

THE
JEFFREY PINE JOURNAL

Newsletter of Friends of the Inyo

WINTER 2010/2011

VOLUME VIII, ISSUE II



An Apache silverspot butterfly.

photo: Ceal Klingler

Honoring
Derham

Summer
Stewardship
Recap

Joshua
Journey

Preservation

Exploration

Stewardship

THE Jeffrey Pine Journal

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



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The Cover Photo



Derham gently holds an unidentified male butterfly to examine its wing markings. (A butterfly taxonomist and author who is a friend of Derham's later confirmed from photos that the butterfly was an Apache silverspot.)

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

Honoring Derham Giuliani

Add to your life a routine of periodically removing yourself from the surrounding and familiar civilization to an area where the rocks and living things are continuing their existences much the same as eons ago, where one becomes immersed in age-old patterns; in effect, comes home.

—Derham Giuliani

On September 7, Friends of the Inyo lost one of our best friends, Derham Giuliani. Derham was a mostly self-educated naturalist who lived in Big Pine for many years. Derham lived simply, took great pleasure from being outside, and was greatly aware of the richness and wonder that nature bestows upon us. He was an expert on Eastern Sierra natural history, including dune insects, amphibians, butterflies, and squirrels. A quiet, patient man, he spent endless days in their company.

At our September 2008 Rendezvous, Derham spent the day with several of us walking to Glass Creek Meadow. It was one of his favorite places, where he spent a great deal of time, rich in wonder for its plants and animals - especially butterflies he knew well and loved. It was a hot spot for them; he had found dozens of species there.

At the beginning, Derham said he was slower than he used to be. We did wait a bit, but it was great to be outside with him, and the walk was fine. On the way we collected pine cones, for he was studying the patterns of their formation and how they matched the Fibonacci sequence numbers.

After we returned to camp, Derham said it would be dark soon. He was tired and wanted to leave for home. Paul McFarland implored him to stay. Those who know Paul know that he is a persuasive young man. Derham agreed to stay for dinner. Potluck was served. He filled his plate with a prodigious portion, one that would have done honor to a mountaineer a third his age, and proceeded to slowly consume it with the wisdom only an opportunistic feeder of the bachelor persuasion could muster.

And lo and behold, a surprise to Derham, after dinner Friends of the Inyo honored him for his lifelong contributions to our knowledge of the flora and fauna of our lovely earth and for his support for FOI. My daughter Rosanne had created a stuffed animal representation of the Ring-tailed Cat, one of Derham's study subjects and favorite creatures. We presented it to him, and he spent the next hour by the fire holding it in his lap and smiling. Several of Derham's colleagues and friends told stories of their friendship with him and the importance of his research. In many areas, his work is the baseline of our knowledge of Eastern Sierra wildlife.

As I walked him to his truck a little later, Derham said, "You know James, I am not that fond of large groups of people, but tonight it was great to be with people who love animals and nature as much as I do."

And likewise it was wonderful to know Derham. The best way for me to remember him is to walk outside, notice the trees, listen to the chickadees, watch the chipmunks, revel in the light, and be aware.

Take Derham's advice: go outside, embrace the wild. Never give up the struggle to keep wild nature whole and alive, and healthy. We owe it to Derham and to the creatures.

In Memoriam

Remembering Derham Giuliani:

The Eastern Sierra's Naturalist

For this issue, we asked friends and biologists who worked with Derham to share memories and to help us assemble a field guide to the creatures he studied and loved. Learn more about Derham's love and legacy in the field guide on pages 4, 5 and 6.

By Dawne Becker, California Department of Fish and Game

My initial response when asked to write a commemorative to 'our' local naturalist Derham Giuliani, was "Yes!" My second thought was that I am not the right person; there were so many others who knew Derham way better than I. I'd never even been to his house, nor he to mine. But Derham influenced my life, and who better to recall a legend, than a person who saw him through only the brightest facet of his life? Derham's house, after all, was simply the abode where he parked his truck and stored his computer and vast collection of field notes. His home was—no, is—the Eastern Sierra. The White-Inyo Range. The canyons, dunes, springs, meadows, flora and fauna.

Derham was an observer and recorder of the natural world around us. He was fascinated by life and its patterns. He could go out for a day with plans to study dune beetles or wingless moths, then on his way home become so intrigued by the antics of a skittering chipmunk that he'd forego his trip home for days, surviving on water and that eternal energy that he had (since his food supply for the day trip would have to be extended to last for days).

Derham's work helped many local agencies, from the California Department of Fish and Game to the Inyo National Forest. He was always willing to share his knowledge with me, and never hesitated to offer assistance. Springs and dunes were fenced and land management was altered due to Derham's actions.

I've never driven through Westgard Pass without thinking of or seeing Derham. His tall, slim frame always clothed in an old thread-bare button-down shirt and polyester slacks (never jeans!), crouched down towards the ground, engrossed by ants marching

on the ground, mesmerized by beetles and butterflies on a flower or wasps laying eggs in a depression in the sand. He knew the different reaction times of wildlife that live along the Pass, from snakes and lizards to chipmunks and even chukar.

Derham watched vehicles accelerating up the grade, trying to maintain a good clip on the steep and winding highway, and he watched the critters. He knew which animals could escape and which would be squished when approached by those of us trying to drive the speed limit, pressing our pedal to the floor in the steeper grades to at least get close to 55 mph.

Whether we're late for a meeting, anxious to get out of the car to go for a hike, or just like the feel of the curves as we speed past them, many of us forget to look around and appreciate the habitat and life along the Pass. We forget in our haste that some animals may be sunning on the road. Some will be crossing the road to get to the other side of their bisected habitat.

Derham never forgot. He knew their reaction times, and he drove accordingly to prevent running over the slowest critters (and that was pretty slow!). Maybe you've been one of many who pulled around to pass his lumbering truck while driving through the Pass. I'm not always a patient person, but now, whenever I drive through Westgard, I make a concerted effort to drive slowly, in commemoration and appreciation.

Many would say that, at 89, he had a full life; I'm sure he did. But I wasn't through learning from him yet. A wonderful group of friends are working to ensure that his work is preserved. I look forward to reading some of his field notes in the future, so I can continue to learn through his legacy, although I'll always miss him.

Panamint alligator lizard near Westgard Pass.

photo: Dawne Becker



A Derham Giuliani

By Ceal Klingler

I first met Derham on a trip to Coyote Flat in 1998. Or rather, I met the back of his head. The front side was pointed towards a small beetle on a low-growing plant. I remember scrambling around to look at the beetle, but by the time I got there the beetle was gone and Derham had popped up to his feet again.

After that, I crossed paths with Derham in the Pine Creek area, up in the White Mountains, in the Big Pine Creek drainage, and on the alluvial fans below Basin and Mt. Humphreys, sometimes shortly after hearing from friends that they'd seen him that week in Death Valley National Park. While reading about the behavior of Great Basin spadefoot toads, I learned that "D. Giuliani" had found them all over Inyo and Mono counties, no small feat given that they only emerge from the ground 1) during the spring 2) at night in 3) sufficiently damp years, and even then sometimes only in 4) sufficiently rainy weather. "D. Giuliani" also turned out to be an authority regarding rain beetles, Inyo slender salamanders, certain species of moths, black toads, a wide assortment of lizards, and an astounding number of beetles, several of which were named in his honor. For a while, I thought Derham might be part of a giant family of D. Giulianis in Inyo County, all of them superhuman biologists.

It took me more than ten years to work up enough bravery to invite the singular Derham Giuliani along on an informal trip to see whether spring had sprung amphibians and insects yet. To my enduring surprise, he said yes. To my enduring gratitude, the first trip wasn't our last.

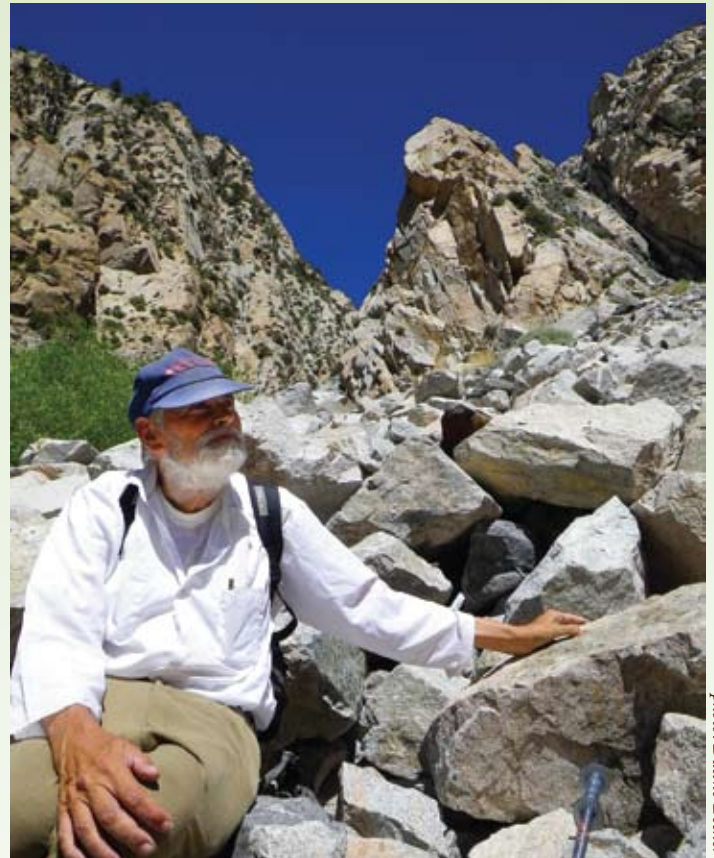


photo: Dwayne Becker

Derham at Slot Canyon, July 2010.

Chipmunks

PANAMINT CHIPMUNK

Tamias panamintinus

A PANAMINT CHIPMUNK TAKES REFUGE IN CURL-LEAF MOUNTAIN MAHOGANY (*CERCOCARPUS LEDIFOLIUS*).



iani Field Guide

Amphibians



MOUNTAIN YELLOW-LEGGED FROG

Rana sierrae

DERHAM SPENT SOME TIME DOING MOUNTAIN YELLOW-LEGGED FROG (*RANA SIERRAE* AND *RANA MUSCOSA*) SURVEYS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME IN THE 1990S AND BECAME QUITE ATTACHED TO SEVERAL POPULATIONS ON THE EASTSIDE. HE WAS DEVASTATED WHEN MOUNTAIN YELLOW-LEGGED FROGS BEGAN A SLIDE TOWARD EXTINCTION IN THE SIERRA NEVADA. THIS IS AN OLDER ADULT AND YOUNG ADULT SIERRA NEVADA MOUNTAIN YELLOW-LEGGED FROG (*RANA SIERRAE*) SHARING PRIME BASKING TERRITORY ON THE SHORE OF A FRESHLY MELTED ALPINE LAKE.



GREAT BASIN SPADEFOOT TOAD

Spea intermontana

DERHAM FOUND GREAT BASIN SPADEFOOT TOADS WHERE OTHERS HADN'T THOUGHT TO LOOK. THIS SPADEFOOT TOAD IS BACKING ITSELF INTO THE SAND.



SALAMANDERS

DERHAM DISCOVERED MANY PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN POPULATIONS OF BOTH OWENS VALLEY WEB-TOED SALAMANDERS (*HYDROMANTES PLATYCEPHALUS*) AND INYO SLENDER SALAMANDERS (*BATRACHOSEPS CAMPI*). HERE, A JUVENILE OWENS VALLEY WEB-TOED SALAMANDER SEARCHES FOR FOOD.

Butterflies



APACHE SILVERSPOT

Speyeria nokomis apacheana

ONE OF THE SPECIES DERHAM TOOK A SPECIAL INTEREST IN WAS THE APACHE SILVERSPOT OR APACHE FRITILLARY, A GLOBALLY IMPERILED BUTTERFLY SPECIES. HE WAS CAREFUL NOT TO REVEAL LOCATIONS OF CERTAIN BREEDING AREAS BECAUSE HE WORRIED THAT BUTTERFLY POACHERS MIGHT MAKE AN IRREVOCABLE DENT IN SMALL LOCALIZED POPULATIONS. THIS NEWLY EMERGED FEMALE APACHE SILVERSPOT BUTTERFLY NECTARS ON GOLDENROD (*SOLIDAGO* spp.).



THICKET HAIRSTREAK

Callophrys spinetorum

DERHAM MADE REGULAR TRIPS TO THE WHITE MOUNTAINS TO LOOK FOR BUTTERFLIES. HE REMARKED THAT HE DID NOT OFTEN SEE THE THICKET HAIRSTREAK BUT ENJOYED WATCHING THIS SMALL LYCAENID BUTTERFLY WHEN HE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY.

DERHAM GIULIANI FIELD GUIDE

Beetles

Beetles were among Derham's favorite creatures, and Derham himself was a favorite of beetle taxonomists for his discoveries of unknown species. Several beetle species bear his name, including Giuliani's dune scarab beetle (*Pseudocotalpa giulianii*); Giuliani's dubiraphian riffle Beetle, (*Dubiraphia giulianii*); and *Microedus giulianii*.



BLUE MILKWEED BEETLES

Chrysochus cobaltinus

BLUE MILKWEED BEETLES ARE A COMMON BUT NOT BORING OCCUPANT OF OWENS VALLEY ALKALI MEADOWS.



CHECKERED BEETLES

Trichodes ornatus

THESE BEETLES OFTEN, BUT DO NOT ALWAYS, MATCH THEIR CHOSEN HABITAT.



BLISTER BEETLE (FAMILY)

Pleuropasta mirabilis

A MEMBER OF THE BLISTER BEETLE FAMILY (MELOIDAE), CAN BE FOUND CLOSE TO SALTBUUSH AND SAGEBRUSH SPECIES ON THE OWENS VALLEY FLOOR.



LONG-HORNED BEETLES

Stenostrophia tribalteata,

A LONG-HORNED BEETLE LINGERS ON A MEMBER OF THE PARSLEY (APIACEAE) FAMILY.



SEXTON BURYING BEETLES

Nicrophorus marginatus

THESE BEETLES PROVIDE PARENTAL CARE FOR THEIR YOUNG BY CREATING A BURIAL CHAMBER AROUND A SMALL ANIMAL CARCASS, PREPARING THE CARCASS, STRIDULATING TO THE YOUNG BEETLE LARVAE WHEN THEY HATCH, AND REGURGITATING FOOD FOR THEM.



DESERT BLISTER BEETLE

Lytta vulnerata

A DESERT BLISTER BEETLE PREPARES FOR FLIGHT

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Ceal Klingler, a biologist and freelance writer, has lived in the Owens Valley thirteen years. She's spent an irresponsible portion of them running, hiking, scrambling, creeping, inching, sidling, and crawling after local wildlife. We're proud that she's a member of Friends of the Inyo, too!

Stewardship

Getting Out and Giving Back

Whew! It's a ton of work, but so very worth the effort. Through a winning combination of volunteer power and staff, FOI's 2010 stewardship program soared. SOS trail days, YCC, Lakes Basin stewards, the stew crew, wilderness campsite inventory, EVOLVE...it adds up to hundreds of people working to care for their public lands on the Inyo National Forest, maintaining and improving over 60 miles of trails and picking up nearly 1000 pounds of trash.

It all happens thanks to grants from the National Forest Foundation and Mammoth Mountain and partnerships with the Inyo National Forest and Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access Foundation. Read the next four pages for first-hand accounts of successful projects.

Thanks to our volunteers and partners!

Businesses

Blue Sky Music Festival and Bluesapalooza
 Convict Lake Resort
 Footloose Sports
 In-Touch Microspa
 Juniper Ridge
 Kittredge Sports
 Linda Wright/State Farm Insurance
 Mammoth Brewing Company
 Mammoth Mountaineering Supply
 Mammoth Pack Outfit
 McGee Creek Pack Station
 Michelle Mather Massage
 Patagonia (Thanks, Kim Jardine!)
 Wilderness Catering

Schools, Clubs and Organizations

June Lake Women's Club
 High Sierra Striders
 High Sierra Triathlon Club
 Mammoth Nordic Development Team
 Mammoth High School and Middle School Cross-Country Teams
 Mono Lake Committee
 Sierra Club Range of Light Group
 Pomona College
 Stanford University
 The Grauer School
 American Rivers



photo: Todd Vogel

EVOLVE wilderness stewardship at Thousand Island Lake.



photo: MLTPA

Lakes Basin Steward Carole Lester.



photo: MLTPA

Volunteers model Patagonia shirts.

Stewardship

Mammoth SOS

This summer was one of our best for volunteer partnerships. From our Mammoth Ambassadors volunteer trail host program to our Summer of Stewardship (SOS) days, Friends of the Inyo got people out and giving back—over 300 volunteers!

Gull Lake

National Trails Day at Gull Lake

By Drew Foster, FOI Conservation Associate

Nothing exemplified successful partnerships better than my involvement with the June Lake Trails Committee (JLTC) this past year or so. I have been lucky enough to work with this great group of local residents and business owners, as well as representatives from the U.S. Forest Service and Mono County. This locally-formed committee has been working on plans to implement a system of trails around the June Lake area for several years, and this summer we kicked off the first of the set on National Trails Day.

We had more than 80 volunteers come out to help build a trail, pick up garbage, and help create something great in their backyard. This record-setting turnout really shows that people care about their land and want to help out where they can. It also illustrates the power of volunteer work – 80 people can get a lot done! The trail wanders through a gorgeous aspen grove, meanders through sagebrush with great views of Carson Peak and the Sierra crest, and provides easy hiking access for people at Gull Lake campground, the Marina, and the Community Center.

Since that great kickoff day, for the rest of our SOS days, groups of high school kids from an American River Conservancy program called “Epic Sierra” came out, as well as some middle school kids from the Grauer School in Encinitas, to help finish up work on the trail. None of this would have been possible without the hard work of the JLTC, the help from the Inyo National Forest staff and Mono County, and of course, you! Thank you for supporting Friends of the Inyo – it’s your support and so many others that gets great work like this done.



Photo: Drew Foster

Volunteers at Gull Lake.



Stewardship

Volunteering for Wilderness

Friends of the Inyo volunteers tackled wilderness projects from the Golden Trout to the Ansel Adams this summer, including the new EVOLVE wilderness stewardship vacations to Thousand Island Lake and Steelhead Lake in McGee Creek Canyon.



Moving logs along the Steelhead Lake trail.
photo: Todd Vogel

Boundary Peak Wilderness; Horseshoe Meadows; Thousand Island Lake; McGee Creek Canyon

Wilderness Campsite Inventory

By Andrew Schurr, FOI Conservation Associate

This year, Friends of the Inyo continued its successful volunteer wilderness campsite inventory program in partnership with Wilderness Manager Jeff Novak of the Inyo National Forest.

For the second year in a row, the program kicked off with a training weekend at Horseshoe Meadows – gateway to the spectacular Golden Trout Wilderness. Ten volunteers and three National Forest staff members attended the training, where they learned the ins and outs of campsite inventory protocol and the reasoning behind the project.

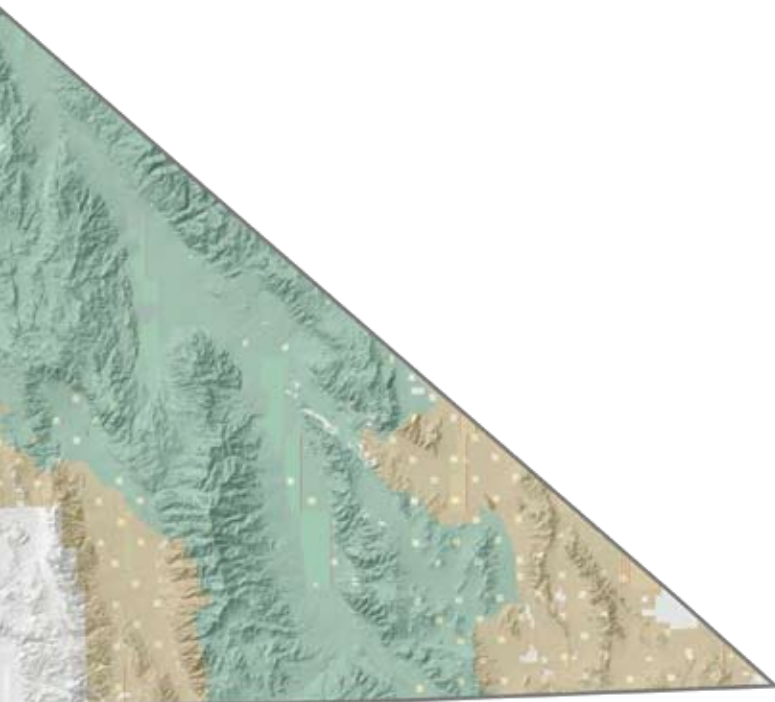
With the help of the volunteers, more than 90 wilderness campsites were mapped and classified throughout the summer. This information will enable wilderness managers and rangers to determine use levels and better manage use patterns in our fragile wilderness areas. While some of the inventoried campsites will be restored to their natural state, others will continue to be allowed for use.

I had the opportunity to join six volunteers to complete the inventory of Mulkey, Bullfrog and Overholster Meadows. We had a fantastic time during three days of inventory work, during which we explored additional spectacular, seldom-visited places.

Later in the season, we also had the chance to visit the oft-overlooked Boundary Peak Wilderness. Boundary Peak is a largely trail-less wilderness that is more a home for mule deer, marmots and birds of prey than it is for people. Visiting the area allows for self-exploration through forests of mountain mahogany, bristlecone and limber pines. The views are spectacular from the crest and Boundary Peak itself (the only place you will likely see other people). We inventoried for campsites and user impacts while there, and luckily found very few. All and all it is a spectacular place and well worth the trip.



Volunteers in training at Horseshoe Meadows.
photo: Andrew Schurr



0 10 20 Miles



- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| US Forest Service | State Lands |
| Bureau of Land Management | Other |
| National Park Service | Highways |

Stewardship

Youth Conservation Corps

This summer, Friends of the Inyo led the organization's first ever-Youth Conservation Corps (YCC), in partnership with the Inyo National Forest (INF). The paid crew consisted of six Eastern Sierra teens, plus an FOI staff supervisor (Melissa Buehler) and program lead (Todd Vogel), under the guidance of INF recreation officer Mary Furney. The YCC crew worked for six weeks on projects across the Inyo.

My YCC Experience

By Nick Schley, Bishop

I applied for a summer YCC program through the U.S. Forest Service and Friends of The Inyo in the spring of 2010. The flier that was distributed to us at school said little more than that if selected I would have the opportunity to spend my summer in the Inyo National Forest.

Growing up in Bishop, the mountains had always been something that excited me, but like many other kids from the area they had always remained just out of reach. Knowing this could potentially be my first chance to experience the beauties of the Sierra in depth was incentive enough for me to devote my summer to work.

The Youth Conservation Corps selects its applicants through a completely unbiased system (I believe we were drawn out of a hat). Our crew was made up of six kids: James, Mallory, Paulo, Anthony, Sarah, and me. I knew them all in passing but none were people I'd usually affiliate with. Throughout the summer we got to know each other more than I would ever have thought possible. I found characters in them that I loved and hated alike. There were times that I loathed being at work, but those were few and far between compared to the times that I was completely in love with my surroundings.

Together, we experienced many things for the first time; it was a learning experience for all – an experience that taught me just as much about myself as it did about others and the world around us. Throughout the summer we were all educated with proper backcountry skills and leave-no-trace ethics – things I knew little about but now strongly believe in and support.

From my understanding, the majority of the work we were given was work the Forest Service did not have the manpower or money to do, although they were entirely worthy jobs. We spent our days brushing trail and cleaning check steps in the John Muir Wilderness, building fences to manage cattle in Hot Creek, building fences to manage people in Reds Meadow, and even working to re-route the Bishop Pass trail away from the path of an active glacial moraine.

For the first time in my life I worked four days a week, for ten hours a day. Most teens would read that sentence and pity me. However, this summer was the greatest of my 16-year life. In the mountains and in the people I found things that I fell in love with, things I will never forget, and things I hope will always be there to experience again.



YCC crew member James Napoles at Hilton Lakes.

photo: Nick Schley

Stewardship

The Stewardship Crew

Friends of the Inyo's Stewardship Crew worked from June into November across the Inyo National Forest, from Mazourka Canyon to the Mono Basin, in wilderness, in front country, on the DeChambeau Ranch and at Convict Lake. Thanks to Mike, Jake, Bayard and Matt, and to INF staff for a tremendous season!

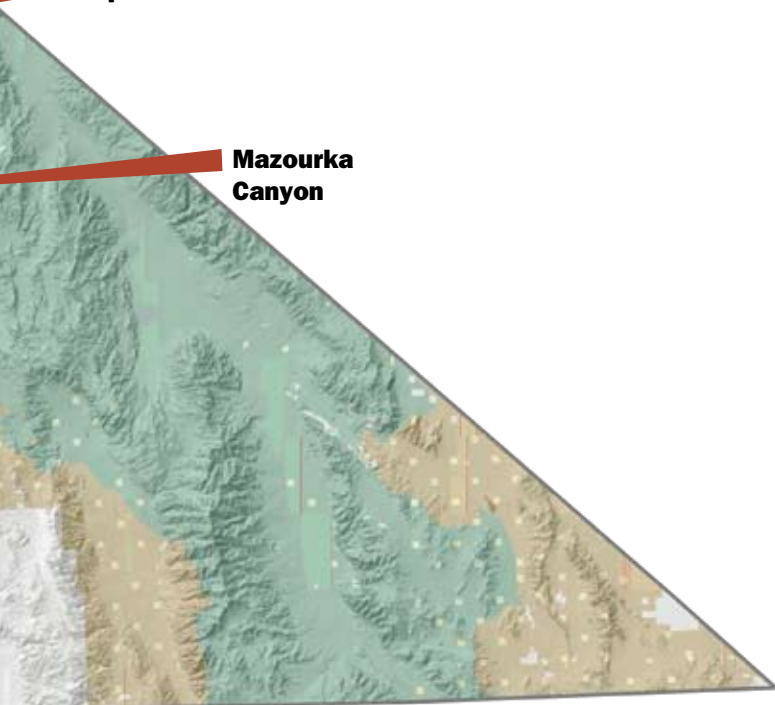
photo: MLTPA



The Stew Crew building a fishing access trail at Convict Lake.

Bishop Pass

Mazourka Canyon



0 10 20 Miles



Anatomy of Travel Management

By Jake Holland, FOI Stewardship Crew

It is difficult for people to grasp exactly what the Stewardship Crew does, due to the odd nature and vernacular of the many activities that encompass our job description. I would like to demystify and give insight to one such activity: the grand process of motorized travel management.

Friends of the Inyo recently began work to implement the Inyo National Forest's Travel Management rule. Though hundreds of miles of roads have been added to the forest's system, there are many routes that were not included. Those roads need to be restored to their natural condition, and we are really perfecting the methods. The process of rehabilitating roads—making them disappear—involves a hysterically tiresome, but effective course of action. It begins with getting rid of visible tracks; this of course depends on the soil type—a rake usually does the trick, but with pumice, a shuffling of the feet is effective. The next step involves “vertical mulching.” Holes are dug and dead sagebrush and bitterbrush, respectively, are put into the holes. Eventually, this will produce nutrients for the soil for possible new growth. This is repeated until the line of sight is no longer visible.

Digging in areas with lithic scatter is not preferred, due to the archaeological sensitivity of the site. To further deter use, rocks, logs, and other debris are placed into the road. If appropriate for the area, the last step involves “duffing,” where pine needles are raked into tarps, and are spread onto the road, giving the “vertical mulching” a more natural look (pine needles, for instance, could blend in with meadow grass.) Another effective technique includes planting young plants indigenous to the area; seed planting of native species also produces results. Hitching posts reinforce the fact the road is no longer to be used; however, they must be at a height that allows safe travel of snowmobiles, which are legal in the winter. The end result: Zen-like gardens and Tim Burton-esque sagebrush forests replace what was once a road.

From Coyote Flat to Warren Bench to the Rush Creek delta, the stewardship crew has been “redefining” roads accordingly. Though it is a tedious endeavor, it is one of the more gratifying aspects of being on the crew. Results are immediately seen, and it is evident that impact will diminish, nature will be able to reestablish, and the Inyo will remain preserved.

Preservation

Protecting National Conservation Lands in the Eastern Sierra

In December, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar ordered the Bureau of Land Management to make conservation the top management priority for the 27 million acre National Landscape Conservation System. Salazar's order clarifies that preserving these special western places is the highest concern. Here in the Eastern Sierra, there are Conservation Lands under threat (the Bodie Hills) and Conservation Lands under consideration (the Alabama Hills).

Bodie Hills Protection Efforts Continue

By Wano Urbonas, Former FOI Conservation Director

Back in September, conservationists and local leaders were surprised by an announcement that Congressman McKeon was introducing HR 6129, the so-called "Mono County Economic Development Act," which would release a Wilderness Study Area in the heart of the Bodie Hills, ostensibly to promote mining. Along with it was a warp-speed attempt at having the Mono County Supervisors vote to support the release of the Bodie Wilderness Study Area (WSA) on September 21. It wasn't difficult to make the connection—mining interests were driving politics, pedal to the metal, to release the Bodie WSA and facilitate future gold mine development.

FOI and other conservation partners went into a 72-hour frenzy, generating hundreds of individualized letters to Mono County Supervisors, Congressional Representatives and Senators, letting them know that this ill-fated bill was an abomination, severely lacking a public process, and catering to the power of gold. (Ironically, the extractive industry can conduct exploratory drilling on BLM lands with proper permits, making the WSA release not necessary, but creating fewer hoops to jump through.)

Perhaps the gold hunters have already located what they were seeking, or perhaps it's all a big shell game to drive up stock prices under the guise of gold. We, the public, have no legal right to know—but we can raise critical questions. What are the mining impacts to the natural and cultural environment? How is the greater sage grouse being protected? Are archaeological sites at risk? What impacts will gold development have on noise, dust, air quality, antelope populations, Lahontan cutthroat trout and watershed health? How will new roads affect fish and wildlife? Who will ultimately benefit, and at what cost to our communities and habitat?

We stood our ground and the Mono County Supervisors voted to take no action on the resolution supporting HR 6129. Our conservation efforts won the battle, not the war. Yes, the gold hunters will be back, as eager and hungry for wealth as ever, even as we continue to search for conservation-based strategies towards sustainable economic development.

If you'd like to know more about the Bodie Hills conservation efforts and threats to this special place, please visit www.bodiehills.org. Look for Bodie Hills field trips this winter, spring and summer.

Alabama Hills National Scenic Area

By Mike Prather, FOI Board Member

The Alabama Hills have been the home of Native Americans for 10,000 years, the subject of photographs by Ansel Adams and Edward Weston as well as a backdrop for ninety years of motion picture history. Weathered granite boulders – rhombohedrals with corners rounded smooth – they emerge from the bajada on the western edge of Lone Pine presenting a dramatic foreground for the High Sierra in the distance.

Over the last two years the Alabama Hills Stewardship Group (AHSF), of which Friends of the Inyo is an active participant, has been evaluating the need for a formal designation of the Alabama Hills as a part of the Bureau of Land Management's National Landscape Conservation System. With growing visitation and a slow decline in the health of the landscape, the AHSF decided it would pursue legislation to create an Alabama Hills National Scenic Area. This designation would bring increased attention and hopefully funding to not only effectively manage these unique formations, but also to allow for the appropriate use by visitors with interests ranging from rock climbing and hiking to motorized sightseeing and film making.

Draft legislation has been written and a map of a 19,000-acre core area of the Alabama Hills has been drawn. Many meetings with stakeholders have taken place. Field tours for Inyo Supervisors and others have been led and multiple public meetings seeking comments have been held. Now, in order to meet Senator Feinstein's requirement of having local support before the promise of introducing legislation, the last hurdle will be the presentation of the package for the approval of the Inyo County Board of Supervisors in November.

With widespread support from the many stakeholders, the Inyo Board of Supervisors voted to support the effort to create an Alabama Hills National Scenic Area. Following the endorsement by Inyo County the legislation will be presented to Senator Feinstein for her sponsorship.

Exploration

Joshua Flat, Piper Mountains Wilderness

By Todd Vogel



photo: Todd Vogel

Lay of the land at Joshua Flat.

Some 25 miles east of the town of Big Pine, hiding in plain view off the paved road to Eureka Valley, there is a wonderful basin with a fine selection of day hikes that can be undertaken nearly any month of the year. Many people speed right by Joshua Flat, in the Piper Mountain Wilderness, perhaps on their way to the sand dunes of Eureka Valley, or to Scotty's Castle in Death Valley Park. A few people may slow to watch for Scott's orioles, who are known to nest in the area; few stop to take the time for a stroll.

The higher areas of Joshua Flat surround the trailhead like palisades, guarding but hinting at fantastic views out towards Eureka Dunes, the Inyo Mountains and the Last Chance Range. The flat itself holds a fine example of a Joshua tree woodland. I suppose anyone who has spent time in the forests of the Sierra may object to calling the dense grove of Joshua trees at Joshua Flat a "forest" but hey, it's all relative. For our part of the world, this is about as dense a stand of Joshua trees as you're going to get, at least within a hundred miles! And though there are isolated Joshua trees scattered about here and there to the north, this is one of the northernmost Joshua tree forests in the West.

In many ways Joshua Flat, like Lee, Santa Rosa, and Centennial Flats to the south, serves to remind us how our designations don't always fit neatly into the boxes we provide them. All these flats have the signature plant of the Mojave Desert, the Joshua tree, but also have plants and animals more familiar to in the Great Basin desert. It's a classic blend, a dramatic landscape of deserts, valleys and mountains, where fingers of one desert merge with the tendrils of another; there is no sudden demarcation, our boundaries between

deserts are only suggestions.

Suggested hike: From the parking spot described below, an old track proceeds in a northwesterly direction. There are several short, dead-end spurs and these are obvious. The main path climbs steadily, with corresponding views, eventually dead-ending at an overlook down to Deep Springs Valley and the White Mountains to the north. The more adventurous may be interested in continuing on to the rugged Mt. Nunn, to the northeast.

Season: The base elevation in Joshua Flat is 6,000'. It snows in the winter and can be quite warm in the summer. Peak flower season is generally late May well into the summer, depending on the elevation. Good hikes can be had year round, other than during and immediately after big snowstorms and the hottest heat waves.

Getting there: Follow the paved Big Pine Eureka Road for just under 25 miles from the town of Big Pine. Don't miss the right turn four miles out of Big Pine, signed to Scotty's Castle in Death Valley. After going through the pass (7,700') the road winds down to Little Cowhorn Valley and then begins a long, steady descent to Joshua Flat. At this point you are just outside of the northwestern corner of Death Valley National Park, the largest National Park in the lower 48. Make note of the mileage at the east end of Little Cowhorn Valley; the parking spot is 5.3 miles from this point. As the Joshua tree forest thickens, start watching out the left side for a small turn out with a wooden parking barrier and a sign. You may also notice the remnants of some old mining tracks out the same window. Park and enjoy!

Explore Joshua Flat with Todd on January 30. See page 14 for details.

Upcoming Events

EXPLORATION

Join guide extraordinaire Todd Vogel for winter and spring adventures on snow and in the dirt. Email todd@friendsoftheinyo.org for more information, and check www.friendsoftheinyo.org updates and additional outings.

January 22, 2011 – Glass Creek ski or snow shoe

This is a yearly Friends of the Inyo favorite. Conditions and energy permitting, we'll try to get to Glass Creek Meadow, an Eastern Sierra gem in any season. Meet 9 a.m. at the plowed Obsidian Dome (Glass Flow Road) parking lot, just north of Deadman Summit on Highway 395.

January 23, 2011 – Grass Creek snow shoe or ski

This is a great opportunity to check out the winter goings-on of the north fork of Bishop Creek above North Lake. Meet at Friends of the Inyo office, 699 West Line Street in Bishop at 8 a.m. Lack of snow cancels.

January 30, 2011 – Joshua Flat hike or snow shoe

Check out the Joshua Tree forest, just thirty minutes from Big Pine. Meet 9 a.m. at the Glacier View Campground at the intersection of Highways 395 and 168 just north of Big Pine. The hike is an out and back of about 4 to 6 hours.

February 20, 2011 – Chocolate Peak hike or snow shoe

Another desert classic. Meet 8:30 a.m. at the Glacier View Campground at the intersection of Highways 395 and 168, just north of Big Pine. The hike is an out and back, we are planning on a walk of 5 to 7 hours in length.



photo: Todd Vogel

Hikers enjoy Chocolate Peak.

April 24, 2011 – Grouse Mountain hike

While it's worth hiking Grouse Mountain in any month, at this time of year there should be lots of migratory birds and other signs of spring. Meet 8:30 a.m. at the corner of the Buttermilk Road and Highway 168 (Line Street) in Bishop.

STEWARDSHIP

We're sure to lead a late winter stewardship trip in Death Valley or surrounding wilderness areas, so be sure to sign up for our email list to get the details!

Then mark your summer 2011 calendar for these EVOLVE (Eastside Volunteer Outdoor Learning Vacation Experience) wilderness stewardship adventures! Dates are subject to change.

July 1-4: Fish Creek Trail/John Muir Wilderness

August 18-21: King Creek Trail/John Muir Wilderness

August 24-28: Thousand Island Lake/Ansel Adams Wilderness

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Waiting out winter.

photo: Todd Vogel

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