

Wild Earth

SPRING 1991

1, NUMBER 1

Periodical Collection
QH75.A1 W525
v. 1, no. 1 (1991 Spring)

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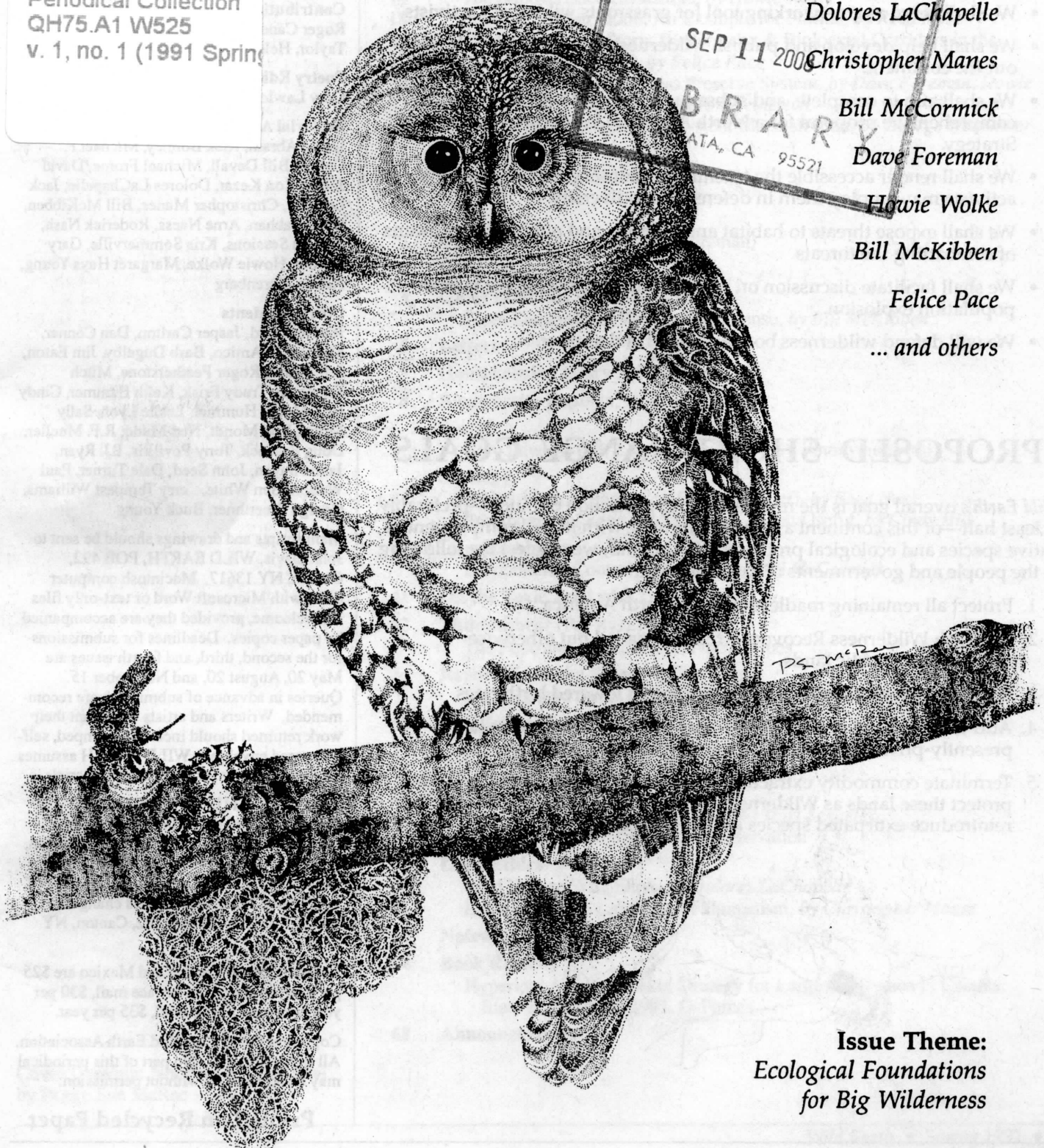
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Issue Theme:
Ecological Foundations
for Big Wilderness

The Grider Creek Story

Biodiversity and Biological Corridors in the Klamath Mountains

by Felice Pace

On 13 September 1990, the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit rendered a decision in the matter of Marble Mountain Audubon et al vs Robert Rice in his capacity as supervisor of the Klamath National Forest. The decision has been hailed as "precedent setting." For the first time a US Court has interpreted the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as requiring that an agency take a "hard look" at the impacts of a proposed action on biological diversity values. Specifically, the Court ruled that the Klamath National Forest had failed to analyze the impacts of logging and road-building on Grider Creek as a biological corridor linking two Wilderness Areas—the Red Buttes Wilderness to the north and the Marble Mountain Wilderness to the south.

The Grider victory is important to forest defenders because it saved, at least for the moment, an ancient forest watershed from the devastation that passes for "timber management" in the Northwest. It is also important because, if properly utilized by forest activists, it can help preserve other threatened ancient forests adjacent to or between Wilderness Areas and other reserves. It might even be possible to apply the Grider Decision off public lands, for example to situations that involve private land development in wildlife corridors between parks.

Marble Mountain Audubon vs Rice is also important as one of a growing number of cases bringing biological principles and concepts, in particular the principles of conservation biology, into federal courtrooms. This extraordinary victory has the potential to significantly influence the way the Forest Service and other federal agencies assess the impacts of their actions. While environmental assessments don't guarantee sound deci-

sions, they do make it harder for bureaucrats to ignore critical information and they provide insights helpful in administrative appeals and court challenges.

Of course, the special conditions of this case should be noted. Marble Mountain Audubon (MMA) activists had raised the issue of biological corridor values early in the process. We steadfastly insisted that the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was not adequately addressing corridor and other biological diversity issues. Through intensive mapping, using Forest Service (FS) timber data, MMA demonstrated that a corridor of natural habitat had been created in Grider Creek as a result of extensive clearcutting and road-building in all other nearby drainages. By fragmenting the surrounding forest, the FS had "selected" Grider Creek as the remnant natural habitat linking two wilderness islands. MMA was helped by the acknowledgement in the Grider EIS of the existence of a corridor in Grider. The logging plan proposed to retain a 1/4 to 2/3 mile wide corridor centered on the stream.

Our task in court was to show that there is no scientific basis for asserting that a corridor of this size would sustain over time a biological connection across the 15 miles separating the two Wilderness Areas. We argued that available biological evidence, while incomplete, suggested the need for a much wider corridor.

Success in any endeavor is a function of the resources and creativity brought to bear on it. Of all human resources, intellect and passion are most critical. The Grider suit was successful because it brought together activists with intimate knowledge of the Grider drainage and surrounding Klamath Mountains, tenacious and talented environmental attorneys, and conservation biologists with the knowledge

and courage to take a stand for the ancient forests. Neil Lawrence and David Edelson, attorneys with the Natural Resources Defence Council (NRDC), provided outstanding legal counsel. Several biologists, most notably Reed Noss, provided expert testimony. Three foresters contributed survey work, slogging through deep snow in winter to collect critical data on forest conditions. The Grider story is about place and people interacting over time, the development of relationship, of knowledge, of friendship and love, and the application of knowledge to action. My goal is to tell the story in a way that makes it available as an example, perhaps even a model, of how to defend native ecosystem values.



In September 1975 I returned to San Francisco from a summer in Alaska determined to find a home in the country. I loaded everything I owned in the back of a 1/2 ton pick-up and headed north. I am an East Coast refugee, a child of the city, and I had discovered the outdoors only after college. Prior to the Alaska summer I had been staying with friends in San Francisco while exploring the hinterland. I had decided on north-central California and south-central Oregon as the focus of my search for a home. I knew next to nothing about this area. For me, as for most Americans, the map north of San Francisco and south of Eugene, Oregon was a blur traversed by red and blue line highways and punctuated with mysterious names—Roseburg and Redding, Grants Pass and Eureka.

My friend Mark, a geographer, had a relief map of California tacked to his wall. Northern California appeared as a jumble of mountains. The day I left Frisco, Mark pointed to an area near the top center of the map, a green valley amid the gray brown of mountains. "I always thought this would be a great place to explore," he said. "I'll check it out," I replied.

It was early October when I approached Scott Valley, up and over a pass from Gazelle, California, on a narrow, winding mountain road following the old stage route. The air was cool and clear after rain and the sun shown brightly—an Indian summer day. As I topped the pass and started to descend I was astounded to see

rust red and yellow foliage. I had not been aware of missing the colorful Eastern fall, but clearly a void was being filled. I wove down from the pass into the Valley feeling more comfortable on the land than I had since leaving New England.

As I came to the Valley floor, an occasional car would pass. This occasioned my second shock of the day. As they cruised past, folks waved! Here I was alone, a stranger, and folks were waving to me.

That night I camped near Etna. There was a dance in town at the "hall" above the city office, and after eating at the cafe across the street I went over. The dance provided my third surprise of the day. I had already seen enough of Scott Valley to expect cowboys, and I'd been in Northern California long enough to expect loggers, but by the end of the night I'd met local Native Americans, miners, fundamentalist Christians, and back-to-the-land hippies.

The cultural diversity encountered that first night coupled with the Eastern feel of the Valley's fall colors and the amazing friendliness expressed in waves from strangers all figured in my choice of this area as home. At the time I was not aware I had chosen an area which, though known to few people, would soon be recognized by biologists as a world center for biodiversity. I had stopped that first day at the local ranger station to pick up maps and read the brochures. Nothing at that office told me I was less than five miles from an area in which you could find 17 distinct conifer species in a single square mile—perhaps the greatest conifer diversity in the world.

Many things have changed since 1975. There aren't as many dances in Etna these days, the old cafe is now a fabric store, and the campground has been converted to a city park. The amazing square mile in Sugar Creek, which was at that time available for logging, is now in the Russian Wilderness, and a storefront on Main Street serves as base for two groups active in defense of the forest. Biodiversity is a buzz word now, and many more people have heard of the Klamath Mountains. There's a new ranger station on the edge of Etna with fancy displays in the lobby. But some things have not changed. The logging trucks still rumble down from the mountains and out to the mills in Yreka and Oregon; most people still wave to neighbors and strangers on the road; and at the new ranger station you still can't find a brochure on the Sugar Creek conifers.



Spanning the California/Oregon border, the Klamath Mountain Province is characterized by steeply folded, granite cored mountains of phenomenal geological complexity. Here are found the oldest rocks in Oregon and some of the oldest in California. The Province is strategically located at the junction of the Northwest (Cascadian), Californian, and Great Basin Bioregions. Within the Province the maximum elevation is slightly over 9000 feet,

miscarried and babies were born with birth defects. Why was the Forest Service intent on using poisons in the forest? It was some time before we discovered "the allowable cut effect." Spraying herbicides allowed the managers to claim faster growth; faster growth meant plantations would reach cutting age sooner; if trees could be cut sooner, more could be cut now. Such rationales are familiar to those working on public lands issues today. Then, it was new infor-

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upland valleys occur in the 1500-3000 foot range, and major river canyons wind through the mountains to the Pacific shore.

Biologists recognize the Klamath Mountains as one of the most biologically diverse areas in North America. The Province is particularly noteworthy for its outstanding plant diversity. It has a high incidence of endemics (species that occur nowhere else). Some herbaceous plants here grow only on serpentine soils of the Kalmiopsis and Siskiyou Mountains. The area's greatest biological significance, however, is in its tree diversity. The forest with 17 species of conifers on Sugar Creek is but one example of a great array of forest types and plant associations, many of which have yet to be adequately studied and described.



My first home in the Klamath Mountains was a log-frame cabin in the Scott River Canyon. From my deck overlooking the river I could watch otters play in the pools below. I could also see giant helicopters flying logs off the mountainsides and hear the engine brakes of log trucks careening over the passes to mills in Yreka and Medford, Oregon.

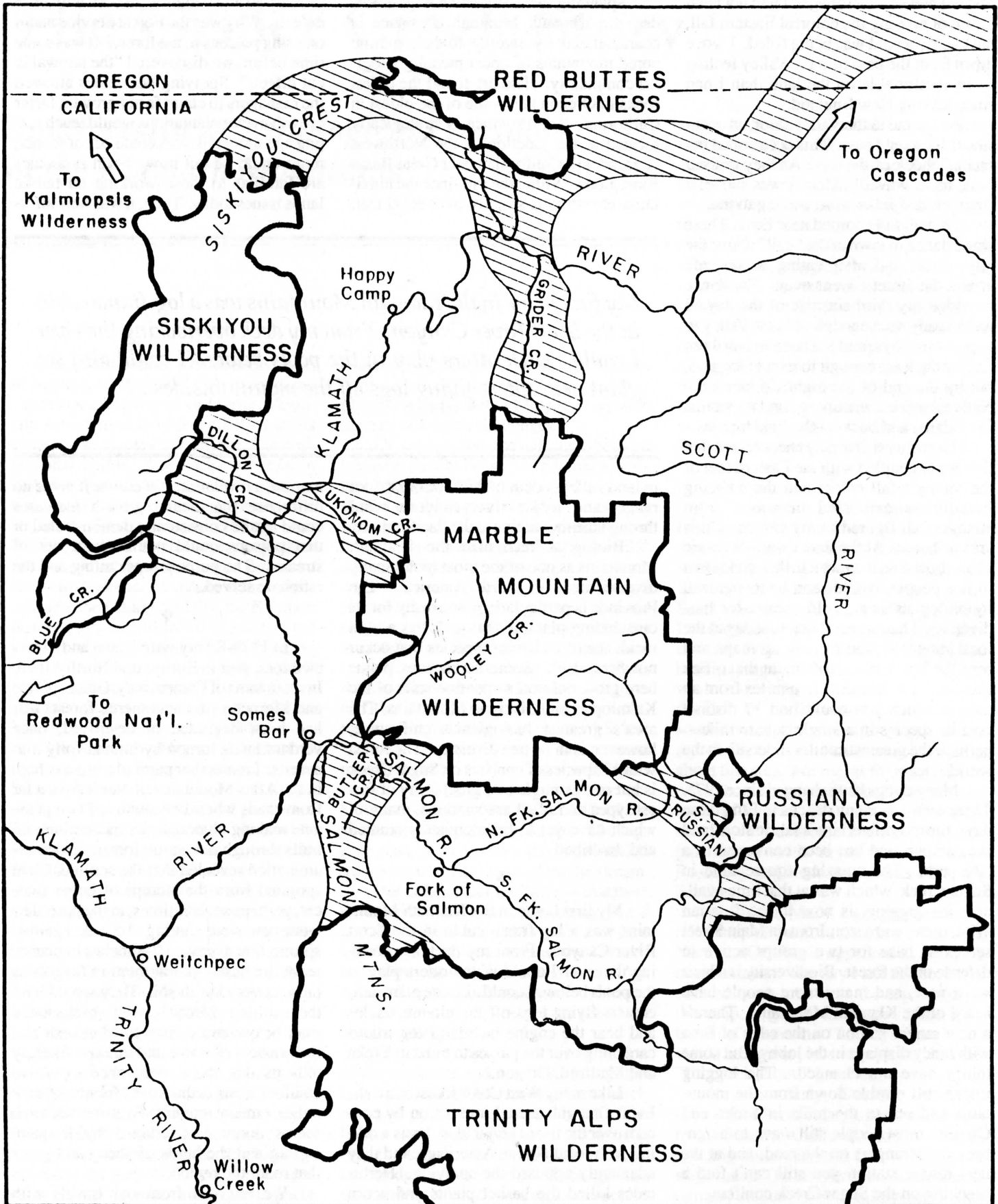
Like many West Coast forest activists, I was first galvanized into action by concern over the use of herbicides. I was working with local Native Americans and they adamantly opposed the spraying. Herbicides killed the basket plants and acorn trees, and fouled the water. When a drainage was sprayed, healthy women suddenly

upland valleys occur in the 1500-3000 foot range, and major river canyons wind through the mountains to the Pacific shore. Biologists recognize the Klamath Mountains as one of the most biologically diverse areas in North America. The Province is particularly noteworthy for its outstanding plant diversity. It has a high incidence of endemics (species that occur nowhere else). Some herbaceous plants here grow only on serpentine soils of the Kalmiopsis and Siskiyou Mountains. The area's greatest biological significance, however, is in its tree diversity. The forest with 17 species of conifers on Sugar Creek is but one example of a great array of forest types and plant associations, many of which have yet to be adequately studied and described.



In 1979-80 my wife Diana and I traveled for a year in Europe and North Africa. In mountains of France, Italy, Greece, Crete and Morocco we encountered forests that had been degraded or destroyed; once verdant lands turned by human folly into deserts. I remember particularly a day high in the Atlas Mountains of North Africa far from roads when I encountered two peasants making charcoal. I was climbing on trails through oak scrub forest. Close examination revealed that the scrub oak had sprouted from the stumps of larger trees cut, perhaps several times, in the past. The workmen were cutting the oak again—sprouts that averaged 2-4 inches in diameter at the base—piling them in faggots to burn, covered with soil. They would haul the resulting charcoal on their backs to the road below and thence to Marakesh and the braziers of home and market. History tells us that there were once extensive conifer forests in the Atlas Mountains, now only a remnant remains. Even the oak scrub seems doomed, overtaxed by frequent cutting and the herds of sheep and goats that roam the region.

We returned from our travels with deepened appreciation for the forests of our home. Our travels had provided perspec-



tive. We had come home to an embattled remnant of the vast temperate forests that once encircled the Northern Hemisphere. This realization inspired action. We joined a few friends to found Marble Mountain Audubon, the first environmental organization based within the borders of the Klamath National Forest.

These were the days of RARE II [the FS's second Roadless Area Review and Evaluation] and the battle, state by state, for additional Wilderness on the National Forests. MMA played a role in this effort and, again, it shaped our consciousness. Two congressmen, John Seiberling of Ohio and Jim Weaver of Oregon, twice brought wilderness hearings to the Klamath Mountains. Watching these men challenge timber executives and forest supervisors, questioning the dominant management paradigms, provided inspiration and an understanding of land management politics.

As a RARE II area, Grider Creek was eligible for designation by Congress as Wilderness. Despite this, the Forest Service prepared an environmental assessment to support an extensive plan for roads and timber extraction. Huey Johnson, at that time director of California's Resources Agency, along with NRDC, filed suit to block this and other development plans in RARE II roadless areas. State of California vs Block stopped development of Grider and many other California roadless areas pending passage of a wilderness bill for the state.

In 1984 the long awaited California Wilderness Bill became law. In the Klamath Mountains, Wooley Creek, the Trinity Alps and a few other areas were protected. The bulk, however, including Grider Creek, were "released" for other uses. The Grider Creek Environmental Assessment, subject of California vs Block, was taken down from the shelf and dusted off. A few of the worst roads were dropped and a laundry list of "mitigation measures" added "to protect water quality." On 5 July 1985 Robert Rice, Klamath National Forest supervisor, issued a "Finding of No Significant Impact and Decision Notice." In order to meet "multiple-use objectives" 74 million board feet of timber would be removed from 2621 acres in the drainage. Over 40 miles of new roads would be built. Grider, a beautiful salmon stream with the Pacific Crest Trail running most of its length, would be made to resemble the growing number of watersheds in the Klamath Mountains ravaged by clearcuts, crisscrossed by roads, and degraded by eroded sediments.

MMA, Salmon River Concerned Citizens and the Karuk Tribe of California joined together to challenge the decision. Development plans were suspended pending hearings on our administrative appeal. Regional forester Zane Smith found no merit in our arguments but, upon petition, the Chief of the Forest Service reversed his decision.

Figuring strongly in our victory were the grave reservations that California's Department of Fish & Game had expressed concerning impacts to fisheries. Though state agencies charged with protection of wildlife and water quality rarely challenge Forest Service decisions, strong statements of their concerns in the environmental planning records can be critical in appeals and court actions brought by private organizations or citizens. Our appeal also cited an important decision of the US District Court known as the GO Road Decision [resulting from attempts to block the Gasquet to Orleans Road on Six Rivers NF]. In a challenge to road-building and logging in the Blue Creek drainage, also in the Klamath Mountains, the Court found that simply listing mitigation measures was not sufficient to meet water quality standards. Mitigations had to be specified on the ground and analysis completed which demonstrated that planned mitigations would be effective in reducing watershed impacts to comply with state standards. FS managers had again been frustrated in their attempts to "develop" Grider Creek.



Forest activists rarely have time to keep current with the scientific literature pertinent to their concerns. There always seems to be a crisis demanding attention and action. In depth study is deferred; books collect dust on shelves. For the most part we are forced to rely on articles, conference presentations, and phone conversations to gain the knowledge and concepts we need to support our work. When we do make the time, however, study of primary sources can provide powerful insights which serve to organize our on-the-ground knowledge and guide our work.

At the time of the Grider administrative appeal, the Spotted Owl was gaining a prominent place in the debate over management of West Coast forests. I had ordered a book, *The Fragmented Forest*, by biologist Larry Harris. A train trip provided a rare opportunity to read the book in its entirety. It was a revelation. Harris's work on the Willamette Forest in Oregon had provided the basis for Forest Service plans

to "manage" for survival of the Spotted Owl and other species associated with Northwest Ancient Forests. The "plan" was to retain a polka dot network of old-growth islands in the sea of clearcuts the managers were creating at breakneck speed. But Harris had called for more than this network. He had stressed the need for "corridors" linking the habitat islands to provide for dispersal of young and interchange of genetic material over time. In typical fashion, managers had chosen to incorporate in their plans only the more convenient aspects of the strategy.

The Forest Service plan for the Spotted Owl has since been recognized for what it always was: "a recipe for extinction." It now seems obvious that a strategy relying on fragments of habitat scattered across a landscape could not possibly be effective in countering the effects of forest fragmentation. Maintaining or restoring forest connectivity is the most (perhaps only) effective way to counteract the impacts of forest fragmentation which result from logging as practiced in our Western forests.

The Fragmented Forest provided the concepts activists needed to develop a vision of how the Klamath Forest should be "managed." First we convinced the Forest Service and California's Department of Fish & Game to join us in sponsoring a 3-day workshop on forest fragmentation and corridors. Fortunately a former student and colleague of Harris's, Reed Noss, had recently moved to Oregon and was available. The workshop, held on the Klamath Forest in April 1989, was well attended by state and federal biologists. It produced draft guidelines for "biodiversity corridors." There appeared to be hope for a cooperative approach to planning for biodiversity in the Klamath Mountain Province. It soon became clear, however, that government biologists were not ready to advocate excluding logging from large areas. FS biologists on the Klamath and Six Rivers National Forests proposed connecting the isolated Spotted Owl habitat islands with narrow (1/8-1/2 mile) dispersal corridors. MMA and the newly organized Klamath Forest Alliance, recognizing the vulnerability of narrow travel corridors, wanted to go farther. The Klamath Corridors Proposal (see map) uses entire watersheds and ridge systems to link current reserves (wilderness, parks, etc.) on the Klamath and adjacent forests.

One goal of the Klamath Corridors Proposal is to increase the effective size of

continued next page

the reserves. To function properly the corridors must do more than provide travel ways for large animals. Smaller animals and plants must be able to migrate and interact over long time frames. Effective landscape linkages provide for a continuity of life between adjacent reserves. For maximum effectiveness we selected watersheds and ridge systems that had not yet been subjected to extensive logging and road-building. Because very few such areas remain, this was not always possible. Consequently, some of the proposed corridors require extensive restoration (road removal, vegetation planting, etc.) before they can function properly.

The Klamath Corridors are designed to be wide enough to encompass large natural disturbances, such as forest fires. During the late summer and fall of 1987 fires burned large sections of the Klamath Province. On the Klamath National Forest over 230,000 acres burned, including a big part of the Grider Corridor. In Grider the fire was for the most part a classic underburn.

Fire is an essential process in Western forests. We now understand that periodic fire is needed to create the cathedral qualities and to preserve the biological functions associated with the Ancient Forests. Human fire suppression and plantation forestry, however, have combined to dramatically alter the fire regime. As a result, catastrophic fire is becoming more prevalent and with it the federal managers' mania to get in and log. In salvage logging dead and live trees are sold at bargain prices. These sales typically lose money for the government. Dead wood, a prime component of the forest's biological legacy, is sold off; timber companies reap windfall profits; and the American taxpayer foots the bill.

The 1987 fires provided another opportunity for Forest Service managers to get into Grider. This time they were deter-

mined not to fail: over 3 million dollars was spent constructing the complicated justification and EIS known as the "Grider Recovery Project." The result was yet another defeat, the precedent setting Grider Decision described above. The managers were stunned. Perhaps now they suspect as I believe that some force is at work in Grider, some earth genie or power, which does not want this place to become like so many others to the west and east, north and south, a shadow of its former self.



When asked to comment on the Grider Decision, the attorney representing three timber companies who wanted to log Grider said, "I think they (environmentalists) will see biological corridors everywhere." And so it has come to pass. Recognizing the need for habitat connectivity and inspired by the Klamath Corridors Proposal and Grider Decision, forest activists are identifying numerous corridors in proposals to protect West Coast Ancient Forest Ecosystems.

Connectivity, however, is only one of the principles of landscape ecology and conservation biology that must be applied if we are to design strategies adequate to the task before us. That task is to preserve what remains of our native heritage and to restore to native integrity as much as possible of what has been destroyed in our species' rush to subjugate the earth. In the Klamath Mountain Province this means creating much larger reserves, on the order of 2-3 million acres, and connecting these with broad corridors, thereby forming a reserve network capable of supporting the Gray Wolf, Grizzly Bear, Elk and other critters as they reinhabit their former ranges. It means restoring natural habitat connections between our mountains and the Cascades to the northeast, Sierra Nevada to the southeast, and Coast Ranges to the west. Our challenge is to extend our native con-

sciousness outward in space and forward in time to conceive a vision of a reserve system which may someday stretch from the rainforests of Southeast Alaska to the Alerce forests of Chile—and then to bring this vision into reality.

And where does *Homo sapiens*, the two legged species, fit in this vision? How should we respond to the fear, anger and misunderstanding of the humans who live in the rural regions and to the obstructionism of the corporate and political elites? The Biosphere Reserve model developed by the United Nations provides a framework from which we can work to reconcile extensive wild reserves and the needs of human communities. In this model, core reserves are surrounded by buffer zones in which human alterations are allowed at low intensities. Outside the buffer zones are the lands where humans and their works dominate.

In the Klamath Mountains the large forest reserves (core areas and corridors) and the buffer areas would be located mostly on public lands. Buffer zones would be managed with ecologically sensitive techniques, for example, what is currently called "new forestry" or, in Forest Service jargon, "New Perspectives." The surrounding private forest, agricultural and urbanized lands would be managed as traditional use areas. Ecosystem restoration would be needed, particularly in the buffer zones. Restoration forestry and agriculture, fisheries and wildlife restoration, road removal and revegetation with native species provide means to mitigate the economic changes needed to restore balance between nature and civilization. Involving humans in restoration would also promote a land ethic based on stewardship, a change in human consciousness essential to the success of such a vision. If properly designed and executed, this system would result in sustainable ecosystems and sustainable economies, a synthesis critical to survival for all critters, including the human variety.

Since creating the Klamath Corridors Proposal, activists from the Klamath Forest Alliance have been working with other forest activists in the Klamath Mountain Province and all along the West Coast on wider applications of these approaches. During the next year we will use the Biosphere Reserve model to develop an integrated vision at the scale of the Province. This will involve organizing the knowledge and concerns of activists working on the Siskiyou, Rogue River, Six Rivers, Klamath, and Shasta Trinity National Forests,



as well as folks active in forest and wild-life issues on lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management and National Park Service, and on state and private lands. We believe this work will succeed because of the high degree of congruence that lies beyond (or below) the surface differences in orientation, tactics and organizational affiliation. Consensus, while sometimes not realized, has grown from years of involvement with this Province. It is the native consciousness of the Klamath Mountains, the wisdom of forest and meadow, crag and canyon, which awaits further articulation.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

The Klamath Forest Alliance is working to convince the Forest Service that preservation and restoration of biodiversity should be the #1 priority for managers of the Klamath National Forest. The world class biological importance of this Province can best be protected by creating a large biodiversity reserve centered in the Klamath Forest. Letters to Barbara Holder, Klamath NF supervisor, calling for adoption of KFA's "Critical Klamath Corridors Proposal" would help. Ask her to consider your letter in formulating the final Land Management Plan. You may want to ask her to place your name on the land planning mailing list. Write to Ms. Holder at 1312 Fairlane Rd, Yreka, CA 96097; and if possible send KFA a copy of your letter.

For an information packet on biological corridors, the Grider Decision and the Klamath Corridors Proposal, send \$10 (or whatever you can afford), for duplicating, postage and the people doing the work, to Klamath Forest Alliance, POB 820, Etna, CA 96027. KFA can also provide training for groups or internships for individuals who want to develop skills in applied conservation biology—creating a visionary biodiversity proposal and acting to make it reality. Write for information on workshops and internships or for membership information.

Felice Pace is the director of the Klamath Forest Alliance, and vice-chair of the California Ancient Forest Alliance. He has degrees in economics and education and has worked many years on environmental and Native American issues in northern California.

The EARTH FIRST! Wilderness Preserve System

by Dave Foreman, Howie Wolke, & Bart Koehler

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

"The Earth First! Wilderness Preserve System" was developed beginning in 1980 by Dave Foreman, Howie Wolke, and Bart Koehler and first presented in the June 1983 issue of Earth First! The proposal has been edited slightly for this issue of Wild Earth but is presented essentially as originally printed. It is an historical document. The proposal was one of the first Earth First! projects. It anticipates by several years the work of most conservation biologists. In 1980 very few biologists were speaking of the need to preserve large inviolate wild areas in order to protect biodiversity. Now many are, and conservation biology is blossoming into a major force in the effort to prevent the untimely and anthropogenic end of the Cenozoic Era.

Obviously, given the great advances in island biogeography and other sub-disciplines of conservation biology made in recent years, if this proposal were being presented today it would look somewhat different. A few of the likely changes are these:

Fewer developed corridors would be allowed. Conservation biologists now realize that some species, in particular large carnivores (Grizzly Bear being a prime example) and raptors, range over vast territories and are very sensitive to human intrusions. In contrast to what this proposal suggests, roads to Old Faithful and Yellowstone Lake, for instance, would be closed or left open only for non-motorized transport (bicycles, feet).

The number of preserves would probably be doubled at least. The East is poorly represented in this proposal, in part because it is so over-developed, of course; but also because Dave, Howie, and Bart

were most familiar with the West. Now we would see on the map a huge dark blob over northern New England and New York (perhaps 30 million acres); much larger preserves in the Central and Southern Appalachians; more preserves and corridors in Florida; stepping stone preserves in the Berkshires of western Massachusetts, the Finger Lakes of western New York, the Catskills of eastern New York, the Allegheny Mountains of Pennsylvania, the Red River Gorge and Rockcastle River area of eastern Kentucky, and elsewhere. (I displayed my own bias here—for the North-east.)

More coastal and off-shore areas would be included. In general, conservationists have paid too little attention to areas where hiking is impossible (or possible only for the very light and the very divine).

International preserves would be added. Many border ecosystems—the Wild Rockies, the Sky Islands and Sonoran Desert of the Southwest, the Northern Transition forests, and others—still retain wildness on both sides of the United States/Canada or US/Mexico border.

In short, when the Earth First! co-founders' proposal is next presented, it will be greatly refined and expanded. It may also be a book. Wild Earth will facilitate development of a continental proposal by running regional Wilderness proposals from throughout North America. We encourage you to develop or refine proposals for your bioregion and send them to us. For now, starting on the next page is the original EF! plan.

—John Davis