

# Jeffrey Pine JOURNAL

SPRING 2017 | VOLUME XV, ISSUE I

## Making a Difference

Seeing the Opportunity

## An Unforgettable Winter

Connecting with Wild Snowy Places

## Owens Lake Bird Festival

Why it all Matters



PRESERVATION | EXPLORATION | STEWARDSHIP



THE JEFFREY PINE JOURNAL  
VOLUME XV, ISSUE I, SPRING 2017

## 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

Wildflowers  
glow in the late  
afternoon on  
the Volcanic  
Tablelands.

PHOTO: John Dittli

*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.

# Welcome by Ben Wickham

I recently went in for minor surgery, and afterwards the anesthesiologist told me that during the surgery I must have been dreaming about skiing. Apparently I talked about it the whole operation. To be fair I've been thinking of skiing a lot lately. Sitting at my desk in the office, my mind often drifts to places with snow, especially now that the Sierra are covered in it and we'll be skiing until June. So can you blame me for dreaming?

I grew up skiing in Idaho at Bogus Basin, a non-profit ski area operating on a land lease from the Boise National Forest. Ever since I was a kid, skiing has been there for me. When I graduated college and had no idea what I wanted to do, I explored mountains on skis in search of myself. Some of the best days of my life have been skiing with friends into yurts in wilderness, shredding powder in burned forests, booting up big lines in spring, or sliding on snow under the full moon. And when times got hard, I also split for snow covered open spaces. The last big, magical winter in the Eastern Sierra coincided with my mother's final months of life. I was working at Rock Creek Lodge that winter, and as I grieved my boss seemed to know that the walls of work could not contain me. She never stood in the way when I snuck out to the Hilton Bench where somehow, as the sun shimmered on the snow's surface and my skis floated through powder while flashing turns through the most beautiful junipers in the world, I came back to life.

I know you feel the same way whether it's climbing, fishing, backpacking, riding horses or mules, or just watching the sunset at an overlook like Sierra View in the White Mountains. These activities and places connect us. They connect us to loved ones past and present. They connect us to who we were when we were young and who we are now. They connect us to each other, and they connect us to processes bigger than ourselves. We are so lucky that wild places exist and we must never stop dreaming about them.



Dreams come true in Rock Creek, winter 2017. Photo: Ben Wickham

# From the President by Sam Roberts

Collaboration. A word often seen in the nonprofit world, usually in strategic plans or other aspirational documents generated with good intent by an organization. But more often than not, true collaboration is often one of the first things that gets put on the back burner until “the time is right.” By true collaboration I mean a genuine meeting of minds working towards a shared, greater vision.

We have seen recent examples of collaboration having stunning effects on government. A recent misguided bill was stopped dead in its tracks by a partnership of hunting and angling groups, and similar alliances are forming around the country. In fact, these collaborations are critical to not only fend off threats to our public lands, but are proving to be the most effective way to advocate for the agencies managing those lands. The time is now for us in the Eastern Sierra to put aside the tiny fraction of differences we may have and collaborate for the good of the public land that is so important to each of us.



Over 4 years, Laura helped ensure that many beautiful bouquets of wild flowers flourished on our public lands. Photo: Laura Beardsley



Photo: Jon Crowlev

## Goodbye Laura

As many of you are aware by now, Laura Beardsley, our Executive Director for the past 4 years, has moved on and taken a job with Eastern Sierra Disabled Sports. We have so much to thank Laura for, not the least of which was the passion and commitment she brought to Friends of the Inyo each and every day. While her departure leaves a void, the Eastern Sierra is a better place for her having worked here, and it is with deepest gratitude that we wish her well in her new job with Eastern Sierra Disabled Sports.

**Thanks, LB...!**



## PRESERVATION

# Conservation in the California Desert by Jora Fogg

The BLM lands between the Inyo Mountains and the Coso Range Wildernesses are now a landscape level protected corridor thanks to the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan. The area was depicted on the cover artwork for the U2 Joshua Tree album, one of the world's best-selling albums. Through the music, the band sought to evoke a sense of place and the open spaces of America, exemplified in the California Desert. The Joshua tree photographed for the album sleeve fell around 15 years ago, yet the site remains a popular attraction for U2 fans to pay tribute to the group.

The area is also known for its spring wildflower displays and exceptional scenic quality with sweeping views of the Sierra Nevada, Owens Lake, and Death Valley's diverse mountain ranges. You can experience this place by a four-wheel drive tour, traveling the many dirt routes along the valley floor, and stopping to camp or hike high points along the way. You can also continue and connect these routes for a multi-day trip into Death Valley National Park to the east.

In order to balance conservation priorities with other uses in the California Desert, the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) designated some areas for energy development and some for conservation and recreation—lands now called the California Desert National Conservation Lands (CDCLs).

There are now over 300,000 acres of new CDCLs in the

Eastern Sierra. If you have explored the wilderness character of Conglomerate Mesa, ventured to camp off of highway 190 on your way to Death Valley, or traveled the 395 corridor along the foothills of the Sierra and Coso Ranges, you have seen some of the newest additions to the National Conservation Lands system.

A must visit within the CDCL is Centennial Flat, a landscape comprising Joshua tree and higher elevation pinyon pine woodlands enveloped by the Malpais Mesa and Coso Range Wilderness Areas, Death Valley National Park, and Owens Lake. These protected lands provide habitat linkages and climate refuge for numerous species of animals and plants as well as ample recreational opportunities. Centennial Flat represents one of the only intact Joshua tree nurseries in Western Inyo County and is home to the imperiled Mohave Ground Squirrel, a California Threatened species and BLM sensitive species. Protection of Centennial Flat provides connectivity between populations of this Mojave Desert obligate. This place also holds some of the richest historic cultural sites in the California Desert with remains of Native American rock shelters and old foot and mule trails established during the Gold Rush. Although the original tree from the album cover has fallen down, CDCL designation helps ensure that future generations of U2 fans (and everyone else) can continue the pilgrimage to the California desert to celebrate the Joshua tree and other natural and historic qualities.



The wide open expanse of Centennial Flat and the Joshua trees that inhabit it. Photo: Jora Fogg





Sunny, beautiful Conglomerate Mesa provides exceptional views through Joshua trees. Photo: Tom Budlong

## California Desert Conservation Lands Mineral Withdrawal

Despite the intent to manage California Desert Conservation Lands for conservation and recreation, the California Desert Conservation Lands are not truly protected because they are still open to destructive mining. The BLM is moving forward with a phased mineral withdrawal through the NEPA process this year. Phase one totals 1.4 million acres. A complete mineral withdrawal would ensure that new mining claims are not permitted in the California Desert Conservation Lands, however rockhounding and small-scale recreational mining would still be permitted. A mineral withdrawal will provide the California Desert National Conservation Lands with the certainty of protection for the next 20 years. Concurrently, revised legislation introduced by Sen. Feinstein and Rep. Cook would permanently withdraw all 2.86 million acres of CDCLs. The BLM is now accepting public comments on mineral withdrawal. Please visit our website for up to date information on how to comment and a list of public meetings.



## ▶▶ FIELD GUIDE

# Off Trail Travel

**Words: Ben Wickham, Illustration: Autumn Eanes**

"We will leave the trail," I'd tell my students when I taught at an outdoor school. This was a rule for our week together. I believe that on every outing a person should leave the trail at least once. Trails can lack creativity. Fewer discoveries take place on trails. You never know what you will find when you wander away from the peopled path and into the woods for a while.

Kids are great because they're willing to ask questions. They would ask, "aren't we going to hurt plants if we walk on them?" I love teachable moments and kids are always willing to explore answers to their questions. To answer an important question like that as we considered leaving the trail, this is the process my students and I worked through to decide if it was appropriate.

## Know Leave No Trace Principles

Leave No Trace (LNT) is the foundation for outdoor etiquette, and among other things it covers travelling off trail. Many of the regulations you'll see on a trailhead sign or your wilderness permit are based on LNT. LNT advises that a group travelling off trail should spread out. Walking in a single file line- even three or four hikers can create the beginnings of a social trail that others will follow. Also, step on durable surfaces like rock or downed wood as much as possible.

## Justify It

If you're thinking of leaving the trail, be able to justify why you're choosing to go off trail in the first place. Do you need to go to the bathroom? Is there a hazard on the trail that's forcing you off? You would like to get to the creek for water or to have lunch. You see a pretty wildflower and you'd like to get a closer look. These examples are either human necessities or opportunities for personal enrichment and are probably reasonably justified. When it comes to cutting switchbacks, laziness isn't justified.

## Be Purposeful

If you've taken a second to justify veering off the beaten path, take one more second to consider the best way to do it. Look around. What is the least impactful way to get to that flower? Imagine that a small field of grass separates you from the flower. Can you walk around the grass to give the vegetation a break? Do you see a natural line of rocks where you can hop scotch to the flower? Is there a downed tree you can use as a bridge? If yes, go for it. If no, think a little longer. Is this the best place to get a close look at this flower? Maybe there will be a more accessible flower down the trail? Maybe not? If your curiosity is killing you, maybe it is okay in this instance to walk through the grass.

You'll often find there is not a definitive answer, which is important to remember in a world where we often see things in only black or white. What is most important is the thoughtful process.







# STEWARDSHIP

## Stewardship Highlights by Ben Wickham

Since last fall's *Jeffrey Pine Journal* went to print, a lot of you came out in full force for several successful volunteer stewardship events. We worked in Black Canyon in the White Mountains for National Public Lands Day with the Inyo National Forest and Eastern Sierra Four Wheel Drive Club. For BLM National Public Lands Day, with the help of Bishop BLM, the Inyo National Forest, and Eastern Sierra Land Trust, we planted 600 plants to restore winter deer habitat impacted by the Round Fire and we maintained the Lower Rock Creek Trail. In Bodie, Friends of the Inyo partnered with Bishop BLM, the Bodie Hills Conservation Partnership, Bodie Foundation, and Bodie Hills State Park (that's a lot of Bodies). We cleared brush to protect historic buildings from wildfire and removed fence to aid animal migration. For the Fall Highball, a staggering 95 of you came out to help clean up popular climbing areas around Bishop.

While so many groups supported our work in 2016, the following foundations and organizations deserve extra appreciation: Inyo National Forest, Bishop and Ridgecrest offices of the Bureau of Land Management, Devils Postpile National Monument, Mono and Inyo counties, Town of Mammoth Lakes and Measure R, National Forest Foundation, National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance, Rose Foundation, Southern California Edison, Conservation Lands Foundation,

Patagonia, Metabolic Studio, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Eastern Sierra Audubon, Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association, California Audubon, Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access, and Mammoth Lakes Recreation.

While we're in transition here at Friends of the Inyo, we will keep up with our annual stewardship work. This is due to the great partnerships we have here on the Eastern Sierra and to your unending support. Upcoming volunteer events for the summer of 2017 are on the calendar. Our Stewardship Crew will be working on restoration in rugged places like the Tablelands and Inyo Mountains. Later in the summer, we'll give them a respite from the heat while they work in high country wilderness. Planning for another weeklong volunteer event like the Humphrey's Basin Volunteer Project is in the works, so stay tuned.

Once again, thank you so much for all of your energy and enthusiasm at volunteer events across the Eastern Sierra and for all of the other ways you support your public lands. We can all agree that this is a special landscape that we benefit from in so many ways. Finding agreement provides us opportunities to make the world better, and the power of public lands is they provide us the opportunity to work alongside each other and build community bridges. See you out on trails this summer.



Bishop BLM and Westin Monache Resort employees get after pulling fence posts in the Bodie Hills. Photo: Casey Penn

### Casey Penn

Casey's tireless work ethic drove our stewardship programs for the last few years, whether on the crew or as Stewardship Programs Manager. Casey's wealth of knowledge and work precision helped form a professional program that proudly cared for public lands throughout the Eastern Sierra. We are grateful for Casey's efforts. Thank Casey if you see him skiing around Mammoth this spring.

Casey works with Summer of Stewardship volunteers in Mammoth to clear a felled tree. Photo: Ben Wickham



### Paul McFarland

Paul moved on from Friends of the Inyo to a year-round job with Mono County. It's impossible in a 50 word section to describe how significant Paul's contributions have been to public lands in the Eastern Sierra. All we can say is thank you for your passion Paul, and we hope to bump into you sometime while wandering through a Jeffrey Pine forest.

Paul shares the art of the crosscut saw with a young volunteer. Photo: Ben Wickham





## EXPLORATION

# A Wild Sierra Winter with Winter Wildlands Alliance

by Ben Wickham

In the midst of an unforgettable winter, Friends of the Inyo partnered with Winter Wildlands Alliance to enhance human powered recreation on our public lands. We kicked off the winter by celebrating wild winter adventure through the movie Monumental: Skiing Our National Parks in December and the Backcountry Film Festival in January. By working with Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association and the Inyo National Forest, we held the two film events in the auditorium at the Welcome Center, and each night, over 160 came out to enjoy activities and places that we can all agree are special.

We carried the excitement and stoke from these movies outside into the snowy mountains with two new Eastern Sierra programs. We piloted a winter Nordic trailhead host program where Friends of the Inyo staff or volunteers spent the day stationed at the trailhead or skiing the trails while offering information or assistance to the diversity of recreationalists enjoying our great Nordic Trails. You may have seen us out at the snowpark at Rock Creek, on the pathway by the visitor center as you were headed to the Shady Rest Trails, or in the parking lot at Obsidian Dome. We were out on busy Saturdays and select weekdays throughout the winter.

Many memories from this epic winter stick out. We saw kids hopping out of mini vans to play in the giant piles of snow at Obsidian Dome. People from all ages and walks of life were out on trails with Nordic skis or snowshoes. We were up in Rock Creek giving advice the day after many natural avalanches swept across the road above East Fork. Many turned around or chose an alternate route as all of us were in awe of the power of nature that day. While there was the occasional dog off leash and once in a while too much dog poop peppered the parking lot, overall we were impressed by everyone's happiness and respect towards each other. We're thankful

to have shared the trails with you this memorable winter.

Winter Wildlands Alliance established SnowSchool, a travelling curriculum of winter focused, experiential lessons for grade school students. It's an opportunity for youth to experience the magic of winter, either in a new way or sometimes for the first time. Winter Wildlands Alliance and Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association brought together groups like Mammoth Mountain Ski Area, Mammoth Lakes Elementary, Eastern Sierra Avalanche Center, and scientists from the UCSB hydrology program to host a day of SnowSchool for 50 Mammoth Lakes Elementary 5th graders. From Friends of the Inyo, Sam Roberts and Ben Wickham offered support as instructors. The plan was to spend the day in the forest behind Main Lodge and explore snow science, watersheds, and animal tracks. The kids would also get to ride the gondola, check out a one of a kind weather station, and then slide on their bellies down the hill below it.

January 24 was to be the day. Many of us remember what hit that week. Some folks never got out of their driveway. If passable at all, many roads were only one lane. School got cancelled, and we rescheduled SnowSchool for February 7. Once again, another storm hit, and the school called a "red day." We rescheduled for March 21, and although another storm hit in full force, we got the kids out in the snow. We saw smiles all day and heard zero complaints about the weather. It was amazing to see kids learning in the winter environment. They learned to dig snow pits, built watershed models of their home, explored animal tracks and experienced the place through all five senses (a few boys, unable to resist the urge to observe a tree through the sense of taste, even licked tree bark). Thank you to Winter Wildlands Alliance for the partnerships that helped all of us enjoy the wild winter around us this year.

A Mammoth Elementary 5th grader "meets a tree" during SnowSchool. Photo: Ben Wickham



The belly slide is the highlight of SnowSchool. Photo: Ben Wickham





## EXPLORATION

## Get out!

## Discovering the Secrets of the Alabama Hills by Christopher Langley

Visitors to the Alabama Hills near Lone Pine, California can find something of interest for almost every taste or inclination. If interested in geology, you can find the fault line along which one of the most powerful earthquakes in California happened on the night of March 26, 1872. It killed at least ten percent of the population and damaged or destroyed every adobe structure in Lone Pine.

The scarp is basically unchanged since 1872 because of the low annual rainfall. Turn right on an unmarked dirt road just after going west crossing the L.A. Aqueduct and travel until you are sitting on top of an area overlooking the Owens Valley. You are on top of the fault line and with careful searching you can find displaced irrigation ditches and even a creek bed north of the areas.

For hikers there is the brand new, as yet unnamed trail that climbs from near the Owens Valley floor to Whitney Portal at 8300 feet (FOI's Stew Crew helped build this trail). You'll be a robust pioneer if you make it the thirteen miles. There is a "grand canyon" as well that can be found with a little help from a member of the Alabama Hills Stewardship Group or experienced local resident.

Artists and photographers have long been drawn here. Ansel Adams did several famous photographs in the "rocks." The most accessible is one he took with the point of a local rock formation called "Shark Fin" and matched it to the top of Lone Pine Peak. You can find the spot a few hundred feet down Movie Road. Famous landscape artist Maynard Dixon lived in Lone Pine for a year with his wife Dorothea Lange and captured the special light of the Alabamas in his paintings.

Perhaps most famous are the films of the Alabama Hills. Nearly 400 films, and more than a thousand commercials, have worked in the rocks. If you are interested, stop in the Museum of Western Film History, see the movie orientation film and some of the exhibits and pick up the self-guided tour of movie locations in the hills. With luck and persistence, you can find lots of movie locations, including those from such recent films as *Tremors*, *Iron Man*, and most recently *Django Unchained*.

To get to the Alabama Hills, motor on down (or up) Highway 395. In the middle of Lone Pine you will find their only traffic light. Turn west and in about three miles turn north on Movie Road. You are now in the heart of Hollywood's "favorite" movie location since 1920.

The Alabama Hills are in the shadow of Mt. Whitney, at almost 14,500 feet the tallest mountain in the 48 contiguous states. The Alabama rocks are geologically related to the Sierra but are a separate formation. One type of rock is metamorphosed volcanic rock and is 150 to 200 million years old. The other rocks are more

prominent because of their varied rounded shapes with many indentations and arches. They date back 80 million years. The Mobius Arch is where the Movie Road turns suddenly east. It is well marked, has ample parking and only a ten-minute walk.

The movies also left a "faux" mining structure called an arastra. Follow the first dirt road that goes to the right after turning onto Movie Road and eventually you will see a round structure of small boulders, with a wooden centerpiece. Once thought to have been built for the classic Gregory Peck western *Yellow Sky*, it is now realized it was there in *West of Nevada* filmed in a decade before.

The hills are rich with natural history, and spring usually brings lots of flowering cycles. It begins with scarlet milk-vetch, also known as scarlet locoweed, followed by desert paintbrush, then yellow desert daisies and apricot mallow, and finally desert asters and desert peach. Coyotes, ravens, jackrabbits, and even a rare black bear or mountain lion are encountered occasionally. Always step mindfully because there are some sidewinders and Mojave greens that make their homes among the rocks.

Finally, many find the Alabama Hills a peaceful, even spiritual place, good for healing and calming the nerves jangled by modern life. Spending a few hours doing nothing but listening, smelling, touching and breathing is a wonderful way to relate to the beauty of this area. Dawn and dusk are special times. The light is rare, the air pure, the shapes and shadows of the boulders fanciful. Finally, the wind picking up the smell of the sage is good for the soul.

*Chris Langley founded the Alabama Hills Stewardship Group, and is a writer, historian, and long time Lone Pine resident.*



Imitating Ansel Adams in the Alabama Hills. Photo: Chris Langley



## EXPLORATION

# Owens Lake Bird Festival

Many Reasons to Celebrate by Ben Wickham

Today, Owens Lake stands out because of the staggering numbers of birds that visit. One April day, over 60,000 shorebirds were counted, over 20,000 American Avocets may be seen at the right time in spring, and fall numbers of the Northern Shoveler have been as high as 30,000. Also, Owens Lake is California's largest nesting location for the secretive Snowy Plover. So have we piqued your interest in the Owens Lake Bird Festival?

It wasn't this way for a long time after water got diverted from the Owens Valley and directed to Los Angeles. While birding seeps and springs in the area in the 1980's, Mike Prather saw opportunity. He noticed a small amount of birds migrating through, and it occurred to Mike that if these few birds were still here, we could bring a lot of them back. He did not consider how hard this might be. He knew he just had to get started.



## OWENS LAKE — BIRD FESTIVAL —

Mike wasn't the only one working towards a positive outcome. Collaboration between local residents, nonprofit groups, government agencies, and Los Angeles Department of Water and Power played a key role in the astounding restoration that's taken place in the past 20 years.

"I believe that there's a solution somewhere in the middle where reasonable people can come together," Mike said.

This is what we have today, a place where the birds are back, the dust storms are gone, and people can enjoy a massive migration that makes us ponder our connections to the greater world around us. Owens Lake is also a reminder for how important all of our work in the conservation community is. We need to see the

opportunity, and then get started around a solution that reasonable people can agree on. That's another reason to celebrate Owens Lake during the Owens Lake Bird Festival.

The Owens Lake Bird Festival is a collective effort between Friends of the Inyo, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Inyo County, Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association, California Audubon, Eastern Sierra Audubon, Metabolic Studio and many others.

## Upcoming EVENTS

28-30 April	<b>3rd Annual Owens Lake Bird Festival</b>
13 May	<b>International Migratory Bird Day: Redding Canyon</b>
3 June	<b>Summer of Stewardship: National Trails Day</b>
10 June	<b>Breakfast with a Botanist</b>
15 June	<b>Mono Basin Stewardship Day</b>
17 June	<b>Twin Lakes Trails Day</b>
24 June	<b>June Lake Trails Day</b>
5 August	<b>Bodie Stewardship Project</b>
19 August	<b>Glass Mountain Exploration</b>
3rd week Aug.	<b>Volunteer Wilderness Stewardship Project</b>
30 Sept.	<b>National Public Lands Day</b>



# PINE DROPS

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

By Jora Fogg and Ben Wickham

### PRESIDENT OBAMA'S CONSERVATION LEGACY

Former President Obama established an unparalleled conservation legacy. He used the Antiquities Act to conserve more public lands than any of his predecessors. He also took major steps forward in making sure our parks and other protected public lands tell the story of all Americans. In his last weeks as president, Obama designated Bears Ears (UT), Gold Butte (NV), Cascade-Siskiyou (CA), and expansions to the California Coastal National Monument as well as three historical sites in the southeast that honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement.

As we work to protect a place that has been blessed with widespread permanent protections, Friends of the Inyo is proud and honored to celebrate these designations and all of the conservation achievements of the past eight years. We have a renewed commitment to collaborative conservation, and together we will uphold the conservation gains made, steward these places, and ensure our bedrock environmental laws remain fully intact.

### NATIONAL POLICY ISSUES

Last fall, a panel at SHIFT, a conference that leverages outdoor recreation for conservation gains, discussed proposed

legislation that would allow mountain bikes in designated wilderness areas. A panelist suggested that one positive outcome of this debate was that it offered a whole new generation of recreationalists and environmentalists the opportunity to discover, contemplate, and debate the inherent values and necessity of the Wilderness Act, one of America's seminal environmental laws.

On so many issues nationally, we hope we're at a similar turning point. With the Women's March and other causes, we're seeing civic engagement at a level unseen in decades. For example, a bill to begin the transfer of public lands to the states was withdrawn because the American public spoke out against it (HR621). In this case, many non-traditional allies, including conservationists, the outdoor industry, and hunters and anglers, came together to support a common cause.

Considering the new political climate, keep an eye on bills that are in various stages working their way through Congress. Some bills would gut the Antiquities Act (SB132, SB33) or terminate the Environmental Protection Agency (HR861). Other bills may cut the budget of the EPA, which was created by another bedrock environmental law which ensures clean air and water for all Americans (HR958, HR637). Another bill would streamline oil and gas development within national parks (HJ46). Stay tuned. There's surely more to come, but if we come together and speak out, we will be heard.

There is also proactive conservation legislation to support. In February, Alan Lowenthal (CA) and Dave Reichert



Friends of the Inyo collaborated with partners in the Bodie Hills Conservation Partnership to provide ecoflights over the Bodie Hills to build support for permanent protection. Photo: Sam Roberts



(WA) introduced a bipartisan house resolution affirming America's federal lands belong to all Americans and are a national treasure that should be maintained for future generations. The resolution highlights the importance of public lands to the national economy. Also, a bipartisan bill promises to permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a law that ensures public acquisition of private lands that adds to our American legacy of public, undeveloped places for future generations of people and wildlife. Potential national legislation that would be great for the Eastern Sierra are the California Desert Bills being put together by Senator Feinstein (SB32) and Congressman Cook (HR3368). Each bill would designate the Alabama Hills as a National Scenic Area.

## CALIFORNIA PRESERVATION LEGISLATION

An opportunity that may arise is that

local, grassroots action drives progress in conservation. One way is for non-profits like Friends of the Inyo to work with local agencies to provide capacity where budgets have been slashed. Another is for states to take the lead on environmental legislation. While this is not ideal for continuity across the country, it provides opportunities to move forward in progressive places like California and to provide a model for how conservation benefits our landscape and society.

In February, California State Senate leadership introduced a bill to guarantee environmental regulations and health protections in the event of federal rollbacks (SB49). This bill would make current federal clean air, climate, clean water, and endangered species standards state law. State bill 50 would prevent the sale of public lands.

## WHO WILL BE OUR PUBLIC LAND LEADERS?

Ryan Zinke, former Montana

Representative, has been confirmed as Secretary of the Interior. Zinke will appoint the Director of the BLM and the director of the NPS and FWS. As of going to print, hearings for the Secretary of Agriculture, former Georgia governor Sonny Perdue, are yet to be scheduled. If confirmed he will appoint a new Chief of the USDA Forest Service.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

The most effective way to speak out for public lands protection and the environment is to call your representatives of Congress and voice your opinion on these bills and resolutions. A great way to save your representatives numbers in your phone is to text your zip code to: 913-586-4849. Remember to be constructive and reasoned in supporting public lands and conservation issues. Also, take the time to reach out and thank representatives when they support the environment and other issues that matter to you.



Overwhelming community consensus has pushed forward progress on the Owens River Water Trail. Thank you to everyone who commented and voiced their support. Photo: Mike Prather

# Member Profile: Julie Anne Hopkins

## What brought you to the Eastern Sierra?

The very first time I visited the Eastern Sierra was on a botany field trip. Our destination was the Bodie Hills. Driving up the Highway 395 corridor north from Walker Pass, I was in a state of amazement. "I'm going to live over here someday," I thought. Independently, Tom (my husband) had the same idea, so relocating to Swall Meadows was a very exciting and easy decision. It will take the rest of our lives to learn about the wealth of native plants and wildlife and their supporting habitats here in this magnificent region.

## You worked as a botanist and a wildlife biologist for the BLM for a long time. Any special memories stand out?

For the most part I really appreciated my job with the Bureau of Land Management. I have worked out of 4 California BLM field offices, which enriched my appreciation of our amazing natural diversity here in California, as well as my knowledge of BLM policy and programs and the challenges of public land management. What stands out most is all of the solitary time I spent in vast, amazing landscapes. Those were the times I saw an osprey spear a rainbow trout, mass pronghorn migration, a mamma scrub jay feeding young, or stood in the midst of hundreds of grassland/wildflower acres breathing in the sweet fragrance.

## How does your background as a scientist drive your passion to participate in conservation efforts?

I want to understand ecological systems and how they function. This requires questions, research, observation, and empirical testing. Working on public lands provides exposure to an endless array of opportunities to implement research projects such as restoration and revegetation, or understanding species behavior and requirements prior to approval of projects. I also really love biological data collection and sampling and analyzing the data to make positive changes on the ground based on the observations previously collected.

## What are the biggest changes you've observed on public lands in the Eastern Sierra since you've been here?

We moved here in 2011- the beginning of our recent drought. Very little water and the immediate consequences has been the most obvious change in our short time. Dead and dying stands of conifers, devastating fires, and invasive weed infestations that follow (this has been the most obvious and personal).

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

Tom has been a member of Friends of the Inyo for a long time and received the Jeffrey Pine Journal while we were still living in Santa Cruz. I think the credit really goes to Paul McFarland, and he is a wonderful representative. Once we moved over I picked up the phone.

## Are there any books that stand out as favorites?

Many. I will mention only *The Invention of Nature* (Wulf, 2015) about Alexander Von Humboldt (our Father of Ecology), which I thoroughly enjoyed. What deeply struck me is how recent Humboldt's exploration to South America was. Yes, I mean recent. Look at the changes on our planet in just 200 years. It is frightening and amazing.



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

It is horrible timing for this question. How can one even begin to prioritize the challenges as the Trump Administration takes charge? It is a ball of confusion. Amongst the top:

- Protecting the Endangered Species Act, which is being dismantled by industry friendly lawmakers as I type.
- Retention of federal lands, rather than transfer to state and private interests.
- Inadequate funding allocated to federal land management agencies.

We can all get involved locally and work on these critical issues together to protect our natural heritage.

## What do you hope to see in the future?

I hope to see an increase in the number of young, smart, caring, upstart environmentalists on our field trips, volunteer outings, on our boards and staff, and filling government seats. I hope elder conservationists can fuel inspiration for our youth.

## Do you have a favorite place in the Inyo National Forest? Is there anywhere you'd still like to visit for the first time?

I am still new to the INF so I do not have a fav yet. I really want to hike into Humphreys Basis in 2017- first time, if you can believe it.

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

Key the bags of plants I brought home and learn more about them. Also cooking, knitting, gardening, petting my kitties, reading, journaling, photography- I fill my time easily.

*Julie Anne is currently the Conservation Chair of the Bristlecone Chapter of the California Native Plant Society and will be leading outings during the upcoming Owens Lake Bird Festival.*



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