



Sierra Wildlife Coalition

Promoting humane and practical solutions for living
with beavers, coyotes and all our local wildlife

Fall 2012

Sierra Wildlife Coalition's second anniversary has been marked with several huge successes. We have to admit, for so long after the inception of our group we often felt as if we were working only to the find animals "removed", but none of us gave up, and our unofficial slogan "We can do this!" is becoming a reality.

Taylor Creek near Camp Richardson in South Lake Tahoe has been on our radar since we read a master's thesis documenting the spike in phosphorus levels measured in the water being discharged when the U.S. Forest Service removed beaver dams within this Lake Tahoe tributary. The study concluded that the resulting environmental impact to the Lake was algae growth, fed by the mixture of nutrients and sediments stored behind those very dams. This one-two punch to water clarity year after year erodes efforts to Keep Tahoe Blue. Sherry and Ted corresponded all summer with USFS supervisors, met with hydrologists, offered pond leveling device design and assistance, and cited studies (with photos) showing beaver dams do not impede spawning salmon, but never got a commitment. Then we received a phone call from Tom Knudsen, the Sacramento Bee Environmental Reporter.

Tom's article on the front page of the Sacramento Bee on Sunday, October 7th, exposed the U.S. Forest Service's continual practice of destroying the dams of the *native* beavers in Taylor Creek for fear their structures would impede the upstream migration of the spawning *non-native* Kokanee Salmon. Sierra Wildlife Coalition's continued and unsuccessful efforts to make the situation work for the Forest Services' trails, the beavers, and the fish were revealed and many of Sherry's quotes were printed. See photos on our Facebook page (Sierra Wildlife Coalition) and here is a link to the article, <http://www.sacbee.com/2012/10/07/4888453/sierra-beaver-dams-targeted-by.html> Enjoy!

You will also see in the Bee article a major milestone has been reached, as studies reviewing physical and historical evidence that beavers are native to the high Sierra Nevada Range have been published in the spring issue of the Journal of California (Dept. of) Fish and Game. If we had a buck for every time we heard the rational for killing beavers is that they are not native to this area, we could build our own beaver sanctuary and theme park. We are attaching these peer-reviewed studies, which will begin to save the lives of these valuable animals in our region.

We love Tahoe Donner. This time we were *asked* to install another pond leveler to prevent the flooding of a portion of their trail system. Our coordinated efforts have resulted in a model project with a developing wetland and a new raised walkway to accommodate (dry and happy) hikers. At our last visit we could see the neighbors had brought lounge chairs to the pond to enjoy their wild neighbors in their natural surroundings. When we are allowed to pursue projects just like this, we can easily prevent any negative effects beavers create in populated areas. We then distributed letters to the homeowners living along this wetland with a brief description of the pond leveler, plus tree protection methods and our Benefits of Beavers brochure. The area below the beaver pond at Skislope, the site of our first pond leveler, is now a water-rich stream environment containing a series of dams. Please, go by and take a walk on the newly constructed trail. You will be in awe of the lower dam and the quantity of clear water being retained in this drought year!



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Another excellent example of the beavers' ability to store water though drought conditions is easily visible where Martis Creek enters the upper end of Martis Lake, off Hwy 267. Thank you to Park Ranger, Jacqui Zink, of the Army Corp of Engineers, for your kind words, support, and appreciation of the beavers and wetlands. Again see photos on our Facebook page, or better yet, check it out, take your dog, and tell Jacqui thanks.

Incline Village General Improvement District's Waste Not Director, Madonna Dunbar, has been pro-active in her efforts to keep beaver habitat from threatening neighboring structures, and calls us whenever she senses a potential problem. Our beaver deceiver culvert protection is still outsmarting nature's greatest engineers and preventing the undermining of a service road and small portion of a trail. Along the road to this project we painted a stand of large cottonwoods being chewed, and as an experiment, we also painted a single tree that was approximately 75% chewed and barely standing. Five months later the survivor is still alive and upright. Latex paint and sand. So simple and easy.

The Sierra Wildlife Coalition booth has been as busy as a, o.k., I won't say it. We started with Earth Day at Squaw, and then we were invited to (are you ready for this) The Native Species Festival at USFS's Taylor Creek, participated in six Truckee Thursdays, the Martinez Beaver Festival, and Dog Day in Tahoe Vista. We could really, really use help next year especially at Truckee Thursdays. It is a huge event every week and our booth has evolved with more projects for kids. We have also added the Sierra Wildlife Cinema featuring an amazing IMAX movie with narration telling the story of a pair of beavers and their transformation of a landscape, with their beautiful pond providing a bio-diverse ecosystem for insects, fish, birds, and other wildlife. It was a huge victory for the wildlife of California when Governor Jerry Brown signed Senate Bill 1221, stopping the unsportsmanlike, cruel, and uncontrollable use of hounds to track and tree bears and bobcats. Many of you wrote letters, emails, phoned, and made trips to the Capitol to spend tense hours surrounded and outnumbered by hunters in what can best be described as the trenches of animal activism. But once again we did it!

We need volunteers! There could very well be beavers living in your neighborhood or on the route you drive everyday to and from work. When our members monitor these sites, we can foresee potential flooding problem or trees in need of protecting, then the possibility the animals will be allowed to remain drastically increases. Email us with your location and we can connect you with an area.

Thanks for your support, and together, we *can* do it!

PO Box 7763, Tahoe City, CA 96145 SierraWildlifeCoalition@gmail.com