

Biologic

Outstandingly Remarkable Value

The continuum of relatively undisturbed ecosystems along the Merced River and South Fork Merced River provides nearly intact river-dependent habitats for wildlife and vegetation. The high-quality riparian, wetland, meadow, and riverine environments support a diversity of river-related plants and animals, including rare and special-status species.



Eleanor Hartney

Because the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog population is in substantial decline, it is considered a special-status species. These frogs are dependent on the river corridor's healthy riparian ecosystems.

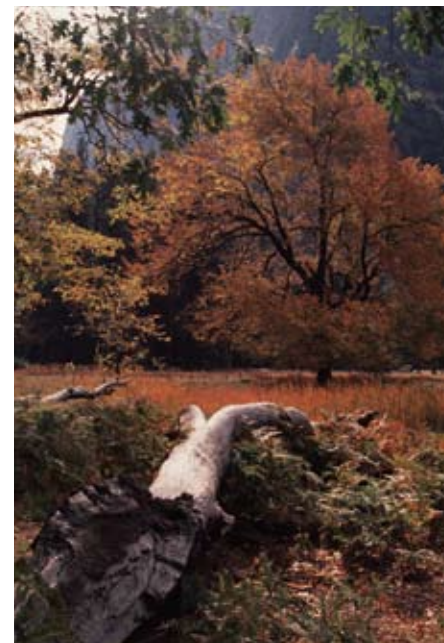


Dan Horner

The harlequin duck breeds near free-flowing mountain streams in the Sierra Nevada. Although sightings were more common in the 1920s, they have become rare until recently—lending hope that they may be staging a comeback.



Keith Walklett, Yosemite National Park archive



Yosemite National Park archive

The Merced and South Fork Merced rivers run through 5 major life zones from alpine to foothill while supporting large areas of riparian, wetland, meadow, and riverine habitats

Supporting evidence and examples of the Biologic ORV include, but are not limited to:

- Both the Merced River and South Fork Merced River support large extents of riparian and wetland habitats that are interconnected throughout virtually the entire lengths of their corridors. These river-dependent terrestrial and aquatic habitats are highly productive. Such intact areas, both as large acreages and extended lengths along rivers, are now regionally rare in the Sierra Nevada.
- Rare and special-status plant and animal species found within the river corridors include the willow flycatcher, Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog, harlequin duck, black swift, and Tompkin's sedge.
- The Happy Isle fen is a rare example of an intact California fen ecosystem. Its rich growth and variety of plants support a diversity of species.