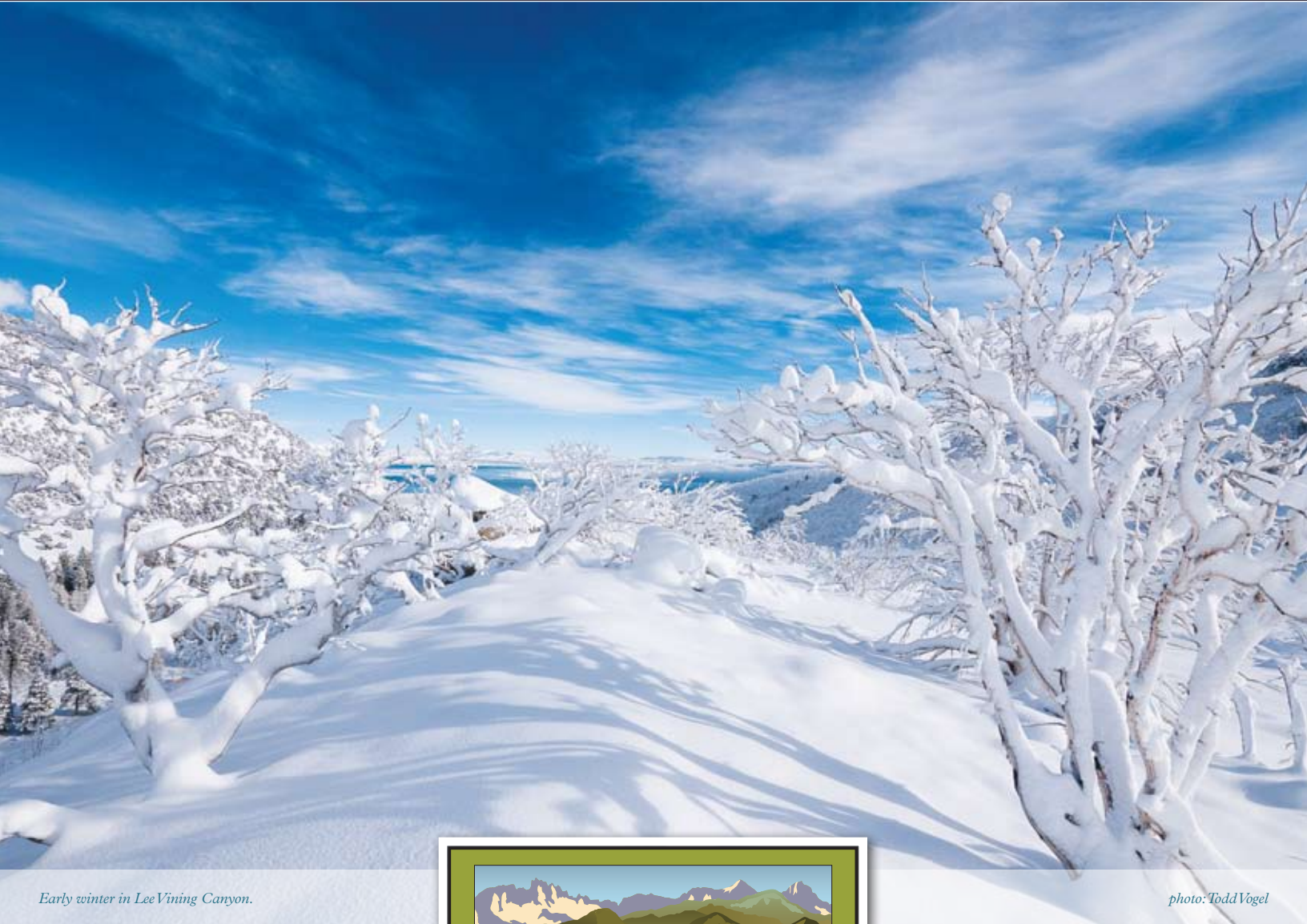


# THE JEFFREY PINE JOURNAL

*Newsletter of Friends of the Inyo*

WINTER 2011/2012

VOLUME IX, ISSUE II



*Early winter in LeeVining Canyon.*

*photo: Todd Vogel*



Travel  
Management

Leapin'  
Lizards

Member  
Profiles

# THE Jeffrey Pine Journal

VOLUME IX, ISSUE II

WINTER 2011/2012

## Newsletter of Friends of the Inyo



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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



Todd took this photo on a frosty morning in Lee Vining Canyon while volunteering at the Mono Lake Christmas bird count last December.

*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

## Travel Management: A Long and Windy Road

Travel on public lands is something that belongs to all of us – by foot, bicycle, motorcycle, quad, jeep, truck, car – all belong. All have their place, and all must be regulated to varying degrees. Lately here on the Eastside, there's been much concern regarding "travel management," the national policy on Forest Service lands that oversees motorized use by formally designating a legal system of roads and providing maps showing where motorized driving belongs.

Friends of the Inyo has invested a significant amount of time and energy on travel management planning and, now, implementation on the Inyo National Forest (INF). We believe this process is essential because without a legal system, roads on public lands are difficult, if not impossible, to manage in a sustainable, cost effective, and biologically sound manner. Now the INF, for the first time ever, has an accepted designated system of roads. It should be fun to navigate, on stable ground, out of riparian areas and meadows, and useful – with access to hiking, fishing, hunting, wood-gathering, and trailheads.

For the past two summers, FOI's stewardship crews, through a grant from the California State Parks Off-Highway Vehicle Motorized Recreation Division, have been helping implement the decisions of travel management by restoring non-designated roads with help from other groups and with constant supervision from INF staff. Although sometimes controversial, this work is necessary and will result in a sustainable, environmentally sound, socially useful, and economically justifiable road network.

Since I moved to Eastern California 35 years ago, I've seen how roading has marred the landscape, from the Volcanic Tablelands and the Buttermilk Country, to the foothills of the White and Inyo Mountains, the Mono Basin and beyond. At first gradual, the impacts seem to have metastasized in the last decade, as more places have been marked by off-road vehicles.

Eastern California is a crazy quilt of land ownership and uses. The National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, California Department of Fish and Game, Southern California Edison, private land and county land – all are part of the quilt. We humans have towns, roads, campgrounds, industrial uses, mines, and more.

Wildlife does not recognize our land designations or boundaries. Animals need a whole landscape in order to thrive. The urban interface (lands between wilderness and development) is especially important to wildlife for migration, feeding and cover. Roads diminish wildlife habitat. Conservation biology has shown that the larger the pieces of unroaded land, the greater the value for wild creatures. One aspect of travel management is to maintain that value. Another value is to keep repetitive, willy-nilly roads out of particularly vulnerable streamside and riparian areas.

So how did travel management come into being? In 1972, President Nixon directed the Forest Service to designate a legal road system for all National Forests. The Executive Order authorized the Forest Service to designate roads suitable for motorized travel and close all other areas and trails to motorized use. The actual directives to accomplish



this were not created until about 2000, when all National Forests were instructed to designate a legal road system. Locally, the INF instituted a team to study and make recommendations to the Forest Supervisor regarding roads currently in the system, illegal trespasses, and make recommendations for all roads. I believe they did a thorough and commendable job.

During this time, I joined a diverse group of environmentalists, local politicians, motorcyclists, jeepers, and off-road vehicle

to the National Forest Transportation System. With the miles already on the system, this added up to 2360 miles of designated roads and trails on the INF. With this designated system of roads, anyone breaking the law can be cited for their trespass; before they could only be cited for resource damage, a much more difficult thing to prove.

A designated system of roads on INF is in everyone's best interest in both the short and long term. As you travel on Forest



*Students from the American Rivers Conservancy's "Epic Sierra" program help to disappear a closed route. (Andrew Schurr)*

enthusiasts to form the Collaborative Alternative Team to participate in the recommendation process. We knew we would not agree on everything, and we didn't. But after many meetings and much compromise, we had recommendations for the Forest Supervisor. Was our agreement perfect? Certainly not. But it was a good start. With this citizen input, the INF from the Supervisor's Office on down worked diligently to create a system of legal roads.

When the inventory was done there were over 1700 miles of undetermined roads. The Forest Supervisor's decision added over 1000 miles of the 1700 miles of undetermined routes

Service lands keep your eyes open. If you see road use or closures that are cause for concern, take pictures, and document with maps or GPS where you are. Talk with Forest Service staff, ask questions, get involved. These are your lands. And above all, enjoy!

See page 11 for a look at some of the travel management work accomplished this summer. Friends of the Inyo hopes to increase public involvement in and awareness of Inyo National Forest travel management implementation this winter and spring. Look for meeting announcements and volunteer opportunities at [friendsoftheinyo.org](http://friendsoftheinyo.org).

# Preservation

## Bodie Hills Hold Strong

By Drew Foster, FOI Conservation Associate

What has been happening in the Bodie Hills lately? As I write this update in late October, the aspen groves are changing colors, with bright yellows and oranges against the greens and browns of the sagebrush steppe. Pronghorn, sage grouse and mule deer are running around, foraging, and fattening up for the winter. The rabbitbrush in full bloom ushers in the fall, and the winter winds are beginning to blow. The cattle and sheep have grazed, and have come off the land

introduced H.R. 1581 in April, a bill that would release all WSAs on BLM land, and all Inventoried Roadless Areas on Forest Service lands. Combined, this represents nearly 60 million acres of land that would be removed from federal protections. It is an unprecedented piece of legislation that would undermine decades of land protection in one fell swoop.

In August, McCarthy's bill came before the Mono County Board of Supervisors, along with a resolution to specifically release

part of the BLM's National Landscape Conservation System, which encompasses 27 million acres of National Monuments, Wild and Scenic Rivers, National Historic Trails and more.

These Conservation Lands are unique and diverse, and the BLM recognized the need for a comprehensive vision for these special places. The agency recently published a 15-year strategy, defining a mission: "to conserve, protect, and restore nationally significant landscapes



*After working with FOI pulling weeds in the Mono Basin Scenic Area, students from Rustic Pathways enjoy the sweeping view atop Bodie Mountain. (Andrew Schurr)*

to give it a rest. Tourists and visitors have flocked in and out of Bodie State Historic Park and the surrounding area. The snow will come soon enough, and skiers will be out enjoying the rolling hills and solitude that epitomizes the wild backcountry of the Eastern Sierra.

Fortunately, large-scale gold mining is not part of the above picture. Mining interests have not moved forward and the Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) in the Bodie Hills remain protected. The quietude of the Bodie Hills goes on as usual, for now. But Congressman Kevin McCarthy (R-CA)

the Bodie WSA, which would have opened it up to gold mining and other large-scale industrial uses. Your support helped generate nearly 2,500 letters and emails opposing this legislation and Bodie WSA release. The Supervisors wisely acknowledged that they have no business supporting the overly broad legislation, which would strip away local control and debate about the future of the Bodie Hills and other special places.

The WSAs in the Bodie Hills, and other specially designated lands, were established because they contain significant wilderness characteristics. These areas have become

and places that have outstanding cultural, ecological, and scientific values for the benefit of current and future generations."

The BLM has the opportunity to become a leader in conservation, and steward their land responsibly with help from its partners. You, too, have the opportunity to make a difference; H.R. 1581 cannot be allowed to roll back protections on these exceptional conservation lands. Call or write your Congressperson today opposing this bill, and continue to voice your support for protecting our national treasures like the Bodie Hills.



# Preservation

## Golden Trout Wilderness Grazing

By Ian Bell, FOI Watershed Technician and Americorps Member

Four cattle grazing areas within the Golden Trout Wilderness on the Kern Plateau outside of Lone Pine are currently in the beginning stages of an extensive environmental review process. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is being crafted by the Inyo National Forest (INF) for the allotments to determine the impact future cattle grazing might have on the Golden Trout Wilderness and its namesake native fish.

The Kern Plateau has been grazed at varying levels since the mid-1800s, and grazing continues on two of the four allotments in question. The other two allotments have been rested (closed to grazing) since 2001, but will be under review to determine if they should be reopened to grazing in the future. A final decision on cattle grazing on the Kern Plateau is not expected until sometime in the fall of 2013, with implementation not happening until the early summer of 2014.

The Golden Trout Wilderness of the Kern Plateau is named after the California golden trout, a stunningly colorful trout species that was designated the California state fish in 1947 and now faces threats of habitat degradation and hybridization with other fish species. Last month, after nearly a ten-year review, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ruled that the golden trout will not to be placed on the endangered species list, citing the conservation efforts that are already in place.

In addition to starting the environmental review, the INF has begun the Kern Plateau public collaborative process, an effort to bring together Kern Plateau stakeholders and interested parties to periodically discuss and resolve issues regarding resource management on the Kern Plateau.

A recent press release from the INF described the process as a "public collaboration effort in developing a grazing management strategy for the Kern Plateau. This effort will seek to reconcile divergent interests and resource needs by looking at a landscape-scale approach to resource use, conservation and restoration." So far, many local and national environmental groups have shied away from the process, fearing that participation will likely increase pressure on the INF to authorize the reintroduction of cattle to the allotments on the plateau that are not currently grazed.

Friends of the Inyo will keep members informed about the process, supporting a solution that preserves the wild species and lands of the Kern Plateau.



*Americorps member Ian Bell helps restore native Owens Valley pupfish habitat with volunteers and California Department of Fish and Game staff. (Todd Vogel)*

## The Economy of Preservation

By Anthony Hitchcock Thomas, FOI Wilderness Intern

Sitting in my microeconomic theory lecture at UC Berkeley, my mind sometimes wanders from the equations, graphs, and symbols on the board to the jagged line of the Sierra Nevada over the Ansel Adams Wilderness. Likewise, while working for Friends of the Inyo in those mountains this past summer, my mind wandered from



*Anthony H. Thomas*

maintaining water bars to mathematics and economic theory. There's a rewarding connection between my theoretical (and admittedly esoteric) education and my summer working on the Inyo.

From the perspective of my academic discipline of resource economics, the Inyo was an excellent learning experience. Organizations like Friends of the Inyo have the difficult task of balancing the conflicting obligations of preserving wilderness for its intrinsic value and cultivating the legitimate exploitation of the area's natural resources. The problem is that everyone has a different definition of "wilderness" and "legitimate exploitation." To some, wilderness is total exclusion from the world of man, while to others it is an ATV track. Prior to working on the Inyo, I had no idea how contentious a minor alteration to a seldom-used trail could be. As in many other areas, wilderness becomes a symbol for ideology, and as such, becomes more contentious than it perhaps needs to be.

The Inyo sits in a unique area where the stark beauty of the Great Basin meets the forested, vibrant landscape of the Western Sierra. This contrast between the vast landscape laid bare in the east and the omnipresence of life in the west, led me to think about the microcosm and its relation to the macrocosm. The full extent of the mountain landscape can only be understood when it is viewed both as a complete whole and as a compilation of many smaller components, just as the macro economy can only be fully understood by seeing it both as a complete whole and as an intricate compilation of micro economies.

One of the dangers of academic study is the tendency to become locked into a certain way of thought. It is all too easy to become so caught up in the study of a subject that we forget why we are really studying it. Experiences which are not inherently academic but nonetheless intellectually stimulating are particularly valuable in that they provide a metaphorical open space into which academic knowledge can flow unencumbered by midterms, grades and textbooks. The Inyo has become the physical manifestation of this intellectual open space for me.

Anyone who has watched the sun rise over Thousand Island Lake or seen a storm blown across Long Valley from Montgomery Peak knows the emotional power this region can have over its visitors. I suppose the strongest message I took away from my summer with Friends of the Inyo was that this forest is not just a pretty patch of land. It is a place of inspiration and discovery. The campaign to preserve this amazing place is something I am proud to have been a part of and something I hope to continue.

# Exploration

## Conglomerate Mesa

By Wano Urbonas

Welcome to what should be wilderness.

It was Tuesday, April 20, the day before John Muir's birthday. Despite a semi-retired pickup truck that protested against shifting into 5th gear, I arrived at the designated meeting spot on Saline Valley Road five minutes early. Tom Budlong was there waiting for me, as we shook hands and joked about Verizon disservice. I debated whether or not to lock my vehicle, as I hopped into Tom's reliable Landcruiser. We had a half-hour of washboard road to handle, as Tom pointed out on a map the Inyo Mountains Wilderness, the Malpais Mesa Wilderness demarcation and, in between, the route that we would be taking towards Conglomerate Mesa.

Unlike the wilderness areas and national park east and west, Conglomerate remains unprotected by federal designations from threats such as industrial gold mining. And since this sliver of desert is relatively unknown, Tom is making it his mission to show folks that this forsaken place is worth saving.

We head first into the outermost section of Death Valley National Park, greet an extended family of Joshua trees, then veer north towards one of many unmarked boundaries between the official wilderness of Malpais and Conglomerate. One alien cigarette butt on the sand delineated our trailhead—a gritty reality check of the human attention this place has received. For the next five hours, eat dust, drink wind. There's a reason that they coined the region 'Malpais'—French and Spanish for 'Badlands.'

With Tom as our human GPS, we set off on a brisk-paced hike up a rocky drainage. The wind swirled and attacked in gusts—yet the rain clouds kept their distance. Occasional Indian paintbrush dotted the desert canvas. I scouted unsuccessfully for any unidentified flying objects. Winged creatures must have hunkered into tree chambers or rock nooks, latching themselves like Velcro, or risk being Wind-Exed to Mexico. Only the rock, sagebrush and pinyon ignored the wind, knowing the whistled tune by heart.

Underfoot, a thin green line turned out to be sub-alpine onion, fresh and pungent. Then, a quick glimpse of a frantic lizard, reacting to our shuffling feet as if we caused a major tremor. A purple flower that I will know the name of the next time I see it. Sometimes we were on a discernable path, but most times we just wandered. Further down the ravine we spotted some lichen pasted to a rock outcrop—a purported synergism of algae and fungus at work. We were not alone.

With deliberate nonchalance, my senior scout led me towards a

trace of past civilization—remnants of charcoal mounds blanketed by sand, and what I call 'Kingsford Kitchens'—hand-built rock ovens that pyrotechnically transformed pinyon logs into charcoal briquettes. Back in the 1860s, they 'manufactured' charcoal to feed the smelters at the Cerro Gordo silver mines, several miles to the north.

We break for lunch under a nearby tree well. I inhale my PBJ

sandy-wich, while Tom knifes open a can of tuna, sipping the liquid like a fine brandy. Downing bananas for dessert, it's time to start moving again. Tom's 70+ year young frame jumps up and lurches forward like an underweight 40 year-old. We stumble upon the tiny tracks of a solitary deer from a rare muddy moment in desert time. Then we spot a lone coyote's crusty scat. More signs of singles life in this harsh, remote wildness. It's the perfect place to practice abstinence—from almost everything.

We keep moving, the wind now surging us forward from behind, whether we like it or not. I kneel over a rusted, empty steel can with a soldered bottom from over 50 years ago. I'm dreaming cowboy beans. Getting back up, I am completely lost. Tom motions the way and I follow him. You can sense the nothingness, and taste the wilderness.

We leave this no-man's land, but I know that I must come back and see it again for the first time. Go experience Conglomerate Mesa. Enjoy the desert solitude, welcome the wind and leave no trace—not even tuna swampwater. After all, badlands are in the eye of the beholder.

*Wano Urbonas is a former FOI staffer now living in Montana.*



*Join Friends of the Inyo on an exploration of Conglomerate Mesa in April—see page 7 for details.*



# Exploration

## Fall & Winter Outings

Visit [www.friendsoftheinyo.org](http://www.friendsoftheinyo.org) for event details!

### December 2,3 & 8 : Wild and Scenic Film Festival

The popular film festival returns to the Eastern Sierra for a fifth year! Enjoy films to inspire activism and awareness - a donation or membership renewal to FOI gets you a free ticket. All shows are \$10 per person, per night, and start at 7 p.m.

Friday, 12/2 in Mammoth/Edison Theatre; Saturday, 12/3 in Bishop/Cerro Coso College; Thursday, 12/8 in Lone Pine/Film Museum.

### January 14: White Wing Ski or Snowshoe

A yearly favorite, this moderate to difficult outing is for experienced skiers and hardy snowshoers as we intend to make a bold attempt on nearby White Wing Mountain. Skiers need to be equipped with climbing skins as well as metal edged backcountry skis. Be prepared for a big day. We should be out about seven hours, having travelled six or eight miles. Meet at Friends of the Inyo, 819 North Barlow, Bishop, at 7:30 a.m. or the Obsidian Dome pull out off 395 (opposite the Bald Mountain Road turn out) at 8:30 a.m. Bring food and water for the day and clothing appropriate for any winter weather condition.

### January 15: Obsidian Dome Snowshoe or Ski

Skiing and Snowshoeing is a great way to get out and explore the winter wonderland of the Jeffrey Pine Forest and the Obsidian Dome area. With gently rolling hills, this easy trip is suitable for beginners - though we do ask that you have familiarity with your chosen equipment, be it snow shoes or touring skis. Depending on the snow conditions and the interests of the group we may tour up towards Glass Creek, making for a more strenuous day, or we may stick to the set tracks, finishing up the day by mid afternoon.

Meet at Friends of the Inyo in Bishop at 8 a.m. or the Obsidian Dome pull out off 395 (opposite the Bald Mountain Road turn out) at 9 a.m. Bring food and water for the day and clothing appropriate for any winter weather condition.

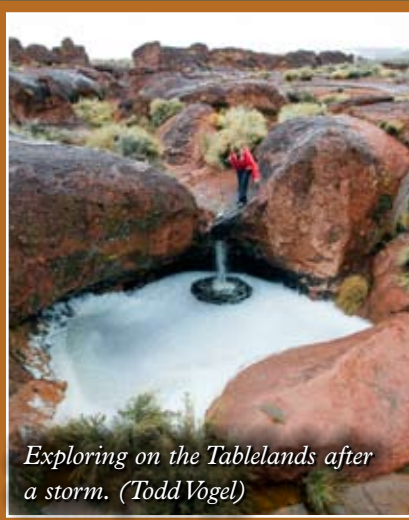
### February 12: Chocolate Peak

Back for a fifth year it's our annual Chocolate Peak Expedition and Chocolate Tasting Seminar (BYO chocolate). Chocolate Peak rises at the north end of Eureka Valley, near the northern border of Death Valley National Park, and has an impressive view. We rarely need snowshoes on this hike but it is a possibility at this time of year. The walk is on an old mining trail and is about a seven mile round trip with 1,500' of gain and loss. It usually takes us around six hours for the round trip. Bring clothing for warm or cold, wet or dry, boots and possibly snow shoes, and of course chocolate to share. Dogs okay.

Meet Friends of the Inyo at 8 a.m. or Glacier View Campground in Big Pine at 8:30 a.m.

### March 10: Tablelands Exploration

Tablelands are a wonderland to explore any time of the year. With fantastic volcanic land forms, hidden labyrinthine canyons, winter wildlife, and early spring flowers there's a bit of something for everyone. If we luck out and it's stormy there may even be some of the amazing ephemeral streams and waterfalls. Dogs okay. Please bring clothing for any weather condition, food and water for the day. It's a moderate 3 mile round trip, plan on 4-5 hours of walking. Other than road-closing snow, the trip is all weather.



*Exploring on the Tablelands after a storm. (Todd Vogel)*

### April 14: Grouse Mountain Hike

Another of our seasonal favorites, Grouse Mountain sits west of Bishop and is well overshadowed by nearby Sierra Crest peaks such as Mt. Humphreys, Mt. Tom, and Basin Mountain. But as the runt of the litter Grouse Mountain is uniquely positioned to have a great view as well as just the right elevation for an amazing spring hike. Add fantastical rock formations, newly arrived migrant birds, and interesting flora and you get all the ingredients of a fine spring hike, worthy of repeating year after year. Dogs okay, but expect mud! Meet Friends of the Inyo at 8 a.m. or the Line Street (Hwy 168) and Buttermilk turn off at 8:30 a.m. We'll be back down by 3 p.m.

### April 15: Conglomerate Mesa Hike

Conglomerate Mesa rises at the south end of the Inyo Mountains, near the famed mining ghost town of Cerro Gordo and just outside of the west boundary of Death Valley National Park. The terrain is characterized by mixed piñon and juniper forest, sage brush, and the occasional Joshua tree thrown in for good measure. We'll be a bit early for the best wildflowers but there will be a few. Just to the south of Conglomerate Mesa Malpais Mesa Wilderness is one of the Wilderness areas created by the Desert Protection Act of 1994, but protective designation has eluded Conglomerate for some reason. Meanwhile, with gold prices spiking the presence of gold (in very low concentrations) in the Conglomerate area has speculators starting to cast an eye towards the area. Meet in Lone Pine at the Inter Agency Visitor Center 1 mile south of town at 8 a.m. Expect to return to vehicles by 4 p.m.



## Looking For Lizards

### *A Field Guide to the Bishop Area*

Written and Illustrated by Autumn Bahlman

The Owens Valley, with its warm springs and hot summers, is an ideal home for many lizard species and a great place to explore their fascinating world. On any number of local hikes, you may see little lizard eyes peering at you from a rocky perch or darting across your path. Consider staring back and getting to know their perspective.

The lizards featured here are just a few of the many species that can be found in the Eastern Sierra.



### Sierra Night Lizard

(*Xantusia sierrae*)

Despite its name, this small olive or grayish brown lizard is active by both day and on hot summer nights, eating termites or small insects. The night lizard does not have eyelids, which is a distinguishing characteristic from other lizard species in the Bishop area. It is rare to see a night lizard out sunning on a rock. Instead they prefer to be under cover of rocks, or under fallen vegetation such as Joshua tree branches or yucca pieces. These lizards have been known to live in family groups with their parents and siblings for several years. If you happen to come across young night lizard, it is best to leave it with its parents!



### Western Side-blotched Lizard

(*Uta stansburiana elegans*)

This small, brownish-gray lizard is one of the most commonly seen lizards in the Bishop area. Its name derives from a small dark patch on its chest behind its front arm. The male of this species is more colorful than the female. The throat markings of males are orange, blue or yellow and have been linked to territorial behavior. Blue-throated males have large territories and defend their mates from other males. Orange-throated males are the most aggressive, and can take over blue-throated territories. Meanwhile, the sneaky yellow-throated males (which resemble females) are able to get past both blue and orange-throated males to steal their mates. Did you ever imagine all of this drama was going on as you passed one of these little guys on a trail?





## Great Basin Whiptail

(*Aspidoscelis tigris tigris*)

This slender-bodied lizard is often spotted darting across the road, or from bush to bush. It has faint stripes running along its body, a pointy, slender face, and a very long tail. Its back and sides are blackish brown to gray, with dark spots. It moves in quick short bursts, tasting its surroundings with its tongue. It is very difficult to approach, so sitting on top of a high boulder is often the best perch from which to observe this lizard going about its day-to-day business.



## Western Zebra-tailed Lizard

(*Callisaurus draconoides rhodostictus*)

Good luck catching this extremely fast lizard! With its streamlined body and long limbs, the zebra-tailed lizard is one of the speediest lizards around. This lizard receives its name from the zebra-like markings on its tail. The lizard draws attention to the tail while running, so in the event of attack, the predator will take the tail, which will grow back. Zebra-tailed lizards are active during the day, and can often tolerate hot sunny days that leave other lizards running for cover.



## Great Basin Collared Lizard

(*Crotaphytus bicinctores*)

Often found basking in the sun on top of rocks, this heat tolerant lizard is one of the most attractive lizards on the Eastside. Its name derives from the black bands around its neck. Their large heads give them an appearance of a small dinosaur and their powerful jaws, which are used to eat small lizards, snakes, and insects, can pack a powerful bite. During the breeding season the male will be so defensive of its territory (which may be the rock it's sitting on), that they can be easily approached.



## Southern Desert Horned Lizard

(*Phrynosoma platyrhinos calidiarum*)

This round, distinctively flat lizard varies in color but is often a reddish tan, brown or gray. Its back and tail are covered in small spines, and its underside is smooth. It usually buries itself in sand when the weather is cold or extremely hot, otherwise it can be seen basking in the sun or found close to anthills where it feeds.



## Discover Reptiles of the Eastern Sierra

You never know what you'll find under a rock! If you have never had the chance to search for lizards and snakes just for fun, and you would like to learn more about them, come along on a reptile hike this spring.

Check [friendsoftheinyo.org](http://friendsoftheinyo.org) for dates and details.



# Stewardship Summer Roundup

## Youth Conservation Corps

By Suzy Bibona, YCC Crew Leader

The Youth Conservation Corps is a summer work program in which local youth learn about and work on a variety of conservation projects within federally managed lands. 2011 marks the second year that Friends of the Inyo has collaborated with the Inyo National Forest to bring this opportunity to Bishop. With oversight and direction from Forest Service staff, a crew of five teenagers and one leader maintained several wilderness trails, removed thousands of invasive plants, assisted with Forest Service travel management efforts, participated in ongoing meadow restoration, and worked on many other projects to benefit our public lands. Aside from earning money for doing worthwhile work, the YCC enrollees also learned quite a bit. They toured Mono Lake, the Bristlecone Pine Forest, and the Mammoth Lakes Basin with interpretive guides. Also, they explored Obsidian Dome, learned rock climbing, and toured a local orchard and farm. All of this was in addition to their job training and learning the principles and concepts guiding the work they were doing. The 2011 YCC was an outstanding group of responsible, focused and engaged teenagers. One crew member graduated second in her 2011 Bishop High School class and attends Pomona College. The other four crew members are Boy Scouts, including two Eagle Scouts. One of them hiked the entire John Muir trail with his father in 2010. Another crew member usually spends summers working on his grandparents' ranch in Texas. One crew member plays the piano and another the harmonica.

We hope their experiences working on their public lands serves them well as they continue their educations and careers!



## Mammoth Lakes Summer of Stewardship (SOS)

Hooray! The exuberant volunteers at Convict Lake on September 11 were celebrating another successful season of SOS trail days when they learned their work wasn't over—one more trail event was added to the mix, bringing the total to 7 SOS days (Sherwin Lakes/Valentine trails, Horseshoe Lake, Coldwater trails, Inyo Craters, Lake George, Panorama Dome), plus National Trails Day in June Lake. That added up to 218 volunteers and over 1000 hours of stewardship. Now in its third year, SOS is a partnership between FOI and the Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access Foundation, supported by National Forest Foundation and Mammoth Mountain Ski Area, along with local businesses and clubs that co-sponsor events. Other volunteer works days added up to another 500-plus hours of stewardship on the forest with Pomona College, Stanford University, Pasadena City College and the Mammoth Mountain Ski and Snowboard Team.

Meanwhile, Mammoth Lakes Basin Steward Carole Lester valiantly led night hikes, geology tours and wildflower walks each week, entertaining and educating hundreds of Lakes Basin visitors and groups, all while patrolling trails and serving as a much-needed friendly face and information source for hikers, anglers and tourists in the basin.

## Wilderness Stewardship

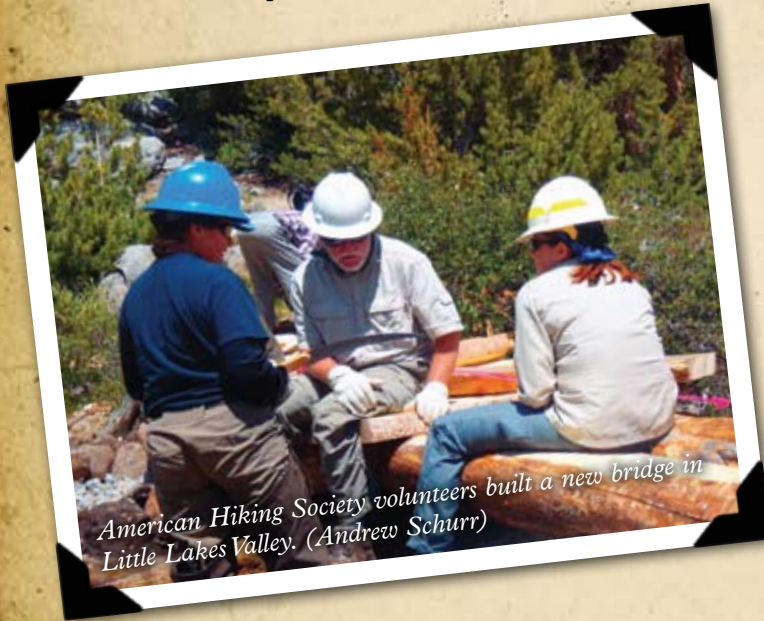
The call came early in 2011: the Inyo National Forest had to make tough choices in its wilderness management due to unprecedented budget changes, and three wilderness rangers would not be offered their seasonal jobs—could





Friends of the Inyo help? Thanks to support of the National Forest Foundation and generous donations from members, the answer was yes. Former ranger Deb Bayle hired on as FOI's wilderness steward, opening trails, talking to hikers, monitoring trail conditions and collecting data for wilderness managers. She led volunteer groups, coordinated the work of interns Anthony Thomas and Chadwick Creighton, walking hundreds of miles through the Ansel Adams, John Muir and Hoover wilderness areas.

FOI Stewardship Coordinator Andrew



*American Hiking Society volunteers built a new bridge in Little Lakes Valley. (Andrew Schurr)*

Schurr trained another group of enthusiastic volunteers in wilderness campsite inventory, providing important information for forest management. Andrew, along with Stewardship Director Todd Vogel, led wilderness stewardship trips with a number of partner groups including the Backcountry Horsemen of California, American Hiking Society and Patagonia Reno employees.

## Stewardship Crew & Inyo National Forest Travel Management

By Jake Holland, FOI Stew Crew

A quarter mile of road needs to be restored to a more natural condition. Time to get to work building barriers, vertical mulching and gathering debris to disguise the route. This accomplishment is not completed without some blood and sweat and a cohesive group that can work together.

Though it seems these 300-plus legal closures suddenly appeared this summer, it took years of planning, the hard work of many people that produced such tremendous results. It started with many meetings of the stakeholders of our public lands: you the people that hike, bike, ride, and recreate in general; and the long-overdue directive by the US Forest Service to create an organized trail system for the summer (much like

we have in the winter here on the Inyo). Input was given about which roads were important to the system. Miles were hiked and driven to take photos of roads that were proposed to be added to determine credibility, more meetings were endured, and, finally in 2009 the Forest Service had a plan.

Enter: Friends of the Inyo Stewardship Crew, Inyo National Forest Travel Management Crew, the Student Conservation Association X-Corps, and countless other volunteers that have made such a difference to our forest.

Day in and day out, 40 hours a week, these seasonal employees take a GPS unit and a map in a truck full of tools and supplies to labor on getting the roads closed and a system created. It is a great job that gives the opportunity to work outside and enjoy the very place we are protecting. The only problem with seasonal employment on the Inyo is that seasons are too short. Fortunately, this year there was still enough time to complete 1/3 of the projected closures, but never enough time with the crews. The stories, anecdotes, jokes, banter, politics and shared observations make work fun. Personalities and idiosyncrasies enlighten as much as nature. Whether a conversation about living off the this land and surviving or an old man telling about a road being closed that he made himself 50 years ago and seeing how passionate he was about coming back to this place, the interpersonal relationships make being in the middle of the forest not so lonely.

In the end it all becomes about the people. Without a human element none of this is possible. The industrial practices first creating these roads and the people who continue to use them and maintain them. Without people, none of these roads would be in the Inyo. There wouldn't be this amazing job of helping create a legal road system, knowing that protecting this place is important to preserve its splendor for future generations to access.

So go enjoy your public lands. Pull off Highway 395, drive back on Owens River Road or Deadman or Glass Creek. Drive. Turn onto the dirt. And just go. The hundreds of miles of open road all lead somewhere: a mountain overlook or a spring or a sand flat. The beauty is surprising, and it's all in our backyard.



*FOI and Forest Service crews work to improve the road system. (FOI)*



# Member Profile

## Volunteering Up Close: *What I Did on my Summer Vacation*

By Jo Bacon

**R**olling rocks off of a trail ... getting “sooty” while dismantling fire rings ... working a two-person cross-cut saw ... ferocious mosquitoes ... shoveling (all kinds of things).

OK, wait a minute.

Pure, dark skies with twinkling stars everywhere ... snow patches intermingled with wildflowers ... experiencing the beautiful Thousand Island Lake area “up close and personal” ... no cell phone or email for five days.

OK, third try.

A sense of accomplishment ... thank yous from hikers on the John Muir and Pacific Crest trails ... camaraderie among the trail crewmembers.

My summer vacation encompassed all of the above when I joined the Friends of the Inyo Eastside Volunteer Outdoor Learning Vacation Experience (EVOLVE) to Thousand Island Lake in late August. I did so expecting most of the above work tasks, but underestimating how much fun it would all be.

Why work so hard on a

vacation? As an advocate for stewardship of our public lands and a participant in many of the one-day Summer of Stewardship events in our area, the trip allowed me to expand that volunteer commitment by being part of the volunteers who are augmenting “traditional” trail crews. The location was a bonus.

We are no longer able to sit back and expect someone else to do all of the backcountry trail maintenance.

Cuts at the federal level this year have decimated funding for trail work throughout the Inyo National Forest. The United States Forest Service commitments to this trip were mules to carry in the equipment and tools (Thank You, Mules!), as well as collaboration with FOI on the tasks to be completed.

I feel that we are lucky that FOI has had the foresight to increase opportunities for wilderness stewardship in the past few years, giving us the option to help ensure that our wilderness is preserved.

Our EVOLVE group included three FOI staff – a trail crew leader who had previously been a USFS Wilderness Ranger, another FOI staff member who was also our cook, and an intern. A Patagonia intern, one other volunteer for one day, and the FOI Executive Director and one of her friends for one day, also took part in the trip.

The best thing about the experience was seeing cooperation, collaboration, and fellowship in action.

Oh, and of course that sense of accomplishment.

*FOI member Jo Bacon is a dedicated volunteer who serves on the Mammoth Lakes Town Council.*

**Why work so hard on a vacation? The trip allowed me to expand that volunteer commitment by being part of the volunteers who are augmenting “traditional” trail crews.**

**– Jo Bacon**



FOI Wilderness steward Deb Bayle and intern Chadwick Creighton untangle a knot of logs on Jo's 2011 EVOLVE trip.



# Member Profile

## Ron & Joel Saenz: A Real Father & Son Team!

By Catherine Billey

When Ron and Joel Saenz volunteered at Sherwin Trails, Horseshoe Lake, Inyo Craters and Lake George – four of the six Summer of Stewardship events hosted by Friends of the Inyo and MLTPA this year – they made it clear they were ready for the heavier work, like moving big logs out of lakes or off of trails, and they didn't mind hauling some garbage out in their 4x4 afterwards, either.

Their preference for rewarding yet challenging trails work at higher elevations might explain why father and son both look younger than their years. At Horseshoe Lake, for example, they volunteered with a team of 6 to clear debris from the lake's outlet, normally dry but running high due to the big snowpack; in heavy-packed ground at Inyo Craters, they drilled holes to put in posts for new trail signs.

"We're usually looking for the more difficult stuff," grinned Ron, who is 53, during an interview with Joel, 30, at Bishop's Great Basin Bakery as trees in town were just starting their burst into yellow autumnal blaze. "The other two events, we were running races, otherwise we would have been there," he added about his still very good attendance record at FOI's summer volunteer trail days.

It would seem that Ron and Joel are popular in Bishop, if the number of patrons who warmly greeted them at their table was any indication, although they are relative newcomers.

Ron's job working as a technician for Southern California Edison's hydroplants from Lundy Canyon to Bishop, where he now lives, was his way to get here in 2004 from Visalia in the San Joaquin Valley. "The Eastern Sierra had always intrigued me, but the last time I visited, it really drew me," he emphasized.

Joel, who works in the solar industry, followed in 2009 after a visit to his father turned into a passion for the area's numerous outdoor activities. He soon learned about FOI during a Volcanic Tablelands exploration – a day he remembers as extremely windy – and volunteered at National Trails Day in June Lake that summer.

"FOI is a great outlet for the community to be actively involved in stewardship projects, and education to make more information available out here," he said. He went to the Wild & Scenic Film Festival last year, FOI's screening of the Aldo Leopold documentary "Green Fire" this June, and with his father was eager to know what the film festival programs will be this December.

Ron has been a generous FOI donor since joining five years ago after participating in FOI's Earth Day 10K run in the Buttermilks. "We have to take responsibility to maintain what we have here, and this is one vehicle to do that."

Ron also believes that FOI benefits the Eastern Sierra by drawing people here from outside the community, thus providing revenue. "We're landlocked, so you're not going to see growth-revenue stuff," he said.

"I guess I'd better become a member," Joel quipped at this point (which, true to his word, he did within the hour).

Ron may have membership seniority, but it was Joel who got his father involved in this summer's volunteer events in the Mammoth Lakes area. Ron said it was most rewarding "just being outside and working outdoors, which is always refreshing, and getting to know unfamiliar trails." For Joel, it was when hikers said "thank you" to the volunteers.

Father and son both plan on participating in next summer's stewardship events in Mammoth Lakes. In the meantime, they are in a venture to start doing solar work together. They will know by the end of the year whether their current bid to do solar for nine government buildings on the Lone Pine Reservation passes the feasibility study. "It will be a big project if it goes through," Ron said.

Asked about their favorite places in the Eastern Sierra, they were both at a loss for words. "There are too many," they said in unison.



Ron and Joel working hard to clear the outlet at Horseshoe Lake.  
(MLTPA)

# Business Profile

## Juniper Ridge- *Bringing the Mountains Into Your Home*

By Catherine Billey, Membership & Outreach Manager

**W**e in the Eastern Sierra are lucky to have the mountains and the smell of the outdoors just outside our doorsteps. But for those who live in cities or suburbs – or even for Eastsiders who want to bring the mountains right into their homes – Juniper Ridge creates unique, wild-crafted products like soap, incense, tea and sachets from native western plant and tree trimmings, such as western juniper, which is used to make incense that will transport you to a campfire in the high desert. Everything is carefully sourced and harvested in a sustainable manner.

“All our products come from a region in the West that has a specific smell and a specific feeling and a specific look, and we want to evoke that and bring it to people so that they value wilderness more,” said Laura Boles, co-owner with

Hall Newbegin of Juniper Ridge. “We’re hoping that in valuing it more, they will support wilderness, because if they realize what they have, they will want to support it.”



Friends of the Inyo was grateful last year when Juniper Ridge became a business sponsor, making an in-kind donation of their product in June, then donating nearly \$3,000 in proceeds from a shopping day devoted to FOI — another donation day happened this year November 16. They have also supported Desert Survivors, The Siskiyou Project, Ventana Wilderness Alliance, Oregon Wild and the California

Wilderness Coalition, thus giving back to the land in myriad ways. Check out their website for more information about their offerings and the native plants they use at [www.juniperridge.com](http://www.juniperridge.com).

## 25th Anniversary Party

**O**n September 10, over 100 friends gathered under storm clouds at June Mountain Chalet to celebrate a quarter-century of preservation, exploration and stewardship. Thanks to all who made it a fun and successful party! We give extra

special acknowledgement to June Mountain Ski Area, Bill Hanna and Muir’s Legacy wines, Apple Hill Ranch, Mono Lake Produce and Mono Market for delicious food and drink, and to the numerous artists and artisans who donated raffle prizes.



Photos: Todd Vogel



## Thank You! *The following businesses supported FOI volunteer stewardship events this year:*

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*photo: Todd Vogel*

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