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Club

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Angeles Chapter Sierra Club

# Mule Pack Section

January 2011 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 2010 trips.*

Big Pine Lakes #4:

July 11 –17, 2010

Leaders: Mary Patterson, Dan Butler, Peter Ireland  
11 participants



*Towards Jigsaw Pass*

On Saturday, July 11, 2010, our group of 14 met at the packer's station at 7 AM. After leaving our duffles and our group supplies under the care of very efficient Murt Stewart of the Glacier Pack Train, we left for our 6 mile, 3,000' gain hike to Fourth Lake. The waterfalls were spectacular because of a winter snowfall that surpassed 143% of normal. On the way in, we visited Lon Chaney's cabin and Peter told us about the history of the area. We arrived at camp after the packer had delivered our belongings so we set up camp right away. The group relaxed the rest of the day. Everyone gathered around at 5 PM for the salad potluck.

The next day, the leaders (Peter Ireland, Dan Butler,

Mary Patterson) offered a hike to Black Lake and Summit Lake. Six went on that hike; the others went on flower photo hikes or a longer hike towards Jigsaw Pass. That night we had the quesadilla potluck under our large community tarp while the rain pounded down.

The next day, five of us went towards Jigsaw Pass. Because of snow we couldn't get to the pass but the views were spectacular. Our route took us by Sixth and Seventh Lake.

Each day Peter, our historian, told us all about the history of the area and he had brought an interesting portfolio of pictures, old letters, and written material from the days past. At Fourth Lake, we compared the old historical pictures with the remains of the old resort. Six of us went to Sam Mack Meadows and on towards the Palisades Glacier on July 15. The meadows were beautiful and had many tadpoles and frogs. We surmised that these frogs were the Yellow-legged species. Unfortunately, the snow kept us from getting to the glacier but we had a fine view of it.



*Sam Mack Meadow*

## Seville Lake

July 14-18, 2010

Leaders: Yvonne Tsai, John Kaiser

Participants: 9



*Seville Lake*

Seville Lake (8,412') is located in the SW corner of King's Canyon NP adjacent to Sequoia NP with pack services provided by Horse Corral Pack Station from a very nice facility. Before the trip, we camped at Stony Creek Campground, one of many along Generals Highway. Big Meadow campground, closer to the station, does not accept reservations but appeared to have available sites.

Seville is reached by a 6.5 mile hike, passing through the Jennie Lakes Wilderness before entering King's Canyon. We selected a camp at the north end of the lake near the outlet stream which provided the best water source. The campsite is open with lots of shade from widely-spaced, mature trees. A granite ridge forms the backdrop on the far side of the lake. A more secluded campsite at the SW end of the lake was rejected because of the early-season mosquitoes.



*Pinewoods fritillary*

Our fishermen had considerable success; fish grilled over a campfire provided the entrée for one group meal and a tasty addition to Happy Hour the following night.

On-trail day hikes were to Lost Lake and/or Ranger Lake and to Comanche Meadow. The trail to Lost Lake follows a "C" loop around Ball Dome but, disappointingly, the mature forest blocks views of the dome. Reaching the dome through the forest appeared to be an easy hike, but no one attempted it. We later found an excellent view of the spire of the dome along the creek just below our camp.

The trail to Comanche Meadow goes downhill through the forest and appeared to be lightly used. Considerable trailside grasses, very wet from thunderstorms, arched over the trail. The plentiful wildflowers were compensation for wet boots.



*kneeling: Yvonne, Bonnie, Sharon K, Kathy, Melissa  
standing: Lorraine, Richard, Sharon W, Fran, John, Sam*

Most cross-country hikes would be impeded by downed trees but four members made an easy, rewarding one to Upper Sheep Camp Lake. The route was indirect, crossing an open granite slope with excellent views. This route would also provide the shortest path to Ball Dome.

Two species of wildflowers stood out. The unusual and rare Pinewoods Fritillary was adjacent to the trail near Seville. Several carpets of low-growing flowers, thought to be dwarf Monkeyflower, contained an eye-catching mixture of red and yellow blossoms. Despite lots of mosquitoes and several thunderstorms, our three first-time participants reported that they were looking forward to another trip in 2011.

[Trip photos](#) from Yvonne and from John are combined online

## Soldier Lake

July 18-23

Leaders: Laura Joseph, Pat Arredondo

7 participants



*View of Soldier Lake*

We love this location! It's out of the way (10 plus miles hike in) and beautiful. Our campsite was adequate and very pretty, but flat spots are at a premium. The weather was perfect and we saw lots of flowers. Our one fisher person did not have much luck. Nearby peaks include the Major General (two folks did this), Pickering (a different duo did this one) Langley (two made it) and Joe Deval (no one made it). Among many hikes, we enjoyed a trail hike to Rock Creek and cross country adventures to some stunning lakes. Both Old and New Army Pass are accessible easily from the campsite. And there are a number of fun short hikes in the slopes and bumps around the lake.



*Happy hour at Soldier Lake*

We reached the campsite via Cottonwood Pass and appreciated the views from the trail between the pass and our destination. The Cottonwood Packer was, as always, efficient and easy to deal with.

Meals were gourmet level including one night of hand made spring rolls.

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## Big Pine Lake #5

Aug 1-7, 2010

Leaders: Sandy Burnside, Laura Joseph

7 participants

Of all the Big Pine Lakes, our group agreed that Lake Five is the best for a campsite. Our location was roomy, with a variety of options for tent sites, fair access to water, many opportunities for short after dinner hikes, and proximity to trails.

Although the area includes many of the highest and most impressive peaks in the Eastern Sierra, none of



*Big Pine Lakes*

our group attempted any of them. Hikes explored the other Big Pine lakes, Black Lake, part of the route to Jigsaw pass, Sam Mack Meadow (which is on the way to the Glacier), and Summit Lake.

The whole group took a day to hike to the Palisades Glacier – a beautiful hike with views of virtually all the lakes – and braved the moraine at the end of the route. No one attempted crossing the glacier. Several fisher people in the group had no luck, although they tried mightily. The weather was good, flowers extraordinary, and mosquitoes plentiful. Each participant (and the leaders) participated in preparation of the outstanding pot luck dinners. The Glacier Pack Train has among the lowest prices in the eastern Sierra and provides excellent service.

## Clark Lakes

August 8-14, 2010

Leaders: Sharon Kirk, Fran Penn, John Kaiser

11 participants



*Mules taking our gear in.*

This scenic trip was more a lakebagging, conversational, photo op, flower-viewing adventure than a peakbagger, though we had plenty of hiking. All who didn't take a housekeeping day were able to follow a group hike daily, thanks to the careful plans of leader SK. We swam, took pictures, and learned about a surprising variety of flowers with leader JK. Others went off in pairs to follow their own plans or to Rush Creek for the mysterious thrill of catch-and-release fly fishing.

Our band of fourteen took off from the Pack Station at June Lake about 8 AM on Sunday in perfect, cool hiking weather to ascend 2950' in 5.5 miles with comfortable rest stops. We arrived at our spacious Clark Lakes



*Summit Lake and Banner Peak.*

campsite about 2 PM, and were able to select group support, hillside, lakeview or shady forest tentplaces. After setting up we were treated to our only afternoon rain-- a short one. The first dinner, "group Salad," had the most fresh stuff such as hardboiled eggs and veggies, salad greens. As it turned out, thanks to the food prep skills of leader FP, every dinner following was just as tasty, with quesadillas, tapa stew, etc., up to the Final-Remaining-Ingredients soup on Friday evening. Additional nightly soup was provided on his own, by Doug F--most welcome in the chilly evenings.

It was possible to hike to and swim in a different lake every day, including Thousand Island (topped by Ham & Eggs Lake), Garnet, Ruby, Emerald, Badger, Waugh-- all part of the Ansel Adams Wilderness. Conversation and good food had to substitute for



*The Giant Blazing Star*

campfires, now restricted in this part of the Sierras. Some resourceful souls in our group had brought sturdy little candles which we set in the ground and surrounded by a mini-wall of stones and created a center to sit around in the chilly evenings. It felt pretty homey.

Our group decided to take a different route home on Saturday. Although the downhill trek was not as pleasant as the others due to heat and dust, we managed to arrive at the Pack Station at 2 PM, exactly as the mules pulled in with our gear. People left quickly no doubt wanting showers, and beer? ice cream? But we will miss the trees and lakes and such a congenial group. See [Bob Hansens photos](#).



*View of Hilton Lake #2 and Davis Lake*

### Hilton Lakes

Dates: August 22-28, 2010

Leaders: Cathie Miller & Laura Joseph

8 Participants

The trail leading to the Hilton Lakes is dusty and dry, and is used heavily by pack animals. There is very little water on the trail, and the hike is roughly 5 miles to Hilton Lake #2 and Davis Lake with less than 1000 feet of elevation gain. The lakes themselves are beautiful. Trees thickly line the shore and slopes at both Hilton #2 and Davis Lake, and the entire basin that holds these lakes is very wet. Mosquitoes can be a



*Paella for the Happy Hour potluck*

problem early in the season, but were minimal during this trip because of the late date.

We had a picturesque campsite located beside Hilton Creek just below Hilton Lake #4. Given a choice of a campsite overlooking Lake #4 or beside the creek below Lake #4, the leaders chose the creek-side location. This site offered shelter from the wind, plenty of tent space, a nice flat pot luck area and easy access to water. Although the view from camp was not as spectacular as it might have been beside the lake, a short hike up the hill behind camp offered a beautiful panorama including Hilton Lake #2 and Davis Lake. This trek up the hill became a nightly ritual after dinner to enjoy the sunset.

This was a relaxed group, and not everyone hiked every day. Some scrambled over boulders and ridges,



*The group at the Hilton Lakes trailhead*

and others did not stray from the trails. While some happily explored nearly all of the upper and lower Hilton Lakes, others enjoyed fishing, reading and relaxing in the sunshine on the beach of nearby Lake #4. The weather was perfect, the scenery fantastic and the sunshine warm. Even though we were not allowed campfires, the happy hour potluck dinners were fun with lots of good food and company. We dutifully locked up our food in the bear containers each night, but did not see any sign of bear activity in the area all week.

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### Sabrina Basin

Dates: August 26-29, 2010

Leaders: Christine Gutierrez, Francine Oschin, Fran Penn

12 participants

The hike from the Lake Sabrina trailhead was an easy 5 miles with 1300' gain to set up camp at Blue Lake



*On the trail to Hungry Packer Lake*

(10,394') at the edge of the Thompson Ridge and the entrance to the basin. The trail was easy to follow. There were many areas to camp but most of them were on granite slabs at different elevations above the lake. We followed a short unmarked use trail to locate a great camping area next to the lake with easy water access.

We enjoyed happy hours each evening but were disappointed by no campfires. Candles were an interesting option to replace the campfire. There were several backpacking groups in the campsite area. One small group of friends stayed one night in a camp area next to us and joined us for happy hour that evening. Watch out for missing trail signs. We followed the trail from camp to what we thought was Donkey Lake for a day hike and ended up going over an 11,000 foot pass to Baboon Lake. We took a lunch break, studied our maps and decided on a cross country route to Donkey Lake. We enjoyed some fishing and relax-



*Baboon Lake*

ing at Donkey Lake and then located the trail back to camp. All agreed that the exploratory day hike was very enjoyable.

The next day we explored the other trail branch to Dingleberry Lake. Some of the participants were more energetic and hiked a few more miles to Hungry Packer Lake, returning just in time for happy hour. The main trail forks at Blue Lake with Donkey and Baboon Lakes on one branch of the trail, and Dingleberry, Pee Wee, Topsy Turvy, Sailor, Midnight, Moonlight, and Hungry Packer Lakes on the other branch. The scenery was beautiful with awesome photo opportunities of the entire basin – it feels like the top of the world at some places. A great location for a short trip. Don't miss lunch at the Lake Sabrina Cafe at the end of the hike out. It is a good opportunity to relax and reflect on the trip and get one last view of the beautiful lake and mountains.



*Relaxing at Blue Lake*

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### Big McGee Lake

Dates: September 2-6, 2010

Leaders: Winnette Butler, Jim Fleming, John Kaiser

Participants: 9

The trailhead to Big McGee is a short distance from the pack station in a colorful canyon. The entrance hike starts in sage, climbs through aspen, then pine forests before climbing rocky switchbacks to a series of upper meadows. The packer chose a drop spot near the outlet of the lake, which did not please the ranger who was in the area. This location allows lots of room for widely-spread tents and is convenient to the outlet streams, but the hardened tent sites are generally closer to streams than desirable. A drop spot closer to



*At the McGee Creek trailhead*

the main lake would be suitable for only about 7 or 8 tents; the drop location on a 2002 trip to Big McGee on the west side of the lake had very few good tent sites. Future trips to this very scenic area should probably limit group size. Trees in the area are generally small and a rain tarp may not be possible.

Big McGee Lake (10,472') is surrounded by very colorful peaks including Red and White Mtn (12,816') and Mt Crocker (12,458'). Waterfalls are located on the stream from Little McGee Lake and where the



*View of Big McGee Lake from Hopkins Pass*

two outlet streams from Big McGee rejoin. The group chose to do easy hikes on the first day, with some exploring the area around the lake and others exploring along the outlet streams below the lake and then to a scenic overlook into Baldwin Canyon. On the second day, most participants hiked up red-, white-, and black-rock McGee canyon to McGee pass and then climbed the use-trail to Red Slate Peak (13,130'). Wonderful 360° views from the peak into Fish Canyon and the Dorothy-Genevieve basin made the effort well worthwhile. On the third day, some climbed the un-maintained CCC ("bleached bones") trail to Hopkins Pass; in addition to views into Hopkins basin and close-up views of Red and White Mtn, they found a field of very fragrant Brewer's lupine. Others checked the views into Baldwin Canyon or once again explored the area near the lake.



*Descending Red Slate Mtn*

Despite the late time of year, a surprising number of wildflowers were seen: Sky Pilot on Red Slate, Monk's Hood along McGee Creek, Mountain Monkeyflower, Alpine Gentian, Grass of Parnassus, Alpine Columbine and many others.

Winnette raised the bar on Happy Hours, adding an ice-cream social to the evening festivities.

Photo albums are on-line from [David](#) and from [John](#)

