

THE  
**JEFFREY PINE JOURNAL**

*Newsletter of Friends of the Inyo*

SPRING - SUMMER 2004

VOLUME II, ISSUE I



**Field Guide  
to the  
Conifers of  
the  
Eastern Sierra:**

*Easy to use  
pull-out guide to  
Eastside Evergreens*

**An Extreme  
Winter:**

*Illegal  
snowmobile use  
threatens Hoover  
Wilderness Additions*

**Summer  
Outings:**  
*Free naturalist  
hikes from the  
crest of the Sierra  
to the top of the  
Great Basin*

*Summer atop the White Mountains, America's highest desert mountain range*

*Working to preserve the public lands and wildlife of the Eastern Sierra*

THE  
Jeffrey Pine Journal

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1

SPRING-SUMMER 2004

Newsletter of  
*Friends of the Inyo*



Post Office Box 64  
Lee Vining, California 93541

275 S. Main St.  
Bishop, California 93514  
(760) 873-6400

[www.friendsoftheinyo.org](http://www.friendsoftheinyo.org)

**Board of Directors**

Lisa Jaeger – Round Valley, CA  
Frank Stewart – Round Valley, CA  
Linda Emerson – Bishop, CA  
Todd Vogel – Bishop, CA

**Staff**

Paul McFarland, Executive Director

**Friends of the Inyo is a local non-profit conservation organization dedicated to preserving the wild-life, cultural and recreational values of the Eastern Sierra's public lands.**



Printed on Recycled Paper

**The Cover Photo**



Special thanks to local wilderness photographer John Dittli for donating his image of prickly pear cactus blooming along the crest of the White Mountains. See more of John's beautiful work at [www.johndittli.com](http://www.johndittli.com).

The Jeffrey Pine Journal, a biannual publication of Friends of the Inyo, is named after the Eastern Sierra's most aromatic conifer, *Pinus jeffreyi*. The Jeffrey Pine Journal is distributed free to members of Friends of the Inyo and is available at various locations in the Eastern Sierra and beyond. Written material and images herein are the sole property of Friends of the Inyo or are used with exclusive permission. We welcome submissions of artwork, writing and field observations.

Please send all submissions and comments to Paul McFarland at [paulmc@friendsoftheinyo.org](mailto:paulmc@friendsoftheinyo.org). Thanks.

# President's Message

by Frank Stewart

It is an exciting time within the Friends of the Inyo organization. For many years, local folks have been carrying on advocacy work using our free time after work. Our files have resided in boxes stashed behind the couch in someone's extra room. News about what we were working on was spread by word of mouth.

That has all changed for good. By the time this newsletter goes to press, our new Executive Director, Paul McFarland, will be staffing an office space on Main Street in Bishop, and we will be running ads in the "help wanted" section of the paper in order to hire a new staff person to assist in our work. Even though there will still be plenty of "after hours" volunteer work by folks like you, Friends of the Inyo will now benefit from the full time efforts of two full time staffers.

These changes are well timed. Citizens across the state are in the midst of a campaign to save California's last best places. From the north coast to the San Gabriel's and up the eastside of the Sierra, there is a statewide movement to permanently preserve California's wild heritage, and Friends of the Inyo is playing no small part in that effort. Many of you have been instrumental in helping to move this dream of preserving more of our public lands as Wilderness through your words and letters.

As you know, our backyard, the mountains just outside the small towns on the eastside, is a national treasure. Surrounded by some of the most spectacular landscapes in the west, the Eastern Sierra offers opportunities for dispersed low impact recreation that are hard to match. In the span of just a single day, one can embark from the major Pacific Rim cities of the Bay Area or Southern Cal. and sleep that night a few miles up a trail in a wild spot with only stars for a ceiling. The thing is, it's an equally short drive for land speculators and developers.

Within 20 years the population of California is expected to swell to 50 million people. Think about what that means. With that kind of population, all of the wild areas in California are going to feel a pinch. Some areas are being coveted for resources like old growth timber, minerals, and water resources, while others have felt first hand the growing impact from irresponsible dirt bike and quad riders who are pushing vehicle use farther off road every summer. Other wild places, like the Eastern Sierra, will feel the impact of resort development as speculators thirst for places to make a quick buck. So is it an "either-or" situation? Either we make money off of the land or we save wild places from careless misuse? I think not.

A glance in the local tourism brochures and vacation planners reveals that the most common advertising photos inside show people hiking, fishing, horseback riding and camping within designated Wilderness Areas. This tells me that many still value solitude and natural beauty. So many Americans are seeking places that offer a quick chance to get out into the wilderness, if only for an afternoon or weekend. The Eastern Sierra is just such a place.

We can have it both ways. Local residents and our tourist-based economy, alike, will continue to benefit from the enriching backdrop of the eastside's Wilderness. Those wilderness areas will also continue to provide homes for rare plants and animals, and be refuges of pure air and water. They are places that are worth saving. That's what Friends of the Inyo is all about, saving the wild places along the eastside of the Sierra Nevada. Please join us.



*-Frank Stewart is a General Building Contractor and has lived in the Eastern Sierra for the last 21 years. His love affair with the Sierra wilderness started on his first backpacking trip to Sixty Lakes Basin back in 1967*

# Outings

*All hikes are free and open to all. Please bring a hat, plenty of water, and some food.*

**May 8th- Pinyon woodland to Marble Canyon, Proposed White Mountain Wilderness.** Come celebrate International Migratory Bird Day on this wonderful downhill hike from the Great Basin down to the Mojave Desert. From the starting point along the road to the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest, this hike will drop over 2300 feet through pinyon pine woodlands to the steep-walled riparian forest of Marble Canyon and out the alluvial fan to the waiting cars at the mouth of Black Canyon. Expect some bushy and possibly wet walking. Meet at 8am in front of the White Mountain Research Station, 4 miles east of Hwy 395 on East Line Street. Shuttle cars provided. 7.5 miles, moderately strenuous.

**May 29th - Black Mountain, Proposed White Mountains Wilderness.** A hike short on distance but long on views, this moderately strenuous 3-mile roundtrip hike to the top of the southernmost peak in the White Mountains yields expansive views of the Eastern Sierra escarpment and the entire Owens Valley. In addition to the peak itself, we'll be searching for a disjunct grove of bristlecone pines. This hike will entail some moderate scrambling. Meet at the Big Pine Triangle Campground (corner of Highways 395 and 168 just north of Big Pine) at 8:30 am.

**June 5th - Birch Creek, Proposed White Mountain Wilderness.** This moderate 6-mile roundtrip hike will take us from the Mojave Desert to the Great Basin as we walk through steep-walled Birch Creek Canyon. A perennial desert creek critical to local wildlife, Birch Creek has just recently been protected from damaging off-road vehicle use. Come out and explore this magnificent desert canyon and its recovering riparian woodlands. Meet at the Big Pine Triangle Campground (corner of Highway 395 and 168 just north of Big Pine) at 8:30 am.

**June 12th - Glass Creek Meadow, Owens River Headwaters Addition to the Ansel Adams Wilderness.** A moderate 4-mile roundtrip hike will take us up past the Glass Creek falls to Glass Creek Meadow. Home to over 40 species of butterflies, dozens of seeps and springs, Yosemite toads and tree frogs, there are few places on the Eastside as magical as Glass Creek Meadow. Meet at 8:30 am at the Obsidian Dome Road turn-off, 11 miles north of the Highway 203 and 395 junction and 3.5 miles south of the June Lake Junction, on Highway 395.

**June 26th - Molybdenite Creek, Proposed Hoover Wilderness Additions.** Meandering through shady aspen groves, this moderate 4-mile round trip hike leads to a beautiful grove of ancient Sierra junipers. Along with the trees, the wildflowers should be wonderful. For those who wish, we may continue up the canyon to enjoy the plants

of the higher elevation lodgepole forests. Meet at 8:30 am in front of the Mono Lake Committee in Lee Vining; we'll carpool to the trailhead from there.

**July 3rd - Yost Meadow, Proposed Owens River Headwaters Addition to the Ansel Adams Wilderness.** This moderately strenuous 7.5 mile round trip hike will take us through a variety of Eastern Sierra habitats – meadows, streams, rocky slopes – on the way

to Yost Pass which looks down into the wild Owens River Headwaters. Meet at 8:30 am at the Information Kiosk behind the June Lake Junction store at the junction of Highways 395 and 158.

**July 4th - First Annual Friends of the Inyo Eco-thon.** See Pinedrops on page 11 for details.

**July 17th - Glass Creek Meadow, Owens River Headwaters Addition to the Ansel Adams Wilderness.** Visit the meadow in its full mid-summer wildflower bloom. See above for description and directions.

**July 31st - Blanco Mountain, White Mountains.** Explore the crest of America's highest desert mountain range on this moderate 5.5-mile roundtrip hike to the peak of Blanco Mountain. We'll walk through desert meadows and search for remnants of the White's mining past on our way to expansive views of the

wild White Mountain crest and beyond. Meet at 8:30 am at the entrance to Grandview Campground, 5 miles north of Westgard Pass along the road to the Schulman Grove of Ancient Bristlecone Pines.

**August 14th - Green & Brown Lakes, John Muir Wilderness Additions.** A moderately strenuous 6.5-mile roundtrip hike leads through aspen groves up into the perfectly carved canyon of Green & Brown Lakes. The expansive views of the Coyote Plateau are a short climb out of this glacial trough. Meet at 9 am at the South Lake trailhead parking lot.

**August 21st - Robinson Lake, John Muir Wilderness Additions.** A short, but steep, moderately strenuous 2.5 mile roundtrip hike from the Onion Valley Campground leads to beautiful Robinson Lake, a glacial tarn in the shadow of Independence and University Peaks. Meet at Onion Valley Campground, at the top of Onion Valley Road west of Independence at 10 am.

**August 28th - Glass Creek Meadow, Owens River Headwaters Addition to the Ansel Adams Wilderness.** Visit the meadow in its grasshopper phase. See above for description and directions.

*\*We may schedule more if time & staffing allow. Check our website or call (760) 873-6400 for updated info.*



Andy Sifers

# An Extreme Winter

## *Illegal snowmobile use threatens Hoover Wilderness Additions*

For many of the year-round residents of the headwaters of the West Walker River, it didn't turn out to be the quiet, restful winter they had planned on. Despite a Forest Service regulation that bans motorized vehicles from the steep ridges and bowls just southeast of Sonora Pass on the Humboldt-Toiyabe (H-T) National Forest, snowmobiles are taking this potential Wilderness Area by storm.

While many have been aware of the unchecked, illegal use of snowmobiles in the Leavitt Bowl area, it took documentation from Forest Service aerial patrols funded by California State Parks gas-tax funds to bring home how out of control the situation has become. Over 100 snowmobiles have been seen riding illegally in the closed area, and riders have invaded the neighboring Emigrant Wilderness and Yosemite National Park.

Thankfully, the H-T has finally proposed to begin enforcing the long-standing closure regulation next season (Winter 2005). While cheered by many who wish to see the law followed and this spectacular landscape preserved as Wilderness, the Forest Service's proposal to protect the proposed wilderness area has riled motorized advocates.

This area, also known as the Hoover West Wilderness Planning Area (Hoover West WPA), was included in the last statewide wilderness bill, which passed the U.S. House of Representative in 1983. The House Committee report found that this "highly qualified 49,200

acre addition to the existing Hoover Wilderness has 24 alpine lakes...possesses outstanding scenic beauty and is characterized by prominent peaks over 10,000 feet. Much of the area is above timberline, and consists of fragile alpine ecosystems. Nonmotorized recreation use is the highest for any RARE II roadless areas on the eastern flank of the Sierra, a testimony to the area's popularity." However, while the Senate-passed version of

this same bill, the California Wilderness Act of 1984, noted that the area would "be a logical addition to the existing Hoover Wilderness," it was dropped from the final bill sent to President Reagan. The future "consideration of a potential power line corridor" was cited as a reason to defer lasting, legal protection for these alpine lands.

For over 20 years, the wilderness character of the Hoover West WPA has been under Forest Service special orders prohibiting vehicle use in this popular backcountry destination. In 1986, the H-T NF recommended the Hoover West Planning Area for wilderness designation and committed to manage the area "for wilderness values for the life of the [Forest] plan." Unfortunately, these regulations were never enforced on the ground.



John Dittli

*Helen Lake Meadows, Proposed Hoover Wilderness Additions*

### No Ecological Impact?

The notion expressed by some that the impacts of this exploding illegal snowmobile use will "disappear with the melting snow" is wishful thinking.

In addition to jeopardizing the area's wilderness future, snowmobiles have a direct impact on the wildlife and water quality of the Hoover West WPA. Snowmobiles cause dramatic snow compaction, making the air spaces under the snow colder than normal. This causes mammals living in under-snow burrows to increase their metabolic rates, causing increased stress and mortality in a time that is already tough for many warm-blooded animals. Compacted snow also makes life more difficult for ungulates (deer and bighorn sheep) who are forced to dig through the hard packed snow for food, and restricts the mobility of species like the red fox. Researchers with the USDA found that since most of the snow compaction occurs on the first snowmobile pass, even minimal use of any area could cause considerable damage.

The EPA estimates that a single snowmobile discharges as much air pollution as about 100 cars. Most snowmobiles are powered by two-stroke engines that dump 25-30 percent of their fuel unburned out the tailpipe. This dumped fuel accumulates in the snow pack and runs into the streams and lakes that form the headwaters of the West Walker River. In early spring, these pollutants can increase the acidity of nearby water bodies and threaten the health of this major recreational fishery and watershed.

With snowmobile advocates working to undo the agency's resolve to enforce the law and open the area to unrestricted motorized use, it will be up to those who believe this area should be preserved as a quiet remnant of our American wilderness heritage to protect the Hoover West for future generations of people and animals.

- PM

### Get Involved

Your letters are urgently needed! Please send a brief letter to the Forest Service asking them to protect wilderness values by enforcing the law and issuing citations immediately. Please also express your support for designating the area as Wilderness!

EMAIL OR MAIL YOUR LETTER ASAP TO:

**Jack Troyer – Regional Forester**  
**324 25th Street**  
**Ogden, Utah 94401**  
**jtroyer@fs.fed.us**

For more information, please call Paul at (760) 873-6400

# How to Read the Tree

First, find a conifer - any of the more than a dozen species of evergreens that bear their seeds in cones.

Then follow the tree guide's branches up, answering the numbered questions found at the forks of the branches.

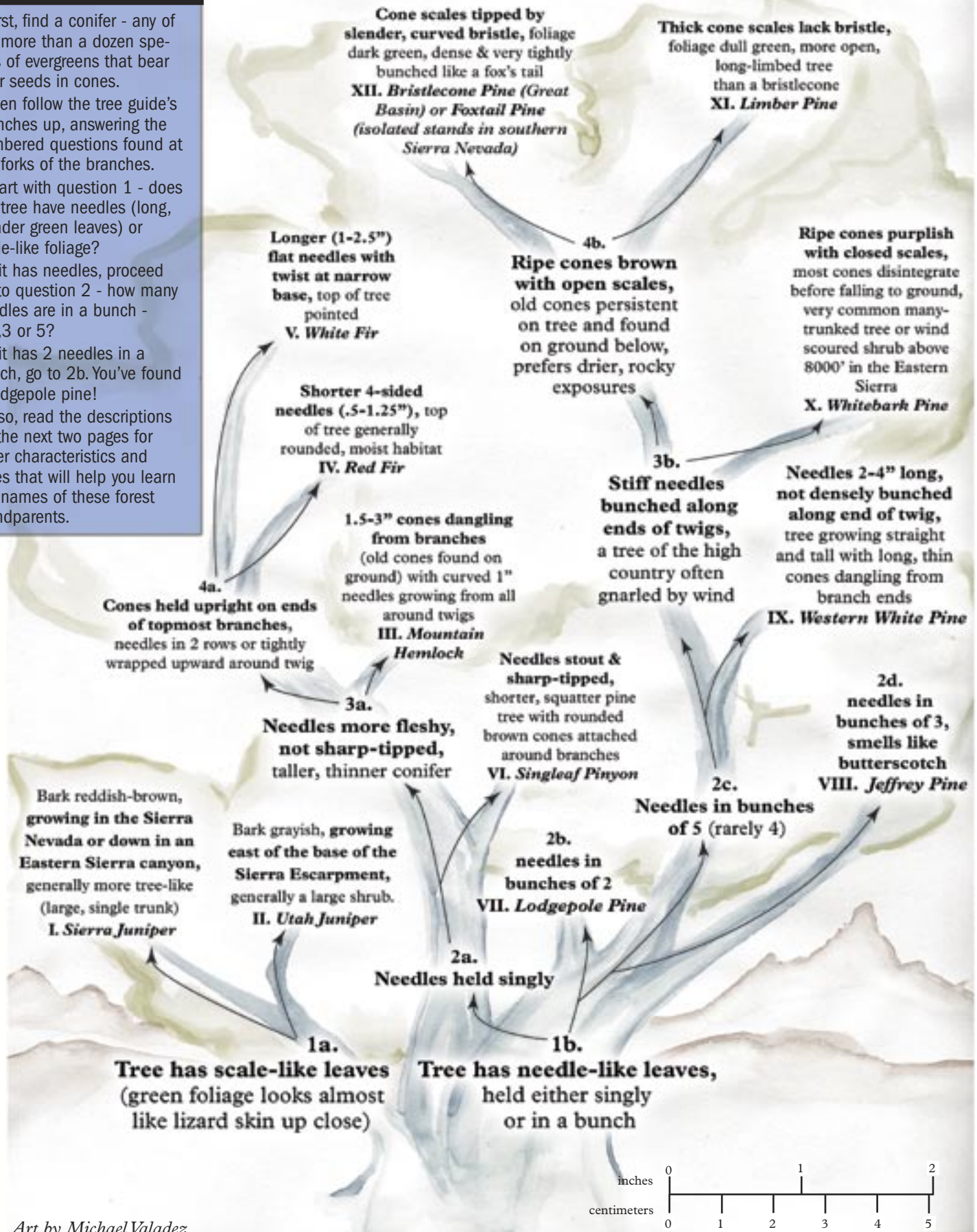
Start with question 1 - does the tree have needles (long, slender green leaves) or scale-like foliage?

If it has needles, proceed up to question 2 - how many needles are in a bunch - 1,2,3 or 5?

If it has 2 needles in a bunch, go to 2b. You've found a lodgepole pine!

Also, read the descriptions on the next two pages for other characteristics and clues that will help you learn the names of these forest grandparents.

# A TREE GUIDE TO EASTERN SIERRA CONIFERS



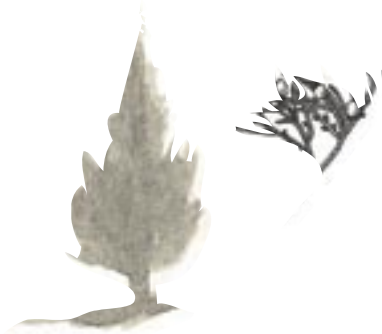
Art by Michael Valadez

# CYPRESS FAMILY - CUPRESSACEAE

## I. SIERRA JUNIPER - *Juniperus occidentalis*

One of the most picturesque trees of the Sierra, the Sierra Juniper is found mainly on **granite outcroppings and canyon walls** (6500-10,500'), where its **fat, red-barked trunk** and boughs are often sculpted by stiff winds.

Usually, one tree will bear only the **female blue-black berry-like cones**, while the **small (1/4")**, **orangish male cones** will be found on a separate tree. Look for Townsend's solitaires and other berry-eating birds on junipers in the fall and winter.



## II. UTAH JUNIPER - *Juniperus osteosperma*

A harbinger of the Great Basin east of the Sierra escarpment, the rounded, shrubby Utah Juniper provides welcome shade to one wandering the sagebrush deserts of the Bodie Hills, the east shore of Mono Lake or the White-Inyo range.

Eaten by many birds and small mammals, the **grayish-purple berries** are found on the same tree as the small orange pollen leaves. The **gray, shreddy bark** has been used to make cordage, clothing, and sandals, while the berries of the juniper are used to flavor gin.



# PINE FAMILY - PINACEAE

## III. MOUNTAIN HEMLOCK - *Tsuga mertensiana*

The **drooping top** of this high forest tree, like the tip of a wizard's floppy conical hat, is a dead giveaway. On the dry slopes of the Eastern Sierra, **moisture-loving Hemlocks** are restricted to shady canyons and north facing slopes north of South Lake. The **blue-green needles**, **purplish-brown cones**, and **gracefully downcurved branch tips** led John Muir to label the Hemlock "the most singularly beautiful of all the California coniferae."

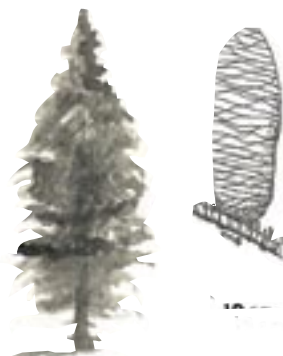
The drooping top of this high forest tree, like the tip of a wizard's floppy conical hat, is a dead giveaway. On the dry slopes of the Eastern Sierra, moisture-loving Hemlocks are restricted to shady canyons and north facing slopes north of South Lake. The blue-green needles, purplish-brown cones, and gracefully downcurved branch tips led John Muir to label the Hemlock "the most singularly beautiful of all the California coniferae."



## IV. RED FIR - *Abies magnifica*

Living up to its species epithet, *magnifica*, the Red Fir is a truly magnificent high forest tree. Like the Hemlock, Red Firs favor cooler, moister areas and become more common the farther north one travels. One of most well developed stands of red fir grows in the Headwaters of the Owens River, near the sources of Glass and Deadman creeks, where these **short-needled firs** sport trunks exceeding 8 feet in diameter. Despite its darker red, mature bark and shorter needles, Red Fir can often be difficult to tell from White Fir.

Living up to its species epithet, *magnifica*, the Red Fir is a truly magnificent high forest tree. Like the Hemlock, Red Firs favor cooler, moister areas and become more common the farther north one travels. One of most well developed stands of red fir grows in the Headwaters of the Owens River, near the sources of Glass and Deadman creeks, where these short-needled firs sport trunks exceeding 8 feet in diameter. Despite its darker red, mature bark and shorter needles, Red Fir can often be difficult to tell from White Fir.



## V. WHITE FIR - *Abies concolor*

The more common fir of the Eastern Sierra, the **pale green needles** of the White Fir are longer than Red Fir's and are **narrowed and twisted at their base**. Unlike the pines, which hold their cones at all angles and often drop them whole, **firs hold their delicate cones upright on the upper branches**, and the thin cone scales fall off the central stalk when mature. If you find a sappy, whole fir cone chances are it was cut free by a hungry chickaree, a reddish squirrel with pointy ears. A century of fire-suppression has increased the abundance of this shade-tolerant fir in western forests.

The more common fir of the Eastern Sierra, the pale green needles of the White Fir are longer than Red Fir's and are narrowed and twisted at their base. Unlike the pines, which hold their cones at all angles and often drop them whole, firs hold their delicate cones upright on the upper branches, and the thin cone scales fall off the central stalk when mature. If you find a sappy, whole fir cone chances are it was cut free by a hungry chickaree, a reddish squirrel with pointy ears. A century of fire-suppression has increased the abundance of this shade-tolerant fir in western forests.



## VI. SINGLELEAF PINYON - *Pinus monophylla*

An **egg-shaped or open-branched tough tree** of lower Eastside slopes and the Great Basin, the Singleleaf Pinyon is the **only pine in the world with 1 stout, pointed needle**. The nuts of the Pinyon Pine are a delicacy for both humans and animals. Native Americans gather the sticky cones and roast them until the nutritious seed pops out, and raucous flocks of pinyon jays cruise pinyon woodlands searching for ripe cones. Perhaps the most desert-adapted of all the Eastern Sierra conifers, the dull green pinyon skirts the lower slopes of the Eastern Sierra escarpment.

An egg-shaped or open-branched tough tree of lower Eastside slopes and the Great Basin, the Singleleaf Pinyon is the only pine in the world with 1 stout, pointed needle. The nuts of the Pinyon Pine are a delicacy for both humans and animals. Native Americans gather the sticky cones and roast them until the nutritious seed pops out, and raucous flocks of pinyon jays cruise pinyon woodlands searching for ripe cones. Perhaps the most desert-adapted of all the Eastern Sierra conifers, the dull green pinyon skirts the lower slopes of the Eastern Sierra escarpment.



## PINE FAMILY - PINACEAE (CONTINUED)

### VII. LODGEPOLE PINE - *Pinus contorta*

Growing straight and tall like a pole, as its name implies, or rounded with a fat trunk, the Lodgepole Pine's 2" paired needles and small cones with sharp barbs on the end of cone scales are unmistakable. The thin bark flakes off in small brown-gray plates – almost as though the trunk was covered in corn flakes. Also known as Tamarack Pine, Lodgepoles are found up to 11,000', often on the borders of meadows or with Jeffrey Pines.



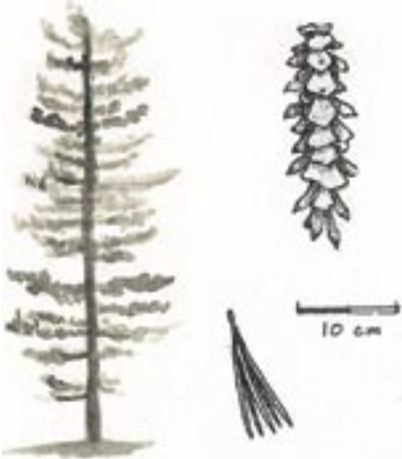
### VIII. JEFFREY PINE - *Pinus jeffreyi*

Growing straight and tall with large trunks (3-7' thick) and thick, stout limbs, the Jeffrey Pine is the Eastern Sierra's most aromatic conifer – the sweet smell emanating from the furrowed reddish, platy bark has been described as butter-scotch, vanilla, lemon, and even pineapple. Find one of these trees with long, green, 3-bunched needles and smell for yourself. The world's largest pure stand of Jeffrey Pines grows in the pumice soils northeast of Mammoth and south of Mono Lake.



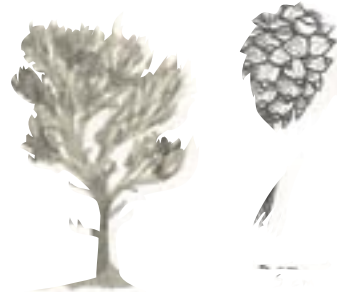
### IX. WESTERN WHITE PINE - *Pinus monticola*

Also known as Silver Pine, the gracefully up-swept branches with long, thin cones dangling from the ends and long silvery green needles in bunches of 5 characterize the Western White Pine. This tree of moist soils is generally found in shady canyons and on north-facing slopes between 7500 to 11,000' and can reach over 150' in height. The tall trunk has reddish gray bark broken into squarish plates.



### X. WHITEBARK PINE - *Pinus albicaulis*

Growing as either a low, weather-beaten shrub at timberline or as a tree in more sheltered locations above 8000', the Whitebark Pine almost always has multiple trunks. Whitebarks can be difficult to tell apart from the other 5-needled pines of the high country, but a close look at the cones can dispel any confusion. Unlike Limber Pines, the purplish cones of the Whitebark do not open up or fall to the ground whole. Often times, the tight groups of Whitebarks found at high elevation are the result of Clark's Nutcrackers, who crack open the fleshy cones and cache the seeds. These alpine loudmouths often forget a cache or two, allowing the seeds to sprout.



### XI. LIMBER PINE - *Pinus flexilis*

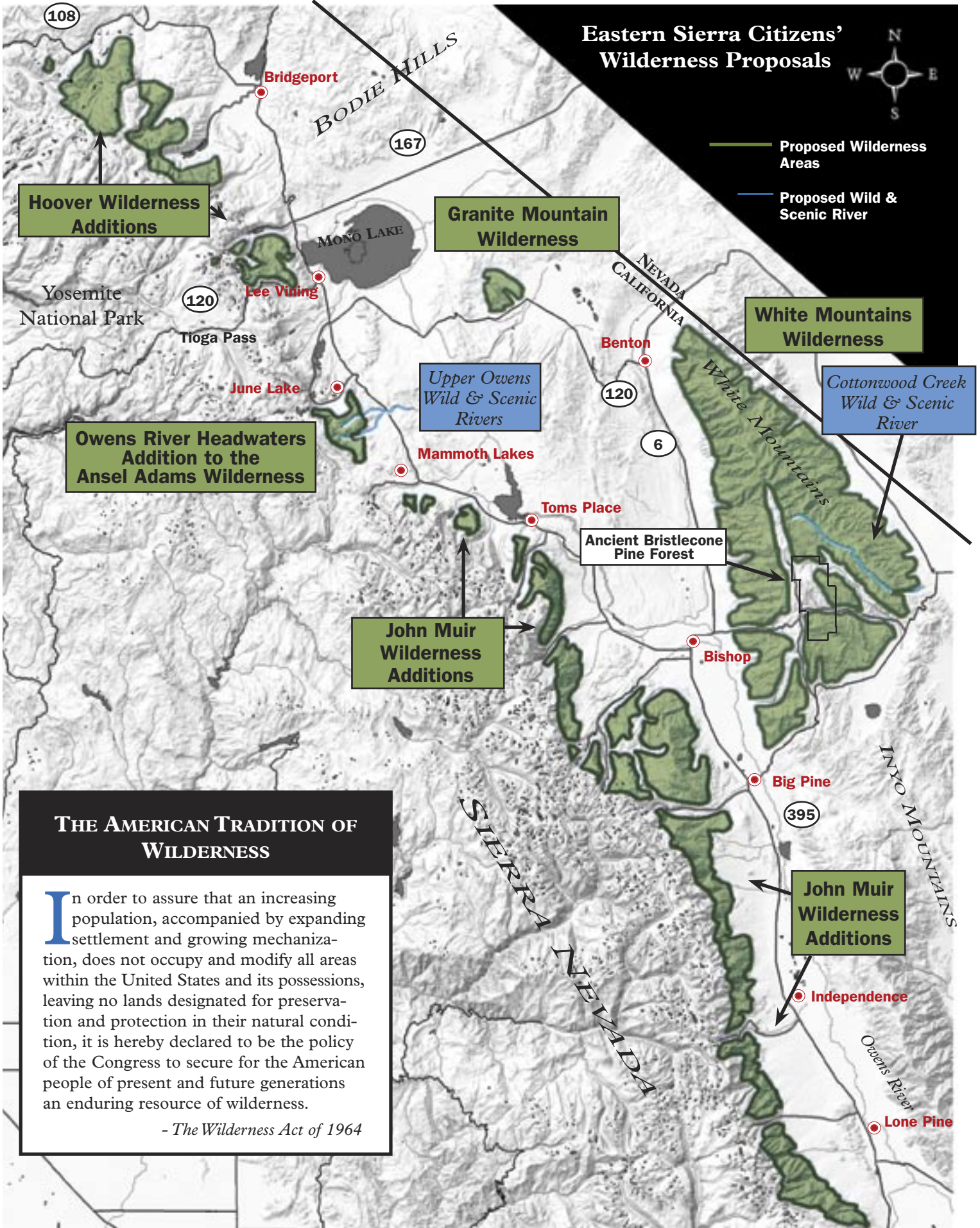
As the name suggests, the branches of this high elevation pine can be tied into a knots (careful not to break the branches!). A tree of exposed, dry, rocky slopes, Limber Pines grow alongside Bristlecone Pines in the White-Inyo Mountains and above 9000' from Lundy Canyon to Monache Peak in the Eastern Sierra. The yellow-green needles are held in tufts on the end of branches, and the 4-8" cones have thick, rounded scales.



### XII. BRISTLECONE PINE - *Pinus longaeva*

The world's oldest living trees (nearly 5000 years old), Bristlecone Pines inhabit the harsh, stark, high elevation slopes and ridges of the White-Inyo Mountains. The stout needles, densely bunched at the ends of curving branches, resemble a bottlebrush or foxtail. Often gnarled and stripped of bark by high desert ice and winds, Bristlecones may have only one or two living branches connected to the roots by thin strips of bark. A walk among these ancients is not to be missed! A close relative, the Foxtail Pine, grows high in the southern Sierra.





**THE AMERICAN TRADITION OF WILDERNESS**

In order to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition, it is hereby declared to be the policy of the Congress to secure for the American people of present and future generations an enduring resource of wilderness.

- The Wilderness Act of 1964



# Saving the Last of the Best

## *An Overview of the Eastern Sierra Citizens Wilderness Proposals*

**T**he magnificent wildlands of the Eastern Sierra are a national treasure. Home to over 35% of California’s native species, 200 endemic plants and unique animals, as well as some of the most spectacular scenery and recreational opportunities in the world, this land where the desert meets the mountains deserves diligent protection.

In recent years, local volunteers, working together with Friends of the Inyo and The Wilderness Society, have developed modest proposals to permanently protect the remaining wild gems of the Eastern Sierra - unique places like the Owens River Headwaters and the White Mountains - as Congressionally designated Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers. Volunteers drove, rode, and walked over hundreds of thousands of acres of public lands, mapping roads, trails, campsites, etc. with an eye toward developing wilderness proposals that preserve the land while maintaining currently permitted activities such as grazing, car camping and scientific research.

With California’s population projected to exceed 50 million people in less than 20 years, it is imperative that we work now to ensure that future generations of people, plants and animals inherit this unparalleled landscape in much the same state as we find it today.

Following are brief introductions to the wild places the Eastern Sierra Citizens’ Wilderness proposals seek to protect. To learn more about these areas and what you can do to help preserve them, come out on one of our summer outings, visit [www.friendsoftheinyo.org](http://www.friendsoftheinyo.org) or call Sally Miller at (760) 647-1614 or Paul McFarland at (760) 873-6400.

### White Mountains Wilderness and Cottonwood Creek



John Dittli

*As America’s largest desert mountain range, the Whites embody the very meaning of the term Wilderness. Home to the largest expanse of alpine tundra in western North America and the world’s oldest living trees, the ancient bristlecone*

*pinus, the Whites are world-renowned for scientific research.*

*Cottonwood Creek, the largest stream draining the Whites, is home to a pure strain of federally threatened Paiute Cutthroat trout.*

### Hoover Wilderness Additions



John Dittli

*With over 12 miles of the Pacific Crest trail and over 30 sky blue lakes, the Hoover Additions are one of the most popular recreation destinations for equestrians, backpackers, hunters, anglers and local outfitters in the Eastern Sierra.*

### Owens River Headwaters Addition to the Ansel Adams Wilderness



John Dittli

*Situated just east of the lowest portion of the Sierra crest, the Owens River Headwaters is a unique island of wet forest and meadow habitat in the dry sagebrush sea of the Eastern Sierra. Protection of this pristine source of the eastside’s most important river is vital to maintaining our tourism based economy.*

### Granite Mountain Wilderness



John Dittli

*Home to sage grouse and wild horses, the distinctive sagebrush steppe habitat of Granite Mountain would make an excellent and unique addition to the National Wilderness Preservation System.*

### John Muir Wilderness Additions



Andy Salters

*These additions to one of California’s most popular Wilderness Areas would protect critical lower elevation habitat for the Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep and preserve the spectacular Eastern Sierra escarpment, a signature landscape of California.*

### Upper Owens Wild & Scenic Rivers



John Dittli

*The waters of the Upper Owens River and its tributaries support one of America’s finest and most popular blue-ribbon trout fisheries. Wild & Scenic*

*River status will assure preservation of these fine waters.*

# Pinedrops...notes on issues affecting Eastern Sierra Public Lands

by Paul McFarland

## Still fiery in Furnace Creek

Those who read the last issue of the *Journal* (V.1, I.1) may remember the story of Furnace Creek – a deep green thread of riparian vegetation nestled at the bottom of a steep-walled desert canyon that suffered for years the damage of careless off-road vehicle use.

In order to protect this vital wildlife habitat, the Ridgecrest Field Office of the BLM and the Inyo National Forest temporarily closed this desert stream to vehicles with a gate last March. Both agencies are currently involved in drafting a joint Environmental Assessment (EA) to determine the future of Furnace Creek and its wildlife. The agencies completed the official scoping phase of this EA in late January, and to date, the Forest Service reports they have received nearly 250 comment letters, with the majority in favor of maintaining the protection of this rare desert stream from needless off-road damage. Thanks to all those who took the time to speak up for protection of public lands and wildlife habitat. Your letters and emails make a huge difference!

Despite the fact that nearly 10 years of monitoring by conservationists documented only a handful of vehicles driving up this creek in any given year (even one vehicle passing through a desert bog creates an inordinate amount of damage), motorized access advocates continue to claim that Furnace Creek should remain open because of its high use and economic importance. Some claim the muddied wetlands, smashed willows and deeply rutted creek bed do not constitute damage, while others claim that “armoring” (paving with rocks) the creek and wetlands will solve the problem.

Thankfully, the law is on the

side of protecting this desert oasis: the federal Clean Water Act, Forest Service and BLM management plan direction,



Executive Orders regarding the protection of wetlands and protection of public lands from OHV damage, California state water quality regulations and Fish & Game laws mandate that the riparian wildlife habitat and water quality be given precedent over allowing damaging recreational vehicle use. Plus, with over 8300 miles of road on public lands in the Eastern Sierra, there are plenty of places to drive that don't harm rare wildlife habitat.

The agencies plan on conducting a public field trip out to the creek in early May – just in time to watch the newly arrived songbirds, hawks and butterflies enjoy their recovering desert home. We'll work to ensure they can return year after year to a healthy

creek and keep you posted on the latest developments. To view pictures of Furnace Creek and sign up for notification of the public field trip, visit [www.friendsoftheinyo.org](http://www.friendsoftheinyo.org).

## Take action for the land

We have been receiving an increasing number of calls and emails into our office from local homeowners and visitors alike wondering what can be done about all the new motorcycle trails showing up behind (or through) their backyard or the snowmobile tracks found far back in the Wilderness.

Now users of the public lands have a quick and easy way to report any route proliferation, dramatic increase in use, unsafe behavior, and damage to the land.

Taking a cue from the Sierra's own Snowlands Network ([www.snowlands.org](http://www.snowlands.org)), other public land watchdog groups, and concerned local folks, Friends of the Inyo has posted a Citizen's Public Lands

Activity Form on our website.

Simply log on to [www.friendsoftheinyo.org](http://www.friendsoftheinyo.org) and click on *What We Do* to reach an easy to fill out online reporting form. We will collate these public reports and work with our local land managers to see that problems are addressed. The dedicated rangers and law enforcement officers with the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management can't be everywhere, and they need to hear from the public about where problems are developing or getting worse.

The public lands of the Eastern Sierra belong to all of us, and as users and stewards of these lands we have a responsibility to actively care for them. So next time you come across a newly burned in track across a broken sagebrush, don't just throw up your hands in disgust – take pictures, take some notes and take action!

## Networking with friends nationwide

# Pinedrops (continued)

Anyone who has dropped over Tioga Pass or climbed out of the Mojave Desert on Highway 395 knows that the Eastern Sierra is truly a spectacular place. What makes this landscape of rock, sagebrush and pine even better is that so much of it is owned collectively by all Americans. The beauty of public land is that it belongs to all of us. The wild open ridges, teeming meadows of wildflowers and butterflies, secretive deer in the bitterbrush and sly trout in a healthy stream put every American, from Paradise to Poughkeepsie, on par with the feudal kings

of old as owners of a vast and wild domain.

Here at Friends of the Inyo, we have enjoyed a wonderful working relationship with groups from around the county – from our successful collaboration with the Wilderness Society, Audubon Society and the Sierra Club in the local campaign to protect more of the Eastside as Wilderness to our recent membership in the Natural Trails and Waters Coalition ([www.naturaltrails.org](http://www.naturaltrails.org)). These partnerships have helped bring national attention and resources to help conserve the Eastern Sierra.

While many of the discussions determining the future of Eastern Sierra public lands will happen locally, it is important to remember that we are just part owners and temporary stewards of these lands – there are many voices to be heard. Representing those who care about the Eastern Sierra but can't be at a meeting, either because they don't live here or are a bighorn antelope, is what we do.

## Stop on by

All are welcome to stop on by Friends of the Inyo's first public office (275 S. Main Street, Suite C) located between the 395.com Visitors Center

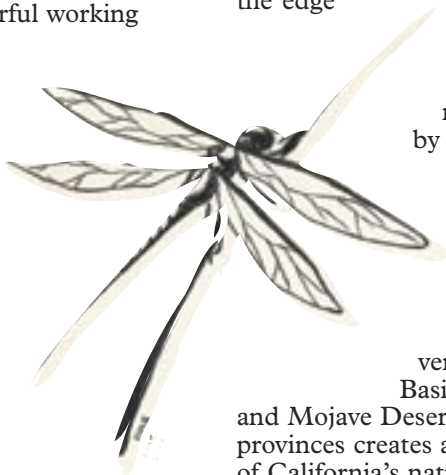
and the wonderfully delicious baked goods of the Great Basin Bakery on the south side of Bishop. Come by to take a detailed look at maps of the Eastern Sierra Citizen's Wilderness Proposals, get some tips on local trails or off-the-beaten path explorations, help stuff some envelopes, share a wildlife sighting or drop off a membership donation.

## Calling All Critters

A main tenet of ecological thought holds that areas which are on the border between two different habitat types – say along the edge of a riparian stream in the Mojave Desert or where a subalpine meadow is bordered by a thick lodgepole forest – are the most likely to contain a high diversity of species. Here in the Eastern Sierra, a similar convergence of the Great Basin, Sierra Nevada and Mojave Desert biogeographic provinces creates a home for over 35% of California's native species and over 200 endemic (lives nowhere else in the world) plants and animals.

To celebrate this diversity (and have a great day out on the land) we are looking for sponsors and amateur naturalists for the **First Annual Friends of the Inyo Eco-thon on July 4th, 2004** – an all-day ecological survey of an area of Eastern Sierra public lands. Sponsors will be asked to pledge an amount of their choosing for every species of bird, plant, bug, mammal, fish, frog or toad that a group of dedicated folks can find in and around the Bighorn Additions to the Hoover Wilderness rising above the western edge of Mono Lake (Lundy Canyon, Mt. Warren and the 20 Lakes Basin).

If you are interest in being part of the first ever Eco-thon as an amateur naturalist or becoming a sponsor, please call Paul at (760) 873-6400 or visit [www.friendsoftheinyo.org](http://www.friendsoftheinyo.org).



## Wish List

FOI is always looking for donations of supplies to help us fulfill our mission of protecting public lands. All donations are tax-deductible for the value of the item.

- Working 4-wheel drive vehicle
- Binoculars for field trips
- Copies of the 1988 Inyo National Forest Plan
- Old maps of the Eastern Sierra
- Desktop computer with recent processor
- Copy machine
- 35 mm slide scanner
- Map storage cabinet
- Natural or cultural history books about the Eastside

## In Appreciation

### MANY THANKS TO OUR FRIENDS

Just as the health of the land is tied to the renewing snow and rain of winter, the nurturing warmth of spring, the long days of summer, and the ripened seeds of fall, the effectiveness of Friends of the Inyo is tied to the generous support of our dedicated members. Thanks to those who have just joined us and those who have renewed their membership for 2004. You are the sun and rain that keep us going and growing!

If you are interested in becoming a member of Friends of the Inyo and supporting our work, please use the enclosed return envelope or visit our website at [www.friendsoftheinyo.org](http://www.friendsoftheinyo.org).

Thanks also to Daniel A. Mazmanian for his special gift from the Haynes Foundation of Los Angeles, and to the Peradam Foundation for their generous and continued support.

FRIENDS OF THE INYO  
POST OFFICE BOX 64  
LEE VINING, CALIFORNIA 93541



## Join with us to preserve the Eastern Sierra

### MEMBERSHIP LEVELS:

- \$25 Clark's Nutcracker
- \$50 Yosemite Toad
- \$100+ Sierra Nevada Bighorn
- This is what I can afford

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS

\_\_\_\_\_  
PHONE

\_\_\_\_\_  
EMAIL

**All members will receive our biannual newsletter, as well as timely alerts on Eastern Sierra public lands conservation issues.**

*Please make all checks payable to FOI.*

*All donations to FOI are tax-deductible.*



[www.friendsoftheinyo.org](http://www.friendsoftheinyo.org)