



VENTANA WILDERNESS WATCH

www.ventanawild.org

Ventana Wilderness Alliance

Volume 11 Number 2 | Fall 2010



The Ventanas viewed from Devil's Peak

Photo: Debi Lorenc

Keep Big Sur Wild!
We need your help

Sensitive Bat Species
of the Los Padres
National Forest

Paul Danielson
and the Lost Camps
of the Wilderness

Protecting the Northern Santa Lucia

VENTANA WILDERNESS WATCH

Newsletter of the Ventana Wilderness Alliance



PO Box 506 | Santa Cruz, California 95061
(831) 423-3191 | ventanawild.org

The mission of the Ventana Wilderness Alliance is to protect, preserve and restore the wilderness qualities and biodiversity of the public lands within California's northern Santa Lucia Mountains and Big Sur coast.

BOARD of DIRECTORS

Tom Hopkins, *President*

Dennis Palm, *Vice President*

David Jacobs, *CPA, Treasurer*

Richard Popchak, *Secretary*

David Knapp, *Director & Trail Crew Chief*

Betsy MacGowan,

Director & Trail Crew Leader

Bob Dawson,

Director & Outreach Coordinator

Volunteer Trail Crew Leaders

Mike Heard, Steve Benoit, Robert Parks,
Mark Maslow

STAFF

Paul McFarland, *Executive Director*

Mike Splain, *Development Director*

Morgan Harris, *Conservation Associate*

Julie Anne Hopkins,

Botanist/Biologist/Cartographer

Hannah Schoenthal-Muse, *Keep Big Sur
Wild Campaign Director*

Greg Meyer, *Youth in Wilderness Director*

NEWSLETTER PRODUCTION

Richard Popchak, Peggy Dilfer,
Paul McFarland

Design: Lynn Piquett

Printing: Community Printers, Santa Cruz



Printed on 100% recycled paper
(50% post consumer waste) using
vegetable oil-based inks.

ON THE COVER



VWA member Debi Lorenc enjoys hiking the Skinner Ridge area with her husband Chris. She captured this image of The Ventanas in May of this year.

President's Message

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Ventana Wilderness Alliance as an established nonprofit corporation. It has been a ten year success story highlighted by significant achievements we all can be proud of.

- The **Big Sur Wilderness and Conservation Act of 2002** designated an additional 55,000 acres of federal Wilderness.
- The **VWA Trail Crew** reopened, over several years, the nine-mile **Black Cone Trail** in the heart of the Ventana Wilderness.
- Today, our Trail Crew is a major contributor to public trail restoration and maintenance in the Ventana Region, **annually contributing over 4,000 volunteer hours**.
- The 2004 **Willow Creek Restoration Project** removed over 10,000 pounds of trash from one of the most beautiful wilderness canyons in Big Sur and led to other stewardship projects, including the cleanup of eradicated marijuana grow sites.
- In 2008 VWA sponsored legislation designating the **Limekiln State Park backcountry as a state Wilderness**.
- The recent launch of our **Youth in Wilderness** program adds educating local youth about the value of preserving public wildlands to our established record of public wild land advocacy, stewardship, and trail access.

This ten year milestone also heralds our transition from a grassroots organization of dedicated volunteers to a more sustainable organization led by experienced conservation professionals who will pursue the VWA mission in perpetuity. This transition kicked off with the hiring of Paul McFarland as the first professional Executive Director to lead the VWA. Paul joined the VWA staff in July following a highly successful ten-year tenure leading Friends of the Inyo – an organization protecting public wildlands in the eastern Sierra. Paul joins our first staff member, Mike Splain, who continues to serve as our half-time Development Director while he completes a degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at UCSC.

VWA staff members and volunteers are focused on a variety of new challenges.

- We are working with our conservation partners to advocate for **sensible science-based wildfire planning** that will simultaneously protect life, property and habitat. VWA does not support the Community Wildfire Protection Plan for Monterey County currently being advanced by well-intended members of the community. VWA will continue to be part of this process to ensure a proper plan is put in place.
- The **abandoned mine surveys** the VWA began two years ago continue to generate valuable scientific information to help the Forest Service better manage the resources of our local public lands. Occupancy of some abandoned shafts and adits by sensitive bat species and the discharge of mercury laden water into a coastal steelhead stream are two of the findings from these surveys. We will continue to evaluate these old mines as funding and resources become available to determine what resources they provide and how they can best be managed over time.
- Our **Keep Big Sur Wild!!** campaign continues under the able leadership of Campaign Director Hannah Schoenthal-Muse and Campaign Coordinator Morgan Harris. *Keep Big Sur Wild!!* is our ongoing effort to secure permanent Wilderness and Wild River protection for the remaining unprotected wild resources on the Monterey Ranger District, including the Arroyo Seco and San Antonio rivers and the Andrew Molera State Park backcountry.

Looking back, it has been a high-energy decade at VWA that has paid off handsomely thanks to the hard work of our dedicated volunteers, our committed leadership and enabled by our growing community of supportive members and conservation partners. With your continued support and participation we can ensure another decade of successful conservation and stewardship accomplishments for the irreplaceable wildlands of the Ventana.

— Tom Hopkins

KEEP BIG SUR WILD!! We need **YOUR** help.

The *KEEP BIG SUR WILD!!* campaign has intensified as we boost our efforts to gain permanent protection of wild lands and rivers across the Monterey Ranger District.

In November of 2009, local Congressman Sam Farr (D-Carmel) introduced HR 4040 – Big Sur Forest Service Management Act to improve the management of the Los Padres National Forest’s Monterey Ranger District by designating this remote and often overlooked Ranger District a distinct Forest Service “management unit.” This will allow for greater budget authority, as well as provide permanent protection for over 90 miles of pristine rivers and streams, add over 2000 additional acres of to the Ventana and Silver Peak wilderness areas, and designate the Jeff Norman Botanical Area.

The goals of the *Keep Big Sur Wild!!* campaign may be nothing new to VWA members — talk of Wild and Scenic Rivers designation started back in 2002 when Congressman Farr championed the Big Sur Wilderness and Conservation Act and folks have been working on it ever since. However, in recent months new energy has been injected into these efforts and successful passage looks closer than ever before.

In May, Campaign Director Hannah Schoenthal-Muse, and Campaign Organizer Morgan Harris began extensive outreach on behalf of the *Keep Big Sur Wild!!* campaign. These efforts have garnered tremendous support. The current list of supporters represents a wide range, including: fellow conservation groups (*Friends of the River; The Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society*), ocean groups (*Save Our Shores, Friends of the Sea Otter*), mountain bikers (*Central Coast Concerned Mountain Bikers, Mountain Bikers of Santa Cruz*), fishing groups (*Carmel River Steelhead Association, Santa Cruz Fly Fishermen*), a business (*Down Works*), and a variety of other local institutions including the *Carmel Valley Association, Esalen, Tassajara Zen Center, Carmel Valley Garden Association, El Paso de Robles Area Historical Society*, and the *UC Big Creek Reserve*. Even the Santa Cruz City Council has passed a resolution supporting the bill and other Central Coast cities are expected to do the same.

So let’s keep the ball rolling! If you have not done so already, please visit the *Keep Big Sur Wild!!* section of ventanawild.org and submit an electronic letter of support on behalf of yourself or a group you represent. Don’t forget to tell your friends, too.



Support the Jeff Norman Botanical Area

On October 31st, 2007, Big Sur lost a powerful voice for conservation. From his youthful days at Pico Blanco Scout Camp (where he identified a fern species [*Cheilanthes cooperae*] previously unknown in Monterey County) to his years as a consulting botanist for California State Parks and the US Forest Service, Jeff Norman worked to understand and conserve the biodiversity of the Santa Lucia Range. Among Norman’s myriad discoveries was the ecological significance of a unique vegetation complex at

Looking south from the proposed Botanical Area

Pfeiffer Point. Although generally considered Maritime Chaparral, such a classification paints an incomplete picture as rare Chaparral components like Carmel ceanothus and endemic Little Sur manzanita mix with Coastal Scrub, Oak Woodland, and even Redwood Forest species. All seem to compete on a more or less even playing field, where dwarfed stature is the only defense from salt spray and perennial wind. It’s easy to imagine Jeff gazing toward the point, pondering this biogeographical quandary from his off-the-grid home at Alta Vista. HR 4040 (the Big Sur Forest Service Management Unit Act), currently in the US House of Representatives, would designate a 65-acre Jeff Norman Botanical Area at Pfeiffer Point as a fitting natural memorial to this local human treasure.

Milpitas Special Interest Area

by Dennis Palm

Many of our members and the local community have been following the progress of the Milpitas Special Interest Area Management Plan. For those unfamiliar with the project, the Los Padres National Forest Management Plan of 2005 designated the Milpitas Special Interest Area (SIA) in recognition of its unique aspects.

The SIA, approximately 9500 acres, located in the upper watershed of the San Antonio River (North Fork) approximately 17 miles from Mission San Antonio just northeast of the border of Ft. Hunter Liggett, is dominated by Santa Lucia Peak (Junipero Serra Peak), at almost 6000 ft., the highest peak in the Coast Range.



The Indians Adobe

Photo: Dennis Palm

The SIA contains a cultural landscape reflecting a continuum of Native American occupation from prehistoric through historic times. Besides the archaeological significance of the area, the valley oak savannahs and sandstone outcrops have become field laboratories, regularly studied by scientists and universities. For more information please refer to the Advocacy section of ventanawild.org.

The VWA has facilitated and funded an agreement between Los Padres National Forest-Monterey District and Mountain Heritage Associates (MHA, an Enterprise Group within the Forest Service) to create a comprehensive management plan for the area.

As a result of research, fieldwork, and two community meetings (one meeting with the Salinan groups and one with the local community), Doug Stephens, MHA, developed a draft plan, to be released in mid-September. The draft will be available through our website, as well as from the Forest Service. A community meeting will be scheduled to discuss this draft in late October but has not been confirmed as of press time.

The draft plan “defines a course of action that can maintain the desired historic character of the SIA and improve visitor experiences.” It is proposed that “the management approach be collaborative,” utilizing “direct participation by partners and individuals in the maintenance of the natural landscape and social and managerial settings within the SIA.”

There are three programs proposed as part of collaborative management:

Ecocultural Restoration Program — An intensive process of plant management to reintroduce, maintain and preserve the historic landscape.

Historic Preservation Program — The maintenance and protection of historic and prehistoric sites, including the Indians Adobe, the Merle Ranch and the Indians Guard Station, as well as cleanup and restoration of the abandoned YMCA Camp at Memorial Camp and Santa Lucia Peak Lookout. This would be an extension of the already existing Heritage Resource Program on the Forest.

Outdoor Recreation Program — This is an extension of the existing Recreation Program, but to be considered within the collaborative approach.

The Indians has been a magical place for generations. It is hoped that many of you will join in this collaborative process to ensure the preservation of this special area. For more information, contact dennis@ventanawild.org.

The Milpitas, from Wagon Cave Outcrop



Photo: Dennis Palm

State of the Trails *by Paul McFarland*

While I may not have decades of thrashing through poison oak or crawling through redwood jumbles under my belt like most Ventanaphiles, it hasn't taken me long to learn that preserving access into the wild backcountry of the northern Santa Lucia Mountains is a never-ending but wholly enjoyable task.

The state of trails in the Ventana seems to be largely influenced by an idiosyncratic natural trifecta: fire, water and flora. The Basin Complex Fire of 2008 burned vegetation off large areas of the Ventana. Without a stabilizing blanket of chaparral, grassland, oak and conifer woodland, the ensuing heavy winter rains washed trails downslope. To complete the cycle, fire followers and stump-sprouters, from deer weed to madrone, quickly covered the blackened landscape with an often impenetrable sea of leaves, boughs and flowers. Somewhere in this beautiful new growth there was a network of 320 miles of trails.

Thankfully, those who yearn to look down on the backs of red-tail hawks from the spine of the mountains have brought their own trinity together to resurrect the historic trails network crisscrossing the northern Santa Lucia – VWA's volunteer Trail Crew, professional crews supported by VWA and the Forest Service, and local students with the Youth in Wilderness program.

Crew Chief Dave Knapp inspires a new generation of trail crew volunteers with the popular cross-cut demonstration at the 7th Annual Chuck Haugen Picnic.

A Year of Accomplishments

Over the last year, the VWA's volunteer Trail Crew members have logged out, brushed and restored tread, clearing trails from Vicente Flat to Black Cone to Horse Pasture while Forest Service crews cleared redwood jumbles from the Kirk Creek Trail and greatly improved access along the Pine Ridge corridor. A one-man machine, Trail Crew leader Mike Heard has alone clocked over 2300 hours in his quest to restore the Cone Peak trail network to its former glory. On his last brief encounter with civilization, Mike reported that the Gamboa Trail is now clear down to Ojito Saddle.

In its inaugural season, the VWA's Youth in Wilderness program introduced the powers of Wilderness to 38 local students on four separate trips to the Marble Peak, Horse Pasture, Bear Basin and Pine Ridge Trails.

Going Forward

Happily recognizing that brush doesn't stop growing, rains won't stop blowing in from the ocean, and fire is simply a part of any wild, healthy ecosystem, the VWA's trail programs are gearing up for another productive year with volunteers, professional crews and local youth. Two main targets for this year include re-establishing a professional workforce to sustain public access and habitat in the backcountry and introducing new volunteers to the joy of a sturdy McLeod and a pair of sharp loppers.

The job of getting out and giving back under the redwoods and oaks is never done in the Ventana, so we need your help.

If you're interested in helping preserve one of California's premier trail networks, visit the Trails section of our website or contact our Trail Crew Chief, Dave Knapp, at daveknapp@ventanawild.org.



Sensitive Bat Species of the Ventana Wilderness

by Julie Anne Hopkins

Many of you will recall Dr. David Johnston, wildlife biologist/bat specialist, and his fascinating talk about bats at the “Farewell to Spring” VWA Gathering this past June. David introduced us to several bat species known to inhabit the Santa Lucia Range, dispelling a number of myths along the way. A sad fact his talk revealed is that many populations of local bats are in severe decline and considered sensitive species on the Los Padres National Forest Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive (T, E, S) Species List. Reasons for decline include loss of habitat, human disturbance, vandalism and disease. In the interest of protecting bat habitat while making the area safe for the public, Dr. Johnston is conducting surveys of abandoned mines in the Willow and Alder Creek drainages on the southern Big Sur coast as part of VWA's Abandoned Mines program.

When you're out at dusk, look for bats catching bugs under street-lights; or sit alongside a mountain stream, where you can observe your winged, fellow mammals at work. For them it's meal time, but for you bats are free pest control.



Western Red Bat

Three Sensitive Bat Species Found in Los Padres National Forest

Pallid Bat (*Antrozous pallidus*)

Pallid bats have excellent hearing and can see fairly well. They use their voices to make ultrasonic calls that bounce back to their ears. These reflected sounds let the bats “see” flying insects and the environment they are flying through. Pallid bats are generally found in grassland and desert habitat. Pallid bats are medium-sized (total body length 3.5 - 4 inches) and often feed on the ground early in the night. They can run on folded wings and hind feet or hop around to catch insects. They then retire to night roosts where they hang out to digest their catch (Jerusalem crickets, scorpions, grasshoppers, beetles, etc.). They may feed again near dawn. By daylight, they retire to hide in “day roosts” within rocky crevices.

Townsend's Big-Eared Bat (*Plecotus townsendi*)

My, what big ears you have! This bat can easily be identified by long ears (1.5 inches) and two lumps on the nose. During sleep, the ears coil up like ram's horns. In flight, the ears point forward and down. They are strong, agile flyers able to dodge most attempts at capture. Fur is pale to dark brown or almost black above and brown below. They are frequently found in abandoned mines and caves, both day and night. They are also known to use buildings as night roosts. These gentle bats feed on moths and may live up to 16 years. Townsend's Big-Eared bats are on the California Sensitive Species List.

Western Red Bat (*Lasiurus blossevillii*)

This medium-sized bat (total length 3.5 – 5 inches) roosts in trees and often can be seen foraging under street lights after sunset. They rarely roost in buildings and are generally solitary except when adult females and young form small family groups. Mothers leave their roosting young (usually twins) to hunt beetles, bugs, ants and moths. Offspring are transported individually from one roost to another by their mother, who can carry only one of her young per trip. These furry bats use the pelt on their tails as blankets. They are known to be strong, straight flyers and are most likely migratory.

Resources

Visit HastingsReserve.org for a great key to Bats of Central California. For more information on bat conservation, visit BatCon.org. Thanks to the Hastings Reserve for the use of photos and information.



Townsend's Big-Eared Bat

Volunteer Spotlight *Paul Danielson*

In this edition of Ventana Wilderness Watch, we get to know Paul Everett Danielson Jr. He is a former VWA Board Member, a wilderness expansion activist, an archaeological sites steward, and now a trails advocate. Paul was born in Santa Barbara where he spent his growing up years before heading East to college in 1956. His dad was a businessman and his mom a schoolteacher. Paul learned about the wonders of backcountry exploration through Scouting. Later on and more recently, Paul served as the Chaplain at All Saints Episcopal Day School in Carmel Valley for 17 years until his retirement in 2001. He previously served as Pastor at parishes in Salinas, Santa Cruz and Upstate New York.

Paul and his wife Margaret live in Toro Park Estates. They have three grown sons and two young grandchildren. Since retiring, Paul has continued being a volunteer conservationist with VWA and the Big Sur Land Trust. He is currently writing a book on "The Lost Camps of the Ventana Wilderness." Paul is also involved in raising funds for the VWA "Ventana Trails Forever" campaign to reopen and repair the trails of the Ventana and Silver Peak Wilderness areas. You can see Paul's presentation on the Lost Camps at the VWA Gathering on October 23rd at the UC MBEST Center in Marina.

Q. What sparked your interest in researching the Lost Camps of the Ventana Wilderness?

It all began when I met with longtime Ventana hiker Ward Allison. I was looking for detailed directions to the Window, which he gave. But then he leaned over and said, "If you really want to know the Ventana, you must hike every trail and visit every camp." He handed me two old LPNF Wilderness maps, one from 1939 and the other from 1970. That began my odyssey. I soon discovered that many of the camps no longer existed. They were "lost," in other words, and I intended to find them! Eventually, after nearly ten years, I have located them all and visited all but a few. Moreover, it turned out that the sum total of all Ventana Camps, old and current, was far more than the alleged 90+. How about 160!

Q. What tools did you use to do your research?

Initially, I just used the two old maps, along with more current ones and trail guides. But a friend, Bert Semtner, soon joined me. His map generating, GPS, and satellite imagery skills helped pinpoint

many of the more difficult destinations. I doubt if I would have located a number of them without his help. The classic instance was following a heavily brushed route that Bert had plotted down from the North Coast Ridge Road. We were trying to find the long-lost Logwood Camp. He said "Another 70 feet, straight ahead." I thought, "Yeah, right!" A few steps more and we emerged in a creek bed staring right at the camp! I became a big believer in GPS after that! An invaluable research tool was Clark's "Monterey County Place Names." Advice from Ventana veterans really helped as well.

Q. What are some of your most surprising discoveries?

Logwood Camp, for sure. Another was Higgins Cabin Camp. There are no longer any trails or clear routes to it. Plus, it was not on the meadow flat where the old cabin once was. We stumbled on it in a ravine taking a shortcut. It was all but buried by deadfall and landslides. Others are Lottie Potrero Camp, which was hidden downhill from the obvious roadside car camp; Lower Pine Creek Camp, which a friend, Jon Doelman, found on an old DeLorme map; Thorpe Camp, which never appeared on any of my maps but was mentioned to me by Bill Post of the Big Sur pioneer family; Ventana Spring Camp near the Double Cone, which I spotted on a traced map that Nikki Nedeff had done in Junior High School. And on it goes. They all involve some elements of surprise.

Q. Why is this work important to you? What drives you to learn more?

We all have our passions and you know how they can get a hold on you! I was determined to complete the challenge Ward Allison had issued to me. But more than that, I decided that others could benefit from that challenge as well. That is what has motivated me to write the Lost Camps book. Most importantly, I feel that the more people get out there looking for and finding these camps, the more they will advocate for wilderness preservation and trail rehabilitation. There is always more to learn. I have since discovered a USFS Ledger Book list of proposed camps: ones that budget constraints killed. But the sites are there. My latest quest is to complete that list and come up with a book supplement called "Invisible Camps of the Ventana."

Q. Tell us about your work with the Ventana Trails Forever campaign. Why is this effort important to you?

This is an extremely exciting and worthwhile project. I feel fortunate to serve on the Campaign Committee to raise funds. We are already halfway to our goal of \$500,000. The need is so great for bringing back our overgrown and fire-compromised trail system. It will be lost otherwise. The forest service can only do so much. The fund will help to expand the efforts of the VWA volunteer Trail Crew. We need to catch up on trail restoration and then preserve the system. It is a legacy for future generations of recreationists and conservationists. We all can do our part through donations of money and time.



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

EVENTS

October 23, 2010

VWA Fall Gathering in Marina
Email mike@ventanawild.org or
call 831-423-3191 for details.

November 13-14, 2010

Indians Ranch Work Party
For further info contact
Dennis@ventanawild.org

Find us on [facebook](#)

Bat Ecology Celebrated at Spring Gathering

VWA members and guests convened at the Big Sur Lodge Conference Center at Pfeiffer-Big Sur State Park on June 12, 2010 for a “Farewell to Spring” Gathering. It was our first time at this location and most agreed it was an excellent venue for a VWA function.

We kicked off the day’s program with a well-attended hike along the Big Sur River led by VWA member Jack Ellwanger. Jack shared his knowledge of the river’s natural and cultural history as we strolled along the Nature Trail near park headquarters. It was a perfect way to start the day.

The staff at the Big Sur Lodge served a delightful lunch for the attendees. The feature presentation was delivered by wildlife ecologist David Johnston, Ph.D. David provided a fascinating overview of the bats of the western United States, paying special attention to species known to occur in the Santa Lucia Range. In addition to conducting bat surveys for the VWA as part of our Abandoned Mines project, David has conducted similar surveys for the Bureau of Land Management, The Nature Conservancy, National Park Service, U.S. Navy, Caltrans, California State Parks, and the California Department of Fish and Game. He guides public agencies and corporations in evaluating impacts and establishing mitigations for bat populations.

Our gratitude goes out to Jack and David for sharing their knowledge with the attendees at the Gathering. Also, a special thanks to Mike Splain and Julie Anne Hopkins for coordinating the entire affair. Please be sure to RSVP by October 16th for our next gathering, scheduled for October 23rd.

Wildlife ecologist David Johnston fields questions at the Gathering in June.