

SIERRA WATER PUMPED UNDER THE GUADALUPE

Deep underground, crossing beneath the Guadalupe River and not far from this sign, stretch two enormous steel tubes -- Bay Division Pipelines numbers 3 and 4. Big enough for a person to stroll inside, these pipes help transport millions of gallons of snowmelt and mountain rainwater 167 miles, from the Hetch Hetchy reservoir in Yosemite National Park to the population centers of the greater Bay Area.

With a gravity-driven flow rate that can fill 460 Olympic swimming pools each day, the Hetch Hetchy water system uses more than 60 tunnels, 11 reservoirs, five pump stations and two water treatment plants. It delivers water to 2.4 million residential, business and industrial customers in San Francisco, peninsula neighborhoods and some south and east bay cities.

The Bay Area's mighty thirst, however, is not that easily quenched. San José and surrounding communities also drink up water from the Sacramento-San Joaquin river delta, which is held in various reservoirs and then fed to local water companies. The Guadalupe River and other valley creeks, ponds and rivers replenish underground aquifers that are tapped for water.



The Hetch Hetchy Reservoir in Yosemite National Park feeds Bay Division Pipelines No. 3 and 4, which run underground nearby

Every Drop Counts

Water conservation is a must in this place often visited by drought. The underground Bay Division Pipelines help protect the transported water from evaporation. Above the pipes, San Jose uses a strip of land as part of a growing and interconnected urban trail network. The paved path is called the Hetch Hetchy Trail — so named to remind walkers and bicyclists of the precious liquid being transported directly beneath.



The Hetch Hetchy Trail follows the pipes beneath it, which carry Hetch Hetchy water



4/20/1950 — The laying of a 72-inch section of Bay Division Pipeline #3

Photo courtesy of the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission



THE HETCH HETCHY WATER SYSTEM

Source: California Department of Water Resources



The red-shafted flicker is found both in the Sierra and in our area