

FSVA Newsletter



Spring, 2006

San Jacinto Ranger District

www.fsva.org

FROM THE DESK OF MELINDA

It seemed as if we weren't going to have winter this year, so the March snow has been a pleasant surprise.

Thank you to all who have kept active this winter! We have had good coverage in the San Jacinto Wilderness almost every weekend. Now that winter has arrived, we need your help to keep the office updated on trail conditions. Please keep in mind that as long as the trails are icy and snow covered, you must work in pairs beyond Saddle Junction.

The annual Refresher Training will be offered on Saturday, April 29, and again on Sunday, April 30. You must attend one of these dates if you want to remain an active volunteer. More information about the training will be out soon. If you have any suggestions on what you would like to have included in the training or would like to help with the training, please let me know.

We are looking forward to another busy summer. We won't have a SCA high school crew this year due to a reduction in our trails budget. But the good news is that our Forest Service trail crew will be back.

Melinda Lyon, FSVA Liaison

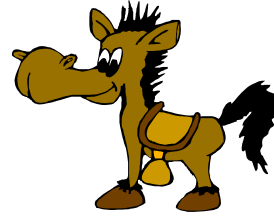
EQUESTRIAN TEAM NEWS

The Parade unit took second place in the Christmas parade in Hemet, and we are getting ready for the Bishop Parade in May on the 27th. We are trying to get together every month with either training or a trail ride. The rides are open to everyone, so if you are interested in joining us, please give me a call: 951-659-5264.

We have had two great horses join the herd in the sky this year; Junior, who was one of our original parade horses from the very beginning (he was 30 something), and Bishop, 20, who also was a horse from the early years. These two great horses

will be remembered always. Finese and Liz, our hearts go out to you.

Live long in the saddle,
Karleen Esparza, Parade Captain



BACKPACKING RECIPES: HOOFIN' TORTELLINI DINNER

Last Memorial Day weekend, while other people at the admin camp were enjoying their freeze-dried dinners (Hmmm, Yuck!), I was cooking a nice tortellini dinner. Dolores Hewitt looked at her dinner and said, "Okay, how do you cook a good tasting dinner that does not weigh a lot in your pack?" Well, Dolores, this is how you do it. You need the following:

- Backpacking pot & stove (of course).
- Tortellini – Enough for 1 to 1.5 portions (depending how hungry you will be by the end of the day.)
- Knorr pasta sauce (pick your favorite pasta sauce).
- Powdered milk. See instructions on the Knorr pasta sauce package.
- Parmesan cheese packet. You can get these from any pizza place when ordering pizza for delivery.

Packing Instructions (this is a one-pot meal):

- Mix the pasta sauce and powdered milk into a small zip lock bag. Write the instructions on the zip lock bag using a permanent marker.
- Put the tortellini in a large zip lock bag. Write the instructions on the zip lock bag for cooking your tortellini.

- Place the zip lock bag containing the pasta sauce and parmesan cheese packet inside the tortellini zip lock bag. (This is now one meal for your backpacking journey).
 - When backpacking it is helpful to keep everything you need for a meal in one container.

Cooking Instructions (~20 minutes cooking time):

- When at camp, put the tortellini and water into a pot for cooking, following the instructions you wrote down on the zip lock bag.
- When the tortellini is done, you might want to drain some of the water from the pot depending on how much water is needed for the pasta sauce.
- Now, you can do one of two things:
 1. Make the pasta sauce with the tortellini still in the pot.
 2. Put the tortellini in a safe place while making the sauce. A good place to put the pasta is on the lid of the pot or back in the large zip lock bag. Then, put the pasta back in the pot for a couple of minutes just to warm it back up.

You are now done with your hoofin' tortellini. Sit down, add the parmesan cheese and enjoy. Within a few minutes all your friends who are eating their freeze-dried, no-taste dinner will be hoofin' on over to see what you are eating.

Scott Huseth

BOOKSTORE SALES AND UPDATES

The latest in FSVA Bookstore and Gift Shop news is sales during the winter have been good, especially for “coffee table” books - *Call of the Mountains: San Jacintos, San Bernardinios, and San Gabriels* and *The San Jacintos*. Other reading books to curl up with (about living in the forest, working for the FS, etc.) and hiking books have been popular. Warm Smokey knit caps, as well as Smokey baseball caps, sell well.

Two newly available items we sell are:

1. Collection of spiral-bound 7-minute topo maps of the whole SBNF, this has been a popular item;
2. Pacific Crest Trail map that details the whole trail from one end to the other (our own Melinda Lyon wrote the San Jacinto section text).

Other Pacific Crest Trail titles to tell hikers about (they are planning now and will be hiking thru our area soon) – 1. *Town Guide to the PCT* (towns where hikers can restock and/or pick up boxes they have mailed themselves, including Idyllwild); 2. *PCT Southern California* (details the southern hike); 3. *PCT Northern California* (details the northern hike); 4. *Day Hikes along the PCT* (includes several hikes on our district); 5. *Pacific Crest Trail* has lots of great interpretive info (trees, plants, birds, animals, etc.); 6. plus the map highlighted in the paragraph above.

Note: the website for the PCT Association, www.pcta.org, is full of good info and is where hikers get their Thru-Hiking Permits (Wilderness Day Use Permits and Wilderness Overnight Visitor Permits for our area are obtained as usual, either at our ranger station or the State Park ranger stations).

An updated version of the popular book *San Bernardino Mountain Trails* by Robinson has just been released. Contrary to the name, he also covers our district and mountains very well. The Foreward thanks Melinda Lyon and Heidi Sellers for their assistance. The map included with this book is great for planning, but folks should purchase one of our detailed Wilderness maps for actual hiking.

As always, volunteers receive a discount of 15% on all purchases. Make sure to tell the staff you are a volunteer if you are not in uniform, they don't know everyone yet.

Gail Heveron, Bookstore Volunteer

THE WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT WANTS YOU!

Do you have what it takes to be on the Frog Squad?



- Do you like to be outdoors?
- Do you like talking to people?
- Do you like educating others about wildlife and the National Forest?
- Do you like protecting endangered species and their habitat?
- Do you like wearing a uniform?
- Do you like using a communication radio?

If you answered YES to any the above questions then you may have what it takes to join the Frog Squad!

It's that time of year again! The endangered Mountain Yellow-Legged Frog activity season is approaching. This year we will be protecting even more areas for their sake as required by US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Endangered Species Act. This means we will be increasing our 'monitoring' effort.

We need volunteers to monitor creek activity at Dark Canyon Camp Ground, along the North Fork of the San Jacinto and Fuller Mill Creek. These areas will be off limits to any activity within 10' of the creeks edge. USFS wildlife staff will be reinstalling our informative signs, attempting to prevent any violations and writing tickets for people who don't comply. Volunteers will monitor the area, educate visitors about the frogs, the creek closure and call on USFS staff if tickets need to be written.

We would like this to be more than just frog guarding duty this year (though of course that is of the utmost importance). We feel that both visitor experience and the natural areas that they visit can be enhanced by more education about the plants, animals and history of the area. We envision a team of "Forest Docents" available for "patrol" of the areas (mainly on weekends and holidays; ~May - Oct). Included in the 'benefits package' is free camping at Dark Canyon Campground on your monitoring days.

*Heidi Lake Sellers, Wildlife Bio-Tech
San Bernardino National Forest, San Jacinto
Ranger District*

WORKING AT THE VISITOR CENTER - WHERE?

For the months of January and February, it was my pleasure to be the Forest Service staff representative at the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Visitor Center (VC) on Hwy 74 in Palm Desert, following the retirement of Pam Hansen. It was lots of fun, as is my job in Idyllwild, but it's a different type of visitor center from our ranger station.

Approximately 125 people came in each day from all over the world, while many asked about exploring the desert trails, many also asked about exploring the mountain trails. We sent folks to the Santa Rosa Wilderness, to the PCT off Hwy 74, and

to Idyllwild; if they weren't going hiking, they were mountain biking, or maybe driving the whole Palms to Pines National Scenic Highway (Hwy 74 and Hwy 243 from Palm Desert to Banning) to enjoy the views. It's great to know how many people had heard of these mountains while on other travels around the world; for example, a man from Scotland had heard about Santa Rosa Mountain (hiking, biking, plant life, etc.) while in Argentina.

Since my background encompasses both the desert and mountains, I was able to lead interpretive hikes on two trails at the VC, to tend the native garden on grounds, to give short presentations on the Monument, and to help at the Wildflower Celebration in February when 650 people came to see our wildflowers (yes, they were at their height then due to low rainfall) and to talk to wildflower experts.

Many of you know already that the U.S. Forest Service is a partner with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in the management of the National Monument. If all goes as planned, I will be working two spring months for the BLM at the VC. This Monument is unusual because there are so many other partners involved from State agencies to the Cahuilla Indians to private entities; this makes for more people to meet with and consider when FS staff makes decisions regarding Wilderness, fire suppression, and overall management of the lands. The Monument boundaries encompass land on the northern side of our district, including some of the San Jacinto Wilderness. We have Monument info in the ranger station. See you back in Idyllwild!

*Gail Heveron, Visitor Center Information
Receptionist*

BUCKLE UP!

Why is wearing seatbelts important to all vehicle occupants? Simply put, these restraints save lives.

Seatbelts hold all occupants in place, where air bags and other supplemental restraint – system components can be most effective. Seatbelts also help keep a driver in place behind the steering wheel to be able to use the vehicle's controls. In addition, restraints help keep occupants from being ejected during a collision.

Statistics from the U.S. Dept. of Transportation indicate that chances of surviving an

impact are greater if a vehicle occupant remains inside the vehicle:

- Only 1% of occupants using restraints were ejected from their vehicles.
- 18% of occupants not using restraints were ejected from their vehicles.
- 74% of the occupants totally ejected from passenger cars died.

There's no excuse for not wearing a restraint:

- "It's just a short trip."
FACT: More than 70% of accidents occur within 25 miles of the driver's residence or workplace.
- "I don't drive fast."
FACT: More than 80% of collisions occur at speeds less than 40 mph.
- "I might be trapped in a fire or under water."
FACT: Less than half of 1% of accidents involve fire or submersion in water, and chances for survival are better if a person is conscious. Any unrestrained occupant is more likely to be unconscious.

Reprinted from Subaru Drive magazine (Fall 2005) with permission from Subaru of America, Inc.

USDA FOREST SERVICE ASSIST IN TRAINING SOLDIERS FOR DUTY IN AFGHANISTAN

10th Mountain Division Soldiers Pack Donkeys

By Frank Carroll, Black Hills National Forest & Gary C. Chancey, Black Hills National Forest

(Ref: <http://blackhillsportal.com/npps/story.cfm?id=1432>)



US Army PFC Geoffray Mwangi learns proper saddle placement

Powell, WY – Craig Sax showed his son, Justin, how to tie heavy water containers to the back of a small donkey. "You like that tie, huh, Justin," Craig asked when the final knot was tied. "I'll make you tie the elk on next time."

Craig is a game warden for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and Second Lieutenant Justin Sax is an Army Ranger with the elite 10th Mountain Division headquartered in Fort Drum, New York.

The father and son from Cody, Wyoming have tied many a load to the backs of mules and horses. This is Justin's first time packing little donkeys but he learns quickly, and Craig is grateful for his son's skills. "I can't tell you the upwelling of pride that I feel about Justin," Craig said. "These men will be operating at 4,000 to 16,000 feet in Afghanistan and their likelihood of survival will be increased because of this training and these animals."

Soldiers of the Army's legendary 10th Mountain Division have turned to the traditions of the Old West, and specifically to Federal, state, and local law enforcement officers in the northern Rocky Mountains, for advice on how to properly pack donkeys and other animals.

"It's a pleasure to pass your knowledge and information on to the next generation," said Travis Lunders, a Forest Service law enforcement officer from the Black Hills National Forest. "And it's an honorable cause."

The 10th Mountain Division was an elite group of expert mountaineers and skiers trained by the U.S. Army to combat the Nazis entrenched in the mountains of Italy during WWII. Their original purpose was to stop a German invasion of the United States through Canada. Members of the Division were instrumental in America's outdoors and environmental movements after the war.

The mountains of Afghanistan will soon be the new theater of operations for this tough specialized division. And the transportation of choice is four-legged and ornery.

Justin Sax is a living example of the Division's long tradition, an outdoorsman and mountaineer with a deep knowledge of the wild country. But Justin's soldiers come from many backgrounds.

PFC Geoffray Mwangi [Mm-WON-gee] from Kenya has served in the Army for two years. His African home is far away from Wyoming and

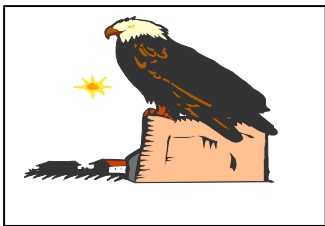
Afghanistan. "I am used to working with cows but I always feared donkeys and horses," he said. "The first thing I have to do is gain it's confidence and learn the psychology of the animal. I've never packed any animal so everything I'm learning is new."

Officers from U.S. Marshall's Service, the Secret Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wyoming Game and Fish, and Wyoming's Park County Sheriff joined the Forest Service to teach the soldiers everything they know about packing livestock.

Law enforcement officers train every year in lost arts like throwing a diamond hitch on a loaded pack animal to secure precious cargoes of food and water, tents and cook stoves, and more exotic things like basket stretchers for search and rescue.

"I've spent the last few months talking to soldiers who have been there trying to get this right," said Ron Ostrom, a law enforcement officer from the Shoshone National Forest. "We've taken a packing course and turned it into a military tactical packing course. It's just a few simple knots and then learning where to put the ropes and they've got it."

Thirty one soldiers spent five days learning the psychology of horses, mules and donkeys, how to pack various saddles, donkey nutritional needs, and the many tricks of the packer trade. "This group has people from all over...so fast to learn, so professional, it makes me feel good about our military," Lunders said.



MARCH BALD EAGLE COUNT IN SAN BERNARDINO & SAN JACINTO MTNS.

On Saturday, March 11, the fourth bald eagle count of the winter was scheduled by local land management agencies and volunteers around lakes in the San Bernardino and San Jacinto Mountains.

No eagles were observed in the Big Bear Basin due to inclement weather and no volunteers. The March average for the Big Bear counts since 1978 is 10. This is the third time a count has not been conducted in March since the start of the counts in 1978. Volunteers were unable to

participate in the 1-hour eagle census due to inclement weather. Counts at Lake Arrowhead and Lake Silverwood were also not conducted due to poor weather conditions and lack of volunteers. Results for the Lake Hemet count were unavailable at time of press release. Even though eagles were not observed during the count on the San Bernardino Mountains, we are still seeing the majestic birds. The San Jacinto Mountains are home to a unique situation – a pair of adult bald eagles live at Lake Hemet year round. Immatures are distinguished by a brown head and tail; adults are recognized by the famous white head and tail. While immature eagles are about the same size as the adults, it takes 4-5 years to acquire full adult coloration.

The U.S. Forest Service has coordinated counts of this federally-protected species since 1978. Data from our local count will be used in the nation-wide Mid-Winter Bald Eagle census to assess recovery status of the species. The Forest Service relies on volunteers to gather information during the monthly winter eagle counts. Counts are conducted for a 1-hour period from 9-10 a.m. Forest Service volunteers stationed around lakes in Big Bear, Arrowhead, and Idyllwild record all observations of bald eagles. Volunteers at Silverwood Lake State Recreation Area conduct simultaneous counts.

Bald eagles are similar to many southern Californians in that they visit the lakes of our San Bernardino and San Jacinto Mountains for their winter vacations. Eagles are easily observed around the lakes between November and April. Instead of vacationing here for dynamite skiing, eagles come for the plentiful food supplies. As lakes and rivers up north freeze each winter, fish become unavailable under a thick layer of ice and ducks leave the frozen waters. The eagles' "grocery stores" have essentially closed for the winter. So eagles fly south looking for open water stocked with food. The lakes of the San Bernardino Mountains fit the bill perfectly--they are part of the Pacific Migratory Flyway, a migration freeway for millions of ducks. Eagles like to spend their winters here because of the abundant and tasty ducks and fish.

If you'd like to see a bald eagle this winter, there's plenty of time: they normally migrate out of the San Bernardino and San Jacinto Mountains in late March, heading back to summer homes in Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, and Alberta, Canada. Typically by the end of March, they'll all be gone,

with the exception of the pair that reside year round at Lake Hemet.

In 1992, the Forest Service biologists in Big Bear started a research project to learn more about what areas of the San Bernardino National Forest are important for eagle foraging, perching, and night roosting. Biologists caught 15 eagles and equipped them with tiny radio-transmitters that allowed their movements to be tracked. Through radio-tracking, we learned that some of the same individual eagles return to the San Bernardino Mountains year after year. We also determined that there is a lot of movement of eagles between the different mountain lakes and that the lakes do not have distinctive separate populations. We have also learned that some of Big Bear's eagles travel to Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho for nesting.

Scientists at Lake Silverwood have equipped some bald eagles with transmitters tracked by satellites. Current information regarding bald eagle migratory routes for these and other California eagles can be viewed from the University of Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group's web site at <http://www2.ucsc.edu/~scpbgr/migration.htm>.

In 2003 a pair of eagles at Lake Hemet successfully fledged two chicks, becoming the first known wild born bald eagles in Southern California since the 1930's. In 2005 a different pair of bald eagles successfully reproduced at Lake Hemet, however severe summer storms destroyed the nest and caused the chicks' death just before they would have fledged. These reproductions are a great sign as eagles continue to repopulate their historic breeding range.

Catching a glimpse of our breath-taking national bird is relatively easy during the winter months. There are also some fantastic opportunities for excellent close-up photography. Just look in the tallest trees around the lakeshore. Or, if the lake is partially frozen, look for eagles perched on the ice near small groups of ducks using open water pockets. Stop by the Forest Service's Big Bear Discovery Center (on North Shore Drive, 3 miles east of Fawnskin) to pick up a handout on eagles. **Remember that human presence may distract or disturb the eagles--so, try to limit your movements and don't make loud noises when nearby. If possible, remain in your car while observing eagles--the car acts as a blind.**

This is the fourth and final eagle count this winter. Volunteers will be needed for next seasons count starting in December. Volunteers need not

have experience--just bring binoculars and a watch (and dress warmly!). For more information about eagle counts, please call Marc Stamer, Wildlife Biologist at the Forest Service Ranger Station in Big Bear (909-382-2828) or Heidi Sellers at the San Jacinto Ranger Station (909)382-2945. To participate in the count at Lake Silverwood, contact Rick Reisenhoffer at (760)389-2281. To welcome and celebrate Bald Eagles in Big Bear, the Forest Service and the San Bernardino National Forest Association invite you to participate in Eagle Season. Discovery Tours to view bald eagles are held Saturdays and Sundays. Call ahead for reservations and information (909-382-2790).

Marc Stamer, Wildlife Biologist, San Bernardino National Forest, Big Bear Ranger District. work phone=909-382-2828. fax=909-866-8192.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

- * **April 21:** FSVA Board Meeting, 6:30 PM
- * **April 21:** Earth Day Celebration at the National Monument Visitor Center, 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM, Palm Desert
- * **April 22:** Disaster Preparedness Volunteer Expo, 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM, Idyllwild Fire
- * **April 29:** 9:00 a.m.-Noon Refresher Training; 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. New Volunteer Training
- * **April 30:** 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. - New Volunteer Training; 1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m. - Refresher Training
- * **May 8 & 15:** 10:00 p.m. – Showing of *The Greatest Good* on KVCR
- * **May 16-17:** 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. -Wilderness Awareness Training. May 16 held at Mill Creek Ranger Station; May 17 held at Big Bear Discovery Center. (1)
- * **May 20** from 12-5pm: Earth Fair, Idyllwild
- * **June 3:** National Trails Day
- * **September 30:** National Public Lands Day

We don't have any plans at this time for Trails Day, the Idyllwild Earth Fair, and National Public Lands Day. Planning and organization help is needed for these events. If you can help with this, please contact Melinda.

(1) Presented by Sierra NF SWAT (Sierra Wilderness Awareness Training) Team.

SOME SNOW PICTURES

View from Los Rios Orchard, Oak Glen



Pepper at Oak Glen, March 2006

(Above photos courtesy of Sharon Middleton)



Playing in the new fallen snow in Garner Valley near Lake Hemet on March 11th, Logan's snowball was actually in mid-air. Photo by Jeff & Stacey Brennan, friends of Gail & Dave Heveron

USFS CONTACT INFO

Idyllwild Ranger Station: 909-382-2921, or 951-659-2117 then 5. Open 7 days, 8-4:30.

Website: www.fs.fed.us/r5/sanbernardino.

Melinda Lyon: mlyon@fs.fed.us, 909-382-2929, FSVAliaison, District Wilderness and Trails Mgr.

WANTED: Web Page Designer

The web page coordinator is looking for someone to take over the creation and maintenance of the FSVAliaison web site. Our current web page designer, Bill Snead, has moved to Flagstaff, AZ. Currently Bill is filling in until we find someone to take it over.

It would be nice if someone has some experience using at least html and has created a web page or web site.

At this time I would like to personally thank Bill for his time, ingenuity, and professionalism in creating the FSVAliaison web site.

If interested please contact me at home:
951-360-1815

Scott Huseth – Web Site Coordinator

WILDERNESS COORDINATOR REPORT

After months of fair weather conditions, the San Jacinto Wilderness finally looks like it is winter time. I am happy for any rain and snow we get at this point. March miracle, how about an April miracle also!

The mild winter months helped accelerate the completion of training for a couple of volunteer wilderness rangers. Steve Ricker and Tom Diaz are out there burning up the trails (figuratively speaking). Welcome, Steve and Tom!

Next up is the refresher training for current members and new member training all on the weekend of April 29 and April 30. I look forward to seeing some of you then. Have a great spring.

Bob Romano

Volunteer Wilderness Coordinator