



**Sierra
Club**

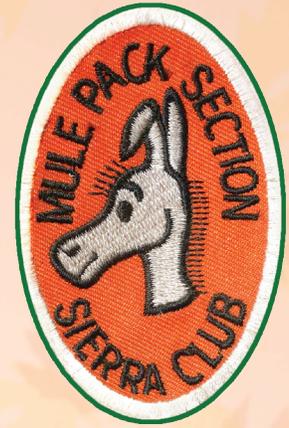
Founded 1892

Angeles Chapter Sierra Club

Mule Pack Section

January 2014 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 2013 trips.

DESTINATION: GLEN AULIN

DATES: JULY 23-27, 2013

LEADERS: FRAN PENN AND JOHN LARUE



Participants: George Haswell, Kim Gunderson, Douglas Farr, Marilyn Jones, Clifford Mapes, Ghislaine Stuart, Karim Khosab, Afkham Amiry

The dates for this trip were selected with the hope of seeing the falls of the Tuolumne and avoid the early season mosquitoes. By arriving on a Tuesday, we had our choice of campsites. The campground became increasingly crowded as the weekend got closer. In addition, since Monday is a resupply day for the packers, Tuesday is a good start day for this trip.

We used the backpackers' campground adjacent to the Glen Aulin High Sierra Camp as our base camp. The campground has three tiers and the upper tier is the best choice. Excellent views, next to the river for water gathering, large campsites, and a group kitchen area next to a community

fire pit compensate for the extra effort of climbing the hill. Luxuries at the base of the campground are potable running water and a solar composting toilet, as well as the nearby camp store at Glen Aulin.

The hike to Glen Aulin offers wonderful scenery making it a very slow six mile hike as frequent photo stops were essential. Tuolumne Falls and the White Cascade were dramatic highlights of the first day.

The day hike down the canyon on the first layover day provided even better highlights with views of cascade after cascade, although there is one swampy area to navigate. LeConte Falls was the definite standout of the entire trip. Some of us made the short side hike to the falls both on the way down canyon as well as on the return hike. We did not continue to Waterwheel Falls after hearing that the low water year diminished the "waterwheel" effect. We did have an enjoyable afternoon swim just below the Tuolumne Falls area which was only possible due to the low water level.



For the second layover day, we selected the trail toward the May Lake High Sierra Camp. At the May Lake junction, we took the trail to the Polly Dome area. We reached Polly Dome Lakes and viewed Polly Dome during lunch.

The third layover day hike was toward Elbow Hill. That afternoon we experienced a thunderstorm which made for an exciting day hike.

This is a trip well worth repeating regularly. The scenery along the Tuolumne River is unsurpassed. We even managed to reserve a group breakfast at the High Sierra Camp cafe on the last morning. We were all very tired of oatmeal by then and this was a welcome addition to our trip. Meals can be reserved the day or two prior if extras are available.

The participants enjoyed nightly happy hours, “participatory” soups, and potluck dinners.



across the canyon of the huge tungsten mine structures. This section is difficult and would be unpleasant in warm weather, covering most of the total 3,000’ gain to the site. The last section of the trail is easy, well shaded, passing Pine and Upper Pine lakes through forest. This hike is not suitable for anyone who is not a strong hiker.

Reaching our campsite, we had barely enough time to get our tents and tarps up before the rain began, quickly turning to hail. When the precipitation stopped, everyone pitched in with set up of the kitchen and latrine and gathering water for our group filters. For dinner, we had appetizers, quesadillas, and chocolate cake for dessert.

On the second day, Monday, most of the participants did the Royce Lakes Loop, finding it more difficult than expected, while others did shorter hikes. For dinner, we feasted on pasta with meatballs, tomato sauce, and pesto on the side along with a ratatouille-like mix made with fresh organic vegetables.

On Tuesday everyone headed in several groups over Pine Creek Pass to the big French Lake and some went beyond to other French Lakes. The hike to the Pass on established trail is very pretty, but from the Pass to the Lake is a bit of a route-finding challenge over multiple ridges. The major French Lake is not impressive but the canyon is quite beau-



DESTINATION: HONEYMOON LAKE

DATES: JULY 28-AUGUST 22, 2013

LEADERS: SANDY BURNSIDE, LAURA JOSEPH

Participants: David Urciouli, Mary Kay Prentice, Joanne Hihn, Richard Hihn, Lillian Tallman, Jean Murray, Maurica Anderson, Dave Wales, Mark Rosen, Paul Rosen, Delia Swanner, Nancy Power, Tim McCoy

The Honeymoon Lake campsite features lots of space for tents on a small ridge overlooking the lake and below the ridge. There is a good open spot for the common area and adjacent wooded areas that offer privacy. The downside of this site is that it is next to the trail to Italy Pass and on the route to backpacker sites. From the campsite, there is easy access to Pine Creek Pass, Italy Pass, French Lakes, Golden Lake, Chalfont Lake, Royce Lakes Loop, and Granite Park.

We hiked in through a beautiful thick wet forest, leading to a steep uphill climb over unshaded switchbacks with a view



tiful. The round trip gain to and from the Lake is about 1600'. For dinner, we had packaged salmon with mashed potatoes, peas, and Hollandaise. The dessert hit was a wonderful chocolate pudding concoction.

We all were planning to find our way to Chalfont Lake on Wednesday but most hikers could not find the route from the Italy Pass trail over the ridge and so went to Granite Park Lakes. A smaller group made it to Chalfont and found the best route on their return. The route is not obvious (although there are multiple places to cross the ridge, they are very steep) and should be undertaken only with good navigation skills. We had tuna with rice, mushrooms, lemon and capers for dinner and oranges with coconut were the primary dessert.

On Thursday, three of the strongest hikers conquered Julius Caesar in less than 8 hours while others visited a meadow on the Italy Pass trail, or hiked in the woods around the Honeymoon drainage. This was our leftover night when we enjoyed the remaining appetizers and desserts.

The hike out on Friday was very hot and tiring after emerging from the forested area. We appreciated fruit, ice water and ice tea provided by the packer as we waited for the mules who returned at 4:30.

The group was really great, good hikes, no complainers, excellent food and everyone really pitched in with the multiple campsite duties. It was a fun trip for everyone.



DESTINATION: CLARK LAKES

DATES: AUGUST 4-9, 2013

LEADERS: WINNETTE BUTLER AND JIM FLEMING



Participants: Stella Cheung, Diane Dickey, Teri Going, Tracy Lau, Beth Mika, Cathie Miller, Debbie Nakamoto, Rey Reed, Brian Scott, Carole Scurlock, Yvonne Tsai.



Driving up Highway 395 through the Owens Valley and seeing the massive amount of smoke over the mountains obscuring the peaks, we wondered how close the fire was to our destination. Fortunately, the fire was west of Mammoth and didn't pose a problem.

Our trip unofficially started on Saturday evening when many of the participants met for our traditional pre-trip dinner at the Tiger Bar Restaurant in June Lake, a popular but very noisy spot. At dinner we discussed our two options for reaching the campsite: the longer route around the north side of Gem Lake, or the steeper direct route through Spooky Meadow. We decided to stay with the longer hike in and to descend by the Spooky Meadow route.

Everyone arrived on time to the Frontier Pack Station, and we were able to drop gear and make an early 7:30 am departure to avoid some of the heat. The hike to camp was at a slow-moderate pace to allow for the length of the trail and the 3,000 feet of elevation gain. We made camp in plenty of time to have a leisurely set-up in a beautiful lakeside area that the packer referred to as Clark Lake #2. Our first night was salad night, with great contributions from all participants, followed by strawberry shortcake with whipped cream for dessert.

From Monday through Thursday, the group hiked to many



of the beautiful locations in the surrounding area. Several people hiked to San Joaquin and Two Teats Mountains. Almost the entire group was able to summit Carson Peak, where they ran into a very large herd of deer. The summits provided fantastic views of the Banner-Ritter massif. Other destinations included Thousand Island, Garnet, Emerald, and Ruby Lakes and several passes. The nearby John Muir and Pacific Crest Trails provided easy access to lots of great places. The warm water in Clark Lakes was enjoyed by many for afternoon swimming parties.

Food in the evenings was, as usual, plentiful and varied. As always, Quesadilla night was a big hit. Late afternoons featured short hikes to photograph some amazing sunsets. On Friday we took the route out through Spooky Meadow and were rewarded with unbelievable views of rocky cliffs and the valley below.



DESTINATION: FOURTH RECESS LAKE AREA

DATES: AUGUST 18-23, 2013

LEADERS: LAURA JOSEPH, LES WILSON



Participants: Richard Potratz, Mary Patterson, Dan Butler, Sam Rametta, Paul Rosen, Al Pavot, Maurica Anderson, Alan Schimpff, Tom Molloy, Mark Rosen

Fourth Recess is a fabulous location for a mule pack which has been avoided lately due to the packer's high costs. We were able to reduce the costs enough to make the trip affordable to 15 mule pack veterans. Unfortunately, three had to cancel at the last minute due to family issues so the group consisted of 9 men and 3 women.

Based on previous experience, we chose the site about 120' below the lake on the outlet. This site is less windy than the site on the lake, larger, more convenient to hikes and has a wider range of options for tent sites. It is also very beautiful and heavily treed and has a large clearing for the group area. Known by the packer as the "FBI Camp," the



trees around the common area are well arranged for hanging tarps and kitchen equipment.

The hike in is not easy. We went over Mono Pass (12,045') and then some up and down with lovely views to reach our site near Mono Creek. It began to rain shortly after we had our tents set up and continued lightly off and on. Everyone pitched in to set up tarps, the potty and privacy tent, collect water for the group gravity filters, and organize the kitchen.

The rain pattern continued through Wednesday. Beginning around 3 or 4 every day, the rain was generally light with short downpours. Wednesday we had a long downpour that drenched our site. Beautiful weather on Thursday got everything dry in time for our departure in lovely weather on Friday. During the late afternoon-early evening rains, we huddled under tarps and had wine and appetizers while the cooks assigned for that evening prepared the main course. In spite of the rain, the group spirit stayed upbeat and no one complained.

Several strong hikers made it to Snow Lake above 4th Recess and went beyond to a ridge from which they could see 3rd Recess. Others hiked to Golden Lake enjoying scarce but pretty flowers along the creek. The last section of the unmaintained trail is rather steep. On the return, they attempted unsuccessfully to cross a ridge and meet several



participants who were fishing at 4th Recess Lake.

The anglers in the group fished at 4th Recess and other lakes and streams but did not find any trout big enough to keep and cook.

On Tuesday, everyone went to Pioneer Basin in several groups aiming for different routes to different destinations. The hike by the more westerly route passes through pine forest, a large meadow where “Mud” Lake (Pioneer Lake #1) is located, and then climbs steeply to the second Pioneer Lake

Everyone tried 3rd Recess during the 4-day layover and agreed that it’s the prettiest of the lakes but not a place to camp due to the very steep hike. It is a very pretty hike that passes through forest, meadows filled with granite rocks, and marshes.

In addition, some participants hiked to Upper and Lower Hopkins Lakes. No one attempted any of the nearby peaks.

DESTINATION: SHADOW CREEK

DATES: AUGUST 22-25

LEADERS: FRANCINE OSCHIN, CHRISTINE GUTIERREZ, AND DAVE CROSS



Participants: Terry Boemer, Doug Farr, Lisa Goldstein, Ruth Goldstein, Edie Jaranilla, John Kaiser, Marie Lafayette, Zachary Oschin, Melanie Pipo, Rapeepun (Maew) Suchin, Carol Tucker

The group gathered at the Agnew Meadows Pack Station to start the hike to our base camp. The entrance hike is fairly easy, starting along a route that parallels the Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River before climbing steeply to Shadow Lake. It then joins the JMT for the final short distance to base camp. The camp is a large flat area located on a plateau above Shadow Creek and is conveniently located near the junction of the JMT and the trail to Lake Ediza. Reaching the camp requires crossing Shadow Creek on two long logs; some caution was required but everyone negotiated the daily crossings without mishap. Shadow Creek provides the water source. A large flat granite area adjacent to camp provides a great view of Ritter and Banner.

The location near the trail junction is very convenient for hikes to Lake Ediza and Garnet Lake. On day one, nearly



For the hike out, we took the less used route past Golden Lake and cross-country to Summit Lake and Mono Pass. This turned out to be less difficult and probably shorter than the standard route. The nice thing about using the Rock Creek Pack Station is that, while waiting for the mules to return, we visited Pie in the Sky.

The group was terrific: all good hikers and several who are very strong; everyone was helpful and took responsibility for the campsite tasks; we got along well, new friendships were made. Our three pairs of male chefs donned yellow aprons to prepare fabulous dinners of Moroccan stew, vegetable frittata, and pasta with clam sauce. The first night, we had quesadillas and the last night leftovers. Appetizers and desserts included a spice cake, cookies, wonderful cheese, salami and more.



everyone chose to hike to Ediza which is considered to be one of the not-to-be-missed locations in the Sierras. A smaller group continued to Iceberg Lake for lunch but no one chose to test whether the water temperature justified the name. A few hardy hikers then decided to continue to Cecile Lake; they reached their destination but reported that the trail vanished after a short distance and the remainder of the hike consisted of boulder hopping. Ediza, Iceberg, and Cecile are located at the base of the Minarets, a beautiful range of spectacular peaks.

On day two, the main activity was hiking north on the JMT to Garnet Lake which is located at the base of Ritter and Banner. For flower lovers, this trail has a large number of Explorer's gentian. Two individuals decided to continue to Thousand Island Lake, but most of us were content to enjoy the scenery at Garnet.

Our angler, who practices catch and release, reported that Shadow Creek provided very good fishing. He did not have success at Garnet Lake however.

For trips of longer duration, there are hikes to smaller lakes

DESTINATION: NORTH OF UPPER SOUTH FORK LAKE (SOUTH OF COTTONWOOD LAKES) DATES: SEPTEMBER 1-7, 2013
LEADERS: FRAN PENN, SHARON KIRK AND JOHN KAISER



(Cabin, Laura, and Clarice), and the JMT can be explored south past Shadow Lake to Rosalie Lake and Gladys Lake. Adventurous hikers could also search for a cross country route to Nydiver Lakes.

On this trip the packer sent seven mules with only one wrangler. The wrangler was very efficient and arrived promptly on time on the final day.

Historical footnote: this area was the focus of the search for Walter ("Peter") Starr, Jr., the author of "Starr's Guide," which was the first hiking guide for the John Muir Trail and continues to be published by the Sierra Club. Peter Starr vanished on a solo hike through the area in 1933. "Missing in the Minarets" by Walter Alsop describes the search and provides information about the early mountaineers who explored the area and those who took part in the search. It makes an interesting read before traveling to the Shadow Creek/Minaret area.

Names of Participants: Doug Farr, Marilyn Jones, Maurica Anderson, Philip Dumont, Brian Scott, Jane McCord, Jo Ann Hunt and George Haswell

The hike in to Cottonwood Lakes was just over six miles and about 1,200 feet of gain to upper South Fork Lakes at 11,000'. Our 11 member group hiked in on Sunday of Labor Day weekend. Most of the camp areas where we had planned to camp beside Long Lake or Cottonwood Lake #3 were occupied. The packer suggested we utilize the large flat camp area just north of upper South Fork Lakes. His suggestion was a good one: the area has tree cover and, although very rocky, had many flat tent locations that provided plenty of room to spread out. Water came from the stream connecting Long Lake to upper South Fork Lake.

We had views of nearby Cirque Peak and Mt. Langley from our campsite. The eastern portion of the camp area had a view of upper South Fork Lake. Everyone had a great time. Ten people climbed Cirque Peak on Tuesday, and three people climbed Mt. Langley on Thursday. On the other days, the group split into smaller groups for hikes to the nearby lakes.

Favorites were the cross country routes to Cirque Lake, Muir Lake and Hidden Lake, as well as the trails to the numbered Cottonwood lakes. The more hearty hikers hiked up and down New Army Pass several times for conditioning. One group enthusiastically endorsed hiking north from New Army Pass along the ridgeline to a high point that gave great views of the Cottonwood basin and the Old Army Pass trail.