As supervisor of Yosemite's Preventive Search and Rescue program, ranger Alan Hageman focuses on educating visitors about staying safe in the park.

Ever since Alan Hageman joined the U.S. Coast Guard at 18, he has been involved in some form of public safety. In his previous post, he worked as the safety officer and interpreter at the George Washington Birthplace National Monument. Off-hours, he was active on a community-based volunteer rescue squad. When an opening came up in Yosemite for supervisor of Preventive Search and Rescue (PSAR) operations, Hageman was drawn to the challenge. Joining the team in 2015, he found it was the perfect blend of his experience in public safety and education, set in the unparalleled scenery of Yosemite.

Q :: What do you love about working in Yosemite National Park?

A :: I enjoy the privilege of working and living here. It's so meaningful to know I play a small part in reducing emergencies and helping visitors develop pleasant memories of Yosemite.

Q :: Please explain what Preventive Search and Rescue volunteers do.

A :: Other than my position, PSAR is entirely volunteer-staffed. Our volunteers educate visitors about having a safe and enjoyable experience on Yosemite's trails.

Once an emergency occurs, law-enforcement park rangers and support teams are called in for a Search and Rescue (SAR). Depending on their skill set, PSAR volunteers actively train with and participate, as needed, in emergency service calls.

Q :: How has the PSAR program made a difference in Yosemite?

A :: Yosemite's visitation has steadily increased, but we have been able to reduce the rate of SARs from 7.20 per 100,000 visitors in the 2009 peak season to 5.21 during the same period in 2016.

One key area is the Mist Trail corridor. It's our busiest trail for hikers and SAR activity, especially the slick steps below Vernal Fall. By encouraging hikers to use the Clark Point cutoff, PSAR volunteers have seen Mist Trail incidents fall from the usual rate of 50 per year to only 27 in 2016. We'd like to see such success throughout Yosemite.

Q :: What are your suggestions for a safe Yosemite visit?

A :: Planning is vital. Before you head out on a hike, ask yourself: How long and steep is the route? How much food and water should I bring? Are there any hazards or difficulties? What is the weather forecast?

PHOTOS © COURTESY OF NPS.

Stay on the trail and away from moving or white water. In almost all the most serious injuries, someone made a spontaneous off-trail trip and got lost, found themselves in swift water or took a bad fall. Granite is slippery, even when dry.

Tell a friend your plans before you go. Snack regularly on salty foods to replace minerals lost from sweat. And, finally, stay hydrated! Drink one liter of water for every two to three hours of activity.

Q :: How do Conservancy donors help keep visitors safe?

A :: Our dedicated intern volunteers provide direct services to visitors, and they help me recruit, train and support the other volunteers. Conservancy funding provides crucial supplies for these interns, including lodging, a food allowance, uniforms and equipment. Because of Yosemite Conversancy, PSAR is a vibrant and successful program. ■

ABOVE In addition to educating visitors, PSAR volunteers help with emergency operations, such as this carry-out on the Four Mile Trail. **RIGHT** PSAR volunteers — easy to spot in their yellow shirts — work closely with Hageman (center) to keep people safe in Yosemite.

New Grants for 2017*

TRAIL REHABILITATION & ACCESS

Building Historic Connections: Washburn Trail	$295,055
CCC Crews Restore Trails: Merced River Watershed	$200,056
CCC Crews Restore Trails: Tuolumne River Watershed	$200,056
Restore the Bridalveil Fall Area	$292,900

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Keep Bear Cubs Safe with GPS Tracking	$13,500
Protect Yosemite's Owls	$97,587
Restore Rare Frogs and Turtles	$217,301
Return Bighorn Sheep to the Heart of Yosemite's Wilderness	$87,832

HABITAT RESTORATION

Improve John Muir Trail and Meadow Habitat in Lyell Canyon	$165,210
Keep It Wild: Restore Yosemite's Wilderness	$188,315
Plant Flowers to Save Pollinators	$70,430
Protect Alpine Meadows from Invasive Plants	$43,640

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Discover and Document Ackerson Meadow Species	$47,562
Protect Songbirds and Inspire Visitors	$52,000
Streaming Science: The Yosemite Bat Channel	$30,748
Yosemite Valley Predators: Raccoons, Ravens & River Otters	$42,750

CULTURAL & HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Build a Traditional Roundhouse at Wahhoga Village	$54,838
Preserve Yosemite's Horse and Mule Tradition	$7,000
Restore Historic Scenery: Valley View	$44,060
Traditions to Careers: Engage Tribal Youth in Archeology	$10,000
Yosemite Goes Global: Connect with International Parks	$15,000

VISITOR SERVICES & EDUCATION

Adventure Risk Challenge: Youth Build Skills in Yosemite	$85,000
Ask a Climber	$49,000
Inspire New Stewards at UC Merced	$105,300
Junior Ranger Programs	$125,000
Keep Visitors Safe with Preventive Search and Rescue	$50,000
No Limits: Yosemite Adventures for Wheelchair Users	$21,460
Parks in Focus: Youth Explore Nature through Photography	$24,000
Parsons Memorial Lodge Summer Series	$30,000
Replace Search and Rescue Tent Housing	$14,682
WildLink: Teens Connect to the Natural World	$50,000
Yosemite Climbing Stewardship Program	$71,850
Yosemite Leadership Program: Summer Internships	$90,000
Yosemite Nature Notes Series	$60,000
TOTAL	**$2,952,132**

**Color represents 2016 Youth in Yosemite Programs.*

PROTECTING MOUNTAIN MEADOWS

STOPPING THE SPREAD OF INVASIVE PLANTS IN THE HIGH SIERRA

Far above sea level in Yosemite, the air thins, temperatures drop, and high-elevation habitats thrive. Snow-fed alpine meadows support a remarkable array of plants and animals.

Invasive plants disrupt these havens of biodiversity. If allowed to spread, such plants can transform meadows into monocultures, eliminate animal habitat and weaken ecological resilience to climate change.

With support from Conservancy donors, park crews have surveyed more than 17,250 acres for invasive plants in recent years, often focusing above 7,000 feet. Along the way, crews map and remove non-native flora; this year, they will treat another 50 acres of invasive alpine plants.

With support from Conservancy donors, park crews have surveyed more than 17,250 acres for invasive plants in recent years, often focusing above 7,000 feet.

PHOTOS: (ABOVE) © COURTESY OF NPS. (RIGHT) © ANNE SANDMAN.

The fieldwork pays off — 2016 results show that 25 invasive species potentially have been eradicated from high-elevation areas — but the full benefits cannot be measured in acres. By giving interns and volunteers hands-on habitat restoration experience, this project is cultivating new crops of environmentally engaged stewards.

Thanks to you, park staff and volunteers are continuing to document and treat existing populations of invasive plants this year. Meanwhile, we can all help prevent new ones from taking root, by staying on trails and brushing off hiking gear to avoid accidentally transporting non-native seeds.

As Student Conservation Association intern Richard realized while unearthing dandelions last summer, small acts, from pulling plants to cleaning boots, add up: "As the climate warms, alpine regions are put at greater risk for the spread of invasive species ... On the small scale, we were weeding. On a larger scale, I saw everything that was at stake." ■

LEFT Volunteers play an important role in Yosemite's efforts to identify and remove invasive plants that pose a threat to ecosystem health. **RIGHT** By supporting invasive plant management in the park, your gifts help protect habitat for native wildflowers, such as shooting stars.

EXPANDING ACCESS TO ADVENTURES

NEW YOSEMITE PROGRAM FOR VISITORS WITH PHYSICAL CHALLENGES

PHOTOS: © MARK WELLMAN.

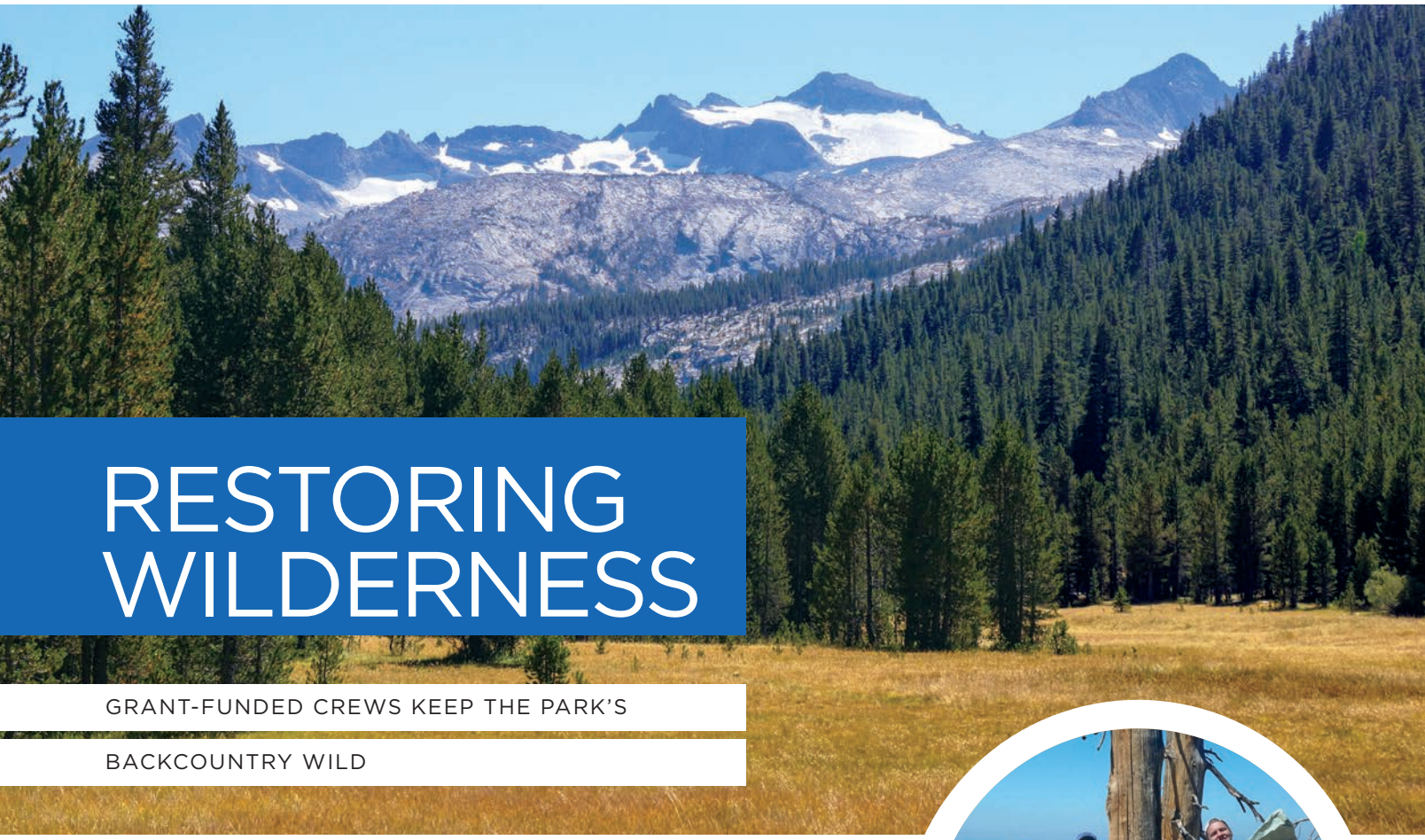
PHOTOS: (TOP) © TED HUNTING; (BOTTOM) © COURTESY OF NPS.

Pioneering climber Mark Wellman, pictured here at Glacier Point, is encouraging wheelchair-users to discover Yosemite with "no limits" this year.

No Limits program participants will explore the park through adaptive climbing and hand-pedaled cycling.

More than 30 years ago, a climbing accident in the John Muir Wilderness left mountaineer Mark Wellman paralyzed from the waist down. Rather than dampening his passion for exploring the natural world, the event pushed Mark to embrace a "no limits" philosophy. He made the first paraplegic ascents of El Capitan and Half Dome, sit-skied across the Sierra Nevada, and served as an interpretive ranger in Yosemite.

This year, Mark is bringing his enthusiasm for envelope-pushing adventures back to the park. The No Limits Yosemite program helps wheelchair-users experience the natural world beyond the traditional confines of paved paths, leveraging adaptive equipment to help them explore vertical granite walls and wilderness areas. Thanks to your support, Mark and his team are empowering participants to go beyond perceived boundaries in outdoor recreation, and become active, informed users — and stewards — of our public lands. ■



RESTORING WILDERNESS

GRANT-FUNDED CREWS KEEP THE PARK'S BACKCOUNTRY WILD

During the 2016 season, restoration staff and volunteers covered 220 miles on foot to restore wilderness destinations such as Lyell Canyon.

The 704,624-acre Yosemite Wilderness serves as a permanent home for diverse plants and animals—and as temporary habitat for tens of thousands of visitors. Those hikers and backpackers inevitably, and often inadvertently, leave a mark on the landscape, by dropping food wrappers, transporting non-native seeds, or camping too close to water.

For nearly three decades, our donors have funded wilderness restoration in Yosemite. In 2016, with your support, park staff worked with a Student Conservation Association crew, Conservancy volunteers and other groups to survey 8,178 wilderness acres, eliminate or formalize more than 600 campsites, remove invasive plants and fire rings, and restore social trails.

Everyone who cherishes wilderness has a role to play in keeping Yosemite wild. As your gifts propel another season of restoration this year, take simple steps to minimize your own impact: camp and cook at least 100 feet from water, and leave nothing but carefully placed footprints behind. ■

A 35-day Student Conservation Association "Keep It Wild" crew removed or maintained more than 208 backcountry campsites last summer.

Ready to explore – and protect – Yosemite's backcountry?

Join one of our casual backpacking trips this summer to adventure through stunning wilderness areas and learn to "leave no trace" with a naturalist guide.

yosemiteconservancy.org/outdoor-adventures

YOSEMITE AT YOUR PACE

CONNECT TO YOUR PARK ON A RELAXED ADVENTURE

LEFT On beginner-friendly trips, Outdoor Adventures participants build backpacking skills and explore less-visited parts of the park in a relaxed environment. **MIDDLE** Explore at an unhurried pace — and take breaks to enjoy quiet moments with epic views — during casual, expert-led adventures

How old are these mountains? What does a great gray owl sound like? How did the early Miwok people prepare acorns for food? Satisfy your curiosity on a Yosemite Conservancy Outdoor Adventure with park scientists, researchers and expert naturalist guides. Our team has an array of fresh offerings to help you cultivate a deeper understanding of your favorite park.

The Conservancy's new Dine and Discover™ series includes an al fresco picnic and opportunity to hear behind-the-scenes information from insiders who have spent years studying the

PHOTOS: (LEFT) © MATT MCIVOR. (MIDDLE) © RYAN KELLY. (RIGHT) © KEITH WALKLET.

natural and cultural history of the park. Gain closer insights to the grants made possible by your support, including wildlife management, habitat restoration and more.

Looking for a low-stress trek into the backcountry? Casual backpacking trips enjoy a leisurely pace to a lovely alpine setting. Expert naturalist guides will make the trail come alive, as they enrich your hike with stories of the area. These trips are great for both beginning and experienced backpackers looking for a relaxed outing to the High Sierra.

Yosemite offers a lifetime of exploration and learning. Tune in to the park in a new way by exploring with Yosemite Conservancy. ■

Find your next adventure.

2017 OUTDOOR ADVENTURES HIGHLIGHTS

JUNE 2–3
Dine and Discover: Geology Underfoot

JUNE 9–11
Introduction to Backpacking: Hetch Hetchy

JUNE 24–25
All Angles of Angling: Fly Fishing and Aquatic Life — Trip 1

JULY 14–16
Casual Backpacking: Ostrander Lake

AUGUST 17–20
Casual Backpacking: Polly Dome Lakes

SEPTEMBER 14–17
Casual Backpacking: Mono Pass

SEPTEMBER 30–OCTOBER 1
Dine and Discover: American-Indian Food Preparation and Acorns

Check out a full list of this year's programs at **yosemiteconservancy.org/outdoor-adventures.**

Want something specific?
Let Yosemite Conservancy organize a Custom Adventure for you.

PACK IT IN, PACK IT OUT

TIPS ON PACKING YOUR BEAR-PROOF CANISTER

PHOTOS: (TOP) © KEITH WALKLET. (BOTTOM) © YOSEMITE CONSERVANCY.

PHOTO © KRISTA LEONARD.

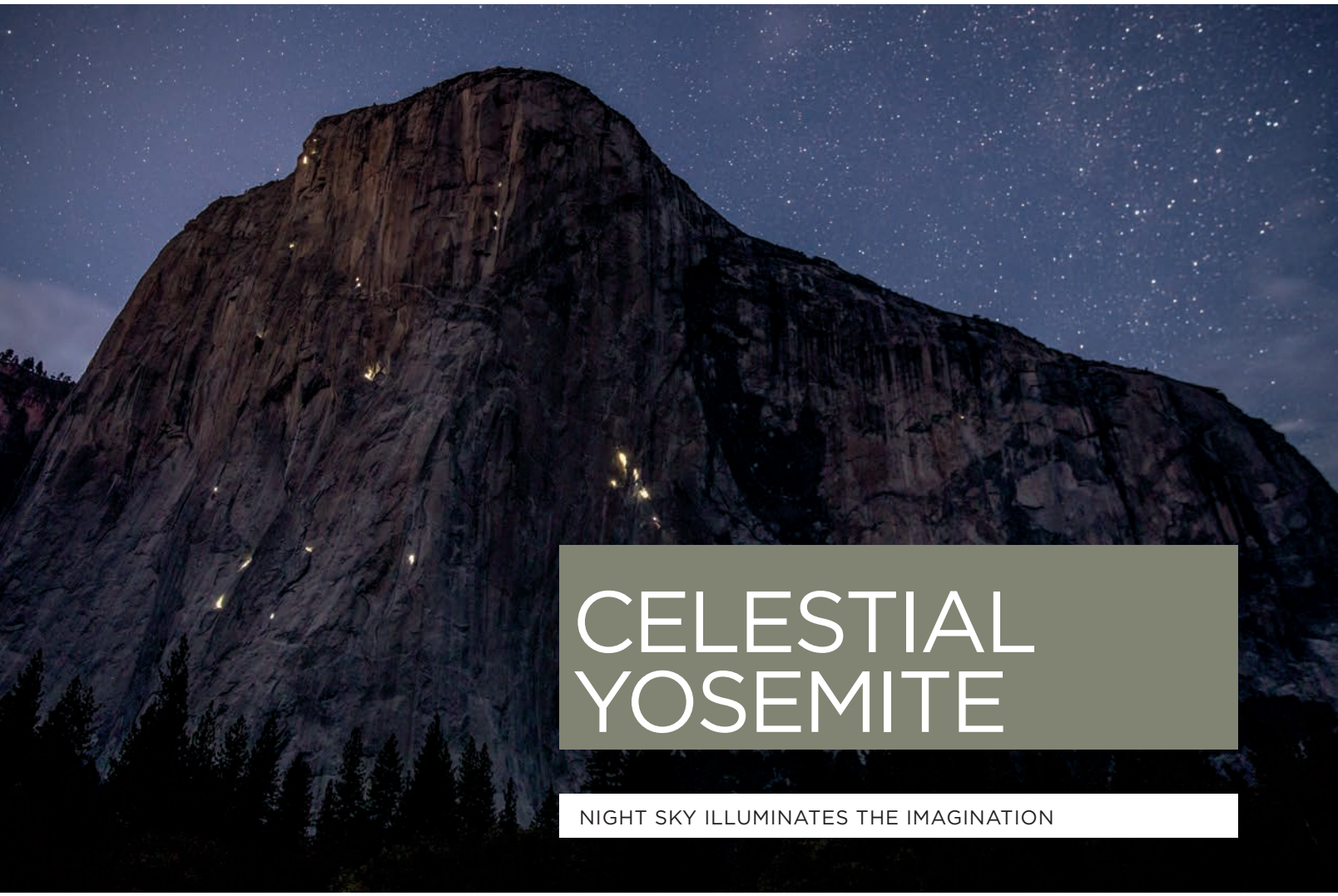
By renting out bear-proof canisters, the Conservancy's Wilderness team helps visitors protect wildlife and collects fees that support the park.

Bear-proof canisters offer a simple way to make a big difference for Yosemite wildlife.

Planning a backpacking trip in Yosemite? Use a bear-proof canister to ensure your food and scented items remain inaccessible to curious bears. Laurie Stowe has run Yosemite Conservancy's wilderness programs for the past 19 years and has backpacked most trails in Yosemite. Here are her tips on how best to pack a canister:

- Remove bulky food packaging. Utilize small, compressible bags for each meal. Remember to include any cooking instructions from original packaging.
- Canisters will be tossed around in a backpack. Pack them tightly, so objects won't rattle around inside. Fill empty space in the canister with other gear.
- Choose foods that are dense in calories and nutrition, and that are compactable, such as tortillas.
- Toiletries, first-aid kits and other scented items need to fit into a canister at night.

Rent a bear-proof canister from Yosemite Conservancy staff, located at all park wilderness permit locations — proceeds go back to the park! Seasonal hours can be found at ***nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/permitstations.htm.*** ■



CELESTIAL YOSEMITE

NIGHT SKY ILLUMINATES THE IMAGINATION

TOP El Capitan looms over Yosemite Valley, its steep granite walls punctuated with a constellation of lights from climbers' headlamps.

To purchase, visit one of our bookstores in Yosemite, or shop online at ***yosemiteconservancy.org/shop.***

Discover the wonders of luminescent Yosemite nights through the lens of astro-photographer Kristal Leonard in her new book, *Celestial Yosemite*. Leonard's work depicts the mesmerizing power of the night sky and the primal connection we share with our ancestors when gazing into the untrammeled darkness.

Through vibrant pictures and text, Leonard provides insight on the importance of protecting the natural night sky above our parks from light pollution and includes helpful tips for preserving dark skies. Crack the spine, and take a journey to a selection of rarely seen Yosemite sites.

Keep your eyes out for the 2018 *Celestial Yosemite* calendar, sure to dazzle even your most seasoned Yosemite landscape aficionado. All proceeds from *Celestial Yosemite* support projects in Yosemite, helping to preserve this unique place in the galaxy. ■

THANK YOU

YOSEMITE CONSERVANCY SUPPORTERS Yosemite Conservancy is extremely grateful to acknowledge the John Muir Heritage Society and Joseph Le Conte Legacy Society individual donors, foundations, businesses and volunteers, who supported our work at a leadership level from Jan. 1, 2016, to Dec. 31, 2016, below. Donors of $25 and more are listed in the Honor Register or on the Honor Wall at the Valley Visitor Center in Yosemite National Park. Thanks to our generous donors, we are able to fulfill our mission to preserve and protect Yosemite National Park and enrich the visitor experience — today and for future generations.

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The John Muir Heritage Society is composed of individuals with a strong commitment to preserving and protecting Yosemite for the future by giving $1,000 and more each year.

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Gifts of $100,000 & more

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"Working together, we hope to build greater awareness of Yosemite Conservancy's effort to steward and increase access to the outdoor recreation places where REI members and customers play."

— RECREATIONAL EQUIPMENT, INC. (REI)
Yosemite Conservancy Corporate Donor

PHOTO: © AL GOLUB.

Thank You, Volunteers!

Volunteers are a vital part of the Conservancy — and of Yosemite. Every year, our volunteers donate thousands of hours to support the park they love. Whether restoring trails and habitat, leading art workshops, or making sure visitors have the best possible experience, volunteers play an essential role in Yosemite's present and future.

To all our generous volunteers: Thank you for donating your time and talents to help preserve your park!

Become a volunteer! If you would like to give back to Yosemite in this tangible way, visit **yosemiteconservancy.org/volunteer** to find out more.

PHOTOS: © KEITH WALKLET.

Climbing Yosemite's Icons *continued from p. 5*

Periodic cliff closures to protect falcons are part of a collective, long-running effort to balance climbing and its wild setting. "Clean climbing" tactics use removable devices, protecting both the granite and the thrill of a clean route. At the base of the walls, restoration work funded by Conservancy donors has transformed informal paths into environmentally sound approach trails, protecting habitat and climbers' safety. On and off the walls, climbers and other volunteers help remove thousands of pounds of litter each year through Facelift, the annual parkwide cleanup.

The next time you're in Yosemite at dusk, look for the glint of headlamps, as climbers settle in for a night on the walls, continuing a legacy of defying the impossible and caring for an intricate granite world. Even if you never put on a climbing harness, you play a role in that legacy by supporting efforts to protect habitat on and around the walls, educate the public, and inspire new stewards of the vertical wilderness. ■

WHIMSY ON THE WALLS

Climbing in Yosemite can be seriously challenging — but there's plenty of fun to be found on the walls! Many routes have earned charming (or downright bizarre) monikers, names that reflect quirks in the rock or hint at memorable moments from past ascents. Here's a sample:

- BONGS AWAY
- BOOK 'EM DANO
- BRING IN THE FEMBOTS
- BUTTERFINGERS
- CARIBBEAN CRUISE
- COLD FUSION
- DANGLING CHADS
- DAWN WALL
- ELECTRIC LADYLAND
- GIDGET GOES TO YOSEMITE
- JUNGLE BOOGIE
- MEAT GRINDER
- NUTCRACKER
- OUTER LIMITS
- PLASTIC JESUS
- PLASTIC SURGERY DISASTER
- TRIAL BY FIRE
- TWILIGHT ZONE
- VELVET ELVIS
- ZODIAC

Donor Events & Activities

THE JOHN MUIR HERITAGE SOCIETY
is a community of generous Yosemite Conservancy supporters who have demonstrated a strong commitment to protecting and preserving Yosemite for future generations. With your annual gift of $1,000 or more, you join the influential group of Conservancy donors responsible for the completion of many critical projects in the park each year. Support at this level has tremendous impact, and your leadership gifts enable Yosemite Conservancy to truly make a difference in the park. Join now, and enjoy benefits such as invitations to exclusive events with park staff, an insider's view of the park, special recognition and a community of like-minded individuals.

For more information about the John Muir Heritage Society or events, please contact Kim Coull at ***kcoull@yosemiteconservancy.org*** *or* ***415-434-8446 x324.***

Fall Colors
Conservancy President Frank Dean

Fall Colors
Projects Director Schuyler Greenleaf

Fall Colors
Morning bird walk led by Pete Devine, Resident Naturalist

Tuolumne Meadows
JMHS donors hike Mono Pass

Tuolumne Meadows
JMHS donors with Dan Webster, Naturalist

Tuolumne Meadows
Melody & Bob Lind

Bracebridge
Kim & Steven Rizzuto

Bracebridge
Colin Tanner, Linda Lester, Betty Watson & Ken DiVittorio

Bracebridge
Woody Smeck, Joan Parker & Rick Grunsky

"I have found much comfort on the trail over the years, and I hope my children can find the same. We all need a positive way to release stress."

— STEVEN GADECKI
Yosemite Conservancy Donor

Yosemite, the "Family Park"

A year of discovery inspires a commitment to the Conservancy

Have you ever watched the sunrise in Yosemite in footie pajamas? For the Gadecki family, it's an experience to remember. Steven and Erica Gadecki had been to Yosemite many times before, but when they visited the park in 2015 with their sons, Ryland (age four) and Hunter (age two), Steven described it as "a new beginning."

One sleepless morning, Steven took Ryland to Yosemite Falls, and together, they watched the sun rise. Steven cherishes this quiet moment as one of many wonderful memories in a year of discovery. They made a promise to spend every weekend in nature discovering something new. For every new place, the Gadeckis

PHOTOS: (LEFT & RIGHT) © COURTESY OF GADECKI FAMILY. (MIDDLE) © KEITH WALKLET.

LEFT Inspired by their love of the outdoors, the Gadecki family dedicated a year's worth of weekends to discovering nature — and giving back to the park. **MIDDLE** An early morning hike to Yosemite Falls helped prompt the Gadeckis to see the park through fresh eyes and devote more time to exploring the natural world.

made a donation to Yosemite Conservancy on behalf of someone positive in their lives. Though Yosemite has always been close to their hearts, the Gadeckis now think of it as their "family park."

As their year of discovery ends, the Gadeckis continue to support the Conservancy through automated monthly gifts. Steven and Erica have also encouraged each of their workplaces — Sony Pictures Entertainment and FremantleMedia — to support Yosemite with generous contributions to the Conservancy. And, as members of the John Muir Heritage Society, the Gadeckis stay connected to Yosemite through donor events. For this outdoorsy family, it's a powerful way to teach their kids the importance of having a relationship with nature. Steven explains: "I have found much comfort on the trail over the years, and I hope my children can find the same. We all need a positive way to release stress."

Our thanks go to the Gadecki family — and to the many Conservancy donors — for their commitment to the natural world. With your help, Yosemite will remain an inspiration for countless generations of explorers, young and old. ■

RIGHT Steven Gadecki and his two sons enjoy a sunny moment resting at the edge of the Merced River in their "family park," Yosemite.

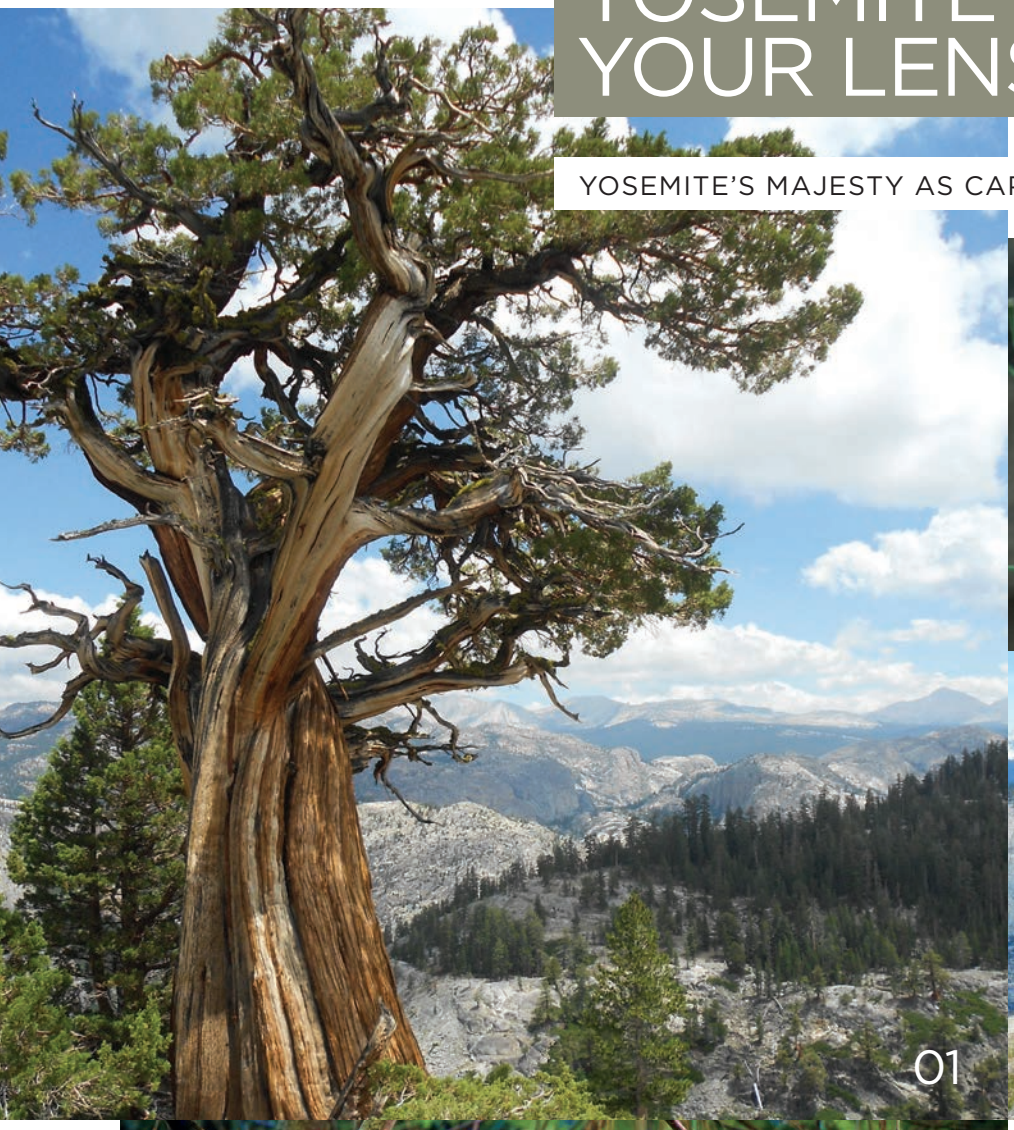
What does Yosemite mean to your family?

Honor your favorite Yosemite memory with a gift in honor (or in memory) of a loved one.

*Visit **yosemiteconservancy.org/tribute,** or contact us at 415-434-1782 or info@yosemiteconservancy.org.*

YOSEMITE THROUGH YOUR LENS

YOSEMITE'S MAJESTY AS CAPTURED BY OUR SUPPORTERS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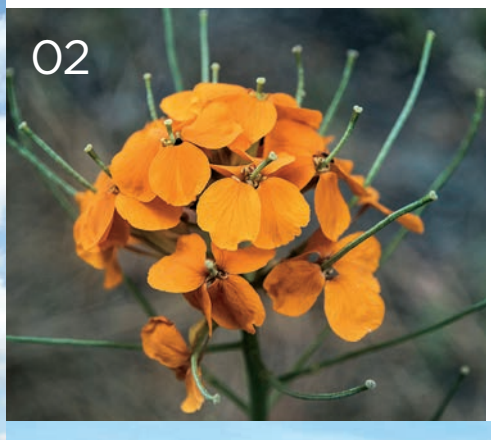
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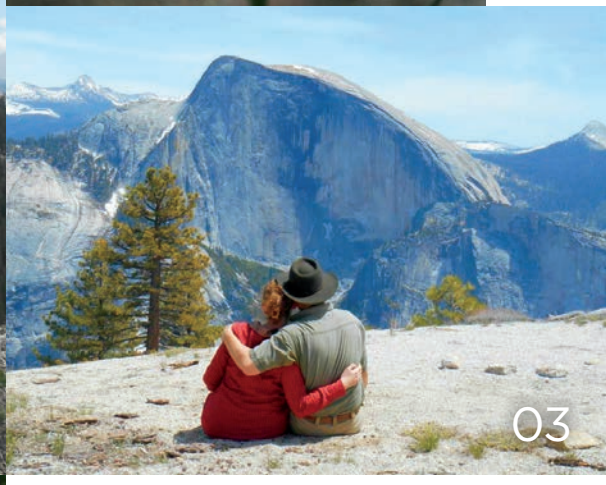
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04

01 Western Juniper.
PHOTO BY © MELISSA STELLER.

02 Western Wallflower.
PHOTO BY © AVI DRORI.

03 View from North Dome.
PHOTO BY © TAYLOR STANTON.

04 Young Deer.
PHOTO BY © DANNY KAUFMAN.

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These images were captured by Yosemite fans like you. We're always looking for photos to feature in our social media, enewsletter and magazine — and we'd love to see your shots! Share your favorites with us on Flickr, Facebook and Instagram, or email them to community@yosemiteconservancy.org.

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YOSEMITE 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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Follow the Conservancy on
social media to stay in touch on the go.

PHOTO: © KEITH WALKLET.

Your Yosemite Legacy

Yosemite's natural wonders are not only our inheritance, but also our responsibility. Your legacy gift to Yosemite Conservancy makes a lasting impact beyond your lifetime, commemorating your special connection to Yosemite while ensuring the park remains a beloved treasure for future generations to enjoy.

To find out how you can leave your legacy to Yosemite, contact Debra Holcomb at dholcomb@yosemiteconservancy.org or 415-434-8446 x319.

yosemiteconservancy.org/plannedgiving