

By Bob Mazzuca

A Scout's Mission to Save the Mojave Tui Chub

On one recent trip with a group of friends in the Florida Keys, I had the thrill of catching bone fish – a great game fish. We also caught barracuda. The memories stir deeper thoughts of another fish story that I would like to share. It demonstrates the connections kids make to nature, and connection of fishing and conservation, and important role conservation plays in Scouting.

When I think about Scouting's mission as we approach our 100th Anniversary in 2010, conserving our natural resources easily makes the list of our top priorities. Scouts play a huge role in conservation. Our

*ArrowCorps*⁵ project with the U.S. Forest Service this past summer saw 5,000 members of the Order of the Arrow, Scouting's national honor society, working more than 250,000 man-hours of service. Their efforts resulted in more than \$5 million worth of improvements, conservation, and construction work at five national forests.

We also encourage our Scouts to lead individual projects to show our commitment to the outdoors and leaving things just a bit better for future generations to enjoy. I was heartened recently by a conversation I had with Kevin Anderson, an Eagle

Scout with Troop 985 in Whittier, California, who saw his personal commitment turn into a wonderful conservation project at Camp Cady Wildlife Area. He is a great fan of the outdoors, has fresh air and clean water in his blood; he fishes, hikes, and hunts. Kevin's long-time goal is to work for the California Department of Fish and Game.

Kevin is on a short-term quest to earn the Hornaday Silver Medal, a national Scouting conservation award named for the late William T. Hornaday. The medal recognizes outstanding efforts in planning, leadership, involvement of others,

and opportunities taken to help others learn about natural resource conservation and environmental improvement.

As one of four conservation projects required to earn the medal, Kevin identified the need to help protect an endangered fish species, the Mojave tui chub, a minnow typically that grows no larger than eight inches long. He quickly organized an Eagle Scout project to help create a new refuge for this small, but significant minnow.

The problem for the chub was one of habitat. Once abundant in the Mojave River, the species almost disappeared when the Mojave changed course and went underground. Only a few freshwater ponds formed by the Mojave at the Camp Cady Wildlife Area kept the chub alive, and one those emptied after a leak. Kevin identified the need to restore the empty pond to expand Camp Cady's capacity.

Under Kevin's direction, 25 Scouts and parents spent a July weekend cleaning debris and dead trees around the pond so it could be later filled with a clay sealant and hold water. It was a big job, and a hot one to boot. Temperatures at the work site climbed to 108 degrees. "It was really hot out there, and we couldn't work all day, so we didn't have much time," Kevin told me.

On another weekend, Kevin and another team of volunteers returned to Camp Cady to plant 27 natural cover trees around the pond to provide a natural barrier to prevent erosion and wind from filling the pond with dirt and sand.

Kevin's project at Camp Cady now gives Mojave tui chub another pond to provide for its survival, not to mention habitat for other wildlife – quail, small game, and many non-game birds and animals.

Somebody would argue that this little Mojave tui chub in these little ponds doesn't make a big difference in the grand scheme of things. I would

counter using Kevin's words: "There are always people out there studying them, and it's important to have fish native to the area, not just fish from other places." The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's California-Nevada Fish Health Center conducts tests on disease, and the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office partners with others for chub habitat conservation.

Kevin and his conservation efforts make all of us in Scouting very proud. *Field & Stream* magazine named Kevin a "Hero of Conservation." The world needs Eagle Scouts today more than ever before, and Kevin is a great example of why. The Mojave tui chub may not be a big fish, but the efforts to preserve it are a big reason to encourage all conservation efforts, no matter the size.

I learn a lot from listening to Scouts like Kevin, and I think we all can. Conservation and the things that we can do are first and foremost very important to us as a human species to be good stewards – we all know that in our heads, but rarely do we collectively do something about it. Whenever Scouting can do a project like *ArrowCorps*⁵ with such high visibility, you raise the awareness with all of those around you to the importance of these kinds of things.

We were "green" before green was a color. Scouts have always had a passion for the out-of-doors and the essence of Scouting's Outdoor Code is to "leave it better than you found it." At the end of the day, it's going to be organizations like Scouting that will help create a new generation of conservationists, and that's exciting. And thanks to the leadership of Eagle Scouts like Kevin Anderson, we can be assured that America's outdoor treasures will endure for future generations. ♦

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Caption



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