

THE YUMAN HERITAGE

Wild cat: kumiai legend

When the two creators formed people, they also made Wild Cat. The people started migrating from the mountains, named Wikami'; their tracks are still in the rocks there. At that time the sea reached the foot of the mountains.

The creators told Wild Cat that he would know everything concerning people, and that he should therefore care for them. He first made a big mourning ceremony at Wikami' and then led the people westward to this country. As they traveled, he named the bushes.

The people were tired of traveling by the time they reached Mulki't, so they went south to Xatapil. Here all the waipu'k perished, save a few who then came here. All the other followed Wild Cat, circling northward and westward to the salt water; then, when they found their process blocked, they returned eastward and have lived here since. Wild Cat told them that there were many people. He said that the country was too poor for all the people to live together.

"One woman or man must die each year, so that others can live." But the people said, "No, we do not want to die to make room for others." So they sent for Lizard. He brought a large sack of tobacco. Wild Cat said, "I told these people that some would have to die each year in order to leave room for the others." Wild Cat had sent for Lizard to gain his support.

Wild Cat said that the latter was still older than he. Lizard told him that what he had said was proper. Then everyone assented, so that now one or two of us die each year. As the people grew, all the bushes and rocks around here grew with them.



Shackley, M. Steven (2004) The early ethnography of the Kumeyaay. Berkeley, California: Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley