



Sierra
Club

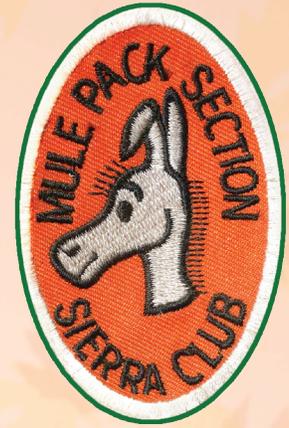
Founded 1892

Angeles Chapter Sierra Club

Mule Pack Section

January 2013 Annual Newsletter

Edited and published by *Bob Hansen*



The MPS Executive Committee voted in 2008 to publish the MPS newsletter only as an online document. The newsletter will include only short trip reports to provide our members and leaders with resource information about the destinations of the mule pack trips. Here are reports from the 2012 trips.

THOUSAND ISLAND LAKE

August 12 - 18

Leaders: Sandy and Peter Lara, Phil and Tonyce Bates

Participants: Linda Emerson, Tim McCoy, Annemarie Mikolaitis, Jane Wang, Su Yi

Site: It was difficult to find a site large enough for 7 tents (9 people) and a common area. There were lots of backpackers (about a hundred tents) around lake. We were on the north side of the lake, about a third of the way from the east end, which was as far as the mules could go (a narrow, rocky section of trail limits them at this point).

Packer: Agnew Meadows Pack Station (operated by Reds Meadow) gave a 10% discount with deposit before April and free use of bear boxes. One bear box failed the first night. Lesson learned: check the screws and clips before accepting a box.

Hikes: Banner Peak, Mt Davis, Garnet Lake, Clark Lakes, Davis Lakes, other lakes

Other activities: Thousand Island Lake is sandy and shallow and so warmer than one might expect at this elevation. Fishing is possible.



Suggestions for future trips to the same destination: This area is overburdened with backpackers. Mule Packs are better off at other locations where there would be less impact and more privacy, as well as space for a larger group.

It rained—every day. It frequently hailed, too, with booming thunder and bright flashes of lightning. But it didn't dampen our spirits (too much). We just happened to hit the week when monsoonal moisture from the south came up and decided to make fireworks. So, we made our plans to fit with the daily weather reports brought to us by the numerous arriving backpackers. At least there were no mosquitoes.

Our biggest adventure was climbing Banner Peak (12,936'). Mt Ritter and Banner Peak are the prominent peaks at the west end of Garnet and Thousand Island Lakes. From Thousand Island Lake, Mt Ritter is hidden by Banner. We couldn't camp there and look at Banner Peak all week without attempting its class 2 route up the far side. Five of us started early on Tuesday morning toward North





SADDLEROCK LAKE

August 19 – 25

Leaders: Laura Joseph and Les Wilson

Participants: Tom Malloy, Alan Schimpf, David Wales, Christine Tate, Susanne Blessington, Richard and Lorraine Seidmeyer, Sam Rametta, Roger Steffen

Our alpine adventure began as we arrived by vehicle at the Rainbow Pack Outfitters pack station early on a pleasant Sunday morning. After unloading our camping gear, food, and other supplies, paying the packer, and confirming the location of our base camp, we carpoled to free parking at the South Lake trailhead (9,785') where the Bishop Pass Trail (the main trail) begins. The trail rises steadily along the South Fork of Bishop Creek to the pass, passing several beautiful lakes including South Lake, Long Lake, Spearhead Lake and Timberline Tarns, eventually arriving at a wooden bridge over the outlet from Saddlerock Lake



(11,125'). We turned right just before the bridge and followed a use trail to the northwest where we set up our base camp a short distance from the lake. We enjoyed "salad night" for dinner.

On Monday after breakfast we divided into two hiking groups: one group hiked up the main trail to Bishop Pass (11,972'), passing Bishop Lake, and into Dusy Basin; the other group hiked back down the main trail to the Ruwau Lake spur trail and then completed a loop that included the three Chocolate Lakes and Bull Lake. Both groups were treated to some beautiful scenery including alpine lakes/streams and granite mountains. One of the hikers spent part of the day fishing for trout (and catching some!) and two explored the shores of Saddlerock Lake. We enjoyed a dinner of bean and vegetable stew, with chicken and vegetarian sausage on the side, prepared by Tom and Alan.



Glacier Pass. Lake Catherine is the glacier-fed beauty on the other side. We skirted around the east side of Catherine and crossed a ridge over to the edge of a long glacier. We stayed on the talus as we climbed, finally testing the surface of the glacier when the angle became less precipitous. It was soft and we continued up to the saddle at its head. From the saddle we climbed talus to the summit.

The views were spectacular! The clouds were mounting around us, but blue sky was over us while we were on the summit. After eating lunch, we started down. We were about halfway down the glacier portion when the sky opened and sheets of rain, with intermittent periods of pea-sized hail, came pouring from above. We had donned our rain gear just in time. On our return there were waterfalls where before there were simple ramps of rock. We yelled over the rain to discuss the route, carefully negotiated each step, and got back safely with a grand story to tell.

We also had great food, even though a bear broke into one of our two bear boxes the first night and made off with the appetizers and most of the desserts, including the brownies and the pan. Tonyce Bates, deemed our Happy Hour Queen, seemed to have no trouble making do with what was left. We even had chocolate mousse one night as an appetizer.

A great time, new friends, good food, and new adventures in a beautiful place. Who could ask for more, especially with no mosquitoes?





On Tuesday we again divided into two hiking groups: the group that hadn't done so hiked up to Bishop Pass and down to the larger lakes in Dusy Basin; the other group tackled a challenging cross-country route to the saddle above Treasure Lakes, taking a roundabout route on the return to avoid a choice between a steep bluff and a moraine. We enjoyed "quesadilla night" for dinner.

At 3:00 a.m. Wednesday, heavy rain began and lasted for about two hours, but our tents and tarps held up and by mid-morning it was (for the moment) a beautiful day. Several people hiked up to Bishop Lake to explore while two fished; the others engaged in walkabouts around the Saddlerock Lake area, read, or rested. Around 1:30 p.m., hail began falling, followed by more rain for most of the afternoon. During a respite in the rain we enjoyed a delicious dinner prepared by Richard and Lorraine and turned in early.

Thursday turned out to be a beautiful day during which nearly everyone hiked to Chocolate Peak (11,682') where we were treated to excellent views of both lakes and peaks. A fabulous dinner was provided by Sam and Dave who donned chef's aprons for the occasion.

Friday was another beautiful day during which another cross-country assault on Treasure Lakes was launched via Margaret Lake and unnamed ridges and passes; two hikers made it all the way, the others returned via the nearly vertical cliff. Dinner consisted of leftovers and trout caught

by Sam and was a wonderful culmination to a trip fit for gourmets.

On Saturday morning we broke camp, hiked out leisurely, waited a few hours for our bags, and then drove home looking forward to hot showers and clean sheets after a wonderful week in the John Muir Wilderness.

The Rainbow Pack Outfit did a good job except that they start late meaning that we had to wait for our gear after arriving at the campsite and again when we returned at the end of the trip.



VIRGINIA CANYON

July 29 - August 3

Leaders: Laura Joseph and Sandy Burnside

Participants: Mary Kay Prentice, Bob Hansen, Dan Butler, Mary Patterson, Keith Burnside, Bruce Langedyke, Mary Lou Langedyke, Bob Graf, Richard Potratz, Lee Wise, Doug Farr, Jerry Glass



On Sunday, the group hiked in from Virginia Lakes pack station over an unnamed pass at 11,300' down to Summit Lake and from there to Return Creek. The site is terrific: plenty of space, next to a trail junction, with lots of trees, plenty of firewood, near the creek, frequently visited by deer, and overlooked by Grey Butte. There are lots of options for tent locations and a large pot luck/common area. We set up camp, including our tented latrine and a canopy over the tables and enjoyed our salad night around the campfire. This is one of the few places in the Sierra where campfires are allowed.

Most of the group gathered together for breakfast every day, sharing pots of hot water for coffee, tea or cocoa. On Monday, there were hikes to Virginia Pass, Return Lake, Summit Lake, and along the creek. The Burnside's prepared pasta with tomato sauce and meatballs for dinner.





TREASURE LAKES

August 23 - 26

Leaders: Francine Oschin, Christine Gutierrez, Dave Cross

Participants: Mike Eberts, Nancy Niebrugge, Mauriça Anderson, Terry Boehmer, Zachary Oschin, Ruth Goldstein, David Urciuoli, Leslie Carlson, Anne Marie Lafayette, Nik Pakvasa, Doro Brandenburg

We used Rainbow Pack Outfit out of South Lake, west of Bishop. The packer left our gear between the two lower Treasure lakes at an excellent spot which provided both scenic beauty and nice camping sites. There were fish in the lower two lakes but they were small and uninterested in being dinner.



Every day, there were at least two people fishing while others relaxed in camp. (None of the fishing yielded trout for dinner.)

On Tuesday, a group hiked up the flank of Grey Butte to Soldier Lake and on down to Return Lake where they met several others fishing.

On Wednesday, folks went to Return and Summit Lakes while others explored cross country to Shepherd Lake. The evening featured a quesadilla feast.

Thursday, participants took off for Virginia Pass, Onion Lake, and creek fishing. Mary Kay prepared salmon, mashed potatoes and peas for dinner.

We hiked out in small groups on Friday with happy memories of good (if not exciting) hikes, catch and release fishing, great food, good chat around the campfire, evening walks, photography, and musical evenings accompanied by Jerry's guitar and several talented men singers. The age of our group ranged from 65-75, six of us wear hearing aids and three are named Mary. The weather was perfect and there were virtually no bugs.

Although the hiking in this area is pleasant, there are few trails and no major peaks. On the plus side, campfires are allowed and the site is perfect.



Within the Treasure Lakes area, there are no longer any marked trails as years of rock slides have covered them. It is however possible to hike to the three upper lakes by following the river and rock formations. This hike takes a lot of strength and requires rock scrambling but the visit to the lakes is worth it. The upper lakes are near 12,000 feet and impressive. The climb down using the same route would be far more challenging and would be extremely difficult and dangerous on a descent. Therefore we took another route which entailed climbing horizontally across a large boulder field. From there, we managed to find a riparian area and followed the natural flow of water down the mountain. This entailed some "sliding on the butt" maneuvers, but it got us down.

Other hikes which are possible to do include Long Lake and Chocolate Lake. These require a long and steep hike back out on the trail we came in on to the other side of the mountain range. These lakes would be better as a home base from which to do other hikes in that area. Access





One alternative we were offered was Boothe Lake, which we knew had trees and a lot of good looking campsites. After hiking to it on Sunday, we were quite pleased with our choice. Boothe is a beautiful lake surrounded by trees and impressive rock walls. There are many fine sites, a nearby lovely meadow, adequate room for the group happy hour and easy access to the many trails in the area. It is only about a half mile to Vogelsang High Sierra Camp where one can buy treats like lemonade and baked goodies in the afternoon and where there is an unlimited supply of potable water.

to them is about two miles from the trail head at the point where the trail forks right to Treasure Lakes and continues straight to Bishop Pass.



VOGELSANG (Yosemite National Park)

August 26 - 31, 2012

Leaders: Winnette Butler & Jim S. Fleming

Participants: Doug Farr, Betsy Horgan, Jane McCord, Beth Mika, Cathie and Gerry Miller, Reynoldo Reed, Dianne Sansoterra, Nancy and Mike Walizer.

Our plan for this trip was to camp near the Vogelsang High Sierra Camp. However, when Winnette picked up the permit from the N.P.S. office in Yosemite the Saturday before our departure, she was informed that we would not be allowed to camp there. Apparently, the Park Service is concerned about over-utilization at the site, and they are closing it to camping for restoration.



the outgoing hike and on the return. However, Bernice Lake is very beautiful and all enjoyed the journey.

It was very interesting to talk to the hikers around the High Sierra Camp. They came from many different places in the U.S. and other countries. Some were backpacking on long extended trips, some were day trippers and some were doing the High Sierra Loop to the High Sierra Camps.

Winnette brought along a new shower enclosure, which became very popular as the days passed. Using a solar shower bag, the shelter provides privacy and was really appreciated! The weather was quite cool the first night (dropping down to 18 degrees F. in the early predawn hours--brrrrr!). Fortunately, it warmed up quite a bit after the first night. There were plenty of trout in the lakes for our fisherperson, and they were really jumping in Boothe Lake in the evenings.



The packers did a fine job getting things in and out for us, though they are not available to speak to until the area opens in June or later. Our great group of participants included Doug Farr, who treated the group to a different soup every evening, including tortilla soup for the quesadilla night dinner yummm! All had a thoroughly wonderful time and look forward to more adventures next season!



HUMPHREY BASIN

August 5-10

Leaders: Yvonne Tsai, Cathie Miller, and John Kaiser

Participants: Fari Afrookhteh, Mauriça Anderson, Bonnie Blanton, Diane Dickey, Philip Dumont, Ruth Goldstein, Debbie Nakamoto, Sam Rametta, Rey Reed, Carol Scurlock, Lillie Tallman, and Sharon Wright



Our group of 15 arrived promptly at the pack station, located near North Lake, and was ready to begin our 9 mile hike to base camp by 7:30 am. We started the hike directly from the pack station and passed through the North Lake campground before beginning a steady uphill climb to Piute Pass (11,423'). We kept breaks to a minimum because of predicted thunderstorms, which fortunately did not arrive and we were able to enjoy a leisurely lunch at the pass while admiring the views into Humphrey Basin.

From the pass the hike descended to our base camp (10,800') adjacent to Piute Creek below Lower Golden Trout Lake. Although much of Humphrey Basin is treeless, the base camp has nice tree cover and the camp area is sufficiently large that we could pitch our 15 tents without crowding. The creek provides a convenient water source and soothing sounds as it starts a cascade down into Piute Canyon adjacent to camp.



Two tarp poles greatly simplified the rigging of our tarp from two trees. They also proved their worth when an early evening thunderstorm produced strong winds and horizontally blowing hail that sent us to the tents early. Despite the winds, the tarp held.

Our fisherpeople found that most of the fish were small but they caught several that were large enough to have fresh fish at one breakfast.

Trails to day hike locations are almost non-existent but cross country hikes are generally easy. Several destinations require crossing to the south side of Piute Creek and on the first day we found a fairly easy rock crossing near camp for a short hike to Packsaddle Lake. This scenic destination was popular enough that several people returned for a second visit on the last day, and a few folks enjoyed swims on both visits. A hike to Muriel Lake required crossing the creek east of Upper Golden Trout and this proved more difficult before we found a spot that satisfied all hikers. After our lunch at Muriel Lake, we cancelled the planned continuation to Goethe Lakes because of building clouds and instead headed across to lower Wahoo Lake before descending a steep slope to Golden Trout Lakes and a return to camp. For hike destinations on the south side of the





LaRue, Kim Gunderson, John Kaiser, Minh Duong

We chose a campsite above Fourth Lake, at the location of a 1920's mountain lodge, some of the remains of which can still be found.

Packer: Glacier Pack Train, great service, reasonable prices, able to accommodate special requests, showed up on time to pack out.

Day Hikes included Palisade Glacier and Sam Mack Meadow, Summit Lake/Black Lake Loop, Sixth & Seventh Lake, Fifth Lake and exploration of the area and nearby campsites.

We explored the campsites of Sierra artist Robert Clunie and mountaineer Norman Clyde and located ruins of a historic cabin that may have been used as a movie set. We had nightly happy hours. We took a break on the hike in to Fourth Lake at a cabin formerly owned by actor Lon Chaney.

creek, participants should consider bringing wading shoes.

We did a lake-bagging loop hike to the north of camp, first to Lower Desolation Lake where one sharp-eyed hiker found an arrowhead. From the lower lake we continued to large Desolation Lake, where three of the group enjoyed a cold swim. Others were content with simply wading. The return to camp after lunch passed Mesa, Square, and Tomahawk Lakes with a few people also making a quick out-and-back visit to Wedge Lake before rejoining the group at Mesa. On the last layover day, two participants hiked on-trail down through Piute Canyon to Hutchison Meadows instead of returning to Packsaddle Lake.

Wildflowers were not abundant due to the low winter snows but our lunch spot on the bank of Desolation Lake was covered with Alpine gentian, we found a yellow variety of Paintbrush at Packsaddle, and there was a beautiful field of mountain monkey flowers near Piute Pass on the exit hike.



The campsite above Fourth Lake has an awesome view of the Palisade Glacier and the surrounding peaks. There is another campsite below next to the shore of Fourth Lake which is also beautiful but does not have views of the nearby peaks. This campsite is big enough to accommodate a small mule pack group. We visited a campsite near Black Lake that has been used in the past for mule pack trips.



BIG PINE LAKES

September 3-8, 2012

Leaders: Sharon Kirk, Peter Ireland and Fran Penn

Participants: George Haswell, Richard Seidmeyer, Lorraine Seidmeyer, John

