

THE
JEFFREY PINE JOURNAL

Newsletter of Friends of the Inyo

SUMMER 2012

VOLUME X, ISSUE I



Rainbow in the Bodie Hills.

photo: John Dittli



Planning For
Change

Eastern Sierra
Wildflowers

Member &
Partner Profiles

THE
Jeffrey Pine Journal

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Newsletter of
Friends of the Inyo



819 N. Barlow Lane
Bishop, California 93514
(760) 873-6500

www.friendsoftheinyo.org

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**Friends of the Inyo is dedicated
to the preservation, exploration and stewardship
of the Eastern Sierra's public lands.**

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The Cover Photo



John Dittli and Leslie Goethals headed to the Bodie Hills after a summer thunderstorm to catch this rainbow at the Paramount Mine site.

Inyo is a Paiute word meaning "dwelling place of the Great Spirit." For us, this dwelling place extends from the bottom of Death Valley to the top of Mount Whitney, from Owens Lake to Topaz Lake, from the crest of the Sierra Nevada to the roof of the Great Basin atop the White Mountains.

The *Jeffrey Pine Journal*, named after the Eastern Sierra's most aromatic conifer, is distributed free to all members of Friends of the Inyo and wherever great spirits tend to dwell.

President's Message

by James Wilson

Sometimes the news can be overwhelming. The best antidote to that is positive action. Friends of the Inyo is a way to stay positive. We have a summer of activities going on, and you can be a participant. Friends of the Inyo is supported by its membership – you! – with time, money, and energy. We need it all to maintain the wonderful place where we love to live and visit – the public lands of the Eastern Sierra.

Our busy summer agenda touches all our program areas – Preservation, Exploration, and Stewardship. When you have space in your schedule, try to participate in all three.

Friends of the Inyo is helping raise consciousness about and gain protection for the Bodie Hills. Mostly known for its mining history, the Bodie Hills is also a critically important area for wildlife. Antelope and Great Basin sage-grouse find critical habitat in the Bodie Hills. Ephemeral lakes, vast plateaus of wildflowers, and ancient rock art sites are also found there, as well as the fascinating historic town of Bodie. Friends of the Inyo will be hosting exploration hikes this summer. Take one, get to know a special place, become invested!

In the Mammoth Lakes Basin, Friends of the Inyo is continuing our Summer of Stewardship program. The SOS projects are a local way for folks to be involved in maintaining trails and keeping the Mammoth Lakes Basin healthy. Go for a walk, maintain a trail, pick up litter, and give back. Check out www.friendsoftheinyo.org for more information about this and other opportunities.

This summer Friends of the Inyo continues its work with Travel Management. We will have two professional stewardship crews implementing the decisions of travel management. These folks will help the Forest Service create a road system that is safe, environmentally sound, and sustainable.

Since February, the staff and board of Friends of the Inyo have been involved in a project of strategic planning. Meetings and retreats are shaping a document that will guide our way in the years ahead. This planning has helped sharpen our focus, and concentrate on the staff and tools that we need to keep the Eastern Sierra a great place to recreate, and healthy for the creatures that need it for a home. Stay tuned for more information.

Friends of the Inyo is a membership-based organization. Without you, we cannot do the jobs that need to be done. Whether that is trail work, being part of a campaign for land designations, or going to a supervisors meeting, we need all of your help.

And of course we need your money. The dollars we receive from our members are the most valuable dollars we receive, because they are the most flexible (unrestricted), and enable us to fill the gaps in our budget. Most importantly, it is a vote from you that we are doing righteous work. Members hear from us at least twice a year - with a renewal notice and with a special appeal in either the fall or the summer.

So thank you again for your support, whether it is time, political energy, or financial!

See you on the trails.

Planning for Change: *Friends of the Inyo Maps the Next Three Years*

by Stacy Corless

We all know the saying—the only thing that's constant is change. Take this summer, for example: though it's a blessedly longer season for early backcountry hiking access, many of my favorite trails are blocked due to a catastrophic tree blowdown that happened last November. Fortunately, I've spent many a winter's evening poring over topos and dreaming of farther flung Sierra Nevada destinations that I just don't seem to get to, what with all the fantastic wilderness right in my backyard in Mammoth. Time to pull out the maps again and plan to find a new favorite destination (and to pull on the work clothes and grab the end of a saw to help clear the trails).

One thing I appreciate about Friends of the Inyo is our ability to stay nimble and respond positively to the unexpected, while still staying true to what we've set out to do.

We've passed some major milestones and significant transitions over the last few years at Friends of the Inyo: our 25th anniversary as a group and the passage of a bill designating over 400,000 acres of new wilderness. We've expanded our volunteer programs and started new campaigns to protect wild places such as the Bodie Hills.

We said goodbye to Paul McFarland, our founding executive director, and welcomed him back this spring as a stewardship program leader.

Now it's my turn to bid farewell, though I won't be traveling far. In July, I'll leave Friends of the Inyo after four wild, wonderful and challenging years.

Some of my favorite moments from my time at FOI:

--FOI's 25th anniversary party: listening to James Wilson, Mike Prather and Frank Stewart recall the group's founding, and bringing together over 100 members and friends to celebrate

--Seeing pronghorn dance along a ridge at the Paramount mine in the Bodie Hills (one time, as if on cue for a Wall Street Journal reporter)

--Helping hundreds of volunteers experience the satisfaction of giving back to the places they love to play at our Mammoth Lakes Summer of Stewardship events

--My first wilderness stewardship trip on the Fish Creek Trail, working with Bill Carter and the Backcountry Horsemen of California

--Hiking to Glass Creek Meadow and seeing the Owens River Headwaters Wilderness sign in June 2009 (thanks to Rick Laborde for getting that sign up less than two months after it was designated wilderness)

--Participating in strategic planning meetings with board and staff (and our fantastic consultant, Amy O'Connor) this spring

Yes, you read that correctly—planning meetings are a fond memory.

Friends of the Inyo is successful because this organization always has a plan. Since 2004, FOI's staff and board has worked with Amy every three years to draw new lines on the map, refine the direction. The early sessions included action items such as "buy office equipment" and "find an office." This year, the group of 16 identified five strategic priorities that will guide Friends of the Inyo through 2015. The plan will be published later this year or early next—expect to see words such as "continue," "collaborate," "community,"



In a wagon lead by Alton Chinn, 94, Friends of the Inyo participated in the 2012 Mule Days Parade with US Forest Service Trail Work Partners Backcountry Horsemen of California (BCHC) and the Pacific Crest Trail Association (PCTA). FOI's Todd Vogel (seated next to Chinn), Drew Foster and Dave Herbst rode in the parade.

"youth" and "wild" repeated, along with preservation, exploration and stewardship.

Of course, things don't always go exactly as planned—I couldn't have told you four months ago that I'd be moving to a new job. But having that plan in place makes the transitions much, much smoother.

Many heartfelt thanks to all who've helped me in my very rewarding work for Friends of the Inyo. I look forward to seeing (as a member!) what the next plan brings.

Preservation

Birding the Owens Lake Spring Big Day

By Andrea Jones, Audubon-CA Important Bird Area Director, and Mike Prather, FOI board member

Birders and Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) staff gathered early on the morning of April 25 at Lone Pine in the Owens Valley to get route assignments for our annual spring survey to count all the birds on the 110 square miles of Owens Lake. Local birders, members of Eastern Sierra Audubon, Friends of the

the summer of 2013. Pete Pumphrey from Eastern Sierra Audubon and Mike Prather, a Friends of the Inyo board member (three FOI board members participated in the Big Day), along with Andrea Jones have spent hundreds of hours in meetings working on a conservation plan for the lake, but little time actually looking together at the birds and habitat they try to protect.

would yell over the wind “you get the grebes, I’ve got the gulls.” Pete, a self-proclaimed non-birder, chuckled as we talked a different language “Here’s a big flock of peeps” “Four yellowlegs” “Eight undies (unidentified diving birds)” and helping Nancy, he learned the birding codes and furiously recorded our sightings.

It was interesting to see the different



Birders at Owens Lake Big Day (Mike Prather)

Inyo, California Native Plant Society, Sierra Club, and a few intrepid people that show up every year from as far away as the San Francisco Bay Area and Southern California came for the Spring Big Day (Fall Big Day will be August 21).

By the end of the rewarding day, the numbers reflected an all-time high count of 74,511 individual birds of 81 species. Nearly 47,000 shorebirds of 21 species were seen – 10,567 American avocets, 12,532 western sandpipers, and 9,085 least sandpipers as well as 21,204 California gulls and 72 white-faced ibis.

But before we could start counting, LADWP spoke to us about safety on the dirt roads around the lake, and cautioned us to avoid snowy plover nests, even requiring us to sign a form that we had participated in plover training. As the lakebed is still a construction zone (a true “working landscape”), hard hats and bright green vests were distributed. But before we split up, we were treated to a plover rap song by one LADWP employee.

Jane Braxton Little, a freelance writer for Audubon Magazine, joined us, as did photographer Rosalie Winard. Audubon is doing a major article on Owens Lake for



White-Faced Ibis. (Mike Prather)

Our first stop was Dirty Socks, a privately owned wetland on the south end of the lake, where a large flock of gadwall and cinnamon teal alighted at the sound of us approaching. From within the marsh, yellow-headed blackbirds squawked and savannah sparrows warned from within their carefully guarded territories. We gave the area a quick but thorough scan, numbers and species were yelled out to Nancy Prather, our reliable data recorder, and we jumped back in the car, off to the next spot. Once on the lake proper, and within the dust control zones, we counted birds by cell (sections of the lake marked off by levee roads) – some had few birds, some were speckled with hundreds of California Gulls and Eared Grebes. Mike

habitats and birds we encountered – more eared grebes and other waterfowl, and fewer American avocets – the ponds are often deeper or too saline in the southern end of the lake. One highlight of the day was all of the snowy plovers we saw. Spotting them on the beach is a piece of cake compared to this landscape! Along this white and watery landscape, larger white forms appeared – and Nancy yelled out “White pelicans.”

We watched from a distance as the pelicans arose from the lake bed, framed with the Sierra in the background, and turned south, eventually to move north for nesting.

We also recorded large numbers of peeps (small sandpipers) – Western and Least Sandpipers. They seemed to be exhibiting migratory restlessness – constantly wheeling around in front of us. By the next day, they could easily have been gone – back on their journey to breeding grounds in Alaska, after getting their fill of brine flies. That they have returned and are making Owens Lake part of their migratory journey is reward enough. A heritage wildlife population is coming back at the Owens Lake Important Bird Area!

Preservation

Eastern Sierra Conservation Updates

By Drew Foster

Friends of the Inyo is continuing to work with the Bodie Hills Conservation Partnership, which seeks to establish permanent protection of the Bodie Hills, and opposes gold mining threats to the region. Cougar Gold, one of the current companies looking to do gold exploration and extraction, is still lobbying for the release of federal protections for the area. Further south near the Inyo Mountains Wilderness area, Friends of the Inyo led a hike in April to Conglomerate Mesa, yet another undeveloped area threatened by mining interests. Meanwhile, a mining company that had been interested in reopening mining areas near Hot Creek (by the Mammoth Yosemite Airport) recently backed away and decided not to pursue further proposals. With all the industrial development interests heating up in the West, President Obama's recent designation of Fort Ord National Monument on the California coast is a good sign for the future protection of public lands, including the Bodie

Hills, and building the Bureau of Land Management's National Landscape Conservation System.

In other news, the BLM Resource Advisory Council (RAC) met in May in Bridgeport to discuss issues on BLM lands across central California, including a field trip in the Bodie Hills to discuss the upcoming review for listing of the bi-state sage grouse under the Federal Endangered Species Act. The potential listing of the grouse has big land management implications for the BLM and local ranchers in the area. These RAC's are important committees with diverse stakeholders that help to inform and advise the various



Up-close botanizing in the Bodie Hills. (Drew Foster)

BLM Field Offices across the west. Another great example of a collaborative planning effort just now getting underway is the Inyo National Forest Plan revision, which is a larger planning process for National Forests in the Sierra Nevada, which Friends of the Inyo is involved in. We will keep you informed as the plan develops.

Court Rules Against Inyo County On Death Valley Road

A federal judge threw out a suit by Inyo County, California to open a highway through a remote roadless area of Death Valley National Park.

Judge Anthony W. Ishii of the U.S. District Court ruled that Inyo County failed to prove that a little-traveled desert wash in the Last Chance Mountains at the north end of the Park was a public county highway under a repealed, 19th century right-of-way law known as "R.S. 2477." Congress protected the Last Chance Mountains as wilderness and added the area to Death Valley National Park in 1994.

The ruling was a victory for conservation groups and the

National Park Service who had argued that the County's evidence didn't show the half-mile route was a public highway, since the route showed no signs of construction, and since only one person could remember having traveled the route in a vehicle before 1977.

Inyo County's claim to the alleged "Last Chance Road" was one of four 'highways' the County sought to open in the County's original suit, filed in 2006. Judge Ishii previously dismissed the other three claims to highways because the County failed to file them in time.

—Earthjustice press release

Exploration

Where and How To Get Out On the Eastside this Summer "You can hike in the Bodie Hills?"

By Drew Foster

As part of a broader coalition called the Bodie Hills Conservation Partnership, I've been working for the past couple of years on Friends of the Inyo's campaign to protect the Bodie Hills. This has included everything from organizing activists, writing letters and making phone calls to elected officials, to leading hikes and running informational seminars about the Bodie Hills. In the process, I've both learned a lot and developed quite a passion for the place.

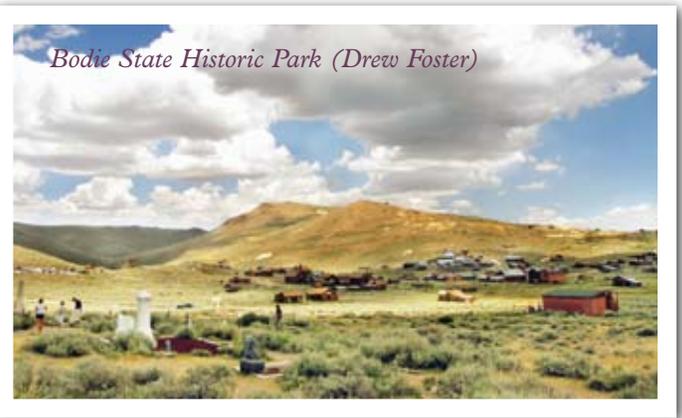
I suppose this has led to a case of losing sight of the forest for the trees – or the sagebrush steppe for the black sagebrush, as it were. I was speaking with someone recently who was looking through our brochure, saw photos of people hiking and camping and asked, "You can go hiking in the Bodie Hills?" As this is something I take for granted, I paused a second before responding in the enthusiastic affirmative. "Well, yeah!"

Although the mountainous, sagebrush-covered terrain lacks many developed hiking trails, there is a phenomenal suite of recreational opportunities in the Bodie Hills and places to explore and enjoy Eastern Sierra solitude. Here are just a few of the more popular places to visit:

Bodie Mountain & Potato Peak: An ideal year-round destination, these two neighboring peaks represent the highest points in the Bodie Hills. Great for a summer hike, or winter ski, they overlook Bodie State Historic Park, with views into the Mono Lake Basin and a panoramic view of the Sierra Nevada range. Both sit above 10,000', so be prepared for a moderate to strenuous adventure to the top. They are best accessible from the Aurora Canyon Road from Bridgeport, or from the Geiger Grade Road north out of the state park.

Dry Lakes Plateau: Known for its stunning wildflower displays, and frequent sightings of pronghorn antelope, the Dry Lakes Plateau is a gem of the Bodie Hills, and the Great Basin Desert overall. Accessible by hiking or four-wheel drive vehicle, the plateau offers excellent opportunities for day hiking, camping, solitude, and photography. Nearby Beauty and Bald Peaks straddle the California-Nevada border and provide fantastic vistas of the area.

Masonic Historic Site: Accessible from the Masonic Road off of CA SR 182, northeast of Bridgeport, Masonic took its name from the Freemasons that opened the Pittsburg Liberty Mine in 1902. The site includes three towns, remnants of which can be found along the narrow wooded gulch the road follows. The three largest mines here were



the Serita, Chemung, and Pittsburg Liberty, filling the towns with around 1,000 people at the height of production (1907-1910). The stamp mills ran on electricity generated from the nearby East Walker River. Today, the various springs and creeks provide for good birding and exploration of the historic sites.

Bodie State Historic Park: The most visited area in the Bodie Hills, Bodie State Historic Park is a destination for travelers from across the world. The historic town hosted about 10,000 people by 1879, and was one of the largest mining towns east of the Sierra until its bust around 1900. Mining steadily dwindled until production was almost nonexistent in 1916, and a fire in 1932 burned many old buildings down. The town is currently maintained in a state of "arrested decay" and has been protected as a State Park since 1962 (celebrating its 50th anniversary this year). The park features a Museum/Visitor Center, guided and self-guided tours, and is best visited during summer months. An entrance fee is charged year-round. There is much more information at www.parks.ca.gov/bodie.

When visiting any of the public lands in the Eastern Sierra and elsewhere, please remember to check road conditions before traveling. There are many areas of private land within and adjacent to public lands, so please respect no trespassing signs. Many roads are not maintained, and high clearance four-wheel drive vehicles may be necessary to access various parts of the Bodie Hills. The Bodie Hills contain many historic and pre-historic artifacts which are protected by federal law, so please practice Leave No Trace etiquette and leave objects where you find them. Also be mindful of wildlife; many animals, including sage grouse, have sensitive breeding and nesting times, so check with the local agency for restrictions and sensitive areas. Most of all, enjoy the great outdoors!

Explore the Mammoth Lakes Basin

Friends of the Inyo's Lakes Basin Steward Carole Lester, along with volunteer docents, will offer weekly interpretive hikes in Mammoth starting in early July through Labor Day. Programs include a geology hike from Horseshoe to McLeod Lakes Thursday-Monday; a wildflower walk to Heart Lake on Sundays; historical tours of the Mammoth Consolidated Mine and environs Friday-Saturday; and family-friendly "bear aware" hikes and night hikes. Check friendsoftheinyo.org for exact days and times.

Carole has also produced FOI's first-ever Junior Steward Guide. This field book helps kids connect with the wild places and creatures of the Lakes Basin with fun activities and information. Junior Stewards can earn a patch once they've completed the guide. Thanks to Heidi Vetter and Lori Michelin for lending their talents to the project! The Junior Steward Guide will be available on all FOI Lakes Basin explorations, at the Mammoth Lakes Welcome Center and select lodging properties this summer.

Exploration

Summer Events, Fall Explorations

Visit www.friendsoftheinyo.org for event details!

June 2 – Sept. 15: Mammoth Summer of Stewardship Trail Days

Join Friends of the Inyo, MLTPA, Mammoth Trails and supporting local business in beautifying some of the best-loved spots on the Mammoth Lakes Trail System!

June 2: National Trails Day, Lakes Basin

July 14: Horseshoe Lake to McLeod

July 28: Lake George

August 11: Coldwater Trails/Duck Pass

September 15: Coastal Cleanup Day, Lakes Basin

Mammoth Lakes Basin Hikes and Tours: Join FOI's Lakes Basin Stewards on scenic, informative walks to explore wildflowers, geology and nightlife of the basin every Friday through Monday. Check the FOI website for ongoing current information this summer!

July 1-5: Reds Meadow with Backcountry Horsemen of California

August 21: Owens Lake Fall Big Day
Join us in gathering data used in the management of habitat and birds by LADWP, Audubon, State Lands Commis-

sion, and the California Dept. of Fish & Game. Meet at 7 a.m. at the Diaz Lake parking lot south of Lone Pine for brief intro and then get out on the lake in small groups. Bring water, snacks, lunch, hat, sunscreen, dark glasses. More info: esaudubon.org/owens_lake or Mike Prather at mprather@lonepinetv.com.

September 29: National Public Lands Day Celebration and Member Rendezvous

FOI returns to the Owens River Headwaters for a day of stewardship and an evening party on the edge of Wilderness! The event – with food, drink and live music – takes place at the Obsidian Flat campground, with nearby daytime activities. Go to friendsoftheinyo.org for updated details.

October 5-7: Conglomerate Mesa Exploration (pending permit approval)

Come learn more about this beautiful, little-known area which currently does not have Wilderness protection and is attracting mineral exploration interests. With views over much of Death Valley, the Owens Valley, Saline Valley, and the Coso Mountains, Conglomerate offers a lot. For more details, see friendsoftheinyo.org/conglomeratehike10-2012. Please sign up in advance for this event by con-

tacting todd@friendsoftheinyo.org.

October 30: Friends of the Inyo Fall Open House

Drop in to enjoy appetizers and drinks at FOI's Fall Open House! Celebrate a successful stewardship season and learn more about current events while mingling with FOI staff, board, members and partners. 5-7 p.m. at 819 North Barlow Lane, Bishop.

November 17 & 18: Mulholland Christmas Carol, Bishop

Join us for a Saturday evening show or a Sunday matinee of this award-winning Hollywood musical put on by Theatre of Note depicting William Mulholland as Scrooge. This water-related "history on stage" is enjoying its 10th anniversary year and returns to the Owens Valley for the first time since 2005 hosted by Friends of the Inyo through the generosity of the Metabolic Studio in Los Angeles. See the FOI website for ongoing details.

November 30 – December 6: Wild & Scenic Film Festival

Friday, November 30 – Mammoth
Saturday, December 1 – Bishop
Thursday, December 6 – Lone Pine



Conglomerate Mesa (Todd Vogel)



Carole Lester leads a wildflower walk on the Heart Lake Trail. (Catherine Billey)

Field Guide to Wildflower

A Brief Introduction to a Few Fair Weather Friends

By Paul McFarland



Alpine Gold
Hulsea algida

SUNFLOWER FAMILY

A pleasant reward for those who climb high above timberline, Alpine Gold lives up to its name. With golden sunflower-like flowers individually perched on hairy, sticky stems sprouting from a basal rosette (bunch) of sticky, narrow leaves, Alpine Gold is a favorite nectar plant of ridge-riding mountain butterflies.



Desert Paintbrush
Castilleja angustifolia

SNAPDRAGON FAMILY

Whether peeking above the gray branches of a sagebrush or lighting up a rocky desert wash, the startling red of Desert Paintbrush is hard to miss. While this flaming desert variety is common from the shores of Mono Lake to Owens Lake, it is only one of a handful of paintbrush species encountered around the Eastern Sierra.



Mule's Ears
Wyethia mollis

SUNFLOWER FAMILY

Unmistakable with its large (up to 1' long), whitely hairy leaves flapping like mule's ears, this beautiful sunflower is common in sagebrush flats and Jeffrey Pine forests. To differentiate Mule's Ears from their Eastside look-alike, Arrowleaf Balsamroot, just look to the names. Balsamroot's deep green leaves are shaped like an arrow with a deep notch at the base, while Mule's Ear leaves are fuzzy without a basal notch.



Rosy Penstemon
Penstemon floridus

SNAPDRAGON FAMILY

Rosy Penstemon is common along Westgard Pass and the Bristlecone Pine Road in the White Mountains. This penstemon's vibrantly pink flowers stand out along a tall stalk rising from a base of fleshy, toothed, grey green leaves. When encountering a Penstemon, take a look inside their sleeping bag-like tubular flowers; maybe you'll find a snoring bee.



Rabbitbrush
Chrysothamnus nauseosus

SUNFLOWER FAMILY

Relatively inconspicuous for much of the year, the yellow blooms of Rabbitbrush brighten fall across the Great Basin. The tufts of yellow flowers stuck on the end of drab green, narrow-leaved stems create problems for fall allergy sufferers and nectar for late season insects.



Pennyroyal
Monardella odoratissima

MINT FAMILY

Next time you're huffing and puffing up a Sierra trail, keep and eye out for this tufted purple-flowered mint. A deep sniff will take your mind off your heaving lungs and get you moving again. Like all mints, Pennyroyal has square stems and opposite (growing directly across from one another in pairs of two) leaves.

all photos: Paul McFarland

Flowers of the Eastern Sierra



Mariposa Lily

Calochortus leichtlinii

LILY FAMILY

The genus name *Calochortus* is Greek for “beautiful grass,” and anyone coming upon a Mariposa Lily knows this is truly one beautiful grass. Not really a true “grass,” members of the Lily family are grouped, along with grasses, as Monocots – a large grouping of plants characterized by, among other things, flowers with petals and other parts in groups of three and parallel (as opposed to net-like) leaf veins.



Lemmon's Paintbrush

Castilleja lemmonii

SNAPDRAGON FAMILY

Part of a group of diminutive flowers jokingly called belly-flowers (guess why!), Lemmon's Paintbrush makes up what it may lack in height with electric purple color. Standing out against the green grasses and sedges it shares high Sierra wet meadows with, the bright beauty of this paintbrush makes you forget your wet knees as you bend down for a closer look.



Spiny Hopsage

Grayia spinosa

GOOSEFOOT FAMILY

The curious flowers of Spiny Hopsage prove you don't need flashy petals to be eye-catching. With small male flowers on one plant and flattened green female flowers turning red with age on another separate plant, Hopsage exemplifies what botanists term a dioecious (Greek for “two houses”) plant. Rather than relying on insects attracted by showy flowers, Hopsage and other members of the goosefoot family rely on wind to spread pollen from the male to female plants.



Sulfur Buckwheat

Erigeron umbellatum

BUCKWHEAT FAMILY

A favorite of little butterflies, this yellow-flowered shrub is just one of the many buckwheats gracing the Eastern Sierra. The yellow pom poms of flowers are held on the ends of thin stalks rising in a bunch from a whorl of scoop-shaped, hairy leaves.



Rayless Daisy

Erigeron aphanactis

SUNFLOWER FAMILY

Rising only a few inches from the ground, this little sunflower completely lacks the ray flowers characteristic of most sunflowers. Found from the Owens Valley to the slopes of Tioga Pass, time spent near this bald little daisy usually yields a nice diversity of visiting insects.

More Resources

Wildflowers of the Eastern Sierra by Laird R. Blackwell, Lone Pine Press – A great, easy to use flower guide for our side of the mountain and adjoining deserts.

A Sierra Nevada Flora by Norman F. Wheeden, Wilderness Press – A fairly comprehensive guide and good tool to learn how to key out flowers.

The Jepson Manual - Higher Plants of California edited by James C. Hickman, UC Press – Known as the California botanist's bible for good reason.

Calphotos.berkeley.edu – A great searchable photo database to check plant or animal identifications.

Calflora.org – A wonderfully informative source for quality information on California's native flora.

Stewardship

The Road Ahead

By Paul McFarland

For the second year in a row, Friends of the Inyo's stewardship crews will be out on the ground working alongside Inyo National Forest (INF) staff and other partner groups to implement the Travel Management Decision signed by Forest Supervisor Jim Upchurch in August, 2009. For those unfamiliar with travel management, it is not about who's going to drive the car or sit shotgun. Believe it or not, it's bigger than that.

Kicked off in the new millennium, travel management was undertaken by the INF to create a legal system of designated routes for motorized vehicle travel. This process determined which, of the nearly 4000 miles of roads crisscrossing the Inyo National Forest, should stay and which should go.

Nearly a decade in the making, and after 50 public meetings, field trips and a groundbreaking collaborative effort, the INF's Travel Management Decision added nearly 1000 miles of roads to the motorized system.

This summer, FOI stewardship crews, funded by a grant of gas tax funds from the California State Parks Off-highway Vehicle Division will focus on restoring routes not added to the system – specifically, completing the work needed at the base of the Sierra Escarpment from Tom's Place to Olancho, as well as in the Glass Mountains and Casa Diablo.

FOI and Forest Service crews will also be working to replace restoration efforts that have been ripped out by folks none too happy with how the Forest Service Travel Management Decision dealt with a particular road.

It has to be noted that travel management was never meant to be final or perfect (nothing is in our world of democratic compromise). The process is iterative – meaning that, each year, through each new set of eyes out cruising around our public lands, the road system can evolve.



*Volunteer doing campsite inventory.
(Andrew Schurr)*

Were some roads closed that were important? Yes. Were some routes designated that don't make sense? Yes. Would some restored roads make great foot, horse or bike trails? Indeed. Are there places where a short section of new trail would make a great singletrack loop? Heck yeah.

The process of creating a system of roads and trails that works is as alive and changing as the Jeffrey pine forests these roads explore. Get involved. Maps and Travel Management Decision documents can be found on the Inyo National Forest website at www.fs.usda.gov/detail/inyo.

To learn more about our work to help implement the 2009 Travel Management Decision, please contact Paul at paulmc@friendsoftheinyo.org or (760) 709-1093. Our crews always welcome volunteers.

EVOLVE This Summer!

August 18-25 Sabrina Project

Join FOI and the American Hiking Society for a week of volunteer trail work in the beautiful Sabrina Basin above Bishop, accessed from the trailhead below Sabrina Lake at about 9,200' elevation. The trip is stock supported, so the 6 miles to camp will be moderated quite a bit. Once there, the middle fork of Bishop Creek will be our base while we take on several much needed trail projects including some rock work (causeway building and repair), and needed backcountry work such as removal of campfire rings and restoration of campsites. Food, kitchen, food storage, water purification, and all other group equipment provided. Meet at 4 p.m. on August 18 at the White Mountain Ranger Station in Bishop for trip briefing, equipment check and final stock packing, which we will meet near the trailhead at 7 a.m. on August 19. Please sign up in advance by contacting todd@friendsoftheinyo.org



FOI Wilderness Stewards Deb Bayle and Michael Rodman. (Andrew Schurr)

Wilderness Stewardship 2012

By Andrew Schurr

With a robust set of wilderness and stewardship programs, Friends of the Inyo is again partnering with the Inyo National Forest (INF) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to help care for Eastern Sierra public lands. Our first full-time Wilderness Steward last summer was so successful that we are now employing two full time this year. They will roam heavily visited wilderness areas to answer questions, maintain trails, and collect information to assist the INF with wilderness management decisions. While the incredible tree blow down of November 30, 2011 will be one of the biggest challenges facing visitors this summer, crews were able to get an early start cleaning up thanks to the unusually dry winter but the work still to be done is staggering. Our wilderness stewards will assist the forest service in clearing and scouting trails, and alerting visitors to hazards.



PCTA Partner Project Volunteers. (Andrew Schurr)

FOI is also again assisting the INF with the 10 year "Chief's Challenge" in which wilderness areas are judged on a set of scored criteria. FOI has helped with this in past years by conducting campsite inventories, invasive plant monitoring and other stewardship efforts. This year we will be focused on the Inyo Mountains and Boundary Peak and will also work in the Golden Trout Wilderness, Southern Sierra, and Hoover Wilderness gathering information on trail conditions, campsite and recreational use, and help to map existing grazing and historical structures. We'll work with partners from Wild-Places, The American Hiking Society, Cross Roads School, Back Country Horsemen of California, the Pacific Crest Trail Association as well as the INF.

We are also working with the BLM in Bishop to help assess the health of the Wilderness areas they manage through a series of wilderness characteristics monitoring programs. Last year we completed a successful inventory of the Granite Mountain Wilderness and will be transferring this program to the BLM portion of the Inyo Mountains. We are also continuing our Wilderness Study Area and

National Landscape Conservation System programs such as the Round Valley School Earth Day. Through these programs we are hoping to broaden the knowledge of these spectacular places.

FOI has a number of volunteer opportunities and programs taking place this summer, including the EVOLVE volunteer vacation from August 18-25. We are continuing our Volunteer Campsite inventory program, with trainings conducted on an individual basis. If interested please contact me (andrew@friendsoftheinyo.org). We will also be working with a number of school and local groups to help maintain the trails and habitat of the Eastern Sierra.

We look forward to a great season in the wilderness this year and hope you can come join us. Happy trails!

2012 Mammoth Lakes Summer of Stewardship Trail Days

Friends of the Inyo staff and volunteers will take to the trails of the Lakes Basin for the fourth summer! The "Trail Days" program is a partnership with FOI, MLTPA and the Inyo National Forest. FOI crew leaders take volunteers out for a morning of trail maintenance and trash cleanup at popular sites such as Horseshoe Lake and Duck Pass Trail. In return for their sweat equity in public lands, volunteers are treated to breakfast, lunch and fabulous door prizes.

44 volunteers helped open up Lakes Basin trails on June 2, National Trails Day. Some 60 trees were removed from trails and there's lots more work to do.

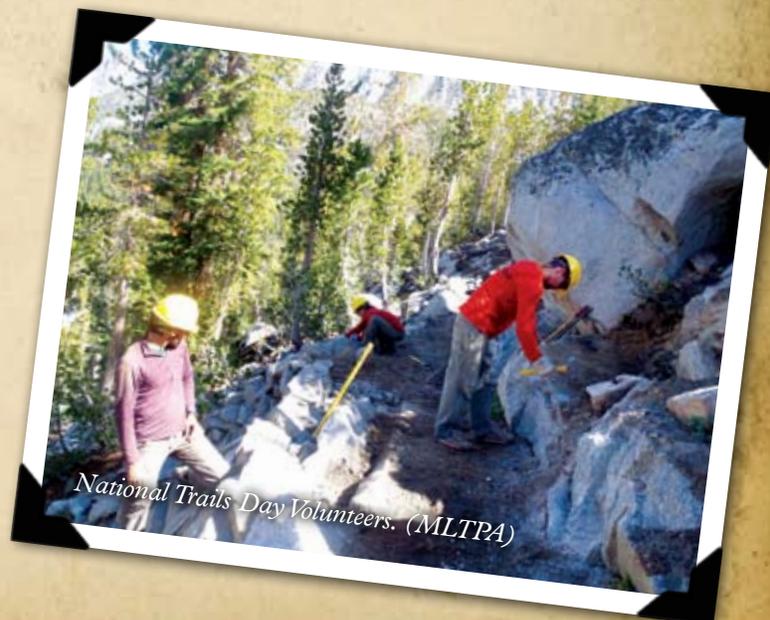
For the following volunteer events, meet at 8:30 a.m. dressed for trail work in long pants, shirt, hat and closed-toe shoes. Gloves and tools provided, as well as breakfast, lunch and prizes!

July 14: Horseshoe Lake

July 28: Lake George

August 11 Coldwater Trails/Duck Pass

September 15: Coastal Cleanup Day, Lakes Basin
(meeting place to be determined)



National Trails Day Volunteers. (MLTPA)

Partner Profile

Jim Harper: Sierra Solar's Pioneering Founder

By Catherine Billey

Longtime Friends of the Inyo member and business sponsor Jim Harper is the pioneer of Eastern Sierra solar system installation – and for home or business owners who want to go solar, it's imperative to have systems installed and maintained properly.

In the year before he became one of the first graduates of Solar Energy International's solar training program in 1991, Harper founded Bridgeport-based Sierra Solar, making it the Eastern Sierra's first full service renewable energy company. He partnered with TJ Chase in 2006, and today the company specializes in residential and commercial photovoltaic grid-tie and off-grid electric systems, and solar thermal water heating, and wind power, water pumping, and residential back-up power generation.

"Solar has changed a lot since 1990," Harper told Friends of the Inyo. "It's gotten a lot better and more reliable. About 10 years ago, the grid-tie was introduced, so now we do both – the grid-tie and off-grid, and solar water pumping."

Harper grew up in Oakland and moved to Yosemite in the 70's, where he worked as a building contractor for many years, giving him excellent hands-on experience to segue into the renewable energy industry. He moved to the Virginia Lakes area of the Eastern Sierra in the late 80's to buy property, where he still lives, off-grid, today.

He's also a backcountry skier, so it comes as no surprise to learn that he specializes in remote site construction projects. "We have a site on Squaw Peak, which is out behind Crowley, and it runs radio and TV equipment. We provide the power through solar and batteries to run that. We also built a power system on top of Mazourka Peak, out of Independence, and that runs Sierra Wave," he said, providing two local examples of remote sites.

When the Shell station in Lee Vining became the first of all the gas stations along the Highway 395 corridor to go solar four years ago, Sierra Solar installed the panels on the roof. Two years ago, the Mobil station in Big Pine followed suit. "I think there's a big commercial opportunity for small commercial systems," Harper said, "because they can take advantage of the tax cuts, they have a higher rebate, they use a lot of electricity, and they usually have big roofs. So compared to

other areas, in the Mono and Inyo area, even though we have a lot of residential systems, we don't have as many commercial systems as the rest of California." Harper said this is the under-used opportunity in the Eastern Sierra. "We did our biggest solar installation just last fall at SNARL," Harper added with a bit of pride, citing over one hundred grid-tied panels.

Many homeowners shy away from solar power because of the expense. Solar panels used to cost about \$1000 each, but Harper said that's gotten considerably better. "They come in all different sizes," he said. "A typical grid-tie solar panel costs about \$400. Solar panel prices are at an all time low because of competition, the boom in solar

in California, a lot more manufacturing, and then a slow-down of the economy, so the supply is high." He added that the grid-tie system now costs considerably less than it did five years ago.

As a long-established Eastern Sierra company, Sierra Solar has maintained its business through word of mouth and good references. With the recent boom in solar, however, there is more competition from outside companies that offer leasing options, so Sierra Solar began its own leasing program through Sun Cap Financial. "People are looking for new creative ways to sell solar," Harper said.

As for large, utility-scale energy projects, such as the

proposal for Owens Lake, Harper acknowledged arguments both ways on that. "Some people are concerned about the transmission and visual impacts [i.e. high voltage wires don't go underground]. I still think that most solar is going to be good solar because it's clean renewable energy. However, the rooftop solar is probably the more advantageous because it is a good example of distributed generation. That means there's a little bit of solar all over the place and it's feeding into the grid, or used right on site. There's no transmission issues, there's no visual issues, stuff like that. That would be preferable." But, he said, rooftop solar residentially contributes a very small percentage of the solar produced for the utility grid. "To meet the good energy needs, I think the utility solar is going to have to happen too."

For more information about Sierra Solar, visit their website at www.sierra-solar.com.



Solar panels installed on the roof of the Mobil station in Big Pine by Sierra Solar. This was the second service station along the Highway 395 to go solar (the Shell in Lee Vining, also done by Sierra Solar, was the first).

(Photo courtesy of Sierra Solar)

Member Profile

Sue Farley: *Blue Diamond*

By Catherine Billey

Local lore has it that in the winter of 1981-82, Sue Farley put up the blue diamonds marking routes for cross-country ski trails in the Mammoth Lakes Basin. “It was an adventure!” she confirmed for Friends of the Inyo. “There was a crew of 3 women. We started out in the fall using a truck to get around up there – that was a really big winter – and pretty quickly had to learn how to cross-country ski while carrying a 20-foot aluminum extension ladder.” Today, blue diamonds that have not been lost to time still serve their intended purpose, though in somewhat limited fashion due to road construction, wider ski trails to accommodate grooming by snow cat, and natural disturbances.

The two other women on the blue diamond team moved on long ago, but Farley – a self-described “hiking fanatic” who can often be found on the trails with her Jack Russell terrier – is now Vegetation Manager for the Inyo National Forest and intends to remain in the Eastern Sierra through retirement. “The opportunities for world-class trail adventures are infinite here.”

She first came to Mammoth in 1975 with a ski team from Wrightwood, where she grew up. “I was just in awe of the big beautiful mountains and wide open landscape.” She did her first backpack on the Kern Plateau when she was 16, and by 1977, she had a summer job with the forest service. For the next decade, she worked in recreation, including as Wilderness Ranger at Purple Lake in the John Muir Wilderness. After that, she knew how to tailor her college education for her future career, and earned a degree in soil science from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo in 1993. She has worked on 10 national forests in three Western states, from the Angeles and Los Padres in California to the Helena and Lewis & Clark in Montana. She is an earth scientist with specialty expertise in soil, water and geology resources including work for watershed restoration, post-fire rehabilitation, abandoned mine reclamation, and road decommissioning. “This is my second assignment working on the Inyo,” she said of her current position, which focuses on managing vegetation to provide for a wildfire defense zone around local communities and facilities at developed recreation sites. “I jumped at the chance to work here again.”

Farley is as passionate as ever about Eastern Sierra public lands. “I have a job that puts me in a position of providing stewardship for

our federal lands, which are national treasures, and I take some pride in that – not because I’m great but because these places are great!” She said all FOI volunteers should take the same pride in serving as stewards of the forest, and remember that an action taken today that may seem routine can turn out to be something of great benefit in the long run.

She recalls working on a trail crew in 1981 to reconstruct a section of the Pacific Crest Trail at Upper Crater Meadows. “The trail through the meadow was a mess. It was 2-foot deep muddy rut, eroding and damaging the meadow, and we fixed it up.” Then, five years ago, the forest service moved the trail out of the meadow. “That trail project we did turned out to be meadow restoration. It’s something that I’m very proud of. I think at the time I never would realized the long term benefit of what we were doing.”

Late last November, violent winds from the north blew down tens of thousands of trees in the Reds Meadow area and Mammoth Lakes Basin. The root systems of these trees had evolved to withstand winds coming from any other direction. “I think this blowdown is absolutely fascinating,” Farley said. “I was in Purple Lake in 1986 when we had the big winter that resulted in large avalanches that knocked a number of trees into campsites and the lake. Over time it completely recovered.” Similarly, she said, the Reds Meadow area will recover over time. “It will come back. In the meantime, I enjoy being able to look at the power of nature and watch that evolution of recovery.”

This year’s short winter allowed the forest service access to the Reds Meadow Valley to get a good sense of affected areas well in advance of the busy summer season. “We are planning to do tree removal for fuels reduction on areas outside of wilderness and outside of the campgrounds in the Reds Meadow Valley,” Farley said. Visitors should always be aware of their surroundings, whether there’s been a big blowdown or not, especially in the wilderness, where there isn’t active management to mitigate hazards. “That’s part of the wilderness experience,” she said. With the blowdown, visitors should look in particular for trees that are partially tipped over, or with obvious damage around the roots, especially in campsites, and exercise caution. Visitors should check the Inyo National Forest website for weekly progress reports on work performed to date.



Sue Farley at Tuolumne Meadows.

Partner News - Caring About Wild Places

Ridgecrest BLM's Martha Dickes - Wins National "Making a Difference Award"

The "Making a Difference Award" is bestowed annually by the Bureau of Land Management in a special shout out for its most exceptional volunteers whose efforts include trail repair, visitor services, habitat restoration, and many other duties. This year, the national volunteer award landed right in the Eastern Sierra when Martha "Marty" Dickes, Wilderness Specialist for the Ridgecrest BLM and longtime Friends of the Inyo supporter, received the award in May.

"I work with a lot of hard working Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management employees – Marty is one of these," said FOI's Todd Vogel. "She really cares about wild places and she is very willing and interested in working with a wide range of volunteers to assist in managing the vast Wilderness areas she has under her care."

Dickes began her service with the BLM in 1994 and in the years since has passionately engaged volunteers in work such as tamarisk removal in Saline Valley, the Surprise Canyon Wilderness Area, and other locations. Under her watch, volunteers have rappelled down waterfalls in search of the invasive weed and successfully eradicated tamarisk from miles of wilderness streams.

Dickes knows how to build loyalty. After distributing seasonal volunteer project calendar brochures to inform volunteers of upcoming events, she motivates (one might say lures) her volunteers by offering unforgettable wilderness hikes near work sites and on occasion schedules barbecues and concerts

to reward her volunteers. As well, she has engaged a variety of volunteer groups, including the California Wilderness Coalition, Desert Survivors, and the Sierra Club.

On working with FOI over the years, she waxed enthusiastic. "Really big thanks to you guys for being such wonderful partners, particularly on the week work on the Inyo," she said. "We couldn't get to some of the places we've gotten into without Todd Vogel's expertise and help."

According to the BLM, last year Dickes' 106 volunteers contributed a total of 14,440 hours, which translates into more than \$300,000 worth of work in places from the Bright Star Wilderness, where they constructed a trailhead in a new addition there, to the Great Falls Basin Wilderness Study Area, where they monitored and repaired fencing around an illegal hill-climbing area, to monitoring and cleaning up after a wildfire in the Chris Wicht Camp in Surprise Canyon. Volunteer crews also assessed the condition of historic areas in the Inyo Mountains Wilderness, monitored and maintained kiosks, equestrian-pedestrian gates, barriers and fences, and documented wilderness characteristics in

the Sacatar and Owens Peak Wilderness Areas.

Importantly, Dickes has helped build strong working relationships between the BLM and local community members, and helped the general public understand and appreciate the BLM's mission.



Dickes, in orange below cliff, on a Tamarisk removal volunteer event FOI in Saline Valley. (Todd Vogel)



Dickes on a Conglomerate Mesa hike with FOI. (Todd Vogel)

Memorial Donation

In memory of her father and sister, longtime FOI supporter Jo Bacon made a special \$300.00 donation for the 2012 Mammoth Lakes Area Summer of Stewardship. Thank you, Jo!

MORE THANKS!

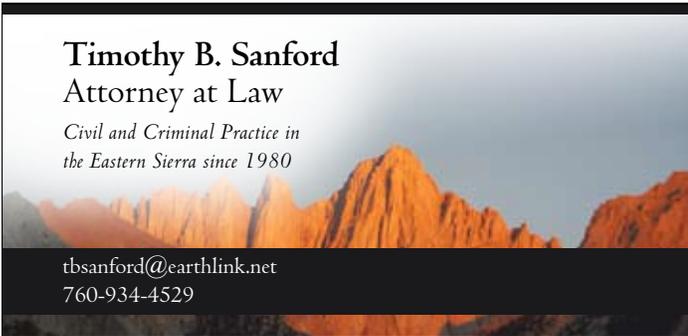
Old New York Deli, Tony and Sherryl Taylor, Java Joint, the Westin, and the Sunrise Rotary Club of Mammoth have generously committed to providing breakfast and lunches for the 2012 Summer of Stewardship volunteers. Southern California Edison made a generous donation of tools for use on our volunteer projects. Special thanks to SCE and Dan Brady.

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