

'I was totally expecting a repeat after last year, but it didn't happen'

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migrated north. Anticipating bird flu's return, officials made extensive plans to test wild birds, euthanize infected flocks and maybe vaccinate poultry.

The USDA and other agencies have sampled more than 43,000 wild birds nationwide since July. Two mallard ducks — in Oregon and Utah — were carrying Eurasian bird flu viruses, but tests were inconclusive as to whether the viruses were highly pathogenic or far less dangerous low pathogenic strains.

In Washington, where the Eurasian virus first appeared in the U.S. in ducks in Whatcom County in December 2014, more than 1,200 wild birds have been tested without a trace of bird flu.

"I was totally expecting a repeat after last year, but it didn't happen," Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife veterinarian Kristen Mansfield said. "I think a lot of us are scratching our heads."

Bird flu struck an Indiana poultry producer in mid-January, but the strain was a low pathogenic North American virus that mutated into a highly pathogenic one in a single 62,000-turkey flock.

The virus was highly similar to low pathogenic strains



In Whatcom County, Wash., where the Eurasian virus first appeared in the U.S. in ducks in December 2014, more than 1,200 wild birds have been tested without a trace of bird flu.

detected in Western and Midwestern states between 2011 and 2013, but different than the Eurasian virus that dam-

aged the U.S. poultry industry last year, according to USDA.

Eight other commercial

turkey flocks in the same Indiana county were infected with the low pathogenic virus. All of the turkeys, about 258,000,

plus 155,000 healthy chickens in the area, were euthanized as a precaution.

In Oregon, more than



Bird flu struck an Indiana poultry producer in mid-January, but the strain was a low pathogenic North American virus that mutated into a highly pathogenic one in a single 62,000-turkey flock.

1,600 wild birds have been tested. Only the mallard duck, collected in Morrow County in November, was found to have Eurasian bird flu.

"It kind of shows what we know and don't know about things in the wild. Things certainly don't act like you'd expect in a laboratory setting. Their lab is the wetlands," he said.

More than 4,100 wild birds have been sampled in California and more than 400 in Idaho.

Baker cautioned poultry owners to continue to be protect their flocks from migrating waterfowl. "We haven't gone through the return migration yet," he said.

Obama moves to protect 1.8M acres of Calif. desert

By JOHN ROGERS
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — President Barack Obama granted national monument status Friday to nearly 1.8 million acres of scenic Southern California desert, a move the White House says will maintain in perpetuity the region's fragile ecosystem and natural resources, as well as provide recreational opportunities for hikers, campers, hunters and others.

Obama, in California this week for a fundraising swing, signed proclamations establishing three regions as national monuments — Mojave Trails, Castle Mountains (both in the Mojave Desert) and Sand to Snow in the Sonoran Desert.

The White House says the designations will nearly double the amount of public land that Obama has designated as national monument status since taking office.

"In addition to permanently protecting incredible natural resources, wildlife habitat and unique historic and cultural sites, and providing recreational opportunities for a burgeoning region, the monuments will support climate resiliency in the region ...," the White House said in a statement.

The designations will also connect those regions to other protected government land,



David Danelski/The Press-Enterprise via AP, File

In this file photo, Joshua trees display unusually abundant blooms in the Cima Dome area of the Mojave National Preserve. President Barack Obama is granting national monument status to nearly 1.8 million acres of California desert wilderness, including land that would connect this preserve to other established national monuments and national parks in the area. Obama, in California for a fund-raising swing, made the announcement Feb. 12.

including Joshua Tree National Park, the Mojave National Preserve and 15 other federal wilderness areas.

Mojave Trails National Monument, at 1.6 million acres, is by far the largest of the three new ones.

Sprawling across the vast Mojave Desert, it contains ancient lava flows, spectacular sand dunes, ancient Native American trading routes and World War II-era training camps. It also contains the largest remaining undeveloped stretch of America's Mother Road, historic Route 66.

Castle Mountains National Monument, also in the Mojave Desert, links two mountain ranges as it covers nearly 21,000 acres that hold numerous important Native American archaeological sites. The area is also home to golden eagles, bighorn sheep, mountain lions and other wildlife.

Sand to Snow National Monument rises from the floor of the Sonoran Desert to the 11,503-foot peak of Mount San Geronio, Southern California's tallest alpine peak.

Its diverse landscape in-

cludes the headwaters of the state's Santa Ana and White-water rivers and is home to 240 species of birds and 12 endangered or threatened species of wildlife. It also contains an estimated 1,700 Native American petroglyphs and 30 miles of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.

The federal Antiquities Act, adopted in 1906, grants the president the authority to protect landmarks, structures, and objects of historic or scientific interest by designating them as National Monuments.

Nursery, packing operation sue state labor board

By TIM HEARDEN
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — Two California agricultural operations are suing the state's Agricultural Labor Relations Board over the practice of allowing union representatives to visit farms to organize workers, which they argue is unconstitutional.

The lawsuit was filed on behalf of Dorris, Calif.-based Cedar Point Nursery and Fresno-based Fowler Packing Co., which claim their operations were disrupted by United Farm Workers efforts to organize their employees.

The UFW staged a demonstration on Cedar Point's property during its six-week strawberry plant harvest last year and filed an unfair labor practices complaint with the ALRB against Fowler, which prohibited organizers from entering its property.

The union's complaint has since been withdrawn.

The Pacific Legal Foundation, which is representing Cedar Point Nursery and Fowler Packing Co., argues the regulation violates the owners' Fifth Amendment right against government-imposed takings, which includes the freedom to exclude trespassers, and their Fourth Amendment right against

government-sanctioned intrusions.

The complaint, filed Feb. 10 in U.S. District Court, alleges the ALRB regulation promotes trespassing by granting a "right of access by union organizers to the premises of an agricultural employer for the purpose of meeting and talking" with workers.

"This case is about basic protections for everyone who owns property," PLF principal attorney Joshua P. Thompson said in prepared remarks.

"Nothing is more fundamental for any property owner than being able to keep trespassers out. Bureaucrats can't cancel that right — especially not as a favor to organized labor," he said.

Thompson and other PLF officials announced the filing at a news conference at the World Ag Expo in Tulare, Calif.

Officials from the union and the ALRB did not immediately respond to messages from the Capital Press seeking comment.

The decades-old access regulation survived a challenge at the state Supreme Court in 1976 but has never been challenged in federal court on the grounds that it violates the Constitution, PLF lawyers say.



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February 24:

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Come see our 1250 SF fabrication shop! We are here for all your welding needs.



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March 18, 11am-1pm



Please contact our office for more information on these events.