

# People and Oaks

## A Changing Relationship

Two hundred years ago, this valley supported many Nisenan families. Salmon, deer and small game, and a multitude of berries, seeds and bulbs provided the Nisenan with a varied and rich diet. But it was the acorn and oaks that provided the year-round foundation of their diet. In great part, the bounty of California's oak forests supported over 300,000 people living in 100 separate tribal groups within the state, the greatest density and diversity of people north of Mexico prior to European contact. Today our relationship with the oak has changed. While California still supports the greatest number and diversity of people in North America, it is at the cost of our oak forests. Houses are rapidly replacing the oak forests here in El Dorado and Placer Counties. What is the value of oak woodlands to our state, to our local communities and to us as individuals?

### Try This:

Take a moment to consider how important this oak woodland and its wildlife was to the Native Americans who once stood where you are. Is it any different for us living today? Aren't open space, oaks and wildlife important to you and your family, just like they were for the Nisenan families?

