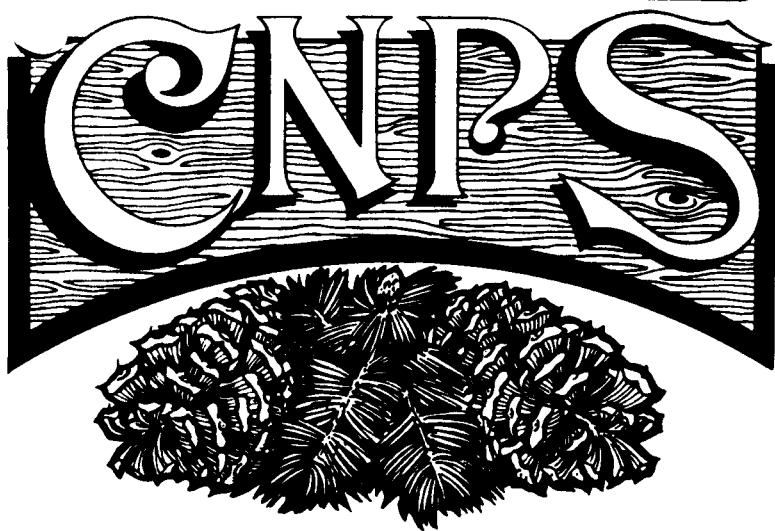


BRISTLECONE • CHAPTER

NEWSLETTER



Vol. 11, No. 2

March 1992

NEXT CHAPTER MEETING

Wednesday, March 25. at 7:30 p.m. at the Big Pine Methodist Church Social Hall. corner of Crocker and North School streets (turn at the caution light on Highway 395). Linda Reynolds, U.S. Forest Service archaeologist, will present "The pre-history of Papoose Flat".

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

Last year it was the March Miracle. This year it has been Feisty February. As I watched the never ending news accounts of the flooded areas I was reminded of the line from Robert Frost's "Mending Walls" in which the neighbor says "Good fences make good neighbors". The neighbors were walking their own sides of the New England stone wall, together repairing the winter's damage, lest their cows stray across the break.

Many of the flooded conditions were caused by poor neighbors who allowed their discards; tree branches perhaps broken by wind, paper, plastic, styrofoam, etc. to fall and remain where strong water currents or wind can convey them to a nearby culvert or storm drain where it contributes to a beaver style dam. Some of this debris may have been deposited in a trash can at one time.

We sign up for Adopt-A-Highway, thinking of the unsightliness of litter, not realizing that litter can contribute to flooding. If we haven't already, we should start closer to home in our own yards, and on those streets leading to state highways (All roads lead to Rome). Some of us have irrigation ditches in our yards, front or back. Most of our neighborhoods have a culvert or storm drain nearby. All are subject to clogging and water back up at any season.

In communities composed of many retired persons, we may have neighbors unable for reasons of health or absence to make regular checks for debris. A few minutes in their territory may save a lot of grief for someone down stream. Make being a good neighbor a habit.

. Evelyn Mae Nikolaus

* * * * *

REMEMBER to check the line on your tax returns to help endangered species. You can make a difference.

BEARS

During the seasonal lull prior to our field trips we give you some bear stories. These large wild animals have become all too friendly with certain residents and visitors in Owens Valley. Those of you who have experienced Bessie Poole's hospitality at Seven Pines can share her mixed feelings over "her bear." The second article is by one of our members, Tom Lipp, who is also a game warden

MY BEAR

It was a year ago this past spring that I first saw him. I had been visiting a neighbor down the creek and was walking home. Just before reaching the bridge I saw what I thought was a medium to large dog crossing the road and going on down on the other side of the creek. On looking closer, I knew it was a little bear cub.

I didn't see him again until September when he came to call at my front door. Then he called again, a month or so later, to say he was headed for a place to sleep for the winter.

It was June when he showed up again. He was making quite a splash in my little pond where I had some plastic ducks. It was about eight in the morning so I figured he had in mind a nice duck breakfast. He was there again from time to time, playing with the ducks. One time he bit into one. I hope I can mend it so that it will float again. Later he tracked up my patio with his muddy feet as he sniffed around the barbecue. One time I saw him shaking one of my patio pillows vigorously. He was a beautiful little animal, but getting bigger fast.

One time in early October when the telephone man came to check on my mobilphone he was met at the front door by my quite friendly wild creature. (I'll bet that Mr. Lindsey's encounter with a bear at the door of a patron would be a likely candidate for a "believe it or not" tale.

A neighbor down the creek got some wonderful photos of "my bear" as he sat at their patio table to eat peanuts placed there for the blue jays. He also tipped over their bird feeding table to get the seeds.

Late in the fall after the wind had blown leaves and acorns from the black oaks down into a hollow east of my cabin, "my bear" made several more visits. Early in the mornings he sprawled there on a mattress of leaves, pawing around for acorns. They were especially nice this year. I said that he was having his breakfast in bed.

Some time after that my son and his family came for a weekend visit. Next morning the bear came sniffing around the cabin as usual, then went down the hill to his favorite bed and breakfast spot. My granddaughter then put her arms around me saying, "Grandma, I'm glad we saw him. Now I know you aren't 'teched in the head' with all your bear stories."

"My bear" put on quite a show for the family at Thanksgiving time. He wandered around outside the house for quite awhile and then stopped at the south picture window to see what was going on inside. We had all grabbed anything that would make a noise, including my can of rocks that I kept for that purpose. He stood looking for a very long time as though wondering what those crazy people were doing.

That episode helped convince me that my two-year friend had become a bit too friendly. It was with mixed feelings that I said I would cooperate when I learned that a local man had been issued a permit to kill him. Prior to that I had always said, "Leave 'my bear' alone." It was about dusk on December 4, 1991, when the permittee arrived. It took only one shot. Two men loaded the 200 pound animal into their truck.

I had never got around to naming him; he was just "my bear". He was becoming dangerously intimate around the cabins at Seven Pines so he had to go. He will be sadly missed!

..... Bessie Poole

"THE BEAR PROBLEM"

I had been the California Game Warden in southern Inyo County for eight summers in 1986 and had not so much as heard of a bear sighting in that period. Late that summer I saw a black bear sow with two cubs traveling down the Kearsarge Pass trail, just below Heart Lake.

I was immensely excited and spent some time observing these unusual visitors to my district. I recall being surprised to see the three bears travel exclusively on the trail, never cutting a single switchback, until reaching the meadow just above Flower Lake. The bears wandered off, feeding and exploring, until I lost sight of them in a dense patch of willows.

It was not the last I heard of these bears that summer, the first complaints of backpacker hits began almost immediately.

The summer of 1987 began with complaints of a robber bear hitting campers at Upper and Lower Grey's Meadow Campground, above the town of Independence. This bear, it quickly became apparent, was no average bear. His M.O. was to appear around dinner time. He would step out of the brush at a campsite after the campers had set all their food on the table. Then by rising to an upright position and woofing he would scatter the campers leaving the table unguarded. Very nonchalantly he would sit down on the table and consume the dinner.

After many incidents of this nature it was decided to trap and move this rogue. The Fish and Game Unit Biologist and the U. S. Forest Service were brought into this operation unique to Inyo County. The two other "trappers" and I decided to meet at Lower Grey's Meadow Campground early so everything would be set for the bears arrival. In that we anticipated the possibility of a long evening, we decided to bring food and enjoy a barbecue dinner. Don't get ahead of me here or you will ruin the punch line.

We had no sooner put our burgers on the fire and our ice chests on the table than you know who emerged from the brush. A quick conference was held to decide if the bear should be chased off or left alone in the interest of trapping him. We decided to leave him alone.

A large crowd of laughing campers gathered with cameras in hand to witness and photograph the bear trappers humiliation. The day was saved from total disgrace only when we successfully caught the bear.

We released the bear in the only authorized release site in Inyo and Mono Counties, near Haiwee Canyon. Within less than one week our bear was breaking into cabins in the Monache Meadow area and had to be killed.

Each following summer saw an increase in "bear problems". The first incidents in Big Pine Canyon were reported in 1988. Backpackers were routinely cleaned out in the vicinity of the Onion Valley Lakes.

Campgrounds are a prime attractant of bears. If regular garbage cans are used bears find a ready source of food here. If garbage is not removed daily the problem is compounded.

The daily turnover of campers in campgrounds creates an enormous education problem for the campground hosts. The astounding fact is that even if told, some campers refuse to bear-proof their campsite.

One incident I recall occurred at Upper Grey's Meadow Campground. I contacted a group of campers at a campsite late in the evening. Ice chests were set out next to the table. The table was covered with "snack foods". I advised the campers of the ongoing bear problem in the area and suggested that all food and ice chests be put into the trunk of their car before dark. The Alpha male of the camping group said that he was an experienced woodsman and did not need instructions from a ranger.

The next morning when I checked the campground the host stopped me to say that the bear had "cleaned out" a group of campers the previous night. I knew

which site to visit for a detailed report. On arriving at the campsite the Alpha male said that he was going to write a letter to his Senator to complain of the "killer bears" allowed to roam the campground. The campsite was a mess and two ice chests were destroyed. I could continue for pages with more examples similar to this, but will only relate one more.

One evening I received a telephone call from the Inyo County Sheriff's Office relaying a message from Upper Grey's Meadow Campground that a bear was brazenly robbing campers of food in broad daylight. I responded from my home in Independence.

As I was driving through the campground a small bear rushed from the brush, across the road and disappeared in the brush along the creek. He crossed not more than twenty feet in front of my truck and I could see that he had in his mouth a whole broiling chicken.

Not more than seconds later a man ran from the brush in pursuit of the bear screaming "He's got my chicken, he's got my chicken"! On seeing me the man ran up to my truck and told me the bear had stolen his chicken from an ice chest he had left in the creek to keep cool. He further demanded that I retrieve his chicken from the bear. I told the man that in spite of the fact that the bear was small I had no intention of taking the chicken away from the bear. This camper also said that he was going to write a complaint letter.

There are several questions which arise when developing a management strategy for "problem bears".

1. What rights do the bears have to habitat?
2. What responsibilities do campers have while camping in bear habitat?
3. What action should be taken in dealing with bears habituated to humans and their garbage and food?
4. How can this habituation be prevented?
5. Can habituation be reduced or reversed?
6. What are the causes of the marked increase in "problem bear" incidents in Inyo County during the past 6 years? (I don't believe drought to be the only cause).
7. Will the problem eventually take care of itself?

These problems continue to be debated as each summer rolls around. As with most human/wildlife problems there is apparently no simple solution. Until shown otherwise I will continue to approach this problem from the standpoint that what we have is a human problem, not a bear problem.

. Tom Lipp

* * * * *

ADDITIONS TO 1992 DIRECTORY

Green Thumb	Richard Potasin	5079 Westridge Bishop, 93514	387-2680
Legislation	Myron Alexander	P.O. Box 912 Lone Pine, 93545	876-5972

1992 BRISTLECONE CHAPTER FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE

MARCH 27-29. ANZA BORREGO DESERT STATE PARK. Leader: Carla Scheidlinger. It's a long drive south to the Colorado Desert, but you'll be rewarded with palm oases, lots of cacti, ocotillo, smoke tree, chuparosa, desert lavender and a host of other wonderful plants we never see in our Mojave and Great Basin deserts. There have been good rains which should produce carpets of spring annuals. Meet in Lone Pine at the Interagency Visitors Center at 1:00 pm on Friday. We'll drive south to Joshua Tree National Monument where we will camp at Blackrock Canyon, a developed campsite where we have reservations. On Saturday we will drive to the Anza Borrego Desert State Park. We will probably camp at a semi-primitive campsite, most likely Bow Willow which has tables, water and pit toilets. Ample water should be brought (both for human and vehicle use) in the event we end up camping at another location without water. We will return to Bishop by Sunday evening. This trip can be made in a conventional vehicle. For further information or for those who live south of Lone Pine and want to arrange for a more southerly meeting place, phone Carla at 873-8439. Easy to moderate walking.

APRIL 11-12. DEATH VALLEY, FUNERAL MOUNTAINS, NEAR HOLE-IN-THE-WALL. Leaders: Mary DeDecker and Sally Manning. High clearance vehicles required. Saturday will be spent botanizing as we travel to a primitive camp in the Funeral Mountains, just outside of the Monument boundary. On Sunday we'll take a treasure walk for rare plants in a nearby canyon. The picture book, *Death Valley Wildflowers*, by Roxana S. Ferris is recommended. Bring plenty of water and the usual camping gear. Meet on Saturday morning at 8:30 am, at the Interagency Visitors Center just south of Lone Pine. For people coming from somewhere south of the Owens Valley, call Mary at 619-878-2389 to arrange for a meeting place in Death Valley or along the way. Easy walking.

APRIL 25. WESTERN BASE OF THE WHITE MOUNTAINS. Leader: Jim Morefield. High clearance vehicles required. This will be a trip to check out the desert wildflowers which occur on the alluvial fans of the White Mountains. Jim has several spots in mind in the Owens, Chalfant and Hammil valleys. However, we would probably only go to one or two general areas which have the best display at the time. If you intend to go, please call Mark at 873-5326 or Evelyn Mae at 878-2149 after April 6 to find out the meeting time and place. Easy walking.

MAY 9. ROSE VALLEY AND COSO MOUNTAINS. Leader: Mark Bagley. We will explore the west side of the Coso Mountains and adjacent portions of Rose Valley. Meet at 9:00 am Saturday morning, in the parking area of the Coso Junction rest stop on U.S. 395, between Dunmovin and Little Lake. Easy walking.

MAY 30. ALKALI LAKES AND MEADOWS OF LONG VALLEY. Leader: Doris Fredendall. Several rare plants occur in the meadows and sagebrush in this interesting and scenic area. Meet at 9:30 am, by the little green church at the junction of U.S. 395 and Benton Crossing Road. Easy walking.

JUNE 13. MAZOURKA CANYON, INYO MOUNTAINS. Leaders: Mary DeDecker and Clem Nelson. High clearance vehicles recommended, but not required. The road is graded dirt, often wash-boarded. Back by popular demand, we will have a combined botany and geology trip led by these noted experts on the Inyo-White Range. Meet at 9:00 am, at the new roadside park across from the rock service station just south of Independence, on the corner of Mazourka Road and U.S. 395. Easy walking.

JUNE 27. LITTLE ONION VALLEY TRAIL, SIERRA NEVADA WEST OF INDEPENDENCE. Leader: Vince Yoder. Moderate to easy walk along road and trail to Little Onion Valley. Start at about 6500 feet elevation, to about 8000 feet if we make it to the valley. Meet at 9:00 am at the northwest corner of Highway 395 and Market Street, across the street from the Independence Post Office.

JULY 11. BIRCH CREEK, BETWEEN THE BUTTERMILKS AND THE SIERRA, WEST OF BISHOP. Leader: Scott Hetzler. High clearance vehicles recommended, dirt roads much of the way. Very scenic area, where the desert meets the Sierra. Meet at 9:00 am Saturday in the Home Street School parking lot, on the corner of West Line St. and Home St. in Bishop. Easy walking.

JULY 25. TREASURE LAKES, BISHOP CREEK DRAINAGE. Leaders: Jack and Pat Crowther. This will be a hike through upper montane and subalpine forests. There should be quite a variety of flowers along the trail. Meet at 9:00 am at the South Lake parking area. Moderate to strenuous hike, about 6 miles roundtrip from South Lake, at elevations from 9700 to about 11,000 feet.

AUGUST 15. ARROWHEAD AND HEART LAKES, MAMMOTH LAKES BASIN. Leader: Ann Howald. Lots of wildflowers are expected in the "enriched" montane sagebrush, meadows, and along the creeks. Meet at 10:00 Saturday morning at the Coldwater Creek Campground parking area at the Duck Pass trailhead. Moderate walking, about 3 miles roundtrip, at 9000-9700 feet elevation.

AUGUST 22-23. SHEEP MOUNTAIN AND NORTH FORK OF COTTONWOOD BASIN, WHITE MOUNTAINS. Leader: Jim Morefield. High clearance vehicles for Saturday only if you want to make it a one day trip, 4-wd needed to get to Cottonwood Basin where we will go late on Saturday to a primitive camp. Meet at 8:30 Saturday morning, in Big Pine at the Triangle Campground, junction of U.S. 395 and Hwy 168. Easy walking, but we will be at 10,000-12,000 feet elevation.

SEPTEMBER 19. OWENS VALLEY. Leader: Carla Scheidlinger. Watch for details on this trip in later newsletters, or on the radio and in the newspaper the week before the trip.

OCTOBER 10. JUNE LAKE LOOP. Leader: Mark Bagley. A fall trip to an area often noted for spectacular aspen colors. Meet at 9:30 am at the June Lake Junction on Highway 395. Easy walking.

FIELD TRIP POLICIES

Generally, day trips last most of the day while the overnight trips conclude early Sunday afternoon. Bring a lunch and drinks on a day trip. Often we are near the vehicles at lunch, but always be prepared to carry your lunch on a hike. Bring plenty of water or other thirst quenching beverages, a hat, dark glasses, sunscreen, and sturdy walking shoes. On the Sierran trips bring along some insect repellent just in case. Don't forget to bring along field guides and a hand lens! Primitive camping means no facilities—bring all your own food, water and everything else.

Family, friends, and visitors are welcome to come along, but please no pets. Unless indicated, the average car should do fine on our trips. Please use a reliable vehicle, with good tires, and start out with a full tank of gas. Some trips are at high elevations (above 9000 feet). These have been noted, so if you have any heart or breathing problems please consult with your doctor before coming. Trips will LEAVE at the time announced, so please arrive a few minutes early. Car pooling is encouraged. Contact Mark Bagley, field trip chairman at 619-873-5326, for more information.

\$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Balin Butler & Paula Jones - Inyokern

Thomas Stephens - Inyokern

We hope to meet you on some of the above field trips.

CONSERVATION CORNER

The status of the EIR on the groundwater management for Inyo County remains in limbo. Although Inyo County certified as adequate the only portion of the EIR it was legally entitled to address - the portion regarding management under the Agreement - there were sufficient glaring inadequacies of the remainder of the document to warrant additional scrutiny. The Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund (SCLDF) has been cooperating with the Owens Valley Committee (which includes CNPS members Mary DeDecker and Carla Scheidlinger) to submit *amicus curae* (friends of the court) briefs describing these inadequacies to the court which will be reviewing the EIR. At present, negotiations are in progress between Inyo County and Los Angeles, and the OVC and SCLDF to settle issues regarding the EIR without submitting the *amicus* briefs. Other groups who have also been granted *amicus* status include the California Department of Fish and Game and the State Lands Commission, and Inyo and LA are negotiating separately with these groups. Issues that have been raised are problems with the pre-project description, the nature of the Lower Owens River project and its use as mitigation, mitigation for major spring areas, cumulative impacts including grazing and ORV use, treatment of rare and endangered species, and the use and interpretation of the aerial photo analysis agreed upon between Inyo and LA. The CNPS representatives on the OVC are currently optimistic that these problems can be resolved to our satisfaction.

Another conservation concern of interest to the CNPS is the formation of the Forest Rangelands Steering Committee. This group was organized by the Forest Service to plan and implement a workshop aimed at addressing the interests of ranchers, conservationists, and government agencies concerning the multiple use of national forest lands. Representing the environmental community are Carla Scheidlinger of the CNPS and Gary Morgan of Audubon. The workshop is tentatively scheduled for May 15-16, and everyone interested in grazing issues is strongly urged to attend. The ultimate intent is to promote small geographically-defined interest groups that can develop good personal and working relationships both among the participants and also with regulatory agencies that will enable us to solve problems that arise with rangeland utilization. This approach has great promise in reducing the polarization that has begun to surround grazing on public lands, and everyone's participation is encouraged.

. Carla Scheidlinger

Each year the Inyo National Forest prepares a "Key Issue" report for the coming year. It discusses last year's accomplishments and its problems too. One of the complaints covers the number of appeals filed on project decisions this year; virtually every decision resulted in an appeal. This is wasteful of the Forest's financial resources and takes up considerable time from staff which could be used elsewhere.

However, hard line decisions not reflecting public perception of how best to use and at the same time conserve this forest's resources will result in frustration and disappointment with consequent use of the appeal process.

We are concerned in this year's discussion of the "Threstened and endangered Species" program that plants were given short shrift. It was mentioned that 24 plants were on the sensitive list, but that was it. The rest of the section named and considered fish and birds. Not that they are not important, but surely something should have been said about the status of recovery plans for some of the sensitive plants most in need of attention.

The bottom line is that plants and the habitats they comprise support all other life and must be recognized to be of at least equal if not greater importance than members of the animal kingdom.

We expect To see more discussion of sensitive plant issues in next year's report.

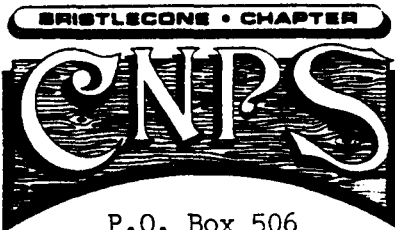
. Vince Yoder

* * * * *

Last year our Bristlecone Chapter members helped the Forest Service make field surveys of four different sensitive plant species. We are asked to do the same this coming season. Dates will be June 6, July 2, July 17, and August 1. Details will be in the May newsletter.

THE BRISTLECONE NEWSLETTER comes out bimonthly. It is mailed free to members of this chapter. Otherwise, the subscription is \$5.00 per year.
Editor: Mary DeDecker.

California Native Plant Society



P.O. Box 506
140 West Pavilion Street
Independence, CA 93526

