



Angeles Chapter Sierra Club

# Mule Pack Section

January 2020 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 2019 trips.*

## DESTINATION: LITTLE LAKES VALLEY

**DATES: JULY 20-JULY 26, 2019**

Leaders: Les Wilson, Laura Joseph, Alan Schimpff

Participants: Sam Rametta, Jeff Bates, Jean Hay Murray, Tina Dellis, Fari Afrookteh, Pat Pipkin, Nancy Power, Carol Tucker, and Liz Goetz

The group met at The Trees motel in Bishop on Saturday afternoon for a happy hour and opportunity to meet each other. After dinner in Bishop, the leaders gave a brief orientation and described the plan for the next day.

Starting early from the Rock Creek pack station, we hiked the short distance and easy gain to our campsite near Chickenfoot Lake at about 11,000 feet. We chose our campsites and shared the



tasks of setting up camp: our kitchen, tarps for the sitting area, shower and potty tents, and our water filtration system. Groups led by Les and Laura enjoy all the amenities which participants set up and maintain.

The site is beautiful with easy access to the lake's inlet for water and a variety of tent sites from flat to hilly. We had the traditional DIY quesadillas for dinner with appetizers and wine and lots of toppings.

On the first layover day, Les accompanied the women to Gem Lakes (10,800') where four women swam in the freezing water and we ate lunch. On the way back, five took the detour to Morgan Pass (11,155'), and Upper Morgan Lake (10,934') while the others went directly back to camp. The rest of the group stayed in camp or wandered around the lake. Sam and Jean cooked a delicious salmon dish while others brought appetiz-





ers and desserts.

The second day, Nancy and Liz headed to the pack station to retrieve an air mattress. Les and several women hiked down the main trail to Long Lake and turned back when it started raining heavily, while two hikers went part way around Chickenfoot Lake. After the rain stopped, several participants hiked a short counterclockwise loop near camp and others hiked the hill on the lake's peninsula—a great spot for views. Alan prepared dinner with help from others.

Wednesday, participants hiked to Ruby Lake (off the trail to Mono Pass), others to Upper Morgan Lake, another group went to Gem Lakes and another group hiked up the Morgan Pass Trail (an old mining road). Nancy prepared a wonderful pasta with tomato sauce and sides for dinner. On the last layover day, hikes went to Morgan Pass (11,155'), Upper Morgan Lake (10,934'),



and Lower Morgan Lake (10,723'), Morgan Pass and the two Morgan Lakes, and cross country beyond, while others hiked to Morgan Pass and the two Morgan Lakes (the lower lake is quite beautiful where Sam caught several trout that became part of our dinner along with leftovers.

The hike out was leisurely and gave us lots of time to enjoy the views along the trail. After lunch at the local Rock Creek café, we gathered our gear and left for home.

Although we had some rain every day except Sunday and Monday, and the mosquitos were legion requiring bug nets most of the time, it was a wonderful trip with a great group. Everyone pitched in to keep things running smoothly.



## **DESTINATION: SHADOW CREEK**

### **DATES: JULY 31 – AUGUST 4**

Leaders: Fran Penn, Karen Belville, and John Kaiser

Participants: Maurica Anderson, Alex Bauer, Paula Bauer, Katja Harwat, Marilyn Jones, Ed Maurer, Helen Maurer, Lydia Sanchez

Our planned base camp near the junction of the Ediza Lake Trail and the John Muir Trail could not be used because the high flow in Shadow Creek had washed away the logs over Shadow Creek that were needed to reach the site. As a result, our hike from the Agnew Meadows Pack Station was one mile longer than planned, going to an alternate site closer to Ediza Lake; this location, called the 'old stock camp' by the packer, provided a large flat area with plenty of room to spread out; our water source was a short walk away at Shadow Creek.

On the first day, three participants elected to do an adventurous loop hike to Nydiver Lakes, starting up a short miners' trail close to base camp,





then continuing cross country to Nydiver Lakes, descending cross country to Ediza, and following the trail back to camp. The rest of the group chose to go via trail to Ediza with plans of continuing to Iceberg Lake. The expected easy hike became more difficult when it was found that the log bridge across Shadow Creek had collapsed and the stock crossing was seen to involve a long slog through marshy water. Backpackers coming down the trail recommended following a use trail up the north side of Shadow Creek to reach the outlet of Lake Ediza. After a suitable round of photos of the lake with a backdrop of the Minarets, several people headed back to camp while four others chose to cross a boulder field to reach the backpacker camping area at Ediza where a leisurely lunch next to a cascading creek

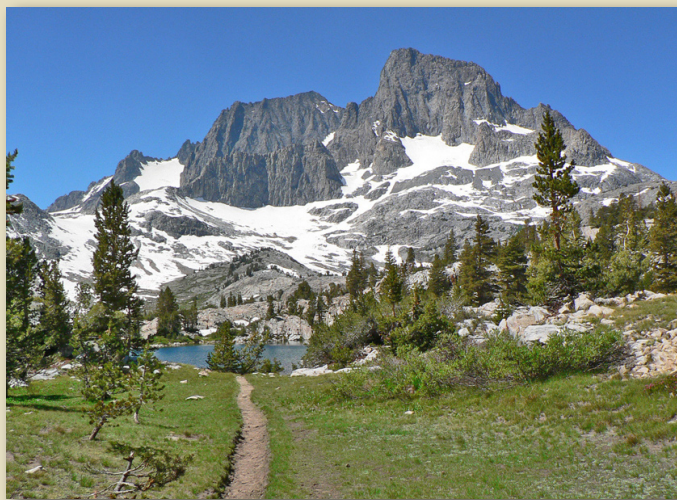


from lower Nydiver Lake. A relaxing morning was spent enjoying the view and exploring the nearby area; several people worked at getting good photos of a couple of very small flowers (Bitter Root and Mountain Jewelflower).

Although the dates of the trip were too early to see the Explorers' Gentian that blooms along the JMT later in the year, other flowers were outstanding with an abundant amount of Red Heather and Mountain Pride and numerous Mariposa lilies.

This area is quite scenic with the Ritter Range and Minarets providing a backdrop to the lakes and is worthy of future visits by the Mule Pack Section.

Note on pack station: The Agnew Meadows Pack Station provided good service although the return to the pack station was somewhat delayed because the packer first delivered gear to Ediza Lake before picking up our gear.



was enjoyed. Plans to continue to Iceberg Lake were abandoned because that trail was still under snow.

On the second day, everyone set out for Garnet Lake, first descending to the JMT, and then hiking north on the JMT. With the additional one-mile distance due to the alternate basecamp, everyone decided to stop at the 10,000' pass for an early lunch, descending across a snow field only far enough for a view of Garnet Lake & Banner Peak before heading back to camp.

On the last layover day, most participants chose to do a short hike up the steep miners' trail past the remains of a log cabin to a lovely pool at the base of a cascading 200 foot waterfall coming





## DESTINATION: SADDLEROCK LAKE

### DATES: AUG. 4 - 9, 2019

Leaders: Yvonne Tsai, Lori DeLaney, & Steve DeLaney.

Participants: Shaune Hand, Gordon Sundberg, Dick Hihn, Joanne Hihn, Joseph Merriman, Maxine Binn, Karl Rubin, Tim McCoy, Juan Castillo, and Janet Carle.

TOPSY-TURVY but WONDERFUL!

Well, to begin with, we didn't go to Saddlerock Lake after all. There was too much snow for the mules to go farther than Long Lake. So Long Lake it was, at an elevation of 10,700 on the Bishop Pass trail from South Lake trailhead. It was a lovely location, and we agreed it was



easier to sleep at a lower elevation. Camping close to the trail, we met interesting people going by. One morning, Maxine awoke to the sight of a hard shell kayaker on the lake, who then proceeded to load the kayak on his back and head up towards the Bishop Pass. We later heard that three men carried their boats all the way to Le Conte Canyon (16 miles) and to run 45 miles of the river --- ALL IN THE SAME DAY! No word if they made it. Another evening, a PCT hiker asked if she could store food in the bear boxes for the night. She and her husband had left the trail to re-supply, get massages and drink coffee in a hot tub in Bishop making a 32 mile detour! There was also a whiff of Agatha Christie's mystery novel, Ten Little Indians, as our group kept shrinking. Due to medical reasons, we started with 13 rather than 15, then lost 3 more to mi-



nor medical issues during the week, leaving 10 survivors on the last day. Luckily, everyone could walk out. On day one while hiking in from trailhead, one participant turned around with intense abdominal pain and, accompanied by co-leader Steve, went to the Bishop ER, was pronounced OK, hiked back in, and proceeded to climb one peak and two passes in the next three days. Hiking highlights were Chocolate Peak, which looms over the Chocolate Lakes, looking like a giant scoop of ice cream with whipped cream stripes. Bishop Pass was "beyond spectacular" according to Joanne-- white columbines, sparkling lakes, crystal-clear air quality, snow patches everywhere, and even the elusive sky pilot flowers -- Yvonne hiked up a good chunk of Mt. Agassiz looking for them.

Oh, did I forget to mention the mosquitoes? Yes, they showed up. Head nets and surgical gloves were de rigeur, especially in the mornings and evenings. Yvonne assured us they were NOT the worst she's ever seen (but close). We all got lots of practice in how to kill mosquitoes in the tent most efficiently (use a bandana, not your finger,







for maximum coverage). But they weren't bad while hiking, and the magnificent scenery, peak wildflowers, great weather, and fine company made up for it. In fact, when the balmy weather cooled off the last few days, the mosquitoes backed off.

The group dinners were awesome, the equipment worked great, and nobody's tent blew away. The mules showed up on time and the packer was smiling.

The last word goes to Juan, who charmed us with his storytelling and flute playing. This is better than a movie – as we walked through fields of wildflowers on the return to Rainbow pack station.



## **DESTINATION: HUMPHREYS BASIN VIA PIUTE PASS DATES: AUGUST 11-16**



Leaders: Les Wilson and Alan Schimpff

Participants: Tom Molloy, Mark Rosen, Michael Vilkin, Dianne Dickey, Ruth Friedman, Elizabeth Schimpff, Balisa Koetje, Jane Wike, Andrew Wike, and John Castillo

The group met at The Trees motel in Bishop on Saturday afternoon for a happy hour and opportunity to meet each other. After dinner in Bishop, the leaders gave a brief orientation and described the plan for the next day.

We embarked from Bishop Pack Outfitters (9,288') near North Lake and hiked up and over Piute Pass (11,423') where there was still a small snowfield and then followed the sketchy "lower trail" near Piute Creek to Lion's Camp where we set up our base camp downstream from Lower Golden Trout Lake (10,800'). We chose our individual campsites and shared the tasks of setting



up camp: our kitchen, tarps for the sitting area, shower and potty tents, and our water filtration system.

The Lion's Camp site (10,750') is ideal for group camping: it offers relative privacy, has lots of trees shading many of the campsites, has easy access to Piute Creek, and has lots of level campsites with minimal rocks on them. We had the traditional DIY quesadilla dinner the first night.

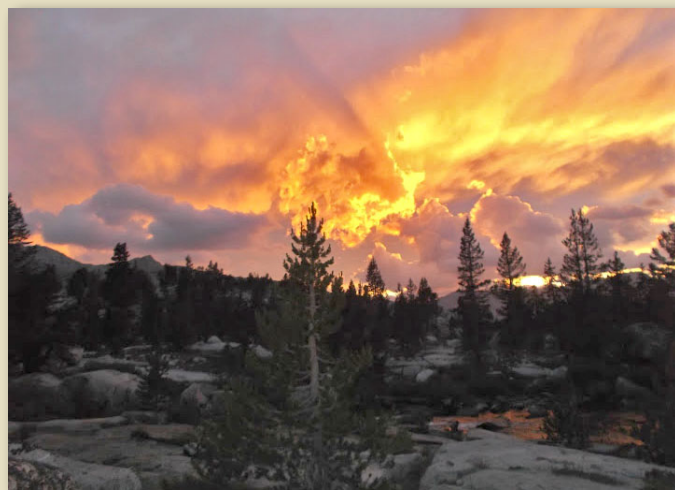
On the first layover day which was quite pleasant with clear skies, four participants hiked several miles downstream on the shady Piute Trail toward French Canyon, turning around at a beautiful series of cascades in Piute Creek; two participants headed for Pack Saddle Lake (10,670') not far from camp; one mountain-climbing participant





headed for Pilot Knob (12,245'); and two participants went fishing at Desolation Lake (11,375') with little luck. As usual we had a "gourmet" dinner accompanied by appetizers, desserts, and wine. Thanks to later-than-usual snow melt, while in camp personal mosquito netting was in fashion during the entire trip (fortunately there was little mosquito activity while we were hiking). Some cross-country hiking was required for most destinations; fortunately, Humphreys Basin is quite "open" with lots of small-to-medium lakes. On the second layover day (another beautiful day) five participants headed cross-country to Upper and Lower Golden Trout Lakes, Wahoo Lakes (11,250'), Muriel Lake (11,336'), and a view of Goethe Lake (11,531'); there was lots of "boulder hopping" rewarded with great views; four participants headed upstream to Wahoo Lakes; two participants headed directly to Goethe and Muriel Lakes; and one participant headed over to Packsaddle Lake. We had another "gourmet" dinner and enjoyed post-prandial conversation. On the third layover day (another nice day) eight

participants headed cross-country (including rock-hopping across Piute Creek) to Packsaddle Lake and then visited the impressive cascades below Lower Golden Trout Lake; two participants headed directly to Goethe Lake (for fishing and reading); one participant headed to Muriel Lake; and one participant explored Lower Golden Trout Lake. We enjoyed our third consecutive "gourmet" dinner before retiring for the night. On the fourth layover day (yes, another beautiful day) four participants headed to Desolation Lake(s) partly cross-country; one participant engaged in birdwatching downstream from our camp; two participants hiked part way toward Desolation Lakes; and one participant headed northwest toward Tomahawk Lake (11,145'). Several participants just took it easy. We had



leftovers for dinner and began the dismantling/packing of our community gear. There were lots of blooming wildflowers and there was lots of water in the streams and lakes, fed by still-melting snow on the mountainsides.



## **DESTINATION: 4TH RECESS LAKE**

### **DATES: AUGUST 23-28**

Leaders: Cathie Miller and Kathy Viola  
 Participants: Bonnie Blanton, Roy Bouchard, Leslie Carlson, Sue Ellen Gittings, JoAnn Hunt, Liz Koucky, Barbara Marcotte, Norm Marcotte, Jane McCord, Gerry Miller, Lisa Sanford, Muffi Scott, Irene Shibata







On Thursday night most of the group enjoyed greeting old friends and meeting new ones at Tom's Place for a pre-trip dinner. Before dawn on Friday morning our group of 15 strong hikers met at the Rock Creek Pack Station to begin our adventure. From Mosquito Flats trailhead, we hiked up and over Mono Pass. After gaining over 2000' of elevation to get over the pass, we lost even more on our way down to our base camp located at 4th Recess Lake. After a long day of hiking and setting up camp, we enjoyed our soup and salad dinner and turned in early. Saturday we slept late and finished setting up camp, so we decided to have an easy day exploring 4th Recess Lake while a few hiked up to Golden Lake and some went swimming. All enjoyed an easy day so that we could be ready for a tougher hike on Sunday. On Sunday we all hiked up to Pioneer Basin to explore the many lakes. It was a steep climb that required some scrambling, but the upper lakes

were worth it. Our group had fun playing on a snow bank and swimming. The weather was perfectly warm and sunny, so the swimmers warmed up quickly afterwards.

On Monday some of the group decided to hike to Golden Lake while others set off on the Creek trail toward 3rd Recess Lake and the Hopkins Lake turnoff. Since they were on the Mono Divide separating the East and West Sierras, they wanted to see the view west. They were rewarded with plenty of amazing wildflowers following the creek and lots of cascades all along the trail. This hike started out going downhill, which meant uphill on the return trip back to camp.

On Tuesday all agreed to have an easy/moderate day in order to save our energy for the tough hike out on Wednesday. Some explored all around 4th Recess lake including lots of bouldering, some went swimming, some hiked along the



creek, while others read a book and prepared for Wednesday's departure. Unfortunately, we got some rain at dinner time, which meant we couldn't start taking down our tarp and screen house until the next morning. We went to bed early since we had to be up before 6:00am to pack up camp and hike out.

Wednesday morning everyone helped pack up our camp and we were on the trail by 8:45. It was perfect hiking weather, and the rain the night before had settled the dust which made the long, steep climb over Mono Pass seem easier. We had to wait at the pack station for the mules to bring our gear, then said our farewells, sad to see the trip end but looking forward to next year.







## DESTINATION: HILTON LAKES

### DATES: SEPTEMBER 5-8

Leaders: Dave Cross, Francine Oschin

Participants: Yvonne Tsai, Deborah Nakamoto, Sylvia Stevenson, Russ Brown, Richard Tupin, Pat Pipin, Stephanie Hodal.

The night before our hike to Hilton Lakes, most of us met for dinner at Tom's Place and got acquainted. We were a small but very cohesive group.

The trailhead to Hilton Lakes is on the Rock Creek road from Tom's Place off Highway 395. The Hilton Lakes are a five mile, up and down hike from the trailhead opposite Rock Creek Lake in the Eastern Sierra. The nine Hilton Lakes are within two miles of each other along Hilton Creek, ranging in elevation from the 9,800-foot Davis Lake to alpine lakes at 11,050 feet.

After about a half mile of uphill walking, the trail levels off into more 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, losing all the elevation we'd gained. About that time, the rains came down and we put on our rain gear and our mosquito nets. Our gear was left at Second Lake, which is large and beautiful, with great camping spots and room to spread out. The rain stopped just long enough for us to set up camp but began again shortly after. Fortunately, that was the last of the rain on this trip.

With many hikes available to the other Hilton lakes, participants were able to enjoy a beautiful variety of day hikes. The fishing in the area was excellent this year and our two fishermen, Russ and Richard, had a great time. We even had fresh trout as an appetizer one night, caught by Russ. We spoke with several groups of men who



came just for the fishing at both Davis Lake and Lake Two where we were camped.

We had warm candles for our first evening gathering and enjoyed our "salad night" and wine. The next day, most of us stayed close to Davis and Lake 2, fishing, exploring the general area and reading. That night we enjoyed happy hour with very interesting appetizers and shared stories about our Sierra Club experiences. On the third day out, several folks hiked up the very steep hill to the cutoff to the other scenic Hilton lakes. That night we gathered around and shared all our leftovers. The night was particularly cold with temperatures hovering around the freezing mark and the wind howling. Of course, that provided a pitch-black sky filled with millions of stars. It also sent us in our tents early.





The Rock Creek packers sent us a wrangler who had dropped folks at Yosemite the night prior and so arrived at our camp on Sunday morning bright and early. Folks who hiked out early had their gear and were on their way home by early afternoon.

We were all happy campers and grateful that we were able to use Hilton lakes and the Rock Creek Pack Station.

Note on pack sta-

tion: The Rock Creek packers bought out the Virginia Lake Packers last year and advised that this seems to be an ongoing process as some of the other companies were not able to make it at the old prices. They are more expensive than most but at least we believe they will likely continue to provide this service to those of us who enjoy the wilderness but don't want to heft our gear to these remote areas.

