

THE
JEFFREY PINE JOURNAL

Newsletter of Friends of the Inyo

SPRING-SUMMER 2007

VOLUME V, ISSUE I



The proposed Hoover Wilderness in its summer glory

photo: John Dittli

Flying Flowers:

A Brief Introduction

Pinedrops:

*Death Valley,
Bighorn
and U.N. Agents?*

Celebrating
a Century:

The Inyo Turns 100

Advocacy, education, and stewardship for the public lands of the Eastern Sierra

THE Jeffrey Pine Journal

VOLUME V, ISSUE I

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



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The Cover Photo



John Dittl took this issue's cover in the Hoover Wilderness—an area proposed for Wilderness designation. Over 12 miles of Pacific Crest Trail and 30 sky blue lakes grace this area which has become the most popular recreation destination for equestrians, backpackers, hunters, anglers and local outfitters in the Eastern Sierra.

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. Thanks.

President's Message

by Frank Stewart

As spring winds howl across the desert outside my office window, I'm reminded of the winds of change gusting within Friends of the Inyo. We have moved to a new location, 699 West Line Street, Suite A. But more important than the new space, is the fact that we have continued to add high quality staff to our organization.

We welcome the arrival of Laura Chamberlin and Michelle Pettit. Laura, a member of the newly formed Sierra Nevada Americorps Program, comes to us from a two-year PeaceCorps mission in Niger. She's made a huge impact in just a few months by creating a digital GIS map library and organizing our new Eastern Sierra Water Watchers program. A refugee from Los Angeles, Michelle brings with her significant experience and talent ranging from award-winning public relations campaigns to teaching natural history in the Santa Monica Mountains. Together, they provide an immediate and positive contribution to the ongoing efforts of our fine core group. Think for a moment about how much talent that is, all under one roof.

I would also like to extend a warm welcome to our newest Board Member, Bill Mitchel, of Bishop. Bill is filling the vacancy left by Will Friday, who stepped down as the result of a growing youngster in need of his attention! I am very pleased with the direction of our organization right now, and believe we are poised to add to our growing list of accomplishments. Thanks also to retiring board member, Mary Handel, for her dedicated service.

In last fall's *Journal*, I wrote about my trip to DC for a national "Wilderness Week" lobbying effort. After the trip I felt there was cause for optimism, that there was potential for wilderness campaigns across the country to advance. Then came November. Who could've imagined the change that took place? With one fell swoop, a major hurdle in the way of passing new wilderness legislation has been removed. Not only did Richard Pombo lose his chair position on the Natural Resources Committee, he lost his job as a congressman. With Mr. Pombo's obstructionism gone, I sense an opening.

I confess that my imagination may be starting to get away from me. I'm beginning to think that the pendulum is swinging the other way, ever so slightly. I remember a political shift that occurred over three decades ago. During that time landmark legislation became law: the Clean Air Act, the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, to name a few. These laws passed because they reflected the values of society at that time. We've all heard of the phrase, "that's an idea whose time had come." Maybe the time has come for some new direction, starting at the national level, and filtering down to own backyards.

Let's simply continue to exert steady pressure, constantly applied, to our government leaders. I think we will see those efforts begin to bear wild fruit soon.

Frank Stewart is a general contractor yearning for the backcountry. He moved to the eastern sierra in 1982 and is one of the founding members of Friends of the Inyo.

Get Out

Blanco Mountain

Stunning views, ancient trees and a rewarding scramble

by Darren Malloy

While many travel to the White Mountains to visit the Patriarch Grove and walk the Methuselah Trail, other treasures hide among the peaks and basins of America's highest desert range. A trip up Blanco Mountain puts hikers atop a beautiful white dolomite knob offering a 360-degree panorama of the snowy Sierra, the Owens Valley and Great Basin.

This 11,280 ft. peak makes a great outing for visitors seeking an acclimatization hike before attempting 14,246 ft. White Mountain. A brief scramble—easy 3rd class—reaches the very top, while the easily accessible saddle just below the capstone offers many of the same views as the peak and a great shady place for lunch.

Natural History

Hiking to Blanco Mountain, you'll walk across half a billion years of earth's history - from newly deposited sediment in the wash at the beginning of the hike, to the 600- million-year-old Reed dolomite laid down in ancient shallow seas. Your return will pass 100-million-year-old granite along the west ridge of Sage Hen Flat.

Today's life is as diverse as the rocks. Low sagebrush adorns beautiful Sage Hen Flat while ancient bristlecones shade Blanco Mountain's slopes. Violet-green swallows commonly accompany hikers on their way through the bristlecone grove, and might circle your head. On summer days, marmots loaf in the sun.

Getting There

To reach Blanco Mountain, head 13 miles east from Big Pine on Highway 168; turn left on White Mountain Road (open seasonally depending on snow). The road is paved for 10 miles to the Schulman Grove, where it turns to dirt – easily traveled in standard-clearance vehicles. Approximately 10 miles past Schulman turn right (east) down the Crooked Creek road at the signed junction. Park in the pullout at the first tight right turn.



The Hike

Choosing a hiking route in country without trails is all about following natural features. From the parking area, head south up a gully through Big Prospector Meadow and aim toward prominent Blanco Mountain, seen to the south-southeast. The climb up through the forest is quite steep – take a cue from the ancient trees that surround you and take your time. From the saddle just north of the peak, blocky white dolomite beckons hikers to scramble the few hundred feet to Blanco's peak. On the return trip, head to your right and follow the ridge on the west edge of Sage Hen Flat, meandering through granite boulders while you enjoy the beautiful views of Nevada's many ranges.

The trip to Blanco Mountain doesn't cover many miles but offers some challenges—take care to ensure you enjoy your journey. The hike starts above 10,000 feet, so start slowly and pay attention to signs of altitude sickness. In the event of a summer thunderstorm, Blanco Mountain and Sage Hen Flat are very exposed places. Take plenty of water, and let us know what you find!



The Eastern Sierra

Getting Out and Giving Back

A Stewardship Update

by Todd Vogel

With a work area spanning some thirteen thousand square miles and ranging from near sea level in Death Valley to the high Sierra Crest, the Eastern Sierra Stewardship Corps doesn't really get a winter vacation. Due to the huge range of environments and acreage in Inyo and Mono Counties there is stuff to be done all year long!

Already this year we have led several multi-day trips to the lower elevation deserts of our area to remove tamarisk. The first outing in January had a dozen cold-hardy volunteers from the University of California, Riverside working hard in Surprise Canyon, in the Panamint Mountains on the west side of Death Valley National Park. Later we spent a glorious week in Saline Valley with a great group from Washington State University. I have learned more than I ever thought I'd know about this invasive and intractable plant, and it has been fun and interesting to help others learn about tamarisk and its severe impacts on desert riparian systems.

Another stewardship project I never thought I would learn about much less find myself doing is fence building. I'd



photo: Michelle Perini

(From L to R) *Emerald Mason, James Huber, Casey Van Maanen and Nordine Patron working hard on the Wildlife Preserve in the Buttermilks.*

always thought that barbed wire fences were pretty much the rancher's bailiwick. But over on the eastside of the White Mountains the lower section of an amazing stream called Cottonwood Creek needed some help. Cottonwood, the largest stream draining America's highest desert mountain range and proposed Wild & Scenic River, provides recreation, shade and shelter to lots of life – from humans escaping urban haunts to brightly colored Indigo Buntings up from Central America for the summer. While upstream Cottonwood meanders through a fantastic, wild and remote basin, the lower portion is looking a bit worse for wear in some places. Recently, cattle drifting into this delicate area and an increase in irresponsible off-road vehicle use have impacted the health of this unique oasis.

Working with the Ridgecrest office of the Bureau of Land Management, we are stepping up to fence the lower sec-

tion of Cottonwood Creek to allow for the natural recovery of the willow, birch and cottonwood forest along the stream banks. After a brief but thorough lesson from the BLM on how fence building is done, our first volunteer group went to work mid-March. There's still lots more to do but we're off to a good start and are learning the finer points of barbed wire.

We've also put our fence building skills to use on another project a bit closer to home: early April had us out with nearly thirty students and staff from the Jill Kinmont Boothe School in Bishop, restoring a barbed wire fence around the Fish and Game Wildlife Preserve in the Buttermilk Country west of town.

There have been other projects this winter and spring, and there will be more. We hope to see you out on some of them. Again, thanks to all who contribute time, skill, and energy to help us protect and preserve our public lands!

Special Thanks

Huge Thanks

to the volunteers and funders that make this work possible:

Resources Legacy Fund Foundation

National Forest Foundation

Little-Kittlenger Foundation

Haynes Foundation

Peradam Foundation

Patagonia

Stewardship Corps

Help Build for the Next Century of Stewardship

Inyo National Forest turns 100 years old

by Michelle Pettit

Home to some of America's most iconic wilderness, this year the incredibly diverse and spectacular Inyo National Forest celebrates its 100-year anniversary.

When looking around at the land this Forest covers, we may think of its dramatic landscapes full of superlatives: the highest and lowest points in the continental U.S. (Mt. Whitney at 14, 496' and Badwater in Death Valley at -282'), as well as the oldest tree (Methuselah, a 4500 year-old Bristlecone Pine in the White Mountains). But did you also know that the world's largest Jeffery Pine Forest (east of Mammoth Lakes and south of Mono Lake) and the world's deepest valley (Owens Valley) also define its landscape?

It's no wonder that as a result this Forest bears another superlative: the most visited National Forest in California. At nearly 4 million visits per year (and visit numbers continuing to trend upward), the Inyo National Forest is facing rapid change as a result of increased use.

Public Lands at a Tipping Point

The current Administration's 2008 budget cuts \$46 million dollars from the already thin Forest Service budget. That translates into a loss of 2000 Forest jobs. Here on the Inyo National Forest, these are the people we rely on for maintenance of over 1200 miles of trail, ongoing interpretive activities, ranger patrols, timber management, and the upkeep of 59 campgrounds, 7 Wilderness Areas, 7 Research Natural Areas, 1 Wild & Scenic River, and over 3600 miles of motorized routes.

Public lands are defined by the public use and care they get, and this decreasing trend in funding for the care of our public lands combined with growing use tells us that additional support is needed.

And with that thought in mind, the Inyo National Forest's centennial provides us the opportunity to reflect—What will the next 100 years bring for our public lands; lands of which

Don't Take Our Word For It

Genny Smith, author of numerous books about the Eastern Sierra, sent in these inspirational words with her generous donation

"Congratulations on all the projects you have undertaken and the responses you have received from so many volunteers. Beginning with almost nothing but some good ideas and determination, you and your friends are making a difference."

—Thank you Genny!

we are essentially all co-owners? You are part of the answer to that question.

Help Preserve Our Public Lands

We are looking for your help to match our recent \$27,000 Wilderness Stewardship Challenge Grant. As you may know, in 2004 Friends of the Inyo started the Eastern Sierra Stewardship Corps with the generous help of the National Forest Foundation (natlforests.org). This year, we are working to again double our on-the-ground stewardship efforts, and with those aspirations come the Challenge Grant.

We are asking for your support of a \$100 donation to help us meet this matching grant. Since 2005, the Stewardship Corps has generated 6,867 volunteer hours of service projects totaling over \$325,000 of additional support to the Forest. Please help continue the efforts of the Stewardship Corps with a generous donation to help us match our 2007 Challenge Grant. Your support will help define a new century of stewardship for the Inyo National Forest so that our grandchildren can celebrate its same wild beauty and serene landscapes at the next centennial.

Connecting Land & People

The Inyo National Forest, turning 100 this year, reminds us that open, wild lands have a place both in our hearts and in our Eastern Sierra identity.

As varied as the ways in which we experience it, the Inyo National Forest elicits a personal connection from each of us. Whether you spend your days in the desert or mountains or you enjoy the views from town, celebrate its centennial by sharing how you relate to this land. Go to www.outsideontheeastside.org and add your story to a collection of voices, memories and experiences of our local natural heritage.

The Eastern Sierra Water Watchers

Protecting Water in the Desert

by Laura Chamberlin



photo: Paul McFarland

On Mill Creek, volunteers practice the techniques that will be used to monitor water quality.

What is a watershed and what does it mean to you? The simple answer is that it is the area of land that drains into a river or other body of water. What it means to you probably has to do with water's end uses: you use it at home, maybe you enjoy observing the birds gathering along a given shore, or maybe you are prize fisherman. Whatever the connection, water affects everyone, and its health should be a concern for all.

Friends of the Inyo, working in partnership with the Mono Lake Committee and with funding from the State Water Quality Control Board, has created the Eastern Sierra Water Watchers—a citizen-based water quality monitoring project for the Eastern Sierra. Three specific geographic areas will be the focus of this program: Mill and Wilson creeks in the Mono watershed, Glass and Deadman creeks in the Upper

Owens River watershed, and Cottonwood Creek in the Fish Lake Valley watershed. Each of these areas has a different story and unique set of uses affecting the water and habitat quality. Some of these uses that present concerns include cattle grazing, recreation and an expanding network of unauthorized off-road vehicle routes. With only eight sites over three areas, the sample size is too small to make broad conclusions about the entire watershed, but by looking at repre-

sentative creeks where there is known impacts we can begin to identify solutions for water quality concerns.

Four times a year (May, August, November and February) a team of volunteers will test the water. Elements of these streams that will be measured include basic water chemistries, fecal bacteria, a habitat assessment and collection of benthic macroinvertebrates (aka water bugs). The combination of all these elements paints a picture of the health of the creek.

Recently, fourteen dedicated volunteers have begun the training process and will soon start actual sampling and collection of data. This 'citizen' component not only provides the time and energy the program needs to be successful, but also allows people to get directly involved in the watershed and its health.

The water quality data will be used to measure the efficacy of stewardship projects and other ongoing activities that affect water quality. It's our hope that once established this monitoring will expand over the years and provide scientifically-credible data that can be used in management and restoration decisions for maintaining the health of Eastern Sierra watersheds.

Get Your Feet Wet

We still have room for volunteers to join the team.

If you are interested in getting involved or for more information, please contact Laura at Friends of the Inyo, **760-873-6500** or laura@friendsoftheinyo.org.

Friends of the Inyo is grateful to the **Sierra Nevada Alliance** for funding and support of this project. For more information on the Alliance visit www.sierranevadaalliance.org

On Board

Getting to Know the Folks behind Friends of the Inyo

by Linda Emerson



Linda exploring the Range of Light from the Black Divide in Kings Canyon National Park.

photo: S.P. Parker

My name is Linda Emerson, and I have been on the Friends of the Inyo Board of Directors for about five years. I grew up in a military family and have lived all over the world. As an adult, I continued to travel quite a bit and enjoyed visiting incredible places around the globe, but no place feeds my soul the way the Eastern Sierra does.

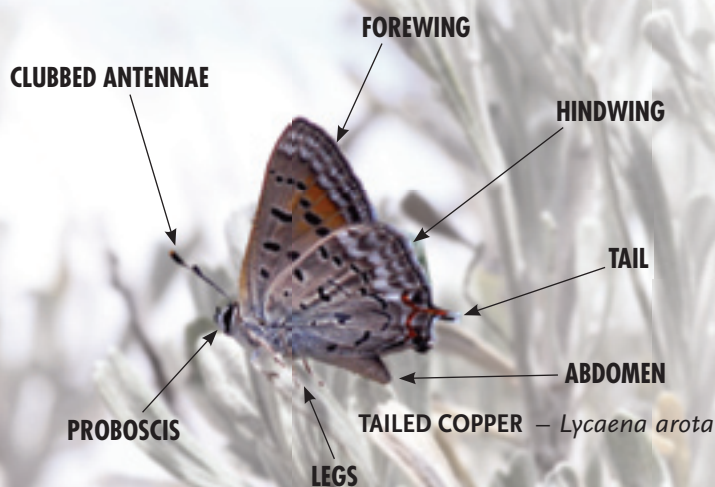
The first time I set foot on the Eastside, I knew I had found my spot in the universe. Not long afterwards, I packed up all my possessions and moved to Bishop. I lived a simple but happy life in the place of my dreams, supporting my hiking, climbing, trail running and mountaineering habits by waitressing at a local restaurant. Eventually, I left the Eastern Sierra to go to college and then law school. I worked long hours at a Bay Area law firm, deprived for many years of the landscape and outdoor life I love. But as soon as I was able, I moved back to the only place I have ever truly missed, and now I am fortunate enough to be able wake up in the morning and see the rising sun reflected on Mt. Humphreys outside my kitchen window. I can get outside on a regular basis to explore one of the most spectacular places on Earth, and I have the time and energy to work to protect it, too.

This is the place where the Sierra Nevada and the White Mountains soar to elevations well above 14,000 feet, while just a short distance below, in between these two grand mountain ranges, the Owens Valley drops below 4,000 feet. Inyo County alone contains both the lowest point—Death Valley—and the highest point—Mt. Whitney—in the continental United States. The County is larger than the state of Vermont, yet has a human population of fewer than 19,000. Most importantly, a whopping 98% of this large swath of land is public land. It is this fact that ultimately spared the region from the worst of the tremendous growth pressures facing much of the rest of California and given us something meaningful to protect. It is also this fact that provides unique opportunities and challenges to preserve the wildness, solitude and beauty of this vast and special place, not just for our own benefit, but for the benefit of future generations and the many non-human species with which we share this remarkable region.

Eastside Butterflies

A brief introduction to a few flying flowers

by Paul McFarland



TAILED COPPER – *Lycaena arota*



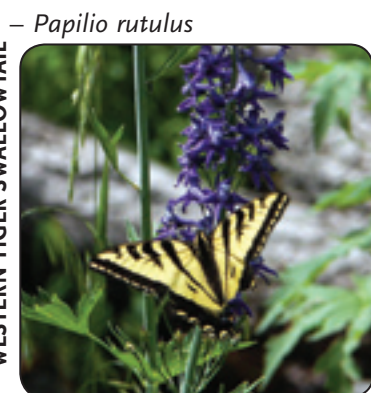
LUSTROUS COPPER – *Lycaena cupreus*



LIKE A BRILLIANT FLECK OF FIRE, the tiny Lustrous Copper will stop you in your tracks. Though about the size of a quarter, Lustrous Coppers stand out amazingly well. A member of the Gossamer-winged family of small, but often brightly colored butterflies, Lustrous Copper flit across moderate to high elevation meadows and along alpine ridges through the summer.

THE SUV OF EASTSIDE BUTTERFLIES

Western Tiger Swallowtails are big and seem to be nearly everywhere—from the valley bottoms to flowery mountain meadows. When perched at the mouth of a delphinium or other flower, take a close look at the tails dangling from the hindwing. Many believe these streamers are meant to attract predator's attention away from the butterfly's body. If the swallowtails flying around with beak-shaped chunks out of their wings are any indication, this strategy seems to work pretty well.



WESTERN TIGER SWALLOWTAIL – *Papilio rutulus*

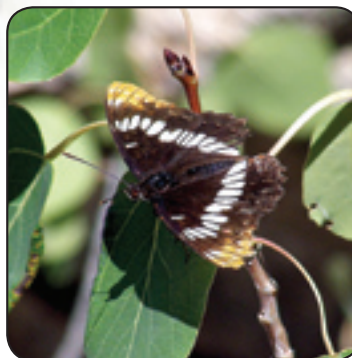
What do the saltbrush-covered floor of Death Valley and the windswept Kuna Crest above Dana Meadows have in common? Besides, both being preserved as National Parks, these polar opposite habitats are home to butterflies.

Though seemingly delicate little creatures, butterflies are as tough as they are colorful. You can find Mourning Cloaks fluttering though leafless aspens over frozen creeks in January, Western Pygmy Blues perched on Desert Holly in scalding June sun, and Clodius Parnassians (yes, that is the common name) desperately clinging to granite at 12,000 feet in August.

Butterflies are best seen on sunny, calm days. Clouds and wind tend to keep butterflies hidden. Field marks to look for are everything from size—from Blues the size of a quarter to Tiger Swallowtails as big as a deck of cards—to color—many butterflies are named after their color: Blues are blue, Coppers are copper, Whites are white and Sulphurs are yellow.

With open eyes and a curious mind, that speck of flying color can tell you quite a tale of the land. You just have to stop long enough to listen.

LORQUIN'S ADMIRAL – *Limenitis lorquini*



A GREAT EXAMPLE OF A BUTTERFLY tied to its host plant's habitat, Lorquin's grace wet places here on the western shore of the Great Basin – the meadows, streams and seeps that support aspen, willows and cottonwoods. Almost unmistakable with their prominent white band on black wings tipped with orange, Lorquin's are graceful gliders about as large as a credit card.

SPHINX MOTH – *Hyles lineate*



NO DISCUSSION OF BUTTERFLIES is complete without throwing in a moth. The Sphinx moth is one of the most recognizable moths in the Eastern Sierra. Often seen hovering like a hummingbird at the head of some flower, the Sphinx Moth breaks one the main myths about moths – it flies in the day. Unlike the club-tipped antennae of butterflies, moths can be distinguished by their feathery or wiry antennae.

More Resources

A little time, patience and a good book are the only keys needed for a deeper understanding of nearly every facet of the natural world. To unlock the world of butterflies, I recommend:

Butterflies through Binoculars – The West by Jeffrey Glassberg, Oxford Press

Western Butterflies by Paul Opler and Amy Bartlett Wright in the Peterson Field Guide Series by Houghton Mifflin

Golden Guide to Butterflies and Moths by St. Martins Press

You can purchase these resources through the Friends of the Inyo web site (friendsoftheinyo.org) by clicking on *Words for the Wild*—a book-buying partnership with Spellbinder Books. A percentage of your purchase goes to us for our stewardship efforts.

all photos: Paul McFarland

CALENDAR

Get Out and Give Back

Spring–Summer Outings

JUNE 2–3 NATIONAL TRAILS DAY PROJECT ALONG LOWER

COTTONWOOD CREEK – Help the Forest Service restore this little-used but beautiful historic trail through the narrow granite canyon of Cottonwood Creek in the southern Eastern Sierra. For those heading from the north, we'll meet for car pooling in the old Smart and Final Parking lot in Bishop at 8am on the 2nd. For those traveling from other directions, we'll meet at the Diaz Lake recreation area, south of Lone Pine at 9:30. For those staying and working the third dinner will be provided. Please be sure to sign up in advance: Contact todd@friendsoftheinyo.org for more information.

JUNE 9–10 LEAVE NO TRACE TRAINER –

Course Learn more than the basics of Leave No Trace ethics on this 2 day course. Easy overnight backpack and classroom presentation. Contact todd@friendsoftheinyo.org for more information.

JUNE 15–17 MONO BASIN BIRD

CHAUTAUQUA – Share knowledge and a love of the land during this wonderful weekend in the Mono Basin. Such great field trips and lectures that even John Muir will be there. Register at www.birdchautauqua.org.

JUNE 23 COTTONWOOD BASIN AND MEADOW EXPLORATION,

WHITE MOUNTAINS – Meander through aspen groves, limber and bristlecone pine forests and mazes of connected meadows that make up the ecological heart of the White Mountains in Cottonwood Basin. Moderately difficult 7 mile round trip. Meet at 7:30 am at the Big Pine Triangle Campground to carpool into the Whites. For more information, contact Todd Vogel at 760-873-6500 or todd@friendsoftheinyo.org.

**JUNE 30–JULY 1 COLDWATER CANYON,
MAMMOTH** – If the low-snow year continues we'll get up there early and help start the seasonal maintenance process on this heavily used area in the John Muir Wilderness. Meeting place/time:

People coming from the Bishop area meet at the large parking lot just north of the Bishop Police Department at 7:30am. All others: meet at the Mammoth FS Ranger Station and visitor center parking lot at 8:30am. Contact todd@friendsoftheinyo.org for more information.

JULY 7 3RD ANNUAL PROTECT OUR HEADWATERS DAY

– Come out and get your hands dirty restoring the headwaters of the Eastern Sierra's greatest river—the Upper Owens. Projects for all abilities and learn about FOI's ongoing water quality monitoring program. Coffee, breakfast treats and lunch provided. Meet at 9am at the junction of Deadman Creek Road, 8 miles north of Hwy 203 on Hwy 395.

JULY 14 JEFFREY PINE FOREST ECOLOGY HIKE

– Despite being home to the world's largest Jeffrey Pine forest, these magnificent trees are often overlooked here in the Eastern Sierra. This moderate 5 mile meander through the Indiana Summit Research Natural Area will explore the ecology—from birds to moths to fire—in this resilient and aromatic forest. Meet at the junction of the Bald Mountain Road and Hwy 395, just over 10 miles north of Hwy 203 at 9am.

JULY 28 SKETCHING THE

BRISTLECONES – Meet at Glacier Campground at 8:00am then drive to an area between Crooked Creek and the Schulman Grove to draw the bristlecones with pen & ink. With spectacular views of the Sierra, we'll talk about its viewable terrain, the peaks and passes, and some of the colorful characters that called it home. For more info, call Wynne at 760-937-5545.

AUGUST 26–SEPTEMBER 1

COTTONWOOD LAKES BASIN TRAIL

RESTORATION – (with American Hiking Society). This project will restore an obsolete trail in the Cottonwoods Lakes Basin, near Mt. Whitney. An ascent of Mt. Langely is planned. All food is included. Should be a great trip! Contact todd@friendsoftheinyo.org for more information.

Resources & Registration

With the exception of the Leave No Trace course, all trips listed are free and are open to anyone and everyone.

For multi-day trips, please register with todd@friendsoftheinyo.org or by calling 760-873-6500.

For more information on each hike and newly added trips, please visit friendsoftheinyo.org.

One Giant Leap

...for a sustainable future on the Inyo National Forest

by Paul McFarland

A BOLD STEP

On March 2nd, 2007, Inyo National Forest Supervisor, Jeff Bailey signed Forest Order 04-07-01. Known as Step 2 in the ongoing 5-step process to legally designate a manageable and sustainable system of roads on the Inyo National Forest, this Forest Order finally makes it a citable violation to drive off of established roads on the Forest. A full 35 years after President Nixon signed Executive Order 11644 directing federal land managers to “ensure that the use of off-road vehicles on public lands will be controlled and directed so as to protect the resources of those lands, to promote the safety of all users of those lands, and to minimize conflicts among the various uses of those lands,” rangers and the public finally have the tools needed to protect roaded and roadless Forest lands.

A CHANCE FOR SUSTAINABILITY?

According to the Forest’s Decision Memo for this much needed Forest Order, “the number of recreationists using motorized vehicles...has surged, leading to a proliferation of unplanned routes and associated resource damage.” In the last 15 years, registration of OHVs



Despite taking a right at the first tufa, this is not a road.

(dirtbikes and quads) has increased 87% while registration of street legal 4 wheel drive vehicles has jumped over 1654%! That means a lot more folks are exploring their public lands to find new fishing holes, trails, birds or simply watch the trees go by. It also means there are more machines capable of going where no one thought possible.

Unfortunately, from the look of local public lands, a good number of drivers and riders are less concerned with respecting the land and other users than getting an adrenaline rush by busting up a pristine slope in the Jeffrey Pine for-



photos: Paul McFarland

This is a road.

est or spinning doughnuts in the alpine meadows near Rock Creek.

The number one threat to sustaining the diverse recreation and healthy Forest we enjoy today is the damage to the land, disturbance to wildlife and displacement of other recreationists caused by motorized scofflaws who treat the Forest like nothing more than a giant motorized sandbox.

By finally spelling out where it’s legal to drive and where it isn’t, this new Forest Order and the Route Designation process will go a long way toward protecting the land and everyone’s enjoyment. However, maintaining our current roads, trails, water quality, opportunities for outdoor peace and wildlife habitat will be impossible if folks don’t step up and demand a renewed commitment to mutual respect and personal responsibility.

Will we hand tomorrow’s children a Forest looking much like it is today or will we leave them a tangled mess of tracks, polarized groups and hard feelings? Rip it up or Respect it—the choice is yours.

Check Yourself

With a bit of backcountry common sense you can help sustain recreation and wildlife on the Inyo National Forest.

Basically, if it looks like a road or a well-used pullout for camping, it’s probably a road or a well-used campsite. If it’s a newly-created rut across a meadow or a fresh single track through the sagebrush, it’s not a road. It is that simple—Respect the Roads.

You can learn more about this process to finally designate a sustainable and manageable system of roads on the Inyo, as well as download handy new road maps at

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/inyo/projects/step-two-docs.shtml>.

A Word From Our Friends

Making Tracks

by Paul McFarland

More sun. That's one of many great things that comes with Spring. With the days growing longer as the sun climbs higher in the sky, it's actually possible for many of us worker bees to get outside during the week.

So, last Thursday, I did just that. Just before 5 o'clock, I escaped from the gravitational pull of my computer screen and headed out, binoculars at the ready, for a short amble on my favorite local trail. Built by local volunteers over a decade ago, the 1-mile Lee Vining Creek trail threads a narrow line along newly-restored Lee Vining Creek. A true example of natural resurrection, Lee Vining Creek is alive today with deep green willow and cottonwood forests swaying to the song of desert waters thanks to those who fought for years to save Mono Lake.

About two thirds of the way down the trail, I heard the high whine of what I knew to be competition dirt bikes. "That's new," I thought, "There aren't usually competition bikes near town." While it sounded like the bikes were on the Creek Trail, I couldn't believe it. It is simply too hard to get down here, and no one would drive past all the signs and natural barriers for fun. So much for optimistic thinking.

As I exited the trail on its south end, I noticed three folks standing near dirtbikes and a trailer. Okay, great, they weren't on the trail. Score one for personal responsibility. After about 3 minutes, I heard the bikes fire up again and watched them speed off down the highway and then onto a residential street in town. Maybe it was the loud engine jetting and wheelies that prompted me to think something was up.

Now, I will be the first one to fight for people's freedom to escape to the hills to enjoy their Public Lands, but unfortunately some folks refuse to treat the land and others with the respect they deserve. Call me a stick-in-the-mud, I am a stickler for the Golden Rule – *treat others as you would like to be treated* – and I extend that to the land and critters. Would you



Mules ears along the Lee Vining Creek Trail

want folks spinning doughnuts on your newly-manicured lawn? If so, I know some Killdeer who would like to have a word with you...

Back to the story. Camera now in hand, I drove out to an overlook at the Mono Basin Visitor's Center to see what the rush was. After a minute of looking around, I saw the bikers. They were riding well away from a road through the wet meadows along the shore of Mono Lake near the David Gaines Memorial Boardwalk in the non-motorized area of the Tufa State Reserve. One guy even drove through the lake itself!

After cruising through the alkali meadows along the shore of Mono, the bikers decided that the landscaped garden around the Visitor's Center looked like a great place to ride. From there the party continued – yup, you guessed it – down along the Lee Vining Creek trail itself.

Unlike the majority of cases of illegal use on our Public Lands, these responsible parties may actually be held responsible as I was able to execute my first citizen's arrest.

Huge thanks to Gary Hughey, Bodie State Park Ranger, for all the backup.

It's amazing what a little more sunshine can reveal. Take advantage of it, get out, get away from work, and as always, be respectful.

Presence or Absence

With only one to two rangers to cover over a million acres each in the Eastern Sierra, it is clear that more presence is needed.

Contact your Representatives and ask them to provide the funding needed to professionally steward America's great public lands.

Tomorrow's hikers, anglers, birdwatchers, campers, bighorn sheep and golden trout will thank you!

In the Eastern Sierra, contact:

Congressman
Howard Buck McKeon
26650 The Old Road,
Suite 203
Santa Clarita, CA 91381

Senator Diane Feinstein
2500 Tulare Street,
Suite 4290
Fresno, CA 93721

Senator Barbara Boxer.
2500 Tulare Street,
Suite 5290
Fresno, CA 93721

Find your Representatives at:
Senate.gov & House.gov

For more information contact
paulmc@friendsoftheinyo.org.

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

by Paul McFarland

Defending Death Valley



photo: Tom Budlong

A lone hiker searches for the county's claimed "highway" in Last Chance Canyon.

MANY OF YOU WHO LIVE IN THE EASTERN SIERRA may have seen the local press coverage on Inyo County's attack on Death Valley National Park. Admittedly acting on philosophy rather than real need, the County Supervisors are suing America's largest continental National Park in an attempt to wrest ownership of roadless canyons and wild valleys away from the American people and build new, unneeded roads in designated Park Wilderness.

After much discussion, the Friends of the Inyo Board voted to step up to defend Death Valley. In January of 2007, FOI and five other conservation organizations

moved to join the federal government in preserving the people's ability to permanently protect our wild heritage as designated Wilderness.

Our intervention seeks to defend the Park from the county's attempt to build new roads off a cliff (Last Chance Canyon road claim) and down a roadless desert canyon (Greenwater Canyon-Petro road claim), as well as create a needless shortcut (Lost Section Road claim) through wild desert habitat. All three areas were found to be "roadless" in 1979, and protected as wilderness when Death Valley National Park was created in 1994.

As one of Inyo County's largest economic engines, pumping over \$35 million dollars a year into the region's tourist economy, Death Valley is known for its miles of unbroken desert silence, isolated oases swimming with pupfish, shifting sand dunes and enchanting canyons.

If the county succeeds in undoing National Park Wilderness protection and building the proposed roads, desert stillness can join the list of public resources wasted alongside precious taxpayer dollars.

To view photos of Inyo County's "road" claims, visit the News and Issues section of friendsoftheinyo.org.

Battling Bighorn

MELTING SNOW BRINGS MORE than the greening up of alpine meadows to the high ridges between Lundy Canyon and Twin Lakes. Each season seems to bring another chapter in the ongoing struggle to balance the survival of endangered Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep against commercial domestic sheep grazing on public Forest land.

Owing to habitat loss, competition from livestock and disease, wild Bighorn across the west have declined along a trajectory as precipitous as a sheer granite cliff. Today, less than 10% of the west's pre-settlement population of Bighorn survive in less than one-third their original range.

Historically, over 1,000 Sierra Bighorn ranged from Olancha to Sonora Pass. In response to a precipitous population crash following the arrival of Europeans, the California legislature first protected Bighorn in 1883. After steep population declines in the late 1990s (to around 100 total sheep), the Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep was further protected under the Endangered Species Act in 2000. Today, around 350 Bighorn survive in the Sierra. While listing under the ESA provided more resources and regulatory

Pinedrops...continued

protection for the Sierra Bighorn, real threats remain.

Journal readers are familiar with the most immediate threat facing Sierra bighorn: disease transmission from domestic sheep to wild Bighorn. Numerous Bighorn from the Lee Vining—or “Yosemite”—herd of Sierra Bighorn have been sighted north of Lundy Canyon on the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest where domestic sheep are allowed to graze each summer.

The chances of disease transmission from the domestic sheep grazing on public land allotments are very real, as illustrated by numerous historic and current events. A much anticipated report released by the University of California at Davis and California Department of Fish & Game concluded that while adjustments to domestic sheep grazing strategies could reduce the risk of contact between domestic and Bighorn to less than 2%, there remains “a 50% probability of at least one respiratory disease outbreak causing \geq (greater than or equal to) 40% bighorn sheep herd mortality during the next 70 years.”

This winter the Bridgeport District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest moved to restrict domestic sheep grazing

in the areas known to be inhabited by Bighorn. At press time, the livestock operator was appealing the District’s conservative and scientifically-valid decision.

John Muir juxtaposed the decline of the once robust Pronghorn Antelope and Tule Elk herds of California’s Central Valley with the Sierra Bighorn’s relatively safe mountain haunts. He urged “all lovers of wilderness [to] rejoice with me in the rocky security of...the bravest of all the Sierra mountaineers.”

Many thanks to the Center for Biological Diversity, Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation, Natural Resources Defense Council, The Wilderness Society, National Forest and National Fish & Wildlife Service staff, California Department of Fish & Game and the commercial livestock permittee for their work to secure a wild future for the Sierra’s bravest (and first!) mountaineer.

U.N. poised to invade Inyo County. Is Mono next?

IT CAME AS A SURPRISE to many in the Inyo County Board of Supervisor’s chambers that local Wilderness advocates are actually agents of the United Nations

hell-bent on implementing a nefarious scheme to make more than half of the United States “off limits to human use.”

That’s the truth according to representatives from a local off-road vehicle lobbying group, present to encourage the Board to support a resolution calling for legislation to designate over 2 million acres of Eastern Sierra public lands for off-road vehicles.

The motorized advocates to claim that over 7 acres a minute are added to the over

107 million acres of public land “closed to most uses.”

Further investigation of the advocates’ claims revealed the source of this threat – new Wilderness legislation proposed by California Senator Barbara Boxer. According to these fact finders, her proposed California Wild Heritage Act will close over 6300 miles of road in the Eastern Sierra alone! (*There are only 3600 miles of road on the entire Inyo National Forest; we haven’t figured out who manages the remaining 2700 miles of roads to be closed.*)



photo: Todd Vogel

FOI volunteer, Bodie Jack Shipley, conceals his UN insignia with a well-placed gloved hand at Cottonwood Creek.

Pinedrops...continued from page 13

Ever vigilant against threats to public enjoyment of public lands, FOI staff investigated some of these numbers. We found that the over 107 million acres “closed to most uses” was curiously close to the 106 million acres of designated Wilderness in the US. And yet Wilderness Areas, like the John Muir, Ansel Adams, Hoover and Golden Trout, are open to hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, horseback riding, and even grazing!

Pushing on, staff thought the closed areas may be the 84 million acres protected in those pesky National Parks. Nope, 272.6 million people used them last year. Maybe it's the 95 million acres of National Wildlife Refuges they're so mad about. Nope, over 40 million folks hunted, fished or birdwatched in those “restricted” areas last year, too.

Undaunted by the majority of bothersome constituents who spoke eloquently against the off-roader's anti-Wilderness blanket OHV designation, the Inyo Supervisors voted 5-0 to support...we're not really sure what, but the UN is somehow involved.

This same motorized resolution is scheduled to come to the Mono Board in early May. With your help, hopefully, this Board will rebuff the off-roader's extreme position and reiterate their support for the compromise process that lead to Congressman McKeon's Eastern Sierra Rural Heritage and

Economic Enhancement Act to protect the proposed Hoover Wilderness Additions (see cover photo).

In the end, factual dialogue and reality will prevail, and tomorrow's children will be able to enjoy the freedom our public lands thanks to those “crazy restrictions” that keep public lands wild.

The Still Sputtering Furnace

WE COULDN'T LET AN ISSUE of the *Journal* go by with-

proceeding with any action, or even a decision to take action, the BLM needed to amend their entire California Desert Conservation Area Plan – the management document covering over 10.4 million areas of public lands in the Great Basin, Mojave, Sonoran and Colorado deserts.

As those who have gotten their feet wet know, Furnace Creek is more of a slow moving desert wetland than a creek. Stretching from canyon wall to canyon wall, water birch, giant cotton-

in 1982 and has not been considered a system road since.”

After being alerted to increasing damage to the stream caused by a handful of intrepid motorcycle and quad riders, the Forest and BLM closed Furnace Creek to vehicles in 2003. Since that time, conservationists have been working to ensure the federal agencies follow their own management guidelines and place protection of rare desert riparian areas over building yet another costly and unneeded road. The agency's own analysis reveals that Furnace Creek was driven by less than a dozen people a year. Where is the sense in spending hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars for a barely-used road when Visitor's Centers, campgrounds, trails and other public facilities are falling apart or being planned for closure?

While no final decision had been released at press time, the BLM has made it clear they plan to proceed with amending the CDCA plan to facilitate the construction of a new road through the White Mountains Wilderness Study Area and Furnace Creek.

Friends of the Inyo, along with numerous conservation organizations and conservationists, are committed to keeping Furnace wild while working to ensure our scant federal and public resources are put where they will do the greatest good for the greatest number (of both people and critters).



photo: Paul McFarland

The “road” up Furnace Creek, May 2006.

out an article on one of our favorite desert oases.

After numerous false starts, the Ridgecrest Field Office of the BLM moved early this year to clear the legal brush in the way of their attempt to build a new road up Furnace Creek. Seems that before

woods, willow thickets and marshes of stream orchids and cattails provide a rich home for wildlife from mule deer to sage grouse.

According to the Inyo National Forest, any semblance of a road in Furnace Creek Canyon “washed out

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En Memoriam

George and Frances Alderson of Maryland donated in memory of Alexander Buck, Pomona College student, aspiring photo-journalist and junior ambassador for our country.

Cyndee Baugh of Bishop and Stephanie Sheltz of Ventura donated in memory of long-time Bishop resident, Mary Klieforth.

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Our Federal partners: **Public Lands Managers of the Ridgecrest BLM, Bishop BLM, Inyo National Forest, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, California Department of Fish & Game**

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