

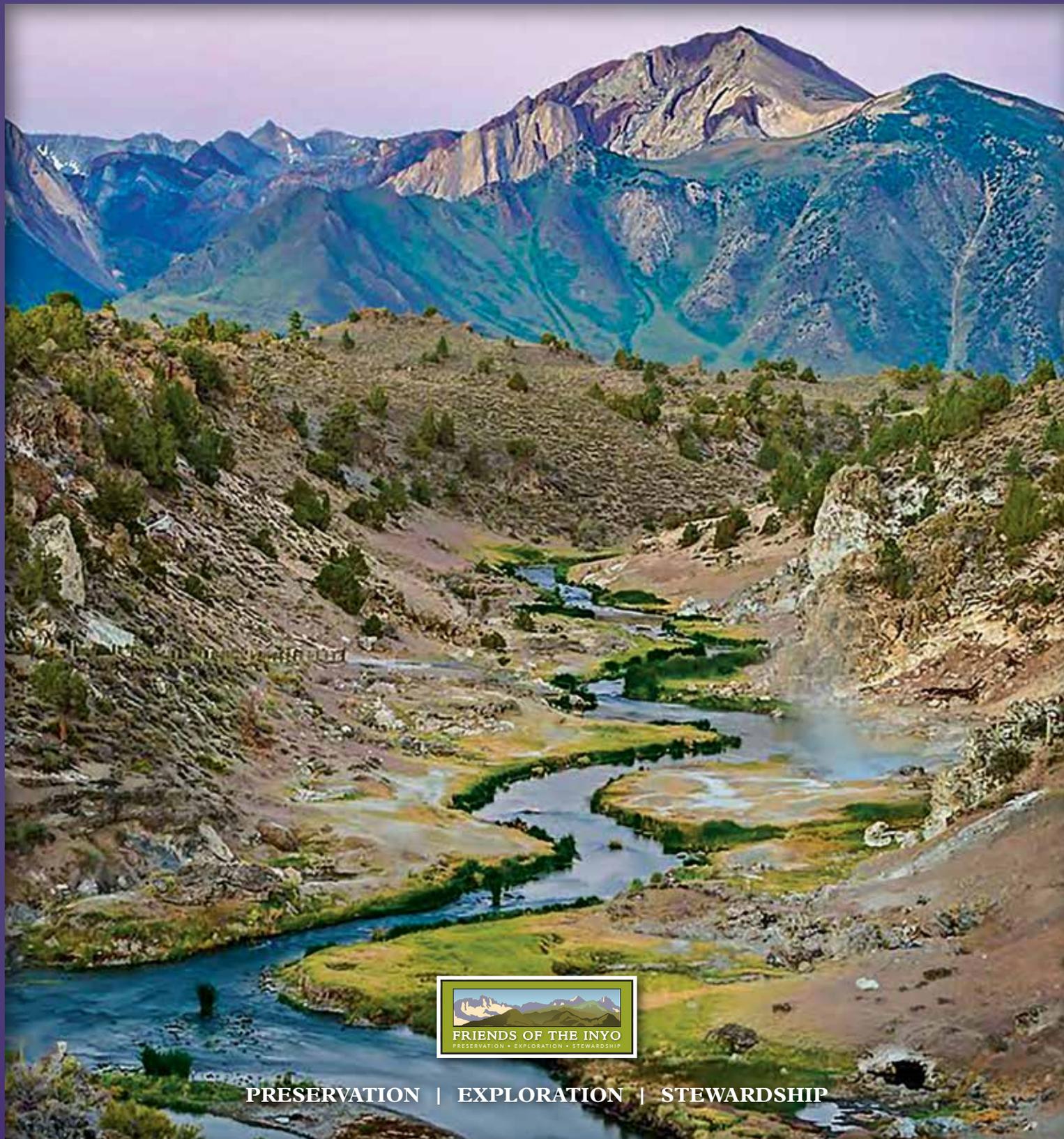
# Jeffrey Pine JOURNAL

SPRING 2016 | VOLUME XIV, ISSUE I

**Making a Difference**  
Stewardship for the Land

**Get Out**  
White-Inyo Bridge

**Wild and Scenic**  
Waterways for the Future



PRESERVATION | EXPLORATION | STEWARDSHIP

THE JEFFREY PINE JOURNAL  
VOLUME XIV, ISSUE I, SPRING 2016

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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**COVER PHOTO**

Summer Day at Hot Creek. Laurel Mountain stands tall above the vibrant banks of Hot Creek as it winds its steaming way through the Long Valley Caldera.

PHOTO: Sam Roberts

*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

## Get Wild in 2016

Wild things are on my mind. Wild places, wild critters, wild people, wild times, even wild fires. All things wild. Wild is the root of our shared passion for the wild open spaces of the Eastern Sierra. Your passion and support is Friends of the Inyo's impetus to work for the preservation of our public lands. Get outside and ski, hike, bike, walk, run, paddle, photograph, paint, fish, bird watch or sit quietly by a pristine alpine lake or stream. It's all possible in our wild backyard. We all need respite from today's hectic world.

I invite you to find a way to get involved with us in the good work we do. Volunteer for a stewardship project, join us in a future outing, talk to us about your concerns and ideas for the future of public lands. Be an activist for the places you love. Speak up and leave the silent majority behind. Of course, you can always just send money-- 😊.

On another note, I can never express enough gratitude for the dedication of our amazing Executive Director, the staff, the board, and all of you, our members. Our combined efforts are the synergy that make it all happen. Also, please help us in welcoming our newest board member, John Louth of Bishop. He came onboard in November of 2015 and is notable for his energy and enthusiasm. The fact that we haven't yet frightened him off is a tribute to his strength of character. Of course, that can be said of everyone at Friends of the Inyo.

*Get wild in the great outdoors in 2016. See you on the trail,*

**Sydney Quinn, President**

[sydney@friendsoftheinyo.org](mailto:sydney@friendsoftheinyo.org)



Brilliant paintbrush, granite, and beautiful skies adorn a warm spring day above Swall Meadows. Photo: Laura Beardsley



Among the 100,000 visitors to Owens Lake each April, the American Avocet enjoys a welcome stop over in the Eastern Sierra.

Photo:  
Sydney Quinn

# Scenic Waters

by Ben Wickham

I've fallen in love with many rivers, and fortunately for me the rivers don't seem to mind my two timing ways. I kayaked the Gallatin eighteen days straight once, partially because I was homeless, but also because I became addicted to floating its smooth waves and bouncing holes.

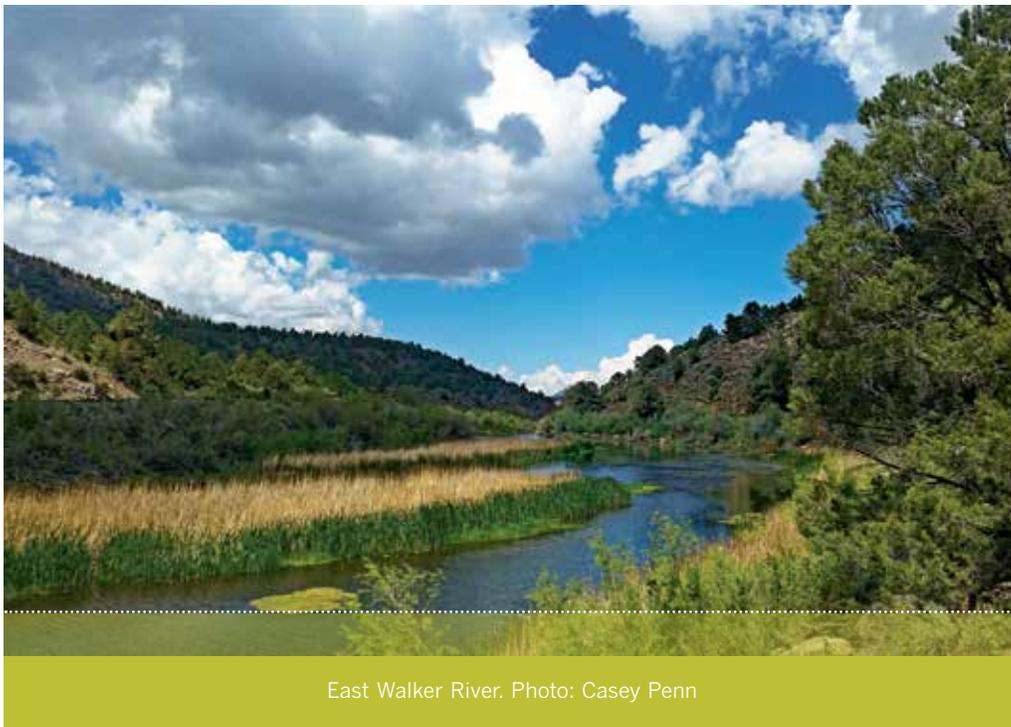
I pilgrimaged seasonally to the Secesh and Marsh Creek to search for the ghostlike spawning Chinook salmon that haunt pools below ripples in the river current. At Dagger Falls the salmon were like shooting stars – I couldn't risk looking away otherwise I might miss one shooting up out of the flat water at the base of the falls.

Rivers bring me peace when I hit my hard season here in the Eastern Sierra- when the high country snows have melted away just enough to discontinue the linking of ski turns, but enough snow still rests piled high on passes and north slopes to make hiking hard. This is when I'd loop an NRS strap through the bow handle of my whitewater kayak, pull the strap across

my chest, and tow the kayak the half mile to the pond on Rock Creek. I practiced rolling, stalling, and cartwheeling, and then just floated in my boat. Sometimes I looked up at the chutes on Mt. Starr that I had skied a couple of weeks before and as my boat slowly drifted down the creek, my mind drifted into memories of skiing, and friends, and sunrises and sunsets, and the feeling of flashing weightlessly – transcendentally – through powder. Sometimes I'd think about what others were doing in the now while I was here alone in this perfect place.

If one river comes close to being the love of my life, it would be the Merced. Above Merced Lake and the high sierra camp I managed over a decade ago, the river meanders through meadows, red fir, and ponderosa pine. At the camp it plunges into a tiny gorge, splashes over a

shelf, and slides down a granite slab into a pool where camp guests swim. As the river level dropped into lower summer flows, I scrambled down into the gorge where no one could see me and where the receding water revealed a smooth granite ledge. I sat on this ledge with my back to the rock wall, and watched the undulations of whitewater rushing past. I liked to try to discern one water droplet within the rush and watch its individual descent down this miniature gorge. I liked how the air felt cool down in there. I liked how the constant sound of the cascading water drowned out all other noise, especially the sounds of voices – my boss's unreasonable demands, the guests' complaints, my staff's occasional bickering.



East Walker River. Photo: Casey Penn

In *The Wilderness Letter*, Wallace Stegner lays out reasons for the necessity of wilderness. Maybe most important is what he called the geography of hope- that wilderness is essential even for people who never actually visit it. Just knowing wilderness is there provides each American emotional security,

soothing memories, inspiration, or something just damn exciting to dream about when you're bored and stuck in a cubicle.

While Stegner intended the geography of hope to apply to wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers fit within its boundaries. I can't think of a better example of what the geography of hope stands for than for me to dream about my secret gorge on the Merced River. I continue to imagine myself on that ledge down in it, with my back against cool granite, listening to the drone of whitewater and gazing mesmerizingly at the fluctuating water. Imagining that wild river has helped me sleep at night when I'm scared, stressed, or suffering serious emotional pain. It eases my soul just to think about being there. That little crack on the Merced River was a place I escaped to then and I still escape now. It will always be within my geography of hope.

# WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS EVALUATION

## What is a Wild and Scenic River?

*"It is hereby declared to be the policy of the United States that certain selected rivers of the Nation which, with their immediate environments, possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural or other similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations..."*

– Wild and Scenic Rivers Act 1968

On October 2nd, 1968 President Lyndon Johnson signed the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to protect America's remaining free flowing and wild rivers, preserving each river's unique ecological and cultural heritage. Less than one quarter of one percent of America's rivers are protected under this act. The Inyo National Forest is blessed with two Wild and Scenic Rivers, both designated in 2009: Cottonwood Creek in the White Mountains and the Owens River Headwaters in the Sierra Nevada. A river is determined eligible based on its Outstanding Remarkable Values (ORVs), which include scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural or similar attributes. Usually agency specialists interpret values that are unique, rare or exemplary based on regional or geographic comparisons. Wild and Scenic Rivers are classified as Wild, Scenic or Recreational, and each classification provides different levels of protection and opportunities for use. Generally wild rivers are inaccessible except by trail, scenic rivers are accessible by nearby roads, and recreational rivers may have railroad access or

roads parallel to or crossing the river. No matter the classification, traditional uses are maintained, including fishing and associated fish stocking. Grazing limitations are confined to the river corridor and are based on individual topography and management of the river's ORVs. Recreational activities are diverse and varied across the Wild and Scenic River system and include whitewater rafting, hiking, climbing, camping, mountain biking, and winter play.

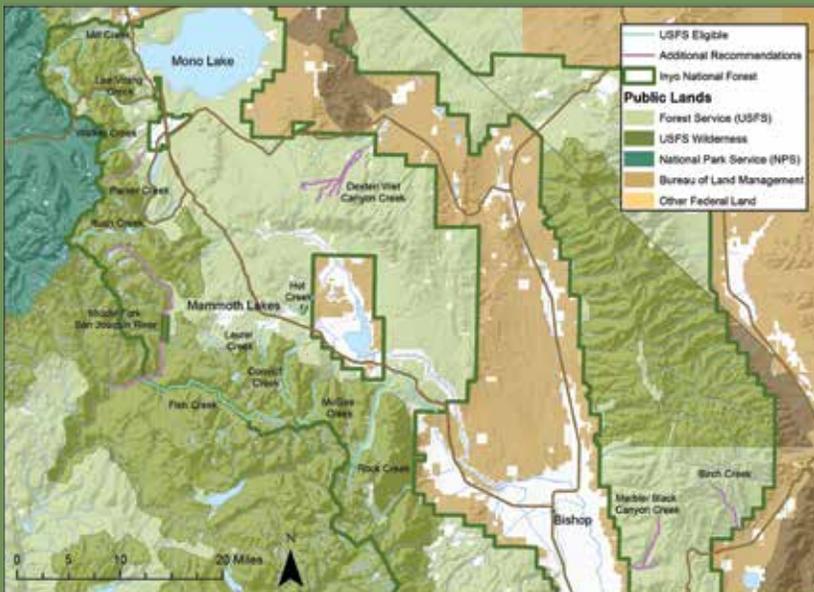
## Wild and Scenic Rivers in General Management Plan Revision

The Forest Service is required to complete an inventory and evaluation of all streams and rivers as part of plan revision. The draft evaluation released in December of 2015 found 19 streams eligible totaling over 160 river miles. Roughly half of the streams are located in existing wilderness. Friends of the Inyo submitted comments on the draft evaluation, and the public will be able to review the revised version within the Draft Environmental Impact Statement to be released this spring. The Forest Service does not intend to determine suitability of these eligible rivers or make designation recommendations to Congress. However, because of this interim protection, the Forest will maintain the free flowing character and ORVs of these rivers, ensuring these streams maintain their eligibility until Congress acts.

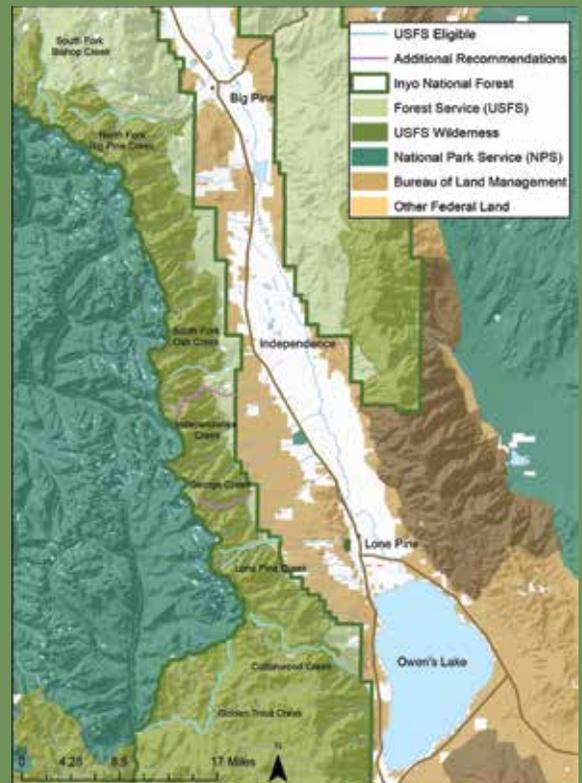
## Middle Fork San Joaquin

The Inyo found a small segment of river eligible near its headwaters at Thousand Island Lake. This river is one of the few remaining

Wild and Scenic River Evaluation (North)



Wild and Scenic River Evaluation (South)



### Map Disclaimer:

These maps are intended to visually represent locations of eligible rivers. They are not necessarily to scale and do not represent actual river miles and wild, scenic or recreational classifications. For USFS Wild and Scenic River maps, please visit:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r5/landmanagement/planning/?cid=STELPRD3833668>

free-flowing Sierra Nevada Rivers with minimal man-made intrusions. The entire stretch of river within the Inyo National Forest should be eligible from the headwaters to the confluence with the north fork of the San Joaquin. The entire segment running through the Devils Postpile National Monument has already been found eligible by the National Park Service.

**Mono Basin tributaries**



Photo: Todd Vogel

Restored flows to Rush, Parker, Walker, Lee Vining, and Mill Creeks contribute to the Mono Lake ecosystem and support an extensive fishery and riparian restoration program. Several lower segments of these rivers are within the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area with management direction “protecting its geological, ecological, cultural, scenic, and other natural resources.” Culturally significant sites are found along some streams, and unique geology includes flows cutting the Ice Age Mono lakebed to form an unusual terminal lake delta. The tributaries are habitat for endangered species including Willow Flycatcher.



Photo: Mono Lake Committee

**Birch Creek**

Birch Creek supports a lush riparian corridor at the boundary of the Mojave and Great Basin deserts. The creek’s rich birch-cottonwood riparian forests host a recently discovered isolated population of Black Toad, a California Fully Protected Species. The presence of Black Toad is unique within the region of comparison. Black



Photo: Jora Fogg

Toads occupying this canyon are completely dependent on Birch Creek and are isolated from lower elevation populations at Deep Springs Lake and Cuna Springs. Birch

Canyon also contains a unique granite batholith, which is emplaced amidst the parent sedimentary rocks of the White Mountains.

**Marble and Black Canyons**

These canyons contain extraordinary riparian systems rich in history and wildlife. Milling complexes to petroglyph panels abound and locally rare deep, marble-walled canyons contribute to the river’s cultural and geologic values. Marble Creek also comprises a rich cottonwood-birch-cattail riparian corridor abundant with wildlife.

**Wet and Dexter Canyons**

In a distinctively dry area, the free flowing nature of Dexter and Wet Canyons is due in part to the Pacific moisture plume that makes its way east over Deadman Pass on the Sierra crest to a unique transverse range formed by Bald and Glass Mountains. Dexter and Wet Canyons are the primary drainages in the most geographically varied and ecologically rich region of the northern Inyo National Forest. The streams have created deeply incised steep-walled canyons reminiscent of the desert southwest, flowing through a landscape of rough hewn granite knobs, rolling uplands, and flat volcanic mesas. Major meadow complexes are the sources of Dexter and Wet Canyons and their tributaries. The incredibly diverse habitat provided by these streams supports goshawk, Greater Sage Grouse, Black-Backed Woodpeckers, Willow Flycatchers, nesting Golden Eagles, badgers, abundant mule deer, and brook trout.



Photo: Jora Fogg

**George and Independence Creeks**

George and Independence Creeks were not found to be free flowing, however the BLM previously found segments of these streams downstream of the National Forest boundary to be eligible, with George Creek possessing outstanding fish, wildlife, and ecological values, and Independence Creek containing outstanding recreation, fish, and ecological values. Since these segments have been determined eligible by the BLM, the Forest Service



Photo: Michael Prather

should reconsider its ineligibility findings for the upper segments. Free flowing condition and outstanding values of streams do not end at relatively arbitrary jurisdictional boundaries.

▶▶ FIELD GUIDE

# Aquatic Stream Insects

**Words and pictures:** Dave Herbst and Bruce Medhurst, University of California Sierra Nevada Aquatic Research Laboratory

Most flyfishers are familiar with the wide variety of stream insects in the Sierra Nevada. Below we offer a quick guide to these unique harbingers of stream health. Stream environments can be divided into two major habitat types: Riffles, which are shallow rocky areas with swift currents and Pools which are deeper areas often at stream bends where currents are slower, particles settle out and deposits of sediment, leaves, and wood accumulate. The aquatic invertebrates pictured here are all immatures. They go through development, molting their skin or cuticle as they grow. Nymphs are those that become very similar looking adults, just sprouting wings, while those known as larvae go through a complete metamorphosis where the adults look very different (as a butterfly to a caterpillar).



## DORONEURIA

Large active predator (2-3"), searches like a tiger for prey, nymphs live several years before maturing into winged adult, lives only in cold turbulent riffle habitats, known by the common name as the golden stonefly. They are indicators of good habitat quality and an important food source to fish.

## PTERONARCYS

The California salmonfly (2-3") is another large stonefly that develops over multiple years, eating decomposing leaves and wood (this feeding style known as a shredder), and is often found around large submerged rocks where packs of leaves often get stuck on the upstream sides of these rocks. They also are indicators of quality habitat and important in food webs.



## TIPULA

Crane fly larvae (1-3"), often live in pools and are also consumers of decaying leaf and wood matter. These develop into the large long-legged true flies (order Diptera) that some call Mosquito hawks, but these fragile insects do not eat mosquitoes, feeding little if at all during their short adult life span. The larvae, sometimes known as leather jackets, store enough nutrition after multiple years of growth for the mated adult female to develop eggs.



# FIELD GUIDE ◀◀



## RHYACOPHILA

Primitive mountain caddisflies (0.5-1") are all predatory, common in cool streams at moderate to high elevation, and are a diverse genus of many species. Unlike most other caddis that build portable cases of sand grains or plant material, these caddis larvae are free-living, cruising for prey in unpolluted streams.



## ARCTOPSYCHE

Net-spinning caddisflies (0.5-1", known to fly fishing as the great gray spotted sedge) use silk to build a fixed retreat on rocks where larvae position themselves to collect drifting food particles in a mesh net they spin at an opening in the case they build. As with caterpillars that spin silk, the material is quite strong, resisting the currents where capture of food particles is most productive. Like butterflies, the adults have scales on their wings, looking somewhat like moths. They act as ecosystem engineers in streams, building structures and filtering suspended food particles.



## CINYGMULA

These mayfly nymphs are small (0.2-0.5"), often sprawled on rock surfaces where their flattened bodies permit them to move easily in fast water, and where they can graze or scrape off thin films of algae for their food. Known as dark red quills in fly fishing jargon, these nymphs live just a year or less and only very briefly as diaphanous adults. As with the insects above, they are integral to the food web of streams and their presence shows a healthy environment.



## STEWARDSHIP

### Stewardship Highlights – Casey Penn

Every year things keep getting better. This past year of our stewardship program was no different. Our exceptional field crew worked alongside some great partners throughout the Eastern Sierra. We even brought some new partners into the mix. We worked in the Golden Trout Wilderness, the Inyo and White Mountains, Convict Lake, and all the way up to the Travertine Hot Springs.

Every step along the way we worked with a number of great partners this past year including the Inyo National Forest, the Bishop Field Office of the BLM, the Bodie Hills Conservation Partnership, the Town of Mammoth Lakes, the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, the Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access Foundation, and Mono County. We especially want to thank our donors and sponsors including the

National Forest Foundation, Patagonia, Southern California Edison, and the Conservation Lands Foundation. Their support helped make a difference on the

**“Every year we are proud of the amount of work we accomplish from the crest of the Sierra to the depths of Inyo County.”**

public lands of the Eastern Sierra, but none of this would be possible without you, the members and volunteers who contributed a total of 4,446 hours giving

back to your public lands.

Every year we are proud of the amount of work we accomplish from the crest of the Sierra to the depths of Inyo County. We make a point of reaching those hard to access areas that have not seen work in a while. This winter besides the regular planning for the coming season, we have been hosting monthly cleanups in the Buttermilk climbing area to mitigate high visitation in the winter months. On top of this we have hosted a number of fun and exciting educational hikes and walks showcasing the exquisite beauty of the Eastern Sierra.

Though we’ve added to our winter season offerings, we’re also busy preparing for a busy field season with opportunities to give back to our public lands. We will continue our partnership with the National Forest Foundation

Hearty volunteers celebrate a day of service in Buttermilk Country. Photo: Casey Penn



# STEWARDSHIP

this summer extending our work to the Golden Trout Wilderness and the John Muir Wilderness beyond the Mammoth Lakes Basin. The summer will be filled with frontcountry restoration work on the Inyo National Forest and the BLM Bishop Field Office. Finally, we'll be continuing our 9th year of the Summer of Stewardship in Mammoth Lakes with three volunteer stewardship days focused on connecting people with their public lands. These days will be complemented by a large-scale trail maintenance program by the Town of Mammoth Lakes and Friends of the Inyo to improve trail conditions on popular trails.

If you are interested in helping care for your public lands this year, follow our website and Facebook for more information. As always, feel free to give us a call at 760-873-6500 to find out more or to talk about great places to visit while in the Eastern Sierra.



Crespi High School students work together to clear a fallen tree from the trail. Photo: Casey Penn



## National Conservation Lands

The nation's newest collection of protected public lands make up a unique national treasure known as the National Conservation Lands. Administered by the BLM, these lands hold nationally significant values including cultural, historic, scientific, biological, and recreational. In the National Conservation Lands system's 15-year history, amazing strides have been made to protect and care for these places on the ground and bring public attention to the system. Just as nearly every American recognizes the National Park or Wilderness Preservation systems, Friends of the Inyo and partners of the Friends Grassroots Network are working to build recognition and appreciation for the National Conservation System. When you are exploring BLM lands how will you know you are on a piece of the National Conservation Lands? Along with BLM staff, Friends Grassroots Network non-profits are implementing a new "look and feel" that will be consistent across all National Conservation Land units. Each year new lands, like recent National Monuments, are added to this growing system. But these designations extend beyond the buzz of monuments and comprise a great diversity of designations including BLM Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and National Scenic and Historic Trails. As we work with others to designate the Alabama Hills as a National Scenic Area, we hope this will be the first National Scenic Area to be part of the National Conservation Lands system.

In the Eastern Sierra, there are places you may regularly visit or recognize by name that are part of the National Conservation Lands system including the Wilderness Study Areas of the Volcanic

Tablelands, Chidago Canyon, Fish Slough, and Casa Diablo, and the Granite Mountain and Inyo Mountains Wildernesses. Venture to the eastside of the White Mountains from Fish Lake Valley to Cottonwood Creek Wild and Scenic River, a river jointly managed for its wild and scenic values by the BLM and Forest Service. Friends of the Inyo is working to ensure the protective status of these places are honored by not only caring for them, but by bringing them into the public eye through trips and projects, social media, and implementation of signs and kiosks that teach visitors about the system as a whole as well as the uniqueness of that place. By supporting Friends of the Inyo, you support the work being done to showcase the National Conservation Lands System, add currently unprotected places to the system, and help the BLM and its non-profit partners engage in meaningful work on the ground. Caring for these places and bringing people out to enjoy them will be a team effort we can all be a part of.

***A collection of organizations doing critical on the ground work to steward the National Conservation Lands. We also use our collective voice as a national network to advance strong conservation management policies and practices. In 2014 the Friends Grassroots Network collectively raised over \$2 million to support this work.***



# EXPLORATION

## Get out!

### Exploring the White-Inyo Bridge

North of the Eureka Valley Road lies some of the last unprotected roadless landscapes cradled between the White and Inyo Mountains, a wild place roughly 40,000 acres with elevations ranging from 5,000-8,000 feet. Pinyon-juniper, sagebrush, xeric shrublands, and black brush paint the topography of steep canyons and gentle rolling slopes. This area provides habitat connectivity between the Great Basin and Owens Valley and adjoins the BLM administered Piper Mountain Wilderness to the east. Search for the rare plants of the area including Mojave Fishhook Cactus and Little Cutleaf. Enjoy, but do not disturb the area's many cultural sites ranging from prehistoric house rings to old mining camps.

Numerous opportunities for exploration of the Solider Canyon potential wilderness area (PWA) and potential Piper Mountain Wilderness additions exist. From the Eureka Valley Road you can walk up Deadman Canyon all the way to 9S109, about five miles. Alternatively, you can walk in from Little Cowhorn Valley along 9S109 or drive in with a high clearance 4WD vehicle. From the road you can look southwest into the Solider Canyon PWA and north-northwest into the Piper Mountain PWA additions. For an extended adventure, leave the road and climb 8,965ft Juniper Mountain to the north. Walk eastward

cross-country about 0.8 miles and then climb to the top, another 0.8 miles. Be prepared for a steep climb as the elevation gain is approximately 1,000 feet. From there you will be in the middle of the Piper Mountain 2 PWA and will be able to see most of it as well as much of the surrounding country. To the east you will see the BLM's Piper Mountain Wilderness, to the north you the Piper Mountain potential wilderness addition, and to

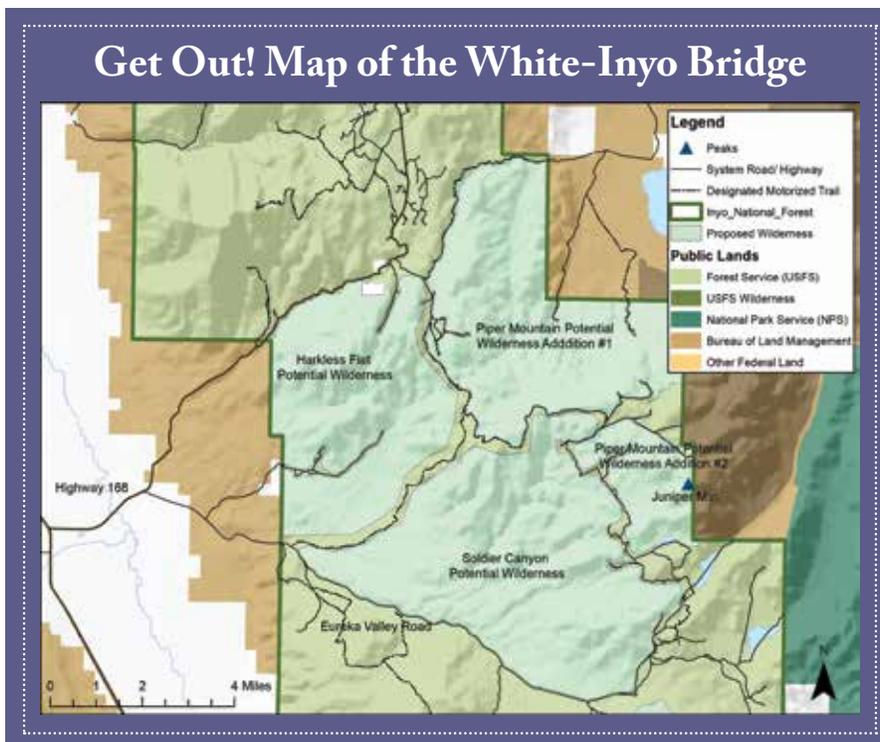
the southwest a beautiful view of the potential Solider Canyon wilderness.

### Getting There

Head east from Big Pine on Highway 168, then take the Eureka Valley Road southeast towards Death Valley National Park. This road provides access to the heart of the Solider Canyon Inventoried Roadless Area. Just after the boundary with the Inyo National Forest and the turn off for 35E421, the Solider Canyon PWA begins to the north. 15,445 acres of canyons and perennial streams lie before you, including the prominent Crooked Road and Deadman Canyons. Water can usually be found during the spring in these canyons, but be sure to carry plenty of water anytime of the year. In the late spring, continue driving east into Little Cowhorn Valley to look among the Joshua trees for singing Cactus Wrens and Scott's Orioles, the northern range for these species.



Hiking along Juniper Mountain in the White-Inyo Bridge.  
Photo: Jora Fogg



EXPLORATION

# Upcoming Events

Spring is just around the corner, and we're excited for a busy field season caring for and protecting public lands in the Eastern Sierra. Please visit our website [friendsoftheinyo.org](http://friendsoftheinyo.org) or like us on Facebook to learn more about these and other upcoming events throughout the year. We'll see you out there!

<b>22-24</b> APRIL	<b>2ND ANNUAL OWENS LAKE BIRD FESTIVAL</b>
<b>6</b> MAY	<b>JUMBO WILD AT MOUNTAIN RAMBLER BREWERY</b>
<b>21</b> MAY	<b>HORSE MEADOWS POTENTIAL WILDERNESS EXPLORATION</b>
<b>4</b> JUNE	<b>SUMMER OF STEWARDSHIP: NATIONAL TRAILS DAY</b>
<b>11</b> JUNE	<b>BREAKFAST WITH A BOTANIST</b>
<b>16</b> JUNE	<b>MONO BASIN STEWARDSHIP DAY</b>
<b>25</b> JUNE	<b>JUNE LAKE TRAILS DAY</b>
<b>6</b> AUGUST	<b>BODIE PROJECT</b>
<b>23-27</b> AUGUST	<b>WILDERNESS VOLUNTEER TRIP</b>
<b>17</b> SEPTEMBER	<b>SUMMER OF STEWARDSHIP: GREAT SIERRA RIVER CLEAN UP</b>
<b>24</b> SEPTEMBER	<b>NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS DAY</b>



Members of Friends of the Inyo and the Eastern Sierra 4WD Club celebrated National Public Lands Day 2015 with a collaborative project on the road and trail to Horton Lakes.  
Photo: Casey Penn



# PINE DROPS

## NOTES ON ISSUES AFFECTING THE EASTERN SIERRA'S PUBLIC LANDS

By Jora Fogg and Laura Beardsley

### FLYING IN FOR A SECOND YEAR

As the spring migration picks up again this month, we're excited to launch the second Owens Lake Bird Festival in Lone Pine. This year's expanded festival includes two days of exploration on and off the lake with tours for birders and non birders of all ages. We'll round out the weekend of exploration with an opening reception at the Museum of Western Film History and a dinner and silent auction featuring keynote speaker Debbie House. Following the success of last year's event, we're looking forward to another celebration of conservation and community in the Lower Owens Valley.

### DRECP MOVING INTO PHASE II?

The Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) is a landscape scale planning document to support renewable energy development and conservation of the California desert across 10 million acres of public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The final DRECP Land Use Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement were released on Nov 10th, 2015. Friends of the Inyo submitted a protest letter based on our concerns with the amount of unallocated lands in the Owens Valley and southern Inyo County. Unallocated lands may not be streamlined for energy development,

but are still open to traditional large-scale energy development, which transforms the desert landscape. Many of the lands currently unallocated are of significant conservation value and were recommended for National Conservation Lands designation in our previous comments. We recommend all public lands in the Owens Valley be removed from unallocated status. The BLM will review all public protests and submit responses and a final decision in the coming months. Friends of the Inyo will engage on phase II of the DRECP within Inyo County, which will involve the implementation of newly designated National Conservation Lands in partnership with the BLM.



Members of Friends of the Inyo's Board and Staff gathered on a spring-like day for their February meeting. Photo: Sydney Quinn

The newly established Mojave Trails National Monument is one of three new monuments protecting special places in the California desert. Photo: Linda Castro, CalWild



## OVER-SNOW VEHICLES ON THE INYO

This spring the Inyo National Forest begins its winter travel planning and Over-Snow Vehicle (OSV) designation process. The 2015 OSV Rule requires that National Forests designate routes and areas where OSV use is allowed, limited or prohibited and provide a public OSV use map. Ideally a public map would also display non-motorized winter recreational opportunities. Currently OSV use is unrestricted over much of the forest, and there is no minimum snow depth requirement. We envision a sustainable system of trails, carefully managed OSV open areas, and quiet, self-powered recreation areas. There is an opportunity for enhanced non-motorized winter recreation and a flourishing winter recreation economy in the Eastern Sierra. The forest is seeking pre-scoping input on snowmobile use on the Inyo, and we encourage you to submit comments on your winter recreation experiences and vision.

## GOING SOLAR IN THE OWENS VALLEY

Inyo County completed their Owens Valley Solar Energy Study (OVSES) under a grant from the California Energy Commission. The final report of the study was released in January. The OVSES follows the approval of the Renewable Energy General Plan Amendment (REGPA), which will guide and facilitate solar energy development in Inyo County. The OVSES consisted of a series of public workshops in Lone Pine and Bishop this past autumn in conjunction with compiling and analyzing existing data on the valley's biological, cultural, and visual resources. The intent of the study is to provide the County and the public with a more detailed understanding of these resources that can be used as a tool for future renewable energy development planning. By understanding the outstanding resources of the Owens Valley and Owens Lake, we can advocate for photovoltaic solar to be located on rooftops, parking lots, brownfields, and other disturbed areas.

## THREE NEW MONUMENTS JOIN CALIFORNIA'S NATIONAL CONSERVATION LANDS

On February 12th we celebrated with our Mojave Desert partners in Shoshone, CA the culmination of over a decade of hard work- the designation of three new national monuments. Using the Antiquities Act, President Obama issued proclamations creating Mojave Trails National Monument, Sand to Snow National Monument, and Castle Mountains National Monument, protecting 1.8 million acres of our precious and irreplaceable California desert.

All three monuments previously had large-scale renewable energy projects proposed within their borders, and we are thankful their beauty and wildness are now protected from future development. With designation, our work for conservation continues as we ensure these monuments are properly managed and protected from ongoing large-scale renewable energy pressure, mineral extraction, and other indelible development interests along their borders.

## Member Profile: John Louth

### What brought you to Bishop and the Owens Valley?

It's actually a much more practical than ethereal reason: day care. My wife and I were living in Mono City, and the June Mountain Day Care was just about to close. We had an opportunity to transfer to Bishop with the Forest Service as a couple of jobs were open that we were interested in so we jumped at the opportunity. That was the main reason, but I always wanted to live where I could wear T-shirts and shorts into the late night!

### How did you get involved with Friends of the Inyo?

I was asked to consider a board position, which I accepted. I had always wanted to be more involved in affecting the decisions that impact our public lands. In an ironic sort of way, being a Board member of Friends of the Inyo affords me more of that chance than my work with Forest Service ever did. As an employee, I was much more involved in the day-to-day management of the visitor services that the USFS provided than the policies that guided larger land management decisions. Our Board of Directors at Friends of the Inyo is a very involved, highly functional, dedicated group that is quite stimulating to be around.

### You worked for a long time in the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest in the White Mountains. Can you share a special or unique experience you had up there?

The trees were certainly magical, but the environment at 10,000 feet had some wonderful surprises. It snowed every month of the year while I worked there. Perhaps the most unique experience was being snowed in at the visitor center in January while I waited for a storm to clear to get some background footage for our film documentary. The morning the storm cleared out was cold and everything just sparkled with fresh snow and was so quiet.

### What do you see as the top three challenges facing wild places and public lands in the Eastern Sierra today?

Certainly unmanaged motorized access can bring on a whole host of problems, not just the impact of the vehicle. Adequate financial resources for the public land management agencies to actively manage the lands, not just care take them is a challenge. Public land management agencies must ensure they have people who have a real passion for getting out into the wild places,

riding horses, hiking, and becoming intimately familiar with the land base that they manage. There is still a place for the old school ranger who knows every canyon, river course, meadow, and the idiosyncrasies of the land...Perhaps the last challenge is the vexing problem of how to re-introduce the natural role of fire into the ecosystem.

It's not an easy fix with the growth of populations into wild areas, the continuing pressure to put out all fires, and the fact that recently burned areas can simply look bad for years. I fought fires for a month in Yellowstone in 1988 and have recently gone through some of those areas. For the most part, they look great: thickets of new growth, hugely increased bird populations, much more growth on the forest floor. But some places still look just plain burnt.

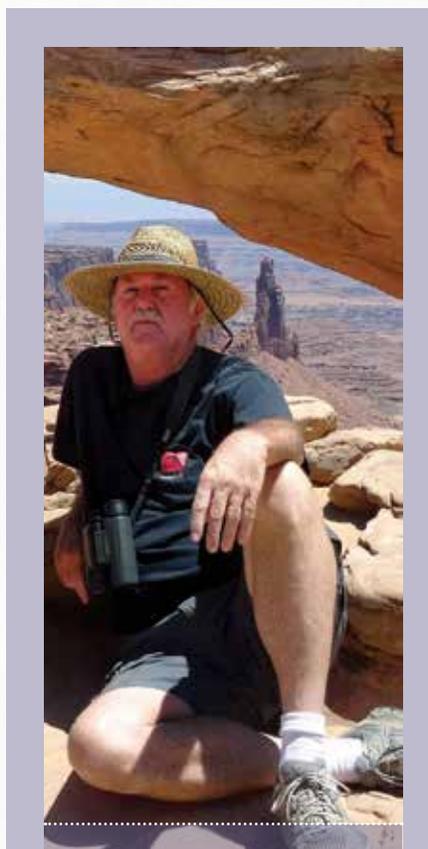
The bottom line is that it was absolutely the right thing for the National Park Service to realize the futility of trying to put out all the fires and instead manage them to restore fire as a rightful link in the ecosystem, just as much as wolves and grizzlies. In the end, 10,000 of us didn't have that great of an impact on the fires anyway, and we all went home when it started to snow.

### Do you have hope for the future?

I do, as long as there are guardians of the public lands. There are so many users of public lands that can help – both those that rejoice in wild untamed places, and those that choose to legally access their favorite places with vehicles. The United States is so blessed with an abundance of publically owned land – nowhere else in the world is so well set aside for public use and conservation. But we need to guard against zealots who might think it is better privatized...

### What do you like to do most in your free time when you aren't exploring public lands in the Eastern Sierra?

I enjoy traveling and exploring new places; both nearby and far-flung. I also have enjoyed stage productions and a late-in-life thespian career of questionable success, but it's fun! Since I was a very involved father for so long I have about 20 years of deferred house maintenance to deal with, so I've got lots to do! Snow skiing, boat exploring, and measuring the sway of palm trees through partially closed eyes fills any "free time" I may have.



John soaking in the scenery in the canyon country of Utah.

Photo courtesy of John Louth

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