It has been a busy summer for me and the Management Committee. Not so much in climbing desert peaks (although I did managed to bag a few Sierra peaks) but in developing and administering the DPS Survey, preparing us for electronic voting for the next elections, wrapping up the reach out program where we recruited 27 new members and subscribers (14 this past month alone!), working with Ann in setting up climbs and outings for the fall, working with Pat and Larry along with National and the Chapter to add Paypal electronic payments to our website, working with Daryn to kick off version 6 for the Road and Peak Guide, working with Jim to start the process to select next May’s banquet speaker (save the date of May 20th at Proud Bird), and working with Ron and Larry to start the electronic distribution of the Desert Sage - starting with this edition. Not to mention the big change of having the unfortunate situation to accept Bob’s resignation as Sage editor and along with my partner Peter putting together this Sage without missing the deadline. Whew. Granted, not everything is done yet, but we are well on our way. Any wannabe future Sage editors out there?

I want to thank Bob Sumner for seven great years as the DPS Desert Sage editor. From new firsthand experience I truly appreciate the work that Bob did to pull each edition together. Bob made the Sage one of the best – if not the best – newsletters in the Chapter. Please join me in thanking Bob for his tremendous effort, skill, and dedication.

From the survey questions a good majority of our members like what we are doing, e.g., 2 day car camps, class 3 intermediate skill climbs, lead climbs in Death Valley and Southern California, don’t touch the list (e.g., don’t take Mexico peaks off and don’t add any more peaks to the list were votes in the majority), and keep the hosted potlucks as they are (95.8%). If climbs to peaks not on the list were offered Canyonlands and Arizona were favorite destinations. Exploratory climbs were of big interest too. At 61.1% members say they like the idea of voting electronically. 98.7% said they liked the leadership provided on DPS outings which speaks volumes about our volunteer leaders. Thank you so much! If you want to look at the Survey results please go to: http://angeles.sierraclub.org/dps/default.htm

I want to thank the leaders and Ann for putting together an impressive list of trips coming up over the next two months. It will be hard not to find some trips that will appeal to our members. And if you can please attend the hosted potlucks (the next one in November is at Christine and Ron’s).

One of the survey questions had to do with how the Sage gets distributed. A 53.3% slight majority of the electronically submitted responses voted to prefer an electronic version of the Sage. This means that there is a preference with some of our members to receive a link to a color Sage as soon as it is published rather than wait for a mailed black and white version. After much discussion at our last management meeting in Lake Arrowhead it was unanimous that we would roll out – with this issue – an electronic form of the Sage. If you have an email address on file this will be your last hard copy Sage – unless you let Ron Bartell know that you still want the black and white hard copy. It is all up to you. You will know that we have a valid email address for you if you have already received an email welcoming you to the new electronic Desert Sage.

Finally, it is not too early to think about DPS awards nominees. The Service Award, Mountaineering Award, and DPS Lifetime Achievement Award are all up for discussion. If you would like to nominate a deserving DPS member for an award the Management Committee would like to hear from you. The criteria for each award can be found on our website http://angeles.sierraclub.org/dps/awards.html.
DESSERT PEAKS SECTION LEADERSHIP, 2011 - 2012 SEASON

Elected Positions

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Cover Photo Credit...
...goes to Bob Wyka on a DPS climb to South Guardian Angel taken on Friday, October 10th, 1975 in the passage called the "subway".

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OPEN

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The Desert Peaks Section
explores the desert mountain ranges of California and the Southwest, stimulates the interest of Sierra Club membership in climbing these ranges and aids in the conservation and preservation of desert wilderness areas.
### TRIPS & EVENTS
#### OCTOBER 2011 — APRIL 2012

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<th>Day(s)</th>
<th>Host(s)</th>
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<td>OCT 22</td>
<td>SAT</td>
<td>DPS</td>
<td>19th Annual Chili Cookoff (TO BE RESCHEDULED)</td>
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<td>OCT 22-23</td>
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<td>LTC, WTC, HL</td>
<td>Wilderness First Aid Course</td>
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<td>Kelso Dunes, Charlie Knapke Celebration</td>
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<td>Indian Cove Navigation</td>
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<td>Old Dad Mountain, East Ord Mountain</td>
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**OCT 22 SAT DPS**

**O: 19th Annual DPS Chili Cookoff and Pumpkin Carving Challenge:** Join us for a day of fun in the desert at the foot of the Orocopia Mountains. Whether you like your chili traditional, Texas-style (no beans), or vegetarian, bring your favorite recipe or just hearty taste buds to this DPS classic. Cooks prepare chili from scratch at the site, then all enjoy happy hour followed by chili tasting and judging. Prizes will be awarded by category, with special recognition for the spiciest chili, best presentation, most original recipe, and the coveted Best Overall Chili. Cook for free or taste for $10. Pumpkin artisans bring your favorite gourd and carve your best design for a prize. Optional short hiking activity in the area before the Cookoff. Send ESASE with choice of Cook or Taster to Hosts: Dave & Elaine Baldwin (DWBaldwin@aol.com) and Leaders: Larry and Barbee Tidball (ltidball@verizon.net).

**OCT 22-23 SAT-SUN DPS, WTC**

**MR: Castle Dome Peak, (3,788’), Signal Peak (4,877’):** Mountaineering outing for Sierra Club members only. Climb two sought-after desert peaks in the Kofa Wilderness of SW Arizona. Sat climb class 3 Castle Dome Peak, 6 mi rt, 2100’ and then have happy hour back at car camp. Sun hike to Signal Peak, 4 mi rt, 2000’. Helmets and recent 3rd class rock climbing experience required. Send an e-mail with medical form, recent experience and conditioning, H&W phones, and rideshare info to Leader: Stephanie Smith (ssmith@platinumequity.com). Co-Ldr: Mike Adams.

**OCT 28-30 FRI-SUN LTC, WTC, Harwood Lodge**

**C: Wilderness First Aid Course:** Runs from 8 am Fri to 5:30 pm Sun. Fee includes lodging, meals and practice first aid kit. Proof of CPR within previous 4 years required to enroll. Fee $210 (full refund through Sept 23). For application contact Leader: Steve Schuster (steve.n.wfac2@sbcglobal.net).

**NOV 5-6 SAT-SUN DPS, HPS, SPS**

**O: A Celebration of Charlie Knapke's Life:** Join all of Charlie's climbing friends as we make one last journey with

(Continued on page 5)
him to his beloved Mojave Desert. We will commemorate our friend who generously gave so much to DPS, HPS and SPS as well as the Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club. We'll remember Charlie with a celebration of his life at the Kelso Sand Dunes in an area accessible to all vehicles. The activities will include a huge potluck and car camp on Saturday night. E-mail leader Sue Holloway at sueholloway@yahoo.com to sign-up. Leaders: Gary Craig, Sue Holloway and Mary McMannes.

**NOV 5-6 SAT-SUN DPS, WTC**

**MR: Castle Dome Peak (3788’), Signal Peak (4877’) (Provisional):** Join us for a mountaineering adventure with two peak climbs within the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge in SW Arizona. Saturday climb 3rd class Castle Dome Peak, 6 mi round trip, 2100’ gain, before returning to our car camp and dinner under the desert stars. Sunday climb Signal Peak, 3.5 mi round-trip, 2100 gain. Helmets and experience with exposed 3rd class rock required, Medical Form required. Restricted to Sierra Club members. Send email with Sierra Club #, medical form, climbing resume, experience with 3rd class rock, conditioning, and contact information to Leader: Joe Harvey (jharvey@hotmail.com), Assistant Leader: Ron Campbell.

**NOV 5-6 SAT-SUN DPS**

**I: Needle Peak (5,801’), Manly Peak (7,195):** Join us for the most fun you can have with a fake mustache. Saturday we'll climb Manly Peak (7 mi, 2900') to the west of Death Valley. Bring your manliest accessories for the group picture up top then return to the cars for a DPS potluck complete with mustache wearing cupcakes. Sunday we'll strut up nearby Needle Peak (6 mi, 2800') before returning home. 4WD required. Leader: Mighty Matthew Hengst. Co-Leaders: Adrienne "Don't Call Her a Man or She'll Kick Your Butt" Benedict & Macho Jack Kieffer.

**NOV 5-6 SAT-SUN DPS**

**I: Granite Mountains #1 (6762’), Old Woman Mtn (5325’):** Join us for 2 peaks in the Mojave Desert - on Saturday we'll climb Granite Mountains #1, 2900' gain, 6.5 miles r/t, 2 miles dirt road driving (2WD vehicles OK). We will meet UC staff in Granite Cove on Sat am for orientation about GMDRC rules and regulations before proceeding with the hike. Opportunity to join potluck celebration for Charlie Knapke at nearby Kelso Dunes on Saturday night. On Sunday climb Old Woman Mtn via the southern Carbonate Gulch approach, 2200' gain, 4 miles r/t (includes sections of sandy road/rocky sections, 4WD vehicles needed). Sign up with Leader: Kathy Rich. Co-Leader: Daryn Dodge.

**NOV 12-13 SAT-SUN DPS**

**I: Smith Mountain (5913’), Brown Peak (4947’):** Join us for two peaks in southeastern Death Valley. Sat climb Smith (5.5 mi, 2300’ gain) and enjoy great views of the valley, Telescope Peak, and more. After car camping, then Sunday it's Brown (6.5 mi, 2000’ gain). Sign up with Leader: Tina Bowman (tina@bowmandesigngroup.com). Co-Leader: Mary McMannes.

**NOV 12 SAT DPS, WTC**

**I: Provisional: Sheepole Mtn, (4,593’):** Sat 7:00 am begin hiking XC 2.5 miles; 2,300' gain from a dirt road near Sheepole Pass to Sheepole Mtn via scenic canyons and ridges. Lunch on the peak, then return XC 2.5 miles to the trailhead by a different route through a canyon. Bring daypack, 4 liters of water/electrolytes and lunch/snacks. The pace will be moderate, but the route is strenuous. Send email with Sierra Club #, hiking/cond resume, and contact info to Ldr: Philip Bates (philipabates@gmail.com), Asst: Jack Kieffer.

**NOV 13 SUN DPS, WTC**

**MR: Bridge Mountain (7,003’):** Mountaineering outing for Sierra Club members only. Climb sought-after desert peak in the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area near Las Vegas. Sat night car camp off the paved Lovell Canyon Road. Sun climb class 3 Bridge Mtn, 6.5 mi rt, 2700’ (incl 850’ on the return) and then head home. Helmets and recent 3rd class rock climbing experience required. Send an e-mail with recent experience and conditioning, H&W phones, and rideshare info to Leader: Stephanie Smith (ssmith@platinumequity.com.), Co-Ldr: Neal Robbins.

**NOV 13 SUN DPS**

**O: DPS Management Committee Meeting and Potluck:** Join us at the home of Christine Mitchell and Ron Bartell in Manhattan Beach. Meeting begins at 4:30, potluck at 6:00. Bring a beverage of your choice and a potluck item to share. Contact Reservationist: Christine Mitchell (christinebartell@yahoo.com).

(Continued on page 6)
I: Needle Peak (5803'), Manly Peak (7196'): Climb these two Death Valley peaks via the eastern approach from Butte Valley Rd. Possibility to stay in the old Geologist's Cabin. Sat, climb Needle (7 miles r/t, 2900' gain); Sun, climb Manly (6 miles r/t, 2800' gain). Enjoy a DPS potluck on Saturday night. 4WD will be necessary in some spots. Send email or SASE to Leader: Kathy Rich; Co-Leader: Tina Bowman.

◆ NOV 19-20 SAT-SUN DPS

I: Edgar Peak (7162'), Granite Mountains # 1 (6762'): Join us in this beautiful area of the Mojave Desert for a Saturday climb of Edgar, 2900' gain, 5 miles, trail begins in paved parking lot. Potluck Saturday night, Sunday climb Granite, 2900’ gain, 6.5 miles, 2 miles dirt road driving. 2WD vehicles can easily do this trip. If time permits either Saturday or Sunday, participants may want to visit Mitchell Caverns nearby. Leader: Dave Perkins. Contact Assistant Leader Ann Perkins (ann.perkins@csun.edu) with recent climbing experience and for more details.

◆ NOV 19-20 SAT-SUN DPS, LTC, WTC, HPS, SPS

I: Indian Cove Navigation: Navigation noodle at Joshua Tree National Park to satisfy the Basic (I/M) level navigation requirements. Sat for practice, skills refresher, altimeter, homework, campfire. Sun checkout. Send email/sase, contact info, navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare, to Leader: Robert Myers (rmmyers@ix.netcom.com). Assistant: Phil Wheeler.

◆ DEC 3-4 SAT-SUN DPS

I: Old Dad Mtn (4252'), East Ord Mtn (6168'): Join us for two of the easier DPS peaks. Saturday it’s Old Dad (4 miles, 1800’ gain) and possibly an excursion to the nearby lava tube. We’ll car camp near East Ord and climb that peak Sunday (3 mi, 2200’ gain). Some excellent to fair dirt roads, 2WD ok. Send sase or e-mail to Leader: Tina Bowman (tina@bowmandesigngroup.com). Assistants: Mary McMannes, Tom Bowman.

◆ DEC 10 SAT DPS, HPS

I: Pinto Mountain (3983'): For HPSers who have "cleaned out" Joshua Tree one or more times, come join the HPS Joshua Tree Holiday party and tackle a DPS peak. Pinto is 2400’ gain, 9 miles. Leaders: Ted Lubeshkoff, Wayne Vollaire. Contact Wayne (avollaire1@verizon.net) to sign up for trip.

◆ DEC 10-11 SAT-SUN HPS, DPS, WTC, Lower Peaks

I: HPS Holiday Party 2010: Welcome in the holidays with old and new HPS friends. Join this festive hiking and partying weekend in Joshua Tree National Park. Sign up for some outstanding HPS, DPS and Lower Peaks outings in the park. We have reserved group campsites for Friday and Saturday nights at the Sheep Pass Campground, sites 3 and 4. Join us for Holiday Potluck on Saturday night. There is a Park entrance fee, but no charge for the campground. No reservations needed, but sign up for individual outings listed on the HPS Website and in the HPS Lookout newsletter. For info, contact Wayne Vollaire, avollaire1@verizon.net.

◆ DEC 11 SUN DPS

O: DPS Potluck, Holiday Party, and Management Meeting: Come to the home of Ann and Dave Perkins for the annual holiday party and management committee meeting. Meeting starts at 4:30; potluck at 6 pm. Bring a beverage of your choice and a potluck item to share. Contact Reserv: Ann Perkins (ann.perkins@csun.edu).

◆ DEC 11 SUN DPS, HPS

I: Eagle Mtn #1 (5350'): What could be better after the Sat night festive potluck party than a 10 mile 3000’ gain hike over rough terrain for some beautiful views of the south end of Joshua Tree National Park including the Salton Sea, Pinto Basin, Mt. San Jacinto, & Mt. San Gorgonio among others. Meet at 7:00 AM at the visitor center at the South Entrance to the park. Leaders: Harvey Ganz (harveyganz@earthlink.net) & Brent Costello.

◆ DEC 11 SUN DPS, LTC, WTC, HPS, SPS

I: Warren Pt Navigation: Navigation noodle at Joshua Tree National Park for either checkout or practice to satisfy the Basic (I/M) or Advanced (E) level navigation requirements. To participate, send email or sase, contact info, navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare to Leader: Robert Myers. Asst: Phil Wheeler.

◆ DEC 17 SAT DPS, WTC, WAS

Warren Point (5103'): Peak 4610' (Provisional): Moderate (6 miles 1500' gain) day hike to Peak 4610 and Warren Point in the pinyon pine and juniper region of the Mojave Desert in Joshua Tree National Park. Practice navigation and cross-country desert travel in a diverse and complex environment in the cooler winter season. We'll tag seldom visited
In order to participate on one of the Sierra Club's outings, you will need to sign a liability waiver. If you would like to read a copy of the waiver prior to the outing, please see http://sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms or call 415-977-5528.

In the interest of facilitating the logistics of some outings, it is customary that participants make carpooling arrangements. The Sierra Club does not have insurance for carpooling arrangements and assumes no liability for them. Carpooling, ride sharing or anything similar is strictly a private arrangement among the participants. Participants assume the risks associated with this travel.

CST 2087766-40. Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California.

Conservation by Virgil Popescu

Attacks on Environmental Laws

Never have there been so many concerted assaults on our Environmental Laws. There are systematic tactics that the Republican anti-environmentalists use to push their extreme agenda, the classical one being to introduce legislation affecting environmental protection. For example, House majority whip Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) introduced Bill HR 1581 which would remove wilderness protection for a staggering 70 million acres of federally managed wildlands, and open them to mining, drilling, and other industrial uses.

Another underhanded tactic is attaching add-on provisions to the bill that Congress may pass to fund the government. For example, the Environmental Protection Agency spending bill contains 40 anti-environmental riders such as prohibiting the EPA from limiting carbon pollution emitted by power plants, stopping government officials from preventing coal mining companies from dumping waste in streams, and opening up lands next to the Grand Canyon for uranium mining.

Our job is to sign petitions supporting the Sierra Club and other organizations fighting against these unprecedented assaults on our environment.
OUTINGS CHAIR
by Ann Perkins

As you see, we have a large number of trips listed in this issue of the Sage. This is partly due to our long-time hard-working leaders, but also due to many new leader candidates who have scheduled provisional DPS trips. Please support them by going on these outings, and by giving them the benefit of your experience – we need new leaders in order to expand and diversify our trip offerings.

Along that line, with all the great trips being led this fall, we do have some overlap with the same peaks being led twice, or multiple trips on the same weekend. This may not be a problem – we’ll see what kind of participation we get – but in general it’s a good idea to aim for a variety of peaks and dates for members to choose from.

And don’t forget to send write-ups after your trips (with pictures) to the Sage. The most interesting write-ups, to me, are those which offer a combination of driving and climbing route information, and more informal anecdotes about the trip.

A final paperwork note – for those of you planning to lead a restricted trip (Class 3 or above), an MOC approval form should be filled out and sent to me along with the proposed trip write-up. This form can be found on the Sierra Club Angles Chapter web page under Outings Forms, http://angeles.sierraclub.org/LTC/forms.html . I’ll then check it over and forward it to the MOC chair for approval.

Happy Climbing — Ann

COACHELLA VALLEY HIKING WEEKEND

The Sun City Palm Desert Hiking Club (SCPDHC) invites all Desert Peaks Section members to join our hiking group in a weekend of moderate hiking, plus a bar-be-que in one of the most beautiful garden back yards in the Coachella Valley.

10:00 a.m. Saturday, March 31st, meet at the parking lot of the Coachella Valley Preserve Visitors Center on Thousand Palms Canyon Road., Thousand Palms, CA. Take a 6 mile, 3-1/2 hour hike, including a climb of 1,308' Herman Mountain and a visit to the Willis Palm grove. Afterward, drive to nearby Sun City for a bar-be-que at the home of Ken (a DPS member) & Dotty Linville. BYOB, bathing suits and towels, and be ready to immerse in the Linville’s Jacuzzi and/or swimming pool. Dinner and overnight lodging on your own. For those who enjoy camping, we suggest either Pinyon Pines Campground on Hwy. 74, above Palm Desert, or Box Canyon in the Mecca Hills.

9:00 a.m., Sunday, April 1st, meet at front entrance of the Living Desert Museum, 47900 Portola Ave., Palm Desert. Using the life membership of Nina Thomas, a SCPDHC past-president, we’ll gain free admission to this excellent desert park and zoo. Once inside, we’ll hike the Eisenhower Peak loop, including an optional off-trail scramble to the peak’s 1,952’ summit—6 miles, 1,000’ gain—after which you’re on your own to enjoy the park’s many amenities, including the zoo, the butterfly house and the excellent miniature train exposition.

Because DPS rules require two I-rated leaders on section climbs, and because only Sun City Palm Desert residents can join the SCPD Hiking Club, this will be an independent, non-DPS sponsored event, i.e., there will be no Sierra Club liability insurance in force. Reservations required: The Sierra Club makes no representations or warranties about the quality, safety, or supervision of this activity. Call Ken Linville (760) 772-7690, hikerlinville@aol.com or Burt Falk (760)772-4051, burtfalk@aol.com.


## DPS MEMBERSHIP

### Membership Summary

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### Activity Report

#### New Members

- **Angie Capece**
  *Telescope Peak*

- **Stephanie Gylden - 2 years**
  *Last Chance Mountain*

- **John Ide - 2 years**
  *Last Chance Mountain*

- **Neal Robbins**
  *Kingston Peak*

#### Renewed Lapsed Members

- **Stephan Bork**
  *1 year*

- **Shane Smith**
  *1 year*

#### New Subscribers

- **Lisa Barboza**
- **Brett Foreman**
- **Michael Kanne Jr**
- **Francesca Marcus - 2 years**
- **Micall McConahey**
- **Lisa Miyake**
- **Samantha Olson**
- **Brian Roche**
- **Michael Rogers**
- **Stephanie Smith**

#### Donation

- **$10 from Shane Smith**

#### Sustaining Renewal

- **Larry and Barbee Tidball - 1 year**

#### Renewals

- **Bob Anderson - 2 years**

- **George Barnes - 1 year**

- **Mary Ann & Jeff Bonds - 2 years**

- **Sharon Boothman - 2 years**

- **Ted Brasket - 2 years**

- **Daryn Dodge - 1 year**

- **Jim Margadant - 2 years**

- **Nile Sorenson - 1 year**

- **Greg Vernon - 2 years**
**DESSERT SAGE - ELECTRONIC VERSION**

The DPS Management Committee is excited to announce the implementation of the Desert Sage in electronic format! You now have the option of receiving your Desert Sage via email. In serving our members/subscribers more efficiently, we are rolling out the electronic Desert Sage with this edition. DPS members who have an email address on record have received or are receiving this Sage edition electronically via a link. All members/subscribers who have received this Sage edition electronically will also receive a hard copy the same as the non-email members/subscribers, for this edition only. Future Sage editions will be sent electronically to members who have an email address on record. For all other members/subscribers who do not have an email address, we will continue to send a hard copy Sage as usual.

Any member/subscriber who is/has received this edition via a link and desires to continue to receive the Desert Sage in hardcopy format through the US Mail, should send an e-mail to the DPS Membership Chair ronbartell@yahoo.com, or leave a message for the Desert Sage editor at 310-570-9307 by November 30, 2011 requesting continued mailing of a hard copy. If you take no action, the Desert Sage will only be sent electronically to members/subscribers with an email address on file.

We encourage you to take advantage of this convenience, as it will save time, paper, and trees. And the photographs of the desert look so much better in color.

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**2011 ANGELES CHAPTER AWARDS CALL FOR NOMINATIONS**

The Awards Committee invites all Angeles Chapter sections to submit nominees for the 2011 Chapter awards. The submission deadline is Tuesday, November 1, 2011. Submissions can be sent any time before that date. Late applications will be held over for the 2012 awards, so earlier is better to ensure all candidates are honored in a timely way.

These annual awards are given to recognize hard-working volunteers who give of their time to the Sierra Club and the Chapter through their conservation, outings, activism, or advocacy efforts. We celebrate veterans and rookies, as well as past award winners!

Any Chapter member or entity management committee can nominate another member for an award. Exceptions: Current At-Large Angeles Chapter Executive Committee and Awards Committee members are NOT eligible; nor are deceased Sierra Club members eligible posthumously. Preference goes to candidates that have received little to no recent recognition. A list of the awards categories, past awardees, and the nomination form can be found on the Chapter Awards page http://angeles.sierraclub.org/about/Awards.asp

HOW DO I NOMINATE ANOTHER MEMBER FOR AN AWARD? Review the awards list and other information and complete the downloadable form. Please return the form and any additional background information on the candidate to the DPS Management Committee. Once reviewed and approved the nomination will be sent to the Committee Clerk, Lori Ives.

Background material on all awardees will be included in the Awards Banquet program and in the Southern Sierran, so please include pertinent information and the specific award for which the candidate is being nominated. Next year’s Chapter Banquet will be held on Sunday, May 6, 2012 at Brookside Country Club in Pasadena, CA.

The Awards Committee looks forward to receiving your nominations! If you or anyone you know would like to join the Awards Committee to help in the selection process, please email me at 10ter@cox.net for more information. The Awards Committee welcomes new members.

Thank you,
Mary Morales
Awards Committee Chair
Don't Be Left Out - Still Time Left!

Go Solar and Support the Angeles Chapter
Schedule for Your Next Meeting

If you have not participated yet, there is still time to support the Angeles Chapter by participating in a pilot fundraising project through the end of October with SunRun, a California-based rooftop solar leasing company, in order to offer our members an affordable opportunity to go solar while also supporting the Angeles Chapter.

SunRun has offered to contribute $50 to the Sierra Club for each supporter who requests a solar quote, including an estimate of energy savings. If you get solar installed on your home, SunRun will contribute an additional $1,000 to the Sierra Club. These funds will be split 50-50 between the national clean energy campaigns and the Angeles Chapter.

To help members learn more about this opportunity, we can meet with you and with DPS members for 15 minutes at the next potluck meeting for a SunRun representative to walk through the steps of obtaining a quote. If anyone would be interested in signing up right then and there for a no obligation quote, that would be great. If anyone would be interested in hosting a house party to help spread the word, we can set that up as well.

The following link can be used to request more information about the SunRun/Angeles Chapter fundraising program:
http://www.sierraclub.org/solar/angeleschapter

This is a simple and easy opportunity and there is a short window (the program ends in October) for the Angeles Chapter to help the environment and raise much needed funds for the Chapter.

Please join in and make this a win/win for all of us!

For more details, please contact Ron Silverman at ron.silverman@sierraclub.org or call 213-317-4289.
Mt Grant at 11,239’ is the highest point in the Wassuk Range and high point of Mineral County. Grant’s summit is sought after by many peak baggers. Unfortunately, this area has been off limits since the events of 9/11.

After many fruitless attempts to gain permission to climb Mt Grant, we suddenly got a flyer announcing a 9/11 Memorial Challenge Run that ended on the summit. Many immediately grabbed the opportunity to participate in this event.

The event allowed 100 participants this year with a good chance that it would become an annual event. Event coordinators accommodated two groups: runners and hikers going the entire 16 miles with a 7,000 foot gain and others that relayed the distance in teams. Eight hikers from the Reno area formed two relay teams: Great Basin Peaks 1 with Sharon Marie Wilcox, Bhe Wilson, John Ide, Ron Moe and Great Basin Peaks 2 with Rich Wilson, TA Taro, Larry Grant, and Loretta Low.

At 6:30am Sunday morning, participants

(Great Basin Peak Section Members: Sharon Marie Wilcox, Larry Grant, TA Taro, Dan Baxter, Ron Moe, Loretta Low, John Ide, Bhe Wilson, Rich Wilson )

(The Desert Sage)
gathered at Cottonwood Canyon in Walker Lake. You could feel the energy flowing through the crowd as everyone found their starting points. In the excitement of taking pictures and organizing team members, I missed wishing Sue and Vic well as they departed with the first group to hike and complete the entire distance to the summit.

The checkpoints provided sani-huts and snacks for the participants in addition to a well-organized shuttle system. A photo taking frenzy occurred at about 3 ½ miles when we observed mother bear in a pinyon pine with her two cubs curiously exploring beneath her.

As the road climbed above the canyon of pinyon pines into wide-open brushy area we could see the road switch backs as they zigzagged towards the summit.

About 15 minutes before I arrived at the final checkpoint, a cloud blanketed the peak, so the 360-degree views were obscured. As I headed up the final rock scramble, an almost frozen Bob Sumner sat on a rock checking off those achieving the summit.

On the summit, busy cameras recorded smiling hikers as a few glimpses of view opened in the drifting clouds. TA served his patriotic cookies to celebrate our climb of the summit.

Shuttle buses continually transported participants back down the mountain and consequently we never gathered our entire group in a summit photo. A view of bighorn sheep added another bonus for the final shuttle bus riders.

The 9/11 Memorial Challenge volunteers efficiently succeeded in getting a large number of eager peak climbers up and down Mount Grant. We thank them for their efforts and look forward to this annual opportunity for others to hike this sought after summit.

Mount Grant—Write Up #2
Completion of Nevada County Highpoints
by Vic Henney and Sue Wyman-Henney

Sue and I participated in the 9/11 Memorial Challenge sponsored by Veterans Memorial Park of Hawthorne, NV, in cooperation with the U.S. military. This was our final Nevada County highpoint.

The “race” was a 16.2 miles course plus another ½ mile or so to the summit of Mount Grant, the highpoint of Mineral County Nevada, about 7000’ of gain. Most participants proceeded at a fast-paced walk. Several other desert climbers also joined in the event: Jim Hinkley, James Barlow, Sharon Marie Wilcox, Bob Burd, and I probably missed a few others. Bob Sumner was part of the support crew and met people at the end of the course to lead them up the final rock scramble to the summit. We really appreciated his encouragement and assistance. Almost 100 people participated in the event, most as relay
We headed to the Hays Canyon Range early Thursday morning, planning to summit the highpoint, Hays Canyon Peak before the storm arrived. We hoped that the storm would miss our destination, allowing us to also hike Little Hat Mountain.

From Reno we drove east on I-80 along the Truckee River to Wadsworth, exited at the Wadsworth/Pyramid Lake exit then drove north on NV State Highway 447 to Gerlach.

Pyramid Lake seemed a deeper blue than usual as we glimpsed it approaching Nixon. Nixon has a small market with gas. As we drove north out of Nixon, we paralleled the Selenite Range on the east passing two GBPS peaks, Limbo & Kumiva.

In Gerlach we stopped at Bruno's for a caffeine reload plus a “to go” order of their renowned raviolis. We bypassed another GBPS peak, Granite Peak, as we continued to Surprise Valley.

Surprise Valley is a pleasant surprise. A scenic valley nestled between the Warner Range, now snow-capped, on the west side and the Hays Canyon Range to the east.

In our quest to get to the peak, we passed the road turnout 7.5 miles prior to Eagleville that our guide promised to lead down a short, steep trail to the fantastic Eagleville Hot Spring. Have to save a dip in the hot springs for a later date.

At Eagleville, we turned on Co Rd 38 (Hays Canyon Road) leaving pavement to a bouncing washboard, gravel road. Passing through the narrow Devil’s Gate we followed the meandering road to the summit as the clouds and wind increased. At the summit, we crossed the cattle guard & turned right. Passenger cars could get to this point without problem. However, at this point the road gets a bit dicey and into rocky areas that require higher clearance. (Divine Peak, 7462’) looks like a quick climb from this area but we needed to continue on to reach Hays Canyon Peak and return before the storm.

The top of Hays Canyon Peak is drivable with a high clearance vehicle. Because of our error in passing Indian Pole Camp expecting a sign that was not there, we drove a bit further than planned. The camp is clearly labeled on the Nevada Road & Recreation Atlas but the camp is not physically signed.

We ended up barely over a mile from the top when we stopped & started hiking up the road. The wind was so strong that we could hardly stand up. At the top, the road veers left to solar panels, but the jumble of rocks to the right is the high point. After exploring the “summit debris” and grand view of the Warners, we headed across the rocks to the summit. The wind made walking a challenge even for my dogs.

There is a peak register placed by DPS, but we didn’t spend time reading much in fear that the wind would rip it out of our hands. A quick register signing and summit pictures, then back to the van.

(Continued from page 13) participants, but 20+ of us set out to do the whole course. It was quite a fun day. The locals had stations set up along the way with food and drink and were very friendly and encouraging to all of us.

This was the first time in years that the military had allowed access to the peak and we hope that they do it again in the future.

Hays Canyon Peak
November 18, 2010
By Sharon Marie Wilcox

We headed to the Hays Canyon Range early Thursday morning, planning to summit the highpoint, Hays Canyon Peak before the storm arrived. We hoped that the storm would miss our destination, allowing us to also hike Little Hat Mountain.

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Finding Willie Boy
By Burt Falk

In March, six hikers, including DPS members Ken Linville and me, trekked over six miles of Mojave Desert to locate a monument commemorating Willie Boy, the object of a 1909 manhunt. Although the 28 year-old Chemehuevi Indian’s long-distance flight is now legendary, many of the events leading up to and during the search for Willie Boy remain vague.

What we do know is that on Sunday, Sept. 26, 1909, at a ranch near Banning, Willie Boy, either purposefully or accidentally, shot and killed Mike Boniface, the father of Carlotta, the teen-age girl who either eloped with Willie Boy or was abducted.

Willie Boy and Carlotta fled on foot via Whitewater, the Morongo Valley and The Pipes, probably heading for Twenty-Nine Palms where he had family. Two days later, on Thursday, Sept. 28, just north of The Pipes, Carlotta’s body was found, shot in the back by either Willie Boy or the pursuing posse. During the next eight days, Willie Boy covered over 400 miles on foot, first heading north toward Ludlow, turning east toward the Bullion Mountains in what is now the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, south toward Twenty-Nine Palms, and finally west toward Rock Corral, northwest of what is now the town of Landers.

On Wednesday, Oct. 6, on a low, rocky ridge about 2-1/2 miles west of Ruby Mountain, the posse, including two Indian trackers, finally caught up (Continued on page 22)

TRIP REPORTS - continued...

We drove back to the flat “cow pied” area near Devil’s Gate to camp for the night, arriving just as it got dark.

Friday morning we woke early to dark cloud cover and drove back to Eagleville as it started to rain. We drove 17 miles north to Cedarville for breakfast since there are no restaurants in Eagleville. The Country Hearths restaurant & bakery had a great breakfast. Even though a light snow had started we drove the longer route returning to Reno via Alturas across the Warner Mountains for different scenery.

A nice discovery trip, but the weather cut the trip short, plus prevented our plan to head up Fredonyer Peak on the way home. The AAA sectional map for Northern California was helpful for an overview of this trip.

Directions:
From Reno, east on I-80 to Wadsworth/Pyramid Lake exit. Take exit and head north on NV State Route 447 from Wadsworth, through Gerlach to Eagleville, CA.

In Eagleville turn Right on Co Rd 38 (Hays Canyon Rd), pavement ends and road becomes gravel & washboard. Crosses back across the NV State line.

Pass through Devil’s Gate & at the summit head Right to Indian Pole Camp (not signed but you’ll pass a large water trough to the left and numerous areas of good camping in the aspen groves). This is a good place to start your hike following the rocky road to the summit.

(Continued on page 22)
I love deserts.

Growing up in southern California, I was enchanted by the vast empty sun-bleached country just on the other side of the San Gabriels. I was drawn in the cool seasons to the silent shadowed mysteries of its canyons and badlands; its sensuous dunes; its fleeting spring flowers; the forbidding beauty of its burnt iron mountains, washed in delicate purple and crimson at sunset; and an exhilaration of pure unfettered freedom so unlike the Los Angeles basin. I've devoted a good part of my life to exploring our glorious North American deserts, from the sombre black basalt of southeast Oregon to the bristlecone pines of the high Panamints to the white granite picachos of Baja to the no-country-for-old-men malpais of West Texas to the orange slickrock of Utah to the spooky spires of the Dakota badlands. And...I've always dreamed of seeing someone else's desert, if only for comparison. Why not, for openers, the driest on Earth with the biggest mountains? Nothing except coastal fog EVER comes off the Pacific at this latitude, and the Andes claw down almost all monsoon moisture from the humid lowlands to the east. I expected strange and wondrous sights, but my two weeks there (and in the adjoining Altiplano) were so outside the boundaries of my experience that I had to completely re-calibrate my concepts of aridity, desolation and altitude. Imagine vast areas where NOTHING visible lives; tropical flamingoes dining on algae soup at 14,000 feet; a “timberline forest” of saguaro-like cacti at 11,000 feet; saline lakes so vast they have no horizon with tasty white table salt “sand” beaches; sterile arctic desert plains at the height of the top of Pikes Peak where the only “trees” have been carved from stone by the relentless wind.

I was fortunate to stumble upon a crackerjack adventure guide service to show me this country. “Azimut 360”, based in Santiago, had an ad on the back of a trekking map I'd bought here in the US, so I emailed them (www.azimut.cl), telling them what I wanted to see and do, and they got back to me with a customized itinerary. If you want to do anything outdoors in Chile, give them a shout and they'll treat you right.

In March, I flew from Dallas to Santiago on one of those dreadful all-night flights that leave you sleepless and disoriented when you arrive in the morning. (At least, going south, there's not much jet lag.) I transferred to an internal LAN Chile flight north to Calama, an unexciting company

(Continued on page 17)
town smack in the middle of the inland Atacama whose only reason for existence is the huge Chuquicamata open-pit copper mine and its smelter (whose huge smokestacks, unfortunately, tend to haze over the surroundings). But the flight there, in perfect lighting, was one of the great plane trips of my life; I had made sure to book a window seat on the right side of the plane, and for two hours the National Geographic maps I had daydreamed over for decades came to 3-D life; the great peaks – 22'ers and 21'ers – on the savage spine of the Andes – passed in review. I would have hung my head out the window, if possible, to get a better look at Tupungato, Aconcagua, Mercedario, Bonete, Ojos del Salado, Llullaillaco! What an overture to my adventure!

Azimut had booked me in a nice hotel near the Calama airport, and the next morning at 0900 sharp I was picked up by Sabine Reuter, a wiry, hard-bodied little Frenchwoman, daughter of the company founder, who was to be my guide on the trek and the peak climb, and the ever-jovial driver Hernan. We drove to San Pedro de Atacama, the base of operations, through a truly absolute desert which at lower altitudes was absolutely devoid of any sign of macroscopically visible life or even any sign that water had ever run on its surface; I saw hills to warm the hearts of conspiracy theorists where NASA really could have faked the moon landing; all they needed to do was black out the sky and tweak the color of the dirt a little. No, Toto, we weren’t in Barstow any more; incredible as it sounds, the Mojave is a forest compared to the most extreme sectors of the Atacama. (World's most boring job: Calama weatherman.) Although the road to San Pedro climbs to over 10,000 feet, an altitude that above Las Vegas or even Death Valley gets you pine trees, I was astonished to see the only indication of “alpine” altitude was a very sparse scattering of little dead-looking bushes no bigger than volleyballs.

We descended past badland cliffs into San Pedro, at 8200 feet, an ancient oasis long inhabited since before the Inca Empire where the San Pedro River, fed by snows from the Andes, emerges from a canyon and makes life possible. Rather surprisingly, considering its remoteness, San Pedro has been “discovered” as a bit of a tourist destination, not so much by Americans as by Europeans – the ubiquitous Germans and French, and a sprinkling of the proverbial Dutch hippies. And, in the past few years, it’s become a base camp for cutting-edge astronomy. So, it’s a strange but not unpleasant multilingual mélange of the humble dwellings and garden plots of the native Atacamenos and adobe-brick – often quite pricey – restaurants and lodgings for gringos. The world-class Gustavo LePaige archeological museum is a must see. Azimut put me up at the Eco Casa Hotel, a tiny, immaculate lodging at the edge of town run by a very pleasant young couple. There I met the three Germans with whom I would share the next five days of trekking. After lunch,
we drive to the Valle de la Luna a short distance southwest of town, a sort of “state park”, for an afternoon warm-up hike.

We began up a canyon in the Sierra de la Sal, an adobe-colored range made up of layers of mudstone, sandstone, and layers of pure halite – table salt. Although the canyon was clearly cut by water, it did not appear to have been used by much water any time recently – an Ice Age relic? I remember seeing exactly one desperate little bush all afternoon. Eventually we climbed out of the upper end of the canyon into a wilderness of barren hogback ridges drifted over with dark gray volcanic sand dunes. We climbed the highest ridge to view the sunset. After hiking through desolation all afternoon, it was incongruous to share this view with numerous other folks – turns out that “sunset over the Valley of the Moon” is one of the San Pedro must-sees, and there was a good graded road to near the overlook (it’s a “state park”, remember).

Next day, we drove north of town on ever-sketchier roads to begin our trek up the Rio San Pedro towards the distant Altiplano. The river flows in a canyon cut in volcanic rocks; at times the canyon widens, and at other times it’s almost in a slot canyon and we got pretty wet. In a few places, the canyon walls break down and the valley widens enough to allow human settlement, either past or present; there are roads to these places, and the trek was planned so that Hernan and a truck would meet us at the end of the day with tents, sleeping bags, and food, so all we had to carry were day packs.

The first night was in a deserted locality, but the next two nights were at native villages where Azimut apparently has permission to use the “community hall” for cooking and sleeping.

The second day was pretty intense; we climbed high above the canyon on an old (Inca?) trail, a desperately arid hike of course, and I ran out of water, the worst thirst I have ever experienced in a lifetime of desert peakbagging. Luckily, Sabine and I met up with the Germans, one of whom had enough water to happily spare and keep me going.

The third day ended on the fringe of the Altiplano at the seemingly-mostly-deserted village of Machuca at about 13,100 feet. Maybe it’s seasonally occupied for llama herding; a bunch of the baby-faced wooly critters were grazing nearby. (At this altitude there’s enough rain and snow to grow scrubby vegetation.) Days were pleasant (it was their “September”), but nights were getting really cold at this elevation; nonetheless, I was happy to be getting the acclimatization. This was the end of the Rio San Pedro trekking.

Next day, Hernan drove us down to a trailhead which led to the canyon of the Rio Puritama which we hiked and bushwhacked through thickets of Pampasgrass up to the Banos de Puritama at 11,600 feet, a truly idyllic “state park” built around a series of cascading hot springs and aquamarine pools shaded by the same Pampas grass that is a staple of southern California landscaping. On the way to the Banos we hiked through a bizarre “subalpine forest” of giant cacti which are almost dead ringers for Arizona’s saguaros and almost delineate the 11,000-foot contour line; much above and it’s too cold, much below and it must be too dry to support such a large organism. After a nice long soak and one of Hernan’s lunches, we drove up (Continued on page 19)
to the Tatio Geysers “national park” at 14,000 feet, supposedly the world’s highest geyser field. (Yellowstone has it totally beat geyser-wise, but the main interest here is the strange surroundings.) We camped in the miserable rocky “campground” at the “visitor center”, fighting to put up tents in a frigid wind. Luckily, we could cook and eat inside the building. The wind died down in the night, making it slightly easier to get up in the bitter predawn cold to see towers of steam rising above the thermal pools and geysers. This scene was also shared with numerous folks who had been roused out of bed in San Pedro at 0400 to see “dawn at Tatio”.

That afternoon, we drove the Germans back to the airport at Calama, along yet another river canyon, stopping to view pre-Inca ruins and petroglyphs. Auf wiedersehen, and then back to San Pedro for an early dinner and early bedtime.

A few hours later, I kicked myself out of bed at 0-dark-30 to meet Sabine in a 4WD truck. As the first hint of dawn began to cut the skyline of the Andes out of blackness we drove up the paved highway due east of San Pedro which relentlessly climbs in a straight line on to the Altiplano at 14,000 feet on its way to the Paso de Jama on the border with Argentina (one of the world’s epic bike rides—up OR down). Sabine found an unmarked little dirt turnoff next to a guardrail, the start of a rough but doable road to an abandoned sulfur mine on the south side of 18,385’ Cerro Toco, one of the countless volcanoes that form the backbone of the Andes for many hundreds of miles. And when you have volcanoes, you have sulfur — although now mostly abandoned, the roads to the old mines allow you to “cheat” on a number of Atacama peaks; we were able to drive to over 15,000 feet. Our road was also the access to the “Atacama Cosmological Telescope”, a fruit-basket-shaped edifice quite near the “roadhead” which is studying the cosmic microwave background, the relict light from the Big Bang. Not far to the north, on the wonderfully-named Plains of Chajnantor, a rocky red lifeless expanse just like some of the views of Mars sent by the Spirit rover, we could see ALMA, the Atacama Large Millimeter Array. This is a giant radiotelescope complex under construction far from clouds, water vapor, or human radio-frequency pollution which will be the largest astronomical facility on the planet.

We saddled up in the finger-numbing pre-sunrise cold and set off up the south side of Toco (the snowy side in the southern hemisphere), following an old trail from the sulfur mine that fizzled out as soon as we hit snow, boiler-plate hard in the cold (and it didn’t soften much in afternoon sun). Sabine set the perfect pace; slow, measured, steady. This was to be my third career “eighteener”, but the other two (Nepal, Mexico) were quite some years ago when I was much younger. My days of acclimatization (and “religious” workouts at the Raintree Athletic Club) paid off; sure, I moved slow and breathed hard, but no real problem. Sabine had said no ice axe or crampons were necessary, but we got into some thin edging on icy suncups, and some hardware sure would have felt good. (Self-arrest with trekking poles? I don't think so.) At least we weren’t concerned with crevasses; there are no glaciers on Toco or, as far as I could see, any of the other peaks in the area, even nineteeners. They’re high enough and cold enough, but they just don't get enough snow. (World’s highest permanent snowline, in fact.) The angle rolled over at about 18,000’, and a rocky crag, mostly swept clean of snow by the wind, rose ahead; almost before I knew it we were on top, and a powerful surge of joy, exaltation, disbelief and maybe a little oxygen starvation lifted me up, leaving tears running down my face. I’d had the impossible dream of climbing the world’s highest desert peaks since I was a kid, and I’D ACTUALLY DONE IT!

I was pleasantly surprised by the realization that I’d run out of mountain, not out of me; I could have kept going up. I was also incredibly lucky; typical conditions on top one of those peaks, while dry and sunny, are a fierce wind and, say, 20 degrees. The air WAS very cold, but just a mild zephyr was blowing, and once you got behind some rocks, it was downright cozy in the intense sun on the Tropic of Capricorn. (Nicer (Continued from page 18)

(Continued on page 20)
than a lot of Colorado 14'ers in the summer, where you touch the top and then run for your life from the oncoming lightning.) We passed 1½ hours on top, some of the greatest 90 minutes of my life, taking in the dream panorama of snow-capped volcanoes (one smoking) stretching in to nothingness somewhere in Bolivia and Argentina, south to 22,057’ Llullailaco. The vast sonic landscape of Mahler’s Ninth Symphony came into my head.

In the “engine room” far below me, the east Pacific seafloor plate was inexorably subducting beneath the westward-drifting South American continent, melting when it got deep enough to generate water-rich, hot, buoyant magma plumes which melted their way through the continental crust as they ascended; the tops of these plumes would eventually blow out the top as volcanoes, while the main magma bodies will eventually cool and freeze into granites such as those that make up the California Sierras. Immovable object vs. irresistible force...a recipe for fireworks...and earthquakes. The largest earthquake in modern times, an incredible 9.5, hit central Chile in 1960.

Back in San Pedro the next morning, I said a fond adieu to Sabine, and she handed me over to Cordillera, a subcontractor to Azimut who specializes in 4WD expeditions across the Bolivian altiplano to the Salar de Uyuni, the world’s biggest salt desert at 12,000 feet. An international crew, mostly 20-somethings from England, Australia, New Zealand, France, Holland, Germany, and three Yanks – myself and a couple from D.C. -- piled into four Toyota Land Cruisers and headed east up the same road Sabine and I had driven the day before. Past the Toco “exit”, we turned north on a graded road and shortly arrived at the “Migracion Bolivia” at the border. The rather desperate condition of this facility was an indication of the poverty we were to see in Bolivia; you can find pockets of poverty in Chile (as you can right here) but Chile is Finland compared to its neighbor to the northeast, whose people have been ill-served by a succession of thugocracies. (Hopefully, this new guy Evo Morales will turn out better.)

Our little caravan headed north into the stark heart of the Altiplano, an uninhabitable (too cold, too dry, too windy, not enough oxygen) despoblado, a lot of which is at the height of the highest peaks of the lower 48 and higher. Much of it is above the thin belt of bunch-grass alpine vegetation and is as sterile as the lower Atacama -- an “exoplanet” right here on Earth. Here, where the wind reigns supreme, rock outcrops have been carved into fantastic abstract sculpture by its ceaseless abrasion – the “stone tree” is just one of the surreal features of what our guide called the “Dali (as in Salvador) Desert”. Desolation on a heroic scale, overlooked by fearsome mountains painted red, orange, yellow, brown and white by the chemical breakdown of their volcanic rocks; enlivened by geologic freak shows such as the boiling mud pots and roaring fumaroles of the “Sol...
de Manana” geothermal field, the highest point of our drive at an incredible 16,200 feet. Now and then faint tracks led off the “main road” into absolute nothingness; I wondered, if your Jeep broke down 80 miles out there, how many years it would be before your bones were found.

And yet, even here there is surprising life in places. The Altiplano is studded with alkali lakes of various colors depending on their chemical and microbial content -- Laguna Blanca, Amarilla, Verde, Colorada – melt water from the high snows that has nowhere to go as there are no rivers up here. Amazingly, several of the lagunas (especially Colorada) host sizable populations of flamingoes – a word which goes well with “Miami” and not a cold high desert – who somehow seem to thrive on a thin wretched diet of algae soup which they strain with their large beaks. And, a little lower wherever a little bunch grass does grow, you might see graceful little guanacos, another animal that seems to have perfected the art of living on almost nothing.

We took 2½ days of driving, stopping often for photos and little hikes, before we reached our ultimate destination, the small city of Uyuni “down“ at a slightly milder environment at 12,000 feet with some vegetation. Just west of town is its namesake “Salar” -- now, after a summer with some unusual monsoon rain, a salt lake six inches deep and 75 miles across, with blindingly white beaches of grains of pure table salt. We slowly drove a couple miles out to a little rise that broke the surface (complete with a little bodega built entirely of salt where you could buy a Coke or a cerveza) to wade around in this almost horizonless blue and white void while distant brown hills lifted their skirts and levitated on mirages – a fitting climax to an exploration of one of the strangest and most extreme corners of our endlessly amazing planet.

AFTERTHOUGHTS: You CAN have too much of a good thing. The utter lifelessness of the lower Atacama could get pretty monotonous after awhile. I realized how much plant life, even the lowly creosote bush, adds to our deserts. And a little weather, like a little hot sauce, is the spice of life – I would really come to miss thunderheads and the smell of the desert after rain.
Finding Willie Boy...continued

(Continued from page 15)

with their prey. After a gunfight in which Willie Boy wounded one deputy and killed three of their horses, the posse retreated carrying the injured man out of the area.

Nine days later, on Friday, Oct. 15, yet another posse returned to the area of the gunfight, where the bloated body of Willie Boy, an apparent suicide, was discovered. A brass plaque set in concrete now marks the spot of where Willie Boy's body was found and burned. Our group of hikers stood in silence by the memorial, lost in thought, trying to imagine what must have taken place at the lonely spot over one hundred years ago.

Later our group climbed nearby 4,357' Ruby Mountain, where at least one writer mistakenly claimed Willie Boy died.

For a more complete story, pick up a copy of Willie Boy: A Desert Manhunt, by Harry Lawton, or view Tell Them Willie Boy is Here, starring Robert Redford and Robert Blake, available by streaming from Netflix.

White Butte, North Dakota
By Bob Michael

Geologists love badlands, Mother Nature's abstract sculpture galleries in all their myriad colors, shapes and freakish weirdness. My work in the Rocky Mountain oil patch took me to far western North Dakota in June to have a look at the "Bakken play", probably the biggest onshore domestic boom of my career. Of course, fun was also on the menu...a full day was spent enjoying the remarkably green badland scenery of Theodore Roosevelt National Park, and (what a coincidence!) my drive just happened to take me past White Butte, the North Dakota state summit (my 27th).

I was delighted to find that this is a nice little true peak, unlike some of the "summits" east of the Rockies, and a very enjoyable short hike. What's more to the point here, it has a surprisingly deserty approach through some fine badland country on the "route normale" from the north. (ca. 2 ½ mi RT, 460' gain)

Two miles east of the one-blink-and-you-missed-it town of Amidon (which bills itself as "America's smallest county seat") on US Highway 85, an excellent graveled county road heads south. 5 miles south of 85, a fair dirt road goes west to an apparently abandoned farmstead. Do not go all the way to the buildings; one mile from the county road, you'll notice a mailbox on the south side of the road lettered, "For continued access, Highpoint donation in mailbox, Thank You." I was happy to clip a $5 bill to a thank-you note to keep Farmer Brown happy; all this country is private property, and good owner relations are crucial.

A jeep trail takes off due south from the mailbox across the prairie, a saturated lush green in June after a record rain and snow year in the northern Plains. Threatening skies held off long enough; I was actually glad for the cool weather, as several write ups on the Internet commented that the place can be crawling with rattlesnakes. The road fizzles out at the impressive white (naturally) badlands which make up the base of the Butte. You may or
may not find a faint use trail heading a bit west of south through this steep topography; I only found it on the way down. Above the badlands are grassy slopes where the use trail becomes more obvious; it ascends to a nice rocky ridge which leads straight to the summit. Expansive views of more white badlands to the south, and huge distant low mesas just like those on the bottom of the North Dakota license plate (check it out if you happen to see one). There’s even a register. Several folks who had signed in a week or two before me mentioned getting stuck in the mud on the white clay farmhouse road – one guy wrote that the sheriff had to pull him out, and the Slope County constable was DEFINITELY not amused. Fair warning if it's rained lately! Looks like I hit the Butte just right re: rain, mud and snakes.

Monuments and National Forests.

Because of bad weather, I got a pleasant but horribly overpriced motel room in Medora, the “gateway” town. Walking around the tiny town after dinner, enjoying the percussion symphony of thunder near and far, I stumbled upon perhaps the greatest Western bookstore of my life – Western Edge Books (425 5th St.). Talk about a kid in a candy store – I was in heaven. I could have spent till dawn in that place if the owners hadn't had to go to bed. With iron self control, I managed to get out the door with only three books.

Next night, with better weather, I camped out at another visual feast for badland aficionados, Makoshika State Park just outside of Glendive in eastern Montana. A little more arid, a little spookier than North Dakota. Rather pricey ($26) but really nice campsites close to the K-T boundary – the quietus for non-avian dinosaurs. That mudstone now grotesquely eroding near your picnic table once felt the ponderous tread of Triceratops and the other end-of-the-line dinos, whose lazy sultry afternoon one day was interrupted by the soundless thermonuclear flash of the world-changing asteroid smashing into Yucatan. I thought of Loren Eiseley’s musings on a similar skeletal landscape somewhere in the High Plains:

“Nothing grows among its pinnacles; there is no shade except under great toadstools of sandstone whose bases have been eaten to the shape of wine glasses by the wind. Everything is flaking,
cracking, disintegrating, wearing away in the long, imperceptible weather of time. The ash of ancient volcanic outbursts still sterilizes its soil, and its colors in that waste are the colors that flame in the lonely sunsets on dead planets. It was a late hour on a cold, wind-bitten autumn day when I climbed a great hill spined like a dinosaur’s back and tried to take my bearings. The tumbled waste fell away in waves in all directions. I wanted to be out of there by nightfall, and already the sun was going sullenly down in the west...Fifty million years lay under my feet, fifty million years of bellowing monsters moving in a green world now gone so utterly that its very light was travelling on the farther edge of space. The chemicals of all that vanished age lay about me in the ground. Around me still lay the shearing molars of dead titanotheres, the delicate sabers of soft-stepping cats, the hollow sockets that held the eyes of many a strange, outmoded beast. Those eyes had looked out upon a world as real as ours; dark, savage brains had roamed and roared their challenges into the steaming night. Now they were still here, or, put it as you will, the chemicals that made them were here about me in the ground. The carbon that had driven them ran blackly in the eroding stone. The stain of iron was in the clays. The iron did not remember the blood it had once moved within, the phosphorus had forgot the savage brain. The little individual moment had ebbed from all those strange combinations of chemicals as it would ebb from our living bodies into the sinks and runnels of oncoming time. Behind me that vast waste began to glow under the rising moon.”

- The Immense Journey

Did you know that a California fan palm “lives an average of 80 to 90 years, approaching 150 years where sheltered from flashfloods, tumbling boulders and windstorms (chubascos).”? That “adult palms are capable of surviving a fire because sensitive vascular tissues are scattered throughout the damp, massive trunk, rather than localized beneath the outermost bark.”? That “only one in a hundred palms dies in a typical fire, while charred survivors sprout a leafy canopy within weeks.”?

Did you know that “Rodents, in general, are probably the principle agents of dispersal and distribution (of Joshua tree seeds?)...But long ago (prior to their extinction) this function was undoubtedly performed,... judging by the copious amount of Joshua tree seeds found in fossilized dung... by the Giant Ground Sloth.”

And did you realize that fish were once a staple part of the Mojave Indian’s diet? Three species were once taken from the Colorado River—the Razorback Sucker, the Bonytail and the Bull Salmon—each of which “routinely achieved 20 pounds.”

Or this? As the weather warmed during the early and mid-Holocene (11,000 to 5,000 years before now), Sonoran flora spread north into southeastern California, e.g., the “ocotillo, (Continued on page 25)
elephant tree, and palo verde (reached) into the Anza-Borrego region, (while) saguaro (made it) to the Whipple Mountains.”

Well, even if you knew all of the above, the good news is that The California Deserts contains a treasure trove of even more interesting information, especially in regard to the area’s rich ecological relationships, and, better still, how it may be possible to keep a good portion of our desert wilderness areas—unlike the Giant Ground Sloth—from becoming extinct.

The author, Bruce M. Pavlik, a Professor of Biology at Mills College in Oakland, CA, comes equipped with a research background “focused on the ecology and physiology of plants native to western North America, including the conservation of endangered species...Most of his projects have been associated with grasslands and deserts, but unusual ecosystems (dunes, geothermal springs, serpentine outcrops, vernal pools) have received special attention.” Two of his earlier publications were Oaks of California (1991) and California’s Changing Landscape (1993).

In The California Deserts, published in 2008, Pavlik updates Edmund Jaeger’s classic 1933 volume of the same name, and in the process he adds an important factor in his “ecological rediscovery,” i.e., us, homo sapiens.

Pavlik begins his odyssey of man’s interaction with the desert by employing a fictional tale, “The Lost Basket,” involving a tightly-woven basket that his friend, Mary DeDecker—author of Eureka Dunes recovery plan—discovered in a limestone grotto in a “steep-walled canyon linking Eureka and Saline valleys.” After examining the relic in the Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum of Anthropology at the University of California at Berkeley, and finding that it contained a few grains of a very rare species, Eureka dunegrass, “whose entire existence is confined to the dunes of Eureka Valley and nowhere else on the planet,” Pavlik decided to construct a story of how the basket was left there by a young Indian boy, circa 1850.

Indeed, because the Eureka Dunes region was too arid for habitation by the Paiute and Shoshone then living in the Owens Valley, the native people visited the area only to collect the nutritious foodstuffs found there. Pavlik’s tale thus describes a grain-gathering trip to the area by the boy, the boy’s mother and several other women.

The point Pavlik makes is that, while the desert people were once capable of living off the land, “the knowledge of plants, animals, water, and landscapes, and the whole of the desert existence (has become) a lost inheritance.”

“It is my hope that this book reflects the many ways desert knowledge is being rediscovered, amplified by new discoveries and given to future generations. Those generations will come to this place of wonder and beauty to make their own observations and to have their own revelations. This is a book about rediscovery as well as discovery—weaving a new basket, holding it sacred, and passing it on.”

The first section, “Rediscovery,” discusses the California deserts’ seminal inhabitants who

(Continued on page 26)
arrived at the end of the Pleistocene, approximately 12,000 years ago. “By the time the Europeans came through (Juan Bautista Anza crossed the Imperial Valley in 1774 & 1775, while Friar Francisco Garcés visited the Mojave in 1776), at least 12 major linguistic tribes, hundreds of cultural groups, and thousands of individuals had completely explored and occupied California’s desert lands.”

Additional Arrivals:
The fur trapper, Jedediah Smith, trekked through the Mojave Desert’s Lanfair Valley in 1826; Peter Skein Ogden, another trapper, crossed the White-Inyo Range in 1829; John C. Fremont, leading a scientific expedition and accompanied by Kit Carson, followed the Mojave River north and east, heading for Las Vegas in 1844.

“A Conspiracy of Extremes,” examines the geographic and climatic histories of the three deserts found in California: the Great Basin, the Mojave and the Sonoran.

Desert Data: Although the Great Basin comprises the largest desert in the United States (157,000 sq. miles total), only a small portion (6,900 sq. miles) is found in California. The balance of the basin, stretching from the Sierra Nevada to the Wasatch Range in central Utah, and from the Columbia Plateau of Oregon and Idaho into north-central Arizona, is made up of “more than 150 minicasins,” none of which drain into a sea.

The Mojave Desert, on the other hand, is the smallest of the North American deserts (54,000 sq. miles), but the largest of the California deserts (27,400 sq. miles). “The (place) name itself may have been derived from the word for bighorn sheep (moha), which the Mojave people had already applied to themselves.”

“Operations and Origins” leans a bit to the technical side in describing the manner in which desert ecosystems operate, i.e., three forms of photosynthesis present in California desert plants supply the bioregion’s primary energy/nutrition production. Secondary production is determined by herbivores who obtain their energy from the products of that photosynthesis, and the third, much less efficient, production is determined by the carnivores who consume the herbivores.

Sizzling Stats: “In eastern California, the number of cloudless days can exceed 340 days per year, allowing more than 4,182 kilocalories (calories times 1,000) to fall on each sq. inch of land surface...Water, (however), is the resource that most limits primary production in deserts...Photosynthesis demands water. Each molecule of carbon dioxide taken up by leaves requires that several thousand molecules of water be lost in a process of gas exchange.”

“Remarkable Biota” discusses the nearly 2,500 species of native plants and vertebrate animals that have been documented as living in the California deserts—a subject obviously dear to Pavlik’s heart. How a few of the ancient species survived “unprecedented oscillations in climate and landscape,” i.e., advancing and receding glaciers, higher temperatures and lower precipitation progressively spreading north, is this section’s main theme. “(A)s rivers stopped flowing, vast lakes began to desiccate into...”

(Continued on page 27)
playas, and dry winds gathered the sandy shores into shifting dunes,” pockets of favorable habitat were formed for some species, while others simply disappeared.

Examples of Extremity: The Desert Pupfish, whose existence in Death Valley National Park’s Devils Hole (where survival is entirely dependent upon a sunlit shelf of rock, roughly 10 sq.ft. in size for spawning and algal-based food supply) and Salt Creek (where water temperature can vary by 27 to 36° F, and the salinity from .5 to 1.6 times that of seawater) “is testimony to the creative powers of evolution.” Or, how about the Alkali Fairy Shrimp which live in an even more extreme environment? “Embedded within the alkaline surface of the driest, dustiest playas of the central Mojave Desert are billions of (their) eggs. The eggs, only 1/125 of an inch across but numbering 50 to 600 per square foot, are dormant and waiting for the next good storm.” When rain does arrive and conditions are right, “The shrimp grow rapidly (up to one inch) and become reproductive within one or two weeks, depending on temperature.”

“Greater Than the Sum of the Parts,” discusses the unique interdependence of several desert species. “The spaces between the thorny shrubs determine how fast predators can chase their prey, while the height of uppermost branches can limit how far baby spiders disperse when wafting away on balloons of silk. All such interactions in a given place, at the same time, under a certain set of conditions, comprise the splendid basketry of a biological community.

Starting with the Great Basin and continuing south and east through the Mojave and the Sonoran deserts, Pavlik examines the local biota, first those found in each area’s highest elevations, e.g., the isolated ancient bristlecone pines, “driven upslope during the Holocene spread of lowland aridity,” and now found primarily in the White and Inyo mountains, but also further east and south on the summit of Telescope Peak (11,049’), as well as the Kingston (7,300), New York (7,400’) and Providence (6,900’) mountains.

This section concludes with sand dune scrub, examining the sand food (a flowering parasite), the sand fly and the Bembix wasp, all endemic to the 230 square mile Algodones Dunes, the largest pile of sand in California..

Provisions in a Parched Paradise: “Pinyon seeds were the most important plant food of the Owens Valley Paiute, inspiring collection technologies, social covenants, and spiritual ceremonies that are still practiced today...Men, women, and children participated in the harvest—a family group could collect 30 to 40 bushels of nuts (more than 300 pounds)—which was celebrated with feasting, dancing, gaming, courting and trading. An overall blessing fell upon the camps, bestowed by sacred smoke from fragrant, sagebrush-fed fires.”

And finally, “The Future of This Arid Bioregion” contemplates several sad scenarios for the California deserts, e.g., “A patch of clay soil formed during the Pleistocene is forever lost after its shield of (desert) pavement has been scraped away... Water diverted from a spring cannot provide habitat for algae, mollusks, dragonfly larvae, or pupfishes. A tortoise taken as a pet will not contribute genes to the next generation. Such small forms of squander have enormous, cumulative impacts when perpetrated in the

(Continued from page 26)

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At the beginning of the Holocene, our aboriginal ancestors found the area rich with game and wild plant foods. As the desert conditions developed, however, “the people built jackrabbit traps and fish traps, developed irrigation systems, and planted indigenous crops in highly managed ‘fields.’ By the time of first contact with Europeans (in the 1770s)...an estimated 21,000 to 24,000 Indians were living in” the three deserts of California. Even so, much of the delicate bioregion remained intact.

Now, according to the 2000 census, over 1.2 million residents live in the same area, and by “the year 2020 the total number of people in the bioregion will exceed 3.1 million.”

Misery Multiplied: But population growth— involving the loss of wilderness, lowered water tables, and increased air and noise pollution— isn’t the only problem facing the bioregion. Consider, for instance, soil compaction—most famously illustrated by the tracks left by General Patton’s forces during World War II— which can significantly reduce water penetration and increase runoff and erosion. Or fragmentation of species—Interstate highways and aqueducts form barriers to seeds, bugs, lizards, even bighorn sheep, thus limiting genetic diversity. Or non-native species—tumbleweeds, salt cedar, and cheatgrass, to name a few—which curb or deny growth of many endemic species.

Positive Prospects: Pavlik believes that man has done so much damage to the bioregion— ‘We have met the enemy and he is us,’ as the noted philosopher, Pogo Possum, once said—“that the healing now requires human assistance, including new desert knowledge and new commitment.”

He is encouraged by the additional acreage gained and the elevation to national park status for Death Valley and Joshua Tree National Monuments, and he considers the 1.6 million acre Mojave National Preserve as the “centerpiece” of the 1994 California Desert Protection Act.

Much work remains, however, including projects such as the removal or reduction of wild horse and burro populations, control of non-native species and exclusion of trampling livestock from critical desert soil locations.

Pavlik wraps up The California Deserts asserting that academia, government agencies and consulting firms have already done a great deal to “favor a sovereign future” for the arid bioregion. “Of equal importance will be the training of skilled practitioners and zealous guardians (think Sierra Club) of a new, indigenous knowledge.”

Amen.

Published by the University of California Press, The California Deserts is a profusely illustrated, 365 page (glossy 7” x 10”) volume, replete with excellent maps, an outstanding reference section, and all available online, $17.18 for the paperback edition or $60.00 for the hardback. Buy, borrow or otherwise “liberate” a copy. You’ll be glad you did.
Angeles Chapter Foundation needs the help of all Angeles Chapter groups, task forces and sections to help support Energy Upgrade California in Los Angeles County.

Dear DPS Members:

We need your help to spread the word about Energy Upgrade California in Los Angeles County. The first step is simply to get information about the program to your group membership and extended social networks.

The best way to do this is by educating others about the Angeles Chapter Foundation’s involvement as an Energy Champion. Energy Champions are part of an outreach and incentive program for nonprofits, allowing them to introduce energy efficiency upgrades to homeowners. When homeowners get an energy upgrade and mention Energy Champion Code #SIE066 on their application (whether a Sierra Club member or not), a reward of up to $500 for the Angeles Chapter Foundation would be secured!

We are trying to get the word out as soon as possible—it is critical to the success of Energy Upgrade California.

And it’s not only about getting the word out to the group. Please take a close look at Energy Upgrade’s web pages yourself, and consider going forward with a residential energy upgrade this year! You may contact our Energy Upgrade California / Energy Champions representative at 800-439-9339, ext. 755. Energy Champions representatives are also available to table at your community events, and presentations will be tailored to the amount of meeting time available. Additional information on Energy Upgrade California is provided below.

Thank you,

Lore Pekrul
Angeles Chapter Foundation Liaison, Green Building Committee Chair
Angeles Chapter Sierra Club
310.529.2026 cell

Photo taken by Bob Wyka on an unlisted peak running the seldom visited ridge between two listed desert peaks somewhere in Southern CA.

Any guesses?

Email desertpeakssage@aol.com
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DESKTOP PEAKS SECTION

DPS NEWSLETTER - THE DESERT SAGE - Published six times a year by the Desert Peaks Section of the Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club. SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT SAGE IS DECEMBER 10, 2011.

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EMBLEM STATUS AND GUIDES - To receive DPS emblem status you must climb 15 peaks on the list, five of which must be from the list of seven emblem peaks, and have belonged to the section for one year. To work on the list you will probably want to buy from the Merchandiser (Gloria Miladin, 11946 Downey Ave, Downey, CA, 90242) the Desert Peaks Road and Peak Guide 5th Edition CDROM - $15. If you like to explore without much direction just purchase the DPS PEAKS LIST - $1 (enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope). Send completed peak and emblem lists to Membership Records Chair Ron Bartell, 1556 21st Street, Manhattan Beach, CA, 90266.

EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE - We welcome all articles and letters pertaining to outdoor activities of interest to DPS members. Some submittals may be too long and space limitations and other considerations are factors in the decision to publish a submission. The editor may modify submittals in an attempt to increase clarity, decrease length, or correct typos but will hopefully not modify your meaning. If you are a participant and know that the leaders are not going to submit a trip report, then feel free to submit one. We welcome reports of private trips to unlisted peaks and private trips using non standard routes to listed peaks. Please DATE all submissions. Please indicate topo map names, dates, and contour intervals. Digital (.doc or .txt) content is essential and will help ensure that there are no typographical errors. Only one web link (url) is permitted within each article submitted. Email material to the Editor by the published deadline (above). When submitting digital photos, please indicate when and where it was taken, what it is of, who is in it, and who took it.

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