



Sierra
Club

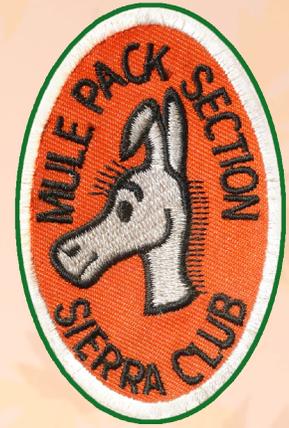
Founded 1892

Angeles Chapter Sierra Club

Mule Pack Section

January 2016 Annual Newsletter

Edited and published by *Bob Hansen*



Two trips in 2015 were cancelled, one because wilderness permits were not available and the other for safety concerns about the trip destination being too close to the Rough fire. However 74 different individuals enjoyed the other six trips; 8 people attended more than one. More than 20% of our participants were on their first mule pack trip.

DESTINATION: HUMPHREYS BASIN

DATES: JULY 14-19, 2015

Leaders: Cathie Miller and Doug Farr.

Participants: Karen Belville, Stephen Fabre, Rosemary Jarrett, Gary Landers, Paulette Landers, Jane McCord, Roberta McIntosh, Gerry Miller, Jasmine Quan, Sandra Sanchez, Lorraine Seidmeyer and Richard Seidmeyer.

Our group of 14 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'). The weather was clear and beautiful but windy, so to stay out of the wind, we enjoyed a leisurely lunch just below the pass. From Piute 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 tents without crowding. The swollen creek from recent rains provided a convenient water source and soothing sounds as it starts a cascade down into Piute Canyon adjacent to camp. Four tarp poles greatly simplified the rigging of our tarp and we enjoyed the shade it provided for our kitchen area. We were very lucky with the weather, experiencing only a few drops of rain one afternoon. We did have high winds one night, but despite the winds, the tarp held.

Due to the low winter snows, creek crossings were not a problem this year, and wading shoes were not required. On the first day we visited Packsaddle Lake where several of us enjoyed a swim in the cool water. The next day we did a lake bagging loop north of camp starting at Lower Desolation Lake. From the lower lake we continued to large Desolation Lake, where one brave person enjoyed a swim in the icy water. Others were content with simply wading. After lunch, some of the group returned to camp while others continued on to Mesa, Square, and Tomahawk Lakes.





Humphreys Basin is truly an area for lake lovers, and other lake destinations during the trip included Muriel, Goethe and Wahoo. During lunch at Muriel Lake, we were joined by two very determined Marmots intent on sharing. On the last layover day several people spent a leisurely day exploring the waterfalls below camp and enjoying the sunshine and scenery.

The area we camped in was rumored to have some of the largest Golden Trout in the Sierras but as good as the anglers were, the large Golden were not to be caught.

Every evening we enjoyed a hot, hearty soup and, thanks to our fisherwoman, Sandra, fresh fish. On the last night we celebrated Sandra's birthday complete with deflated helium balloon which must have drifted up from somewhere below to be found by one of our hikers.

That night we were treated to an incredible sunset – the weather was changing. We stayed dry for the hike out, but it started to rain just as we got to the pack station. What luck!



DESTINATION: SHADOW CREEK

DATES: JULY 30 - AUGUST 2



Leaders: Christine Gutierrez and Dave Cross

Participants: Marie Lafayette, Terry Boehmer, Bob Hansen, Beth Summers, Kenneth Broomfield, Bonnie Blanton, Sharon Wright, Sue Ellen Gittings, Karl Rubin, Dan Appelman, Carole Shawver,

Our trip to Shadow creek started the way most trips do. We all met at the Red's Meadow pack Station at Agnew meadows, just over the hill from Mammoth. We dropped off our gear on the loading dock and started our hike.

Our route skirted Agnew meadow through a mixed forest of Ponderosa, Lodgepole, fir and Juniper. In a short while, we started descending into the deep canyon of the San Joaquin River. Our hike took us along the canyon bottom in rather dense forest to a large bridge crossing the river. Then begins our ascent, switch backing up the west canyon wall, with great views of Mammoth Mountain to our lunch stop at Shadow Lake. Shadow is a beautiful lake, mostly forested with Mt's Banner and Ritter in the background. After lunch, we continued our ascent beside Shadow Creek and



after crossing the creek on a couple of logs, arrived at our campsite.

Our campsite was located on a small plateau overlooking the creek and meadow. This site has the benefit of very low impact on the meadow and creek.

Our day hikes included trips to Lakes Ediza, Iceberg, Thousand Island, Garnet and more. These are among the most beautiful lakes in the Sierra as they all have the Minarets, Mt's Banner and Ritter as their background.

Fishing in Shadow Creek was very good with an abundance of Brook and Rainbow trout. There was the occasional 12-14 incher with most in the 7-11" range.

The weather was typical Sierra, clear or mostly clear in the morning with increasing clouds, and sometimes thunder or a little rain in the afternoon, then often clear by dark. One evening we had very close thunder directly overhead followed by a downpour which sent everyone scrambling for



their tents.

There was an abundance of food and wine.

The weather was nice for our trip back to Agnew Meadows we were very leisurly about it. The timing was perfect as the mule train arrived with our gear in less than an hour.

A wonderful time was had by everyone.



DESTINATION: SADDLEROCK LAKE

DATES: AUGUST 2-7, 2015

Leaders: Les Wilson, Laura Joseph

Names of Participants: Paul Rosen. Mark Rosen. Richard Potratz, Sam Rametta, Dave Wales, Beth Mika, David Urciuoli, Alan Schimpff, Pam Allen, Terry Ginsberg, Haesoon Yoon, Roger Murray

Site: The site at Saddlerock Lake (11,126') is huge with an excellent common area and sites in a variety of locations. However, the best sites are a distance from the common area on a wooded hillside. The campsite is conveniently



located to a variety of hikes from easy to challenging.

Packer: Rainbow Pack outfit is located about a mile from the South Lake trailhead. Their service is good and their prices relatively low.

Weather: We had no rain and it was generally cool. The last few days were windy with a hazy sky.

Hike to campsite: The hike in is about 1500' and 4 miles on good trail passing South Lake, Long Lake, Spearhead Lake and the Timberline Lakes. On the second day, a group hiked to Ruwau, Chocolate, and Bull Lakes while others fished and explored around Saddlerock and Bishop Lakes. Our hardy hikers—Alan, Mark and David U-- summited Hurd Peak (12,237').

On the third day, a group took the cross-country route to Chocolate Peak and several stopped to fish at Ruwau Lake. On the cross-country route, we spotted a buck and a doe as well as a pica. Alan and Mark mounted Agassiz—a challenging climb to 13,893'.



The fourth day saw the whole group go to Bishop Pass (11,972') where some descended part way to Dusy Basin and two went deeply into the basin, while Alan made a trip to Bishop Creek Lodge to pick up supplies. On our last layover day, most of us took it easy while David and Mark climbed Mt Goode (13,085').

Our hike out was uneventful but we waited for our gear until after 6:00 PM.

Other activities: Some of our group became involved in a rescue operation on Wednesday night when a climber fell while descending Jigsaw Pass. Sam, Les and Mark provided support to the person who came to Saddlerock to seek aid and helped her contact Search and Rescue. Sadly, we learned later that the climber had died.

We held a birthday party for Terry with frosted brownies and liqueurs.

Sam and Richard caught an innumerable quantity of trout almost every day which were served for breakfast or lunch.



We had a great group and beautiful wildflowers. We also had good food prepared by participants. Sam cooked a Chinese style dish with vegetables and shrimp; Richard made linguini with tomato sauce and meatballs, and Alan presented a concoction of noodles, sardines, capers, tomatoes and anchovies. Everyone else brought yummy appetizers and desserts.

As usual on our trips, the amenities were luxurious and everyone in the group was terrific about cooperating on all the campsite tasks.



DESTINATION: CLARK LAKES

DATES: AUGUST 9 - 14

Leaders: Yvonne Tsai, John Kaiser

Participants: Bonnie Blanton, Dan Butler, Paula Day, Lori DeLaney, Steve DeLaney, Hal Grant, Linda Grant, Tracy Lau, Val Nordeman, Mary Patterson, Irene Shibata, Sharon Wright

The 5.2 mile entrance hike is a steady uphill climb from the Frontier Pack Train, becoming especially steep after pass-



ing Agnew Lake. We switch-backed up the Spooky Meadow trail from Agnew Lake to a pass at 10,020' and were grateful for the final easy descent to our camp alongside Clark Lake #2. Even with a slow pace, frequent rests, and a lunch break, we reached camp in early afternoon, allowing plenty of time for people to select their tent sites and set up before the group dinner. This location provides a large area with many good tent sites.

On the first day, most participants chose a leisurely loop hike to Badger Lake with a return along the PCT High Trail and over Agnew Pass to Summit Lake and Clark Lake #2. The low winter snow pack reduced the number of wildflowers usually seen along the High Trail, but a sufficient number remained, particularly Monk's Hood and Larkspur, to provide a hint of the flower show that occurs in a year of greater precipitation. The return over Agnew Pass highlights the volcanic origin of the geology in this area. After the return to camp, a few decided on more hiking by descending the Clark trail to the bridge at Rush Creek.



A question arose about who "Agnew" was, leading to a little post-trip research and learned that Theodore C. Agnew was a miner who settled at what is now called Agnew Meadows in 1877. His name attaches to the lake, pass, and the meadows at the popular trailhead near Mammoth.

On day two, a large group set out for Thousand Island Lake and, after pausing for a considerable number of photos of the lake and Banner Peak, continued north on the PCT/JMT to Island Pass for lunch. While we ate lunch, smoke from the Rough fire accumulated to obscure the usual outstanding view of Banner Peak and North Glacier Pass. Following lunch, two members decided to continue north on PCT/JMT to the Rush Creek trail and return to camp by hiking past Waugh Lake and along Rush Creek. The rest descended to Thousand Island Lake via the original JMT that is shown on the 15' version of the USGS map. Portions of the abandoned trail are still visible but at other locations a GPS

track provided the way. This route arrives at the midpoint of the lake providing a better perspective of the entire lake than one sees at the outlet end. One participant had backpacked this section some 50 years earlier. After reaching the lake, a nice beach was found and many chose to cool off by wading in the shallows near the beach.

On day three, many chose to engage in easier hikes or relax near Clark Lake but two members decided to do the Thousand Island – Garnet Lake loop and several descended to Gem Lake. Two others scouted a route for the next day's hike to Carson Peak.

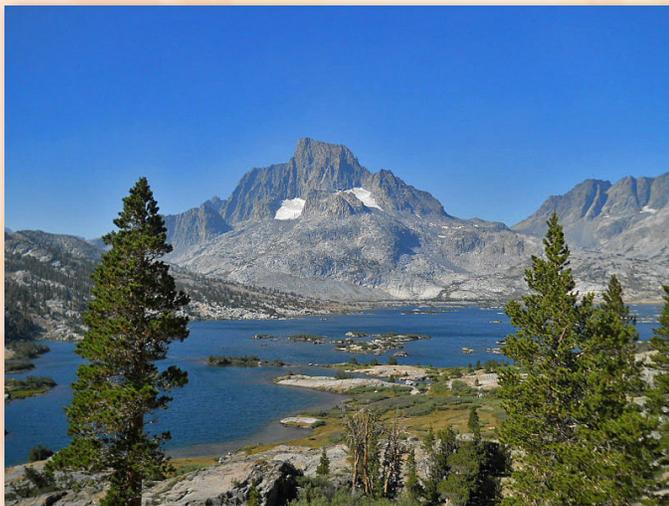
On the last layover day, those who had not previously hiked to Thousand Island Lake made that their hike destination. But most of the trip members elected a cross-country route to Carson Peak for the outstanding 360 degree views that the peak provides. On the return hike, we stopped at a field of *Mimulus nanus* (Dwarf monkeyflower) and several people spent time trying to photograph this 'belly flower'.



Participants: Terry Boehmer, Sally Fohse, Ruth Goldstein, Edith Jaranilla, Dan Kronstadt, Scott Meek, Zachary Oschin, Melani Pipo, Julie Smith-Meek, Rapepun Suchin, Carol Tucker

Hilton Lakes are about a two hour hike (4.5 miles) from the trailhead near Rock Creek Lake in the Eastern Sierra. The 9 Hilton Lakes are all within 2 miles of each other along Hilton Creek, ranging in elevation from 9,800-foot Davis Lake to alpine lakes at 11,050 feet. The trailhead to Hilton Lakes is on the Rock Creek road from Tom's Place on Highway 395. After a quarter mile of starting to hike, the trail levels off into gently rolling terrain then begins a sandy stretch to the top of a ridge, about 500 feet up in 1½ miles. Beyond, we began a steep switchback descent to a trail junction near Hilton Creek. We gave back all the elevation that we gained descending to the junction. Our gear was left at Second Lake, which is large and beautiful, with great camping spots and room to spread out. As there were many day hikes available to the other lakes participants were able to enjoy a beautiful variety of day hikes. Some went fishing while others braved a swim. At the campsite the lake has an island not far off shore where some swam and then warmed in the abundant sunshine.

For many years we have all diligently contained all our food and toiletries in our bear canisters or the group pan-



Two bear encounters occurred. On day three, one person startled a bear, hidden from view by a log, when he stood up after eating lunch; after its initial reaction, the bear ambled away while several close-up photos were taken. During Happy Hour on the last day, a bear (the same one?) strolled by our camp but showed no interest in wanting to share the food.

As always, the Frontier Pack Station provided excellent service although their arrival back at the pack station with our gear was around 4:00 pm, later than usual for them.



DESTINATION: HILTON LAKES DATES: AUGUST 20-23

Leaders: Francine Oschin and David Cross



niers and never had them tested. This trip was the first time a bear decided to test our efforts. The camping site had many flat areas so the participants spread out for a more wilderness experience. As the tents were being assembled a mother bear appeared over a small ridge above the campsite and her cub was spotted up a tree. Pots and pans were heard banging as participants tried to scare her away. She looked as if to say, "Ok, I know you want to scare me away" and she reluctantly turned around. She returned twice more and did not seem to have a fear of us, just that we were annoying her with all the banging and yelling. Those of us who had spread out quickly picked up all our gear and placed the tents close together for safety in numbers. That night we put all food containers far away for the tents. Late that night the sound of banging pans began again as participants slept with the noise makers and the bears were heard inside our ring of tents. The scene was hilarious as people started to report that the cub was up a tree and those who remained in their tents wanted to know "which tree, the one above me!" Again the bear and cub sauntered away from the camp. In the morning, the bear



DESTINATION: GARNET LAKE

DATES: AUGUST 30 – SEPTEMBER 4, 2015

Leaders: Cathie Miller and Doug Farr.

Participants: Bonnie Blanton, Russ Brown, John Kaiser, Bruce Langedyke, Mary Lou Langedyke, Barbara Marcotte, Norm Marcotte, Gerry Miller, Sylvia Stevenson, Bill Tallakson, Kathy Viola, Sharon Wright.

Driving north on 395 on August 29th, from Bishop the mountains were cloaked by the dense smoke blowing from wildfires. It didn't look promising, but by the time we got to Mammoth it was windy and the air had cleared. At the ranger station we were told that it had been smoky in the morning, but cleared once the wind came up. We were hopeful. The night before our departure, the group enjoyed getting to know each other over dinner at Perry's in Mammoth.

Sunday morning we gathered at Agnew Meadows Pack Station promptly at 7:00 am ready for our hike of approximately 7 miles to our campsite at beautiful Garnet Lake. We arrived at camp in plenty of time to get our kitchen/common area and our tarp set up with everyone pitching in



canisters had obviously been gone through and the pannier was as if it had been rolled down the hill. Another participant had a bear canister with a handled bag making it easier to carry the canister, but the handle allowed the bear to drag it away from camp where she shredded the bag but could not get into the canister. We did not see the duo again but there were reports that some young men camping nearby did not heed the regulation to use bear canisters, lost all their food, and had to abandon their trip. We had candles for our evening gathering fire as it was too high an elevation to have a real fire. We enjoyed many stories, songs, and even a hiking terms matching game. The trip was very memorable.





sand Island Lake with stops at Ruby and Emerald Lakes along the way. The next day a group attempted the hike to Lake Ediza but only went as far as Shadow Creek, which was completely dry. The air in that area was somewhat smoky. Part of the group went on to visit Shadow Lake while the others returned to camp. On Wednesday some of us climbed up the ridge above camp to enjoy a spectacular 360 degree view of Banner and Ritter Peaks, Thousand Island Lake, and Garnet Lake. Others spent the day fishing, and we enjoyed fresh fish that night. On the last day a couple of people went fishing at Altha Lake, while others hiked all the way around Garnet Lake. The rest of the group hiked to Nydiver Saddle where they met and enjoyed talking with a group of climbers planning to summit Banner and Ritter.

to help. Our campsite was spacious enough that all of our tents were set up without crowding. This campsite does tend to have a lot of dried up mule droppings and it can be somewhat dusty when the wind blows.

On Monday many of us enjoyed a leisurely hike to Thou-

We enjoyed great weather all week in spite of the wind. One morning we were treated to the sight of a bald eagle flying over camp. We had hot, hearty soup every night, plenty of wine and great conversation. We had a wonderful time

