



# The Desert Sage

OUR 79th SEASON

MARCH-APRIL 2020

ISSUE NO. 386



<http://desertpeaks.org/>



# Chair's Corner

by Sandy Lara



## Hello DPSers!

Welcome to *our* season! I hope you are able to get out and enjoy our peaks as the cooler temps and weather allow. I was just at Joshua Tree for the WTC rock scrambling and navigation weekend with our group and the weather was great, hovering between warm and cool, with

breezes and some wind gusts. Sounds about right, huh? It was fun to watch a storm coming in which was supposed to leave about a half inch of snow on the ground the night we left.

Jim Fleming has been working hard on our banquet this year, to be held May 17 at The Reef Restaurant in Long Beach. Bob Burd will be presenting "California's Desert Ranges" with fabulous photos taken by his photographer and desert-exploring friend, Evan Rasmussen. It's a night you won't want to miss, so save the date!

Megan Birdsill, our DPS Outings Chair has been hard at work behind the scenes coordinating with WTC, HPS, and other organizations like the Cal-Tech Alpine Club to make DPS more widely recognized. William Chen, our webmaster, continues to make critical updates and improvements to our website and helps with all things technical. Laura Newman, our treasurer, keeps our numbers in order and is also working on spiffing up our merchandise. Stay tuned and check in every once in awhile to see the changes!

Our DPS election is coming up! Tina Bowman (secretary), Megan Birdsill (outings chair) and I still have another year. Jim Fleming and Laura Newman are finishing their terms. Jim is throwing his hat in the ring another time and Laura will move into an appointed treasurer position as she has termed out per the bylaws. William Chen has been

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## THE NEXT SAGE SUBMISSION DEADLINE IS APRIL 12, 2020

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in a non-voting role on our MComm as webmaster and is throwing his hat in the ring. Catherine Rossbach, a new DPS Emblem holder, wants to help in whatever way she can.

Happy climbing!

Sandy Lara



# Desert Peaks Section Leadership for the 2019 - 2020 Season

## Elected Positions

### **Chair**

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### **Vice Chair / Outings / Safety**

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### **Secretary**

Tina Bowman  
283 Argonne Avenue  
Long Beach, CA 90803-1743  
(562) 438-3809  
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### **Treasurer**

Laura Newman  
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Porter Ranch, CA 91326-1933  
[desertpeakstreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:desertpeakstreasurer@gmail.com)

### **Program / Banquet**

Jim Fleming  
538 Yarrow Drive  
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## Cover Photo Credit...

goes to Dave Jahng. The photo was taken on November 17, 2019 on a scheduled DPS ascent of Tucki Mountain. Pictured on the summit, from left to right: Dave Jahng (leader), Spencer Backus, Jacqueline Sly, Tom McDonnell, Megan Birdsill (leader), John Mayo, Alex Brinkman, and Alex Hunt.

## Appointed Positions

### **Archives**

Barbara Reber  
PO Box 1911  
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### **Conservation Chair**

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### **Membership Records Chair**

Ron Bartell  
1556 21st Street  
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### **Merchandising**

Laura Newman  
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### **Mountaineering Committee Chair**

Megan Birdsill  
4110 La Crescenta Avenue,  
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### **Mountaineering Committee**

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[ronbartell@yahoo.com](mailto:ronbartell@yahoo.com)  
Tina Bowman  
[tina@bowmanchange.com](mailto:tina@bowmanchange.com)

### **Mountain Records (Summit Registers)**

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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

## March 2020 — November 2020

Please visit the DPS website for an even more up-to-date listing of upcoming trips and events at  
<http://desertpeaks.org/>.

MARCH 7	SAT	HPS, DPS	Martinez Mountain and Sheep Mountain
MARCH 15	SUN	DPS	DPS Management Committee Meeting and Potluck
MAR 20-21	FRI-SAT	DPS	Nopah Range High Point and Eagle Mountain # 2
MAR 20-22	FRI-SUN	DPS, HPS, WTC	Canyon Point
MARCH 21	SAT	HPS, DPS	Villager Peak and Rabbit Peak
APRIL 18	SAT	LTC	Leadership Training (LTP) Seminar
APRIL 18-19	SAT-SUN	LTC, DPS, SPS, HPS	Sierra Snow Check-off and Practice
APRIL 19	SUN	DPS	DPS Management Committee Meeting and Potluck
APRIL 25-26	SAT-SUN	LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS	Navigation: Warren Point Navigation Noodle
MAY 17	SUN	DPS	DPS Annual Banquet
MAY 23	SAT	DPS, LTC, WTC, HPS	Navigation: Beginning Navigation Clinic
JUNE 6-7	SAT-SUN	LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS	Navigation: Mount Pinos Navigation Noodle
JUNE 12-14	FRI-SUN	DPS	Boundary Peak, Montgomery Peak & Mt. Dubois
SEPT 27	SAT	LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS	Navigation: Mount Pinos Navigation Noodle
OCT 17	SAT	DPS, LTC, WTC, HPS	Navigation: Beginning Navigation Clinic
NOV 14-15	SAT-SUN	LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS	Navigation: Mission Creek Navigation Noodle

### ♦ MARCH 7 SAT HPS, DPS

**I: Rabbit Ramp-up Hike #4 - Martinez Mountain (6,560'+) and Sheep Mountain (5,141'):** Join us for the fourth in a series of five every-other-Saturday hikes. The Rabbit Ramp-up hike series will culminate with a hike to Rabbit Peak in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. This is the largest California State Park, and it is named after Spanish explorer Juan Bautista de Anza and borrego (the Spanish word for sheep). With 23 miles and 8,300 feet of elevation gain round trip, Rabbit Peak is the toughest day hike among the Hundred Peaks Section's 281 peaks. The Rabbit Ramp-up series is designed to provide the desert hiking experience and conditioning necessary to handle the "BIG Bunny." This is a very strenuous hike in the Santa Rosa Wilderness desert terrain. The Santa Rosa Wilderness is a 72,259-acre wilderness area in Southern California, in the Santa Rosa Mountains of Riverside and San Diego counties. Enjoy views of the surrounding mountains, Palm Desert and the Coachella Valley. Expect around 21 total miles with about 5,000 feet of elevation gain. Not intended for new hikers. Bring hiking footwear, water, lunch, snacks, layers, hat, sunblock and headlamp (with extra batteries!). This HPS Outing is co-sponsored by DPS. Contact Leader for status, details or to sign-up for outing. Leader: Jerry Grenard ([jerry.grenard@gmail.com](mailto:jerry.grenard@gmail.com)). Co-Leaders: Bill Simpson, Ryan Lynch, Jeff Buchholz, Reddy Yetur, and Ross Doering.

### ♦ MARCH 15 SUN DPS

**O: DPS Management Committee Meeting and Potluck:** Join us at the home of Larry and Barbee Tidball in Long Beach for the DPS Management Committee meeting at 4:30 p.m. and potluck at 6:00 p.m. Please bring a beverage of your choice and a potluck item to share. RSVP to Barbee at [lbtidball@verizon.net](mailto:lbtidball@verizon.net).

### ♦ MARCH 20-21 FRI-SAT DPS

**MR: Nopah Range High Point (6,394') and Eagle Mountain #2 (3,806'):** Join us for two peaks in the eastern Death Valley ranges. Minimal dirt road driving required for the peaks. Friday we'll climb class 2 Nopah, 14 miles with 4,000' gain RT via DPS route C. Saturday we'll have fun with Eagle Mountain #2, 3 miles with 1,800' gain RT. Most of this climb will be class 2 with a class 3 summit ridge with good handholds. We will have a rope for belaying participants up and down the 3rd class, and helmets must be worn. To climb to the summit of Eagle, participants must be Sierra Club members with prior roped climbing experience. Send recent conditioning info and climbing experience (for Eagle) to Leader: Tina Bowman ([tina@bowmanchange.com](mailto:tina@bowmanchange.com) or (562) 438-3809). Co-leader: Nile Sorenson.



♦ **MARCH 20-22**                      **FRI-SUN**                      **DPS, HPS, WTC**

**I: Canyon Point (5,890’):** Death Valley exploratory trip for WTC students and leaders or equivalent. Friday 4x4 car shuttle to setup Cottonwood Canyon to Marble Canyon loop backpack, then backpack 9 miles with 2,500’ gain to Cottonwood Springs, a favorite of local wild horses. Saturday backpack 5 miles with 1,300’ gain to camp in Horsethief Canyon. In route we will dayhike an additional 2 miles with 1,100’ gain RT to Canyon Point for views of the Panamints and into the depths of Death Valley. Sunday we will ascend 1,300’ to intersect Marble Canyon and then descend this deep winding slot canyon of black and white streaked marble 7 miles to our car shuttle. The sharp eye may catch sight of Indian petroglyphs that adorn the canyon walls. Priority will be given to those with 4WD vehicles. This DPS Outing is co-sponsored by WTC and HPS. E-mail contact info, recent experience & conditioning, and rideshare details to Leader: Neal Robbins [neal.robbins@l-3com.com](mailto:neal.robbins@l-3com.com) or (310) 594-2293. Co-leaders: Mat Kelliher and Lisa Miyake.

♦ **MARCH 21**                      **SAT**                      **HPS, DPS**

**I: Rabbit Ramp-up Hike #5 - Rabbit Peak (6,640’) and Villager Peak (5,756’):** Join us for the fifth (and final) in a series of five every-other-Saturday hikes. The Rabbit Ramp-up hike series culminates with this hike to Rabbit Peak in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. This is the largest California State Park, and it is named after Spanish explorer Juan Bautista de Anza and borrego (the Spanish word for sheep). With 23 miles and 8,300 feet of elevation gain round trip, Rabbit Peak is the toughest day hike among the Hundred Peaks Section's 281 peaks. The Rabbit Ramp-up series is designed to provide the desert hiking experience and conditioning necessary to handle the “BIG Bunny.” Spend a special day in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park while hiking the BIG Bunny at a moderate pace. We will also summit Villager Peak during this hike. Very strenuous, not intended for beginners. Hike will start in the dark and will probably end in the dark, and it will be paced moderately. The hike will be about 23 miles round trip with around 8,300 feet of elevation gain (6,950 feet on the way to Rabbit; 1,350 feet on the return to the trailhead). Not suitable for beginning hikers. Bring hiking footwear, water, lunch, snacks, layers, hat, head lamp (and extra batteries!). This HPS Outing is co-sponsored by DPS. Contact Leader for status, details, or to sign up for outing. Leader: Ryan Lynch ([ryan.b.lynnch@gmail.com](mailto:ryan.b.lynnch@gmail.com)) Co-Leaders: Bill Simpson, Jim Hagar, Jeff Buchholz, and Ross Doering.

♦ **APRIL 18**                      **SAT**                      **LTC**

**O: Leadership Training:** Offered just twice a year, the next Sierra Club Angeles Chapter's Leadership Training Program (LTP) Seminar is scheduled for Saturday, April 18, 2020. Apply at least two weeks in advance to guarantee your spot. Later applications accepted on a space-available basis but are not guaranteed, so register early. Come learn all about the best leadership practices of our outings program. This all-day event covers group management, our ratings system, rules of conduct, safety and much more, from presentations, breakout groups and scenarios. The Sierra Club Angeles Chapter's many groups, sections and committees sponsor thousands of trips ranging from easy hikes to backpacks to world wide travel and mountaineering expeditions. From experienced volunteer leaders you will learn how to plan a trip, handle problems on the trail and make sure that everyone has a great time. You'll gain knowledge about good conservation and safety practices, along with tips for getting your leadership rating quickly and then, if you choose, pursuing more advanced ratings. For information, Email [LTPSeminarRegistrar@gmail.com](mailto:LTPSeminarRegistrar@gmail.com). Cost: \$25. Signup Instructions: Go to website URL for application: <https://www.sierraclub.org/angeles/leadership-outings/leadership-training-seminar>. Location: To be determined. Leader: Anne Marie Richardson ([amleadership@gmail.com](mailto:amleadership@gmail.com)).

♦ **APRIL 18-19**                      **SAT-SUN**                      **LTC, DPS, SPS, HPS**

**M/E: Sierra Snow Checkoff and Practice:** For M & E candidates wanting to check-off leadership ratings. We welcome others who wish to practice new techniques. Restricted to Sierra Club members with some prior basic training with the ice axe. Send Sierra Club number, climbing resume, email, and home and work phone numbers to Leader: Nile Sorenson ([nsorenso@pacbell.net](mailto:nsorenso@pacbell.net)). Co-leaders: Neal Robbins, Phil Bates, and Jack Kieffer.

♦ **APRIL 19**                      **SUN**                      **DPS**

**O: DPS Management Committee Meeting and Potluck:** Join us at the home of Tom Sumner in Sylmar for the DPS Management Committee meeting at 4:30 p.m. and potluck at 6:00 p.m. Please bring a beverage of your choice and a potluck item to share. RSVP to Tom at [locornnr@aol.com](mailto:locornnr@aol.com).

♦ **APRIL 25-26**                      **SAT-SUN**                      **LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS**

**I: Navigation: Warren Point Navigation Noodle:** Navigation noodle at Warren Point in Joshua Tree National Park to satisfy the basic (I/M) level navigation requirements. Saturday for practice, skills refresher, altimeter, homework, campfire. Sunday checkoff or additional practice. Send email with contact info (mailing address and phone numbers), navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare to Leader: Robert Myers (310-829-3177, [rmmyers@ix.netcom.com](mailto:rmmyers@ix.netcom.com)). Assistant: Ann Shields. Note: Early (at least two weeks prior to the event) sign-up for all navigation checkoffs and practices is recommended. These outings require substantial pre-outing preparation work, including completion of both a comprehensive written exam and a route planning assignment that will be mailed to you prior to the checkoff. See Chapter 6 of the Leaders Reference Book for more information. Send contact information (including mailing address) and your qualifications to the leader as soon as possible.

♦ **MAY 17**                      **SUN**                      **DPS**

**O: DPS Annual Banquet:** Join your fellow DPS members and friends for a wonderful evening at The Reef Restaurant located in the city of Long Beach for the DPS annual banquet. Happy hour starts at 5:00 p.m. and dinner starts at 6:30 p.m., followed by awards. The banquet speaker will be Bob Burd who will present "California's Desert Ranges"; Bob plans to share some of his more memorable climbs and experiences in California's desert tracts, illustrated with the stunning photographs of Evan Rasmussen, a good friend and fellow desert explorer. Please see the DPS website or page 8 of this issue of *The Desert Sage* for additional information or to sign up for the banquet.

♦ **MAY 23**                      **SAT**                      **DPS, LTC, WTC, HPS**

**I: Navigation: Beginning Clinic:** Spend the day one-on-one with an instructor, learning/practicing map and compass in our local mountains. Beginners to rusty old-timers welcome and practice is available at all skill levels. Not a checkoff, but it will help you prepare. Many expert leaders will attend; many I-rated leaders started here in the past. 4 miles, 500' gain. Send sase, phones, rideshare info, \$25 deposit, refunded at trailhead (Sierra Club) to Leader: Diane Dunbar ([dianedunbar@charter.net](mailto:dianedunbar@charter.net) or 818-248-0455). Co-leader: Richard Boardman (310-374-4371).

♦ **JUNE 6-7**                      **SAT-SUN**                      **LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS**

**I: Navigation: Mount Pinos Navigation Noodle:** Navigation Noodle at Mount Pinos to satisfy Basic (I/M) level navigation requirements. Saturday is for practice, skills, refresher, altimeter, homework and campfire. Sunday is for checkoff. Send email/sase with contact info, navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare, to Leader: Robert Myers (310-829-3177, [rmmyers@ix.netcom.com](mailto:rmmyers@ix.netcom.com)). Assistant: Ann Shields. Note: Early (at least two weeks prior to the event) sign-up for all navigation checkoffs and practices is recommended. These outings require substantial pre-outing preparation work, including completion of both a comprehensive written exam and a route planning assignment that will be mailed to you prior to the checkoff. See Chapter 6 of the Leadership Reference Book for more information. Send contact information (including mailing address) and your qualifications to the leader as soon as possible.

♦ **JUNE 12-14**                      **FRI-SUN**                      **DPS**

**I: Boundary Peak (13,140'), Montgomery Peak (13,441'), and Mount Dubois (13,559'):** Climb three of the four highest peaks on the DPS list, including an Emblem Peak! Friday, backpack in from Queen Mine to our dry camp for a potluck and amazing sunset views (4 miles and 2,400' of elevation gain). Snow drifts at this high altitude (10,800') will be our water source for the weekend. An early start on Saturday will ensure that we have time to reach all of the peaks and enjoy the expansive views before returning to camp for a celebratory potluck (13 miles and 3,600' of elevation gain). Sunday, break camp and hike out to the cars for the long drive home (4 miles and 700' of elevation gain). Must be experienced at high altitude, have great conditioning, and bring an excellent attitude for adventure. Weekend totals are 21 miles and 6,700' of elevation gain. Snow conditions may necessitate that the trip be rescheduled. Send email with experience and conditioning to Leader: Jason Seieroe ([jasonseieroe@gmail.com](mailto:jasonseieroe@gmail.com)). Assistant Leader: Philip Bates

♦ **SEPTEMBER 27**                      **SUN**                      **LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS**

**I: Navigation: Mount Pinos Navigation Noodle:** Navigation Noodle at Mount Pinos to satisfy the basic (I/M) level navigation requirements. Practice skills or checkoff. Send email with contact info (mailing address and phone numbers), navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare to Leader: Robert Myers (310-829-3177, [rmmyers@ix.netcom.com](mailto:rmmyers@ix.netcom.com)). Assistant: Ann Shields. Note: Early (at least two weeks prior to the event) sign-up for all navigation checkoffs and practices is recommended. These outings require



substantial pre-outing preparation work, including completion of both a comprehensive written exam and a route planning assignment that will be mailed to you prior to the checkoff. See Chapter 6 of the Leaders Reference Book for more information. Send contact information (including mailing address) and your qualifications to the leader as soon as possible.

♦ **OCTOBER 17**                      **SAT**

**DPS, LTC, WTC, HPS**

**I: Navigation: Beginning Clinic:** Spend the day one-on-one with an instructor, learning/practicing map and compass in our local mountains. Beginners to rusty old-timers welcome and practice is available at all skill levels. Not a checkout, but it will help you prepare. Many expert leaders will attend; many I-rated leaders started here in the past. 4 miles, 500' gain. Send sase, phones, rideshare info, \$25 deposit, refunded at trailhead (Sierra Club) to Leader: Diane Dunbar ([dianedunbar@charter.net](mailto:dianedunbar@charter.net) or 818-248-0455). Co-leader: Richard Boardman (310-374-4371).

♦ **NOVEMBER 14-15**                      **SAT-SUN**

**LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS**

**I: Navigation: Mission Creek Preserve Navigation Noodle:** Navigation Noodle at Mission Creek Preserve to satisfy the basic (I/M) level navigation requirements. Saturday for practice, skills, refresher, altimeter, homework and campfire. Sunday checkout. To participate, send email with contact info, navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare to Leader: Robert Myers (310-829-3177, [rmmyers@ix.netcom.com](mailto:rmmyers@ix.netcom.com)). Assistant: Ann Shields. Note: Early (at least two weeks prior to the event) sign-up for all navigation checkoffs and practices is recommended. These outings require substantial pre-outing preparation work, including completion of both a comprehensive written exam and a route planning assignment that will be mailed to you prior to the checkoff. See Chapter 6 of the Leaders Reference Book for more information. Send contact information (including mailing address) and your qualifications to the leader as soon as possible.

## *Outings Chair*

*By Megan Birdsill*

This month I'm utilizing this space to appeal to leaders to consider our list or the general exploration of the desert as an excellent objective for WTC experience trips and/or provisional outings:

1. Although not traditionally led as backpacks, a number of the destinations can be adjusted to make them so, either for a more enjoyable trip, or to make a qualified WTC experience trip. Eagle and Pinto Mountains are common examples, but I've created three others in Death Valley. It's really empowering to get creative and do a trip that isn't offered frequently (or at all). You can also offer trips in the late spring while the Sierras are still deep in snow.
2. Alternatively, the joys of car-camping and carrying a light daypack are becoming more and more apparent to me :) Happy hours are even better with chairs, a proper stove, and even a roaring campfire!
3. The desert peaks make excellent Provisionals (I or M). The navigation challenges are better suited than the Sierras. The approaches are shorter if you're lugging in ropes or other technical gear.
4. The majority of destinations will not deal with any altitude issues, either for yourself or your participants.
5. There's no messing with the challenges or timing of acquiring a permit. You can decide to lead and plan a trip closer to the date. We could decide to go, quite literally, at any moment.
6. For the peakbaggers out there, the list is exceptionally well curated, containing only 95 peaks and wide ranging, mostly in California but also from Mexico to Utah, Nevada and Arizona. The terrain varies widely too, from the smallest elevation (Picacho Peak, 1920') to one of California's 14ers (White Mountain, 14,246'), cactus to pine tree forests, and from approachable 1st class trails, to really fun 3rd and 4th class climbs.

Bonus: You'll stay in mountain climbing shape year-round.

We live in the desert. Let's be experts in it. Our calendar will fill up over the next few months, hopefully with your help. I look forward to your trip submissions.



# DPS Annual Banquet

## Bob Burd presents California Desert Ranges

California has more than 100 named desert ranges with well over 4,000 summits, covering about 25% of the state. The DPS list covers but 66 of these summits. Bob has spent more than 350 days in this vast expanse, climbing highpoints, lowpoints, and everything in-between. He has completed the DPS, HPS, SPS, LPC and San Diego peak lists, and climbed all 330+ summits in Andy Zdon's *Desert Summits*. Bob plans to share some of his more memorable climbs and experiences in California's desert tracts, illustrated with the stunning photographs of Evan Rasmussen, a good friend and fellow desert explorer.

**Sunday, May 17, 2020**

5:00 Happy Hour

6:30 Dinner

The Reef Restaurant

880 South Harbor Scenic Drive

Long Beach, CA 90802 • (562) 435-8013



Your Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number or Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Reservations:    \$40 until May 7 \_\_\_\_\_    \$45 after May 7 \_\_\_\_\_    Total \_\_\_\_\_

Entrée Choice (please indicate total number of each):

Fish \_\_\_\_\_    Chicken Piccata \_\_\_\_\_    Cheese Enchiladas \_\_\_\_\_

To order tickets by mail, send this form and a check payable to "Desert Peaks Section" to

Jim Fleming, 538 Yarrow Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065-7352

Or you may use PayPal to pay for tickets ([desertpeakstreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:desertpeakstreasurer@gmail.com)), but let Jim know your entrée choice(s): [Jimf333@att.net](mailto:Jimf333@att.net) or (805) 405-1726.



# DPS Membership Report

by Ron Bartell

## Membership Summary

<u>Type</u>	<u>Regular</u>	<u>Sustaining</u>
Member	74	42
Household	26	
Subscriber	47	5
Totals:	147	47

Riley Scaff  
Ian Sharp  
Nahid Shirazi  
Christine Tsai

## Sustaining Renewals

Marcelo Altamirano & Doug Mantle	1 year
Henry A Arnebold	1 year
Megan Birdsill	1 year
Jan Brahms & David Reneric	1 year
David Comerzan	1 year
Rick Craycraft	1 year
Ron Eckelmann	1 year
Bruno Geiger	1 year
John Hooper	1 year
Patty Kline	1 year
Lawrence Lee	2 years
Mike Manchester	1 year
Robert Michael	1 year
Mary Motheral	1 year
Shelley Rogers	1 year
Catherine Rossbach	1 year
Mark Conover	1 year
Ken D Olson	1 year

## Activity Report

### Achievements

### Emblem

#599 Catherine Rossbach 1/13/20 Signal Peak

### New Member

Jim Wick Rabbit Peak

### Renewed Lapsed Member

Stephan Bork 1 year

### New Subscribers

Scot Angus  
Kristina Barger  
Nadia Bui  
Paula Burnett  
Jim Christel  
Shawn Davis  
Katt Deschene  
Deanne DiMascio  
Lauren Flemming  
Mike Gardenias  
Dawn Graves  
Michael Gonzales  
Claudia Hernandez  
Nina Horwich  
Michael Hudson  
Betty Liu  
John Mayo  
Shannon McCormick  
Sheila Murthy  
Jeremy Netka  
Charles Ngo  
Hannah Niman  
Alejandra Priede  
Maria Sanchez  
Al Sandoval

## Renewals

Doug Bear	1 year
Jeff Buchholz	2 years
Marianna & Fred Camphausen	1 year
Gary Craig	1 year
Guy Dahms	1 year
Jim Fleming	2 years
Mihai Giurgiuлесcu	1 year
Stacy Goss	1 year
Dave Halligan	1 year
Barbara Lilley	1 year
Mary McMannes	1 year
George Quinn	1 year
Mirna & Gregory Roach	2 years
Chris Schmandt	2 years
Jason Seieroe	1 year
David & Barbara Sholle	1 year
Eric Sieke	2 years
Nile Sorenson	1 year
John Strauch	3 years
Rena Tishman & Rich Henke	1 year
Alvin Walter	3 years
Joseph Wankum	3 years
Jack Wickel	1 year
Charlie Winger	1 year

# *DPS Membership Report – Continued*

## **Donations**

\$5 from David Comerzan  
\$5 from Mark Conover

## **John Mayo: New Subscriber**

Growing up, outdoors was always the flat landscape of east Texas. Boy Scouts showed John the joy of the mountains with several summer camps, including



14er in Colorado and a 2 week Philmont backpacking trek. Since scouts, John has gone on many adventures with friends backpacking in many terrains. Now with a Jeep to get to any trail, he is enjoying all the California outdoors has to offer with both hiking and off-roading. John particularly enjoys the peaceful desert regions and is looking forward to working on his DPS list with new friends.

## **Garrett Marcotte: New Subscriber**

An LA native, Garrett grew up hiking with family in the foothills above Pasadena, and got started with backpacking and rock climbing on school trips and summer camps around the southwest and Sierras, even unknowingly bagging his first HPS peak (San Gorgonio) at the ripe age of 13. After a few years' hiatus from the outdoors while focusing on school and career, he got back into hiking in 2014 and has been

going strong ever since. Moving back to LA in 2018 after stints in the bay area, east coast, and the UK, he started joining Sierra Club outings to explore more of the SoCal area and quickly discovered the joys (and pains) of peakbagging.

He jumped into the leader training program this year and is in the midst of planning an O-provisional, with an eye towards I and M in the future. In the meantime, the DPS, HPS, and SPS lists keep offering new mountains to climb, challenges to overcome, and friends to explore with.





# Treasurer's Report

by Laura Newman

## Final Account Summary for 2019

### Income

Banquet Silent Auction	\$241.00
Banquet Ticket Sales	\$1752.00
Donations	\$30.00
Membership/Subscriptions	\$1945.00
Merchandise	<u>\$74.00</u>

**Total Income** **\$4,042.00**

### Expenses

Banquet Expenses	\$2,344.17
Merchandise Expenses	\$5.40
Sage Expenses	\$854.23
Sage Mailing	\$991.80
Sales Tax	\$10.50
Web Page Expenses	<u>\$26.00</u>

**Total Expenses** **\$4,232.10**

**Pay Pal Balance** **\$9.41**

**Checking Account Balance** **\$3,385.07**

**Total** **\$3,394.48**

## Account Summary for 2020

### Income

Banquet Silent Auction	\$0.00
Banquet Ticket Sales	\$0.00
Donations	\$10.00
Membership/Subscriptions	\$540.00
Merchandise	<u>\$0.00</u>

**Total Income** **\$550.00**

### Expenses

Banquet Expenses	\$0.00
Merchandise Expenses	\$0.00
Sage Expenses	\$201.29
Sage Mailing	\$0.00
Sales Tax	\$1.11
Web Page Expenses	<u>\$6.00</u>

**Total Expenses** **\$208.40**

**Pay Pal Balance** **\$29.41**

**Checking Account Balance** **\$3,727.78**

**Total** **\$3,757.19**

### Special Offer to New DPS Members and Subscribers

The DPS would like to welcome new members and subscribers (who don't yet meet the criteria for membership) with a one year free subscription to *The Desert Sage*. New members as well as new subscribers should send their completed membership application form to the DPS Membership Chair, Ron Bartell, by email ([desertpeakssection@gmail.com](mailto:desertpeakssection@gmail.com)) or USPS (the form with the address may be downloaded in Word or Adobe Acrobat format at <http://desertpeaks.org/aboutus.htm>), or may be found in this issue of the *Sage*.

### SAGE PHOTOS AND REPORTS NEEDED !

The SAGE needs articles and photographs, including cover photos, that pertain to outdoor activities of interest to Desert Peak Sections members and subscribers. Please note that trip reports should include trip dates and identify trip participants and photos should indicate when and where the photo was taken, what it is of, who is in it, and who took it. Please email SAGE submissions to [gregg1955@verizon.net](mailto:gregg1955@verizon.net) no later than the second Sunday of even numbered months.

# Conservation Chair

## The Bureau of Land Management is Destroying Millions of Acres of Pinyon-juniper Woodland

By Dave Perkins

The federal government is overseeing a program of massive deforestation on Western public lands. Some 7.4 million acres of pinyon-juniper forest are targeted for destruction in Nevada, Utah and southern Idaho over the next several years — an area larger than the state of Vermont.

Why wipe out millions of acres of thriving pinyon-juniper trees that are superbly adapted to the heat and drought that climate change will throw at the West? To satisfy the demands of the cattle industry for grazing forage on public lands.

The BLM couches the deforestation as environmentally friendly, claiming that erasing large swaths of pinyon-juniper will cut down on fires and create new habitat for the endangered greater sage grouse, a ground-nesting bird whose dwindling numbers in recent years have provoked debates on how to manage public lands. The BLM claims that destroying pinyon-juniper forest will restore the numbers of sage grouse.

Yet there is little clear evidence showing long-term increases in sage-grouse populations following pinyon-juniper removal. In fact, what happens to wildlife when these forests are cut down, mulched or burned has simply not been researched well enough to allow for definite conclusions, according to a 2016 study out of Colorado State University.

What is certain is that pinyon-juniper woodlands are the signature plants of the Colorado Plateau and the Great Basin. These are old-growth trees, gnarled with many hundreds of years of survival in the extreme cold and heat of the arid West. The trees are the green blanket of sweet-smelling conifers across the uplands of the high desert, contrasting starkly in color and form with the sagebrush plains in the valleys.



One person battling to protect the pinyon-juniper biome as an employee of the Idaho-based nonprofit Wildlands Defense is Great Basin biologist Katie Fite. She describes the BLM's tool of choice for destroying pinyon-juniper as the Bull Hog. A Bull Hog is a bulldozer with a spinning bladed cylinder on the front end. It knocks down and chews up everything in its path. In the space of an hour, the machine can wipe out an acre of pinyon-juniper. The Bull Hog, its every square yard of devastation paid for by taxpayers, spit out shattered trunks and limbs and the nests of birds, leaving the landscape flattened, the soil denuded, the air choked with dust.

Fite says that once a Bull Hog has ravaged a forest the surface soil dries out, exposing it to erosion from wind and water. The trees that capture precipitation and hold the soil in place are gone. "We are doing everything the opposite we should do if we were really concerned about buffering the effects of climate change," she said. "By destroying these trees, we are maximizing the damage that will be done as the West heats up."

For its part, the BLM asserts that by laying waste to pinyon-juniper there will be new opportunities for sagebrush to occupy the newly denuded land, and with more sagebrush there will be more sage grouse, which are dependent on sagebrush for their survival.

According to Fite the BLM, which critics mockingly call the Bureau of Livestock and Mining, operates in abject servitude to livestock grazers. The tacit understanding at the agency is that grazing forage in the valleys, where the grass is rich, needs to be conserved for cattle, not grouse. An ecosystem that defines the West deserves better.

From a *Los Angeles Times* OP ED article on January 30, 2020. Keith Ridler (Associated Press} reporting on Christopher Ketcham's latest book *This Land: How Cowboys, Capitalism, and Corruption are Ruining the American West*.



# *Further Beyond the DPS List in Death Valley National Park*

*By Ron Bartell*

Four years ago, I wrote an article for the Sage (#357, May-June 2015) about my Death Valley National Park Peaks List. Christine Mitchell and I had finished this list in February 2015 on a DPS trip led by Dave and Ann Perkins. I was honored to be the speaker at the 2019 DPS Banquet, where my program was: Beyond the List in DVNP. I talked about how I chose the peaks for the DV list, some statistics, and climbs of some of the peaks

was expanded with the addition of two separate areas. I of course had to investigate potential peaks in these additions that met my criteria for the list. One addition was the Crater mining area, in the far north of the park, but there were no peaks in that addition. The other addition was a strip of land between the south boundary of the park and the north boundary of Fort Irwin. I couldn't find a detailed map or a description of that addition, and



**Peaks on our Death Valley peaks list located in southern Death Valley National Park.**

with other DPSers. One of the things I mentioned at the end of the program was what Christine and I would do in Death Valley now that we'd finished this list.

Well, obviously, add more peaks to the list and go climb them!

In creating my DV list I had 3 rules: 1) Peaks have to be located in Death Valley National Park; 2) Peaks have to be named on the 15' or 7.5' topos, regardless of their climbing worthiness; and, 3) Named benchmarks were candidates but only if they were "worthy", i.e. not just a little bump on a ridge.

One of the benchmarks I'd dismissed as not worthy was Mill Benchmark, in the far south of the park, since I thought it didn't look like much of a peak on the topo. But Christine and I were in the area and decided to hike it, and it turned out to be a worthwhile peak, so I added it to the list, for a total of 97.

Then, in March of 2019, Death Valley National Park

at first it looked like the added strip didn't extend all the way to the Fort Irwin boundary. There were a few peaks just north of the Fort Irwin boundary, but I didn't think they were in the addition. In my banquet talk I mentioned the two additions, and said they didn't contain any candidate peaks to add to the list.

After doing some more research it appears that the southern addition does extend all the way to the Fort Irwin boundary, so there are three named benchmarks in that addition: Quail, Head, and Toga. Quail is definitely "worthy", Head is probably worthy, and Toga is questionable. So I've added Quail and Head to the list, for a total of 99. And Toga is a pretty short hike, so we will probably go climb it to see if it makes the grade. I'm guessing it will, because once we've climbed it, it might as well go on the list, for a nice round number of 100 peaks on the list!

If you'd like a copy of our list, I'll be glad to send it to you – see the last page of the Sage for my contact info.

# Trip Reports

## Mitchell Point and Touristy Stuff in Mojave National Preserve

By Jason Seieroe

Photo Credits: Andrew Manalo, Jason Seieroe and Sandy Lara  
January 11-12, 2020

On a very chilly January morning amongst the lava flows of the Mojave National Preserve, Sandy Lara and I met up with the first 3 of our 4 participants to start a mixed weekend of fun exploring and strenuous climbing. We had spent the previous night there after the drive out from LA Friday afternoon while everyone else drove out in the wee hours of the morning. We had slept okay despite the full moon, until being awoken by 20 highly modified off-road trucks at 2am (stopping for an apparent beer break during a long night's journey through the back roads of the park), so luckily today was a fun outing and intended to just get all participants to our trailhead for Mitchell Point before Sunday. Sandy Lara and I had been here last year but had to turn around at point 2024 on the ridge as our group got a late start and was moving slowly. This year we would start earlier and move faster to improve our summit chances.

After signing in Andrew Manalo, Jessica Guerrero, and Marc Aragon and reviewing the plans for the weekend we took a very short walk over to explore the Lava Tube. I had been here exploring with my wife in the summer previously, but it was a new experience for the rest of the group. We checked out the multiple holes leading from the surface into the lava tube before descending the park installed stairs and checking out the view from inside. Due to the much lower angle of the sun in the winter, there were no dramatic rays of light entering through the smaller openings as there had been in the summer, but it was still interesting to check out.

We then caravanned down to check out Kelso Depot, the park's visitor center, and checked out all the exhibits and learned about the history of the park. Our history lesson complete, we moved on to our next objective for the day, climbing and sledding down Kelso Dunes. We moved cars, packed our lunches to eat at the highpoint, and carried our sleds about one and a half miles over and up to the highpoint. I had brought the longest plastic sled I could find (I think it's meant

for 3 kids or in our case 2 adults) and Marc and Jessica had a small round metal disk. After some test runs we all decided my larger sled was much faster and we all took turns climbing up and then racing down the



**Jessica Guerrero hangs on as the sled tries to eject her.**

dune. Another fun and touristy activity ticked off the list and we made the long drive over to the ruins at Bonanza King Mine that would serve as our campsite and trailhead for our ascent of the east ridge of Mitchell Point.

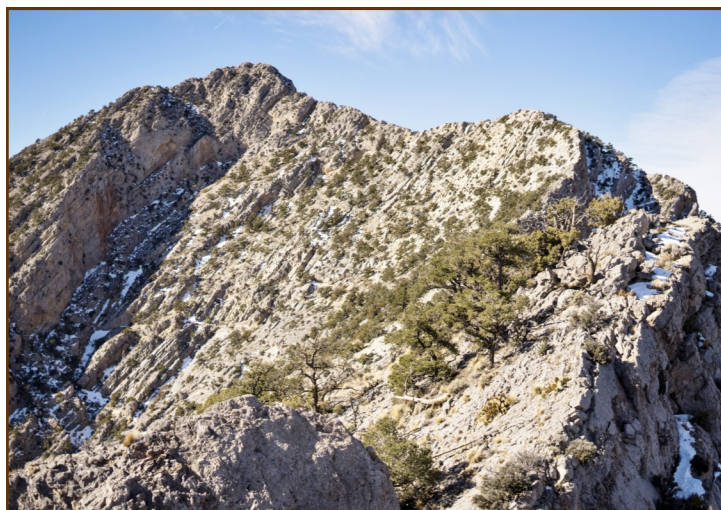
We settled in amongst the stone building ruins and got our campfire going to keep us warm during Happy Hour when our final participant joined us. Joey Dhaenens had driven in Saturday evening and found us after dark. We stayed up a bit late and got to know each other before getting some sleep for our 6am start time.

The group was up and ready to go on time and with some headlamps on in the pre-dawn darkness we headed up the remnants of an old miners road towards our ridge. We made good progress picking our way through the cactus covered landscape and up to the top of the first ridgeline. This first section of 900' of elevation gain makes you feel like you've made significant progress and the peak surely can't be that far away until you realize there's still over 2,000' of elevation gain and a couple miles to go, with multiple false summits along the way. We continued after a brief break, making our way south along the top of this easy ridge to the main ridgeline up to the summit.



# Trip Reports – continued

We were soon heading almost due west on the main ridge to the summit. I started traversing further below the ridge on the south side thinking the travel was easier, but after a while it became apparent that the ground was less stable and there was more cactus so we made a beeline back to the ridge. Just before high point 2024 on the map we had to drop down and climb a steep gully to avoid a cliff band; luckily we recognized it from last year and knew the way. Last year this was our turnaround point, but we were several hours ahead of last year's time and didn't have another campsite to drive to before it got dark so we were looking good. By this point Jessica had decided she would hang out here while the rest of us went to the summit, and Marc decided to stay with her. The



**The view of Mitchell Point from Point 2024.**



**Jason Seieroe and Joey Dhaenens negotiate another snowy section of the route.**

remaining four of us continued on, trying to stay as close to the ridge as we could and avoid the many sections of 3rd class (or higher).

We finally got pushed down off the ridge to the south side again at some big steep slabs. Andrew decided he would hang out here and forgo the last 0.5 miles to the summit and we would pick him up on the return. Our party of 6 had dwindled down to 3 determined climbers and we continued to press on. Thankfully we also had a GPS track from Jim Morehouse to help avoid the climbing sections. As we neared the final summit push we ended up on the north side of the ridge in up to 2 feet of snow that remained from a snowstorm a couple weeks prior. Luckily this section was tame so the snow didn't cause any problems. Soon

enough we were eating lunch on the summit, signing the register, and waving back to Andrew, Jessica, and Marc. We were so happy to reach the summit on our second try!



**From left to right, Jason Seieroe, Sandy Lara, and Joey Dhaenens on the summit of Mitchell Point.**

The hike out was pretty uneventful as we gathered up our other three climbers along the way. We did pick up more cactus needles on the way down, causing several delays for removal. People even found some remaining in their legs days later, but luckily nothing too serious. We made it down to camp just as it was getting dark. We had hoped to make it down the worse section of the Jeep road before dark, but it was already pretty dark by the time camp was packed up and all were ready to head out. We made it out to paved road safely though and started our long drives back home.



# Trip Reports – continued

**Indianhead (3,960')**  
**By Garrett Marcotte**  
**January 18, 2020**

While heading out to Anza-Borrego State Park for the 2020 Desert Orienteering competition on Sunday, January 19, I met up with DPS Outings Chair



**Megan Birdsill in the first palm oasis in Borrego Palm Canyon before it caught fire.**



**An amusing creation that park visitors had made out of a fallen palm tree in Palm Canyon.**

Megan Birdsill on Saturday to take on Indianhead. It was our first time on the mountain and we planned an out-and-back hike of DPS Route B - going deep into Borrego Palm Canyon before ascending a steep northern ridge to the summit, picking up 2,100 feet of elevation in just over 1.5 miles. Little did we know that we'd have the privilege of experiencing both DPS routes in one day...but more on that later.

Conditions at our 8am start were looking perfect for the ascent - clear skies, minimal wind, and already heating up towards highs in the mid 60s. We followed the well traveled tourist trail for 1.5 miles, passing

ocotillos, cholla, and the unmistakable desert walrus-es, amusingly crafted by creative visitors from the bushy end of fallen palm trees. After a short break to admire the dense palm oasis (and lament the end of the well-marked trail), we pushed ahead for another mile of bushwhacking, stream crossings, careful traverses over masses of fallen palm fronds, and a few nice class 2 scrambles, finally reaching the start of our ascent at 10am.

The climb up the ridge was straightforward but unrelentingly steep. A few rocky bumps and a dense maze of spiky plants were the only route-finding challenges, and we soon progressed from loose scree onto larger and larger boulders as we attained the saddle of the final ridge, the summit finally in sight. To the north, the clear day afforded a full view of the Rabbit-Villager ridgeline and Rosa Point off in the distance, foreshadowing the Rabbit Ramp-Up series I would soon be joining in February. Around noon we finally reached the summit plateau, hopping across boulders like the bighorn sheep we had unsuccessfully been trying to spot all morning and looking forward to a hard-earned lunch. But the mountain had other plans.

Just as we came around a bend near the summit, we got a clear view towards the canyon and saw a trickle of smoke drifting up into the sky. Within minutes the trickle became a dense black plume, leaving no doubt that the palm oasis we had passed through mere hours earlier was on fire. The forecast for our route down through the canyon had suddenly gotten a whole lot hotter!

Making our way to the summit to sign the register and have lunch (priorities!), we strategized how to get out of this predicament. Complicating matters, we realized that the DPS guide Megan had printed out beforehand was still down in the car - a harsh lesson on why a paper map is one of the 10 Essentials. Fortunately, there was intermittent cell signal at the summit so we could call in a lifeline. I was able to get through to the Borrego Springs visitor center and confirm the fire was indeed at the palm oasis and the fire department was on its way. But with no estimate of when it would be safe to pass through the canyon, the idea of waiting and possibly getting

# Trip Reports – continued

stuck on the mountain after dark wasn't so reassuring. While I scouted for other routes down, Megan



**Garrett Marcotte on the phone calling emergency services from the summit of Indianhead with smoke rising in the background.**

called up fellow WTC leader Jeremy Netka, who was familiar with our plans and would be joining us for the orienteering event the next day. He was able to send us the DPS route guide as well as get in touch with search and rescue to alert them to our presence. Confirming that Route A would bring us out clear of the fire zone, we decided to forego the excitement of a helicopter rescue and attempt our own way down. We took a few last moments to watch the planes doing water drops on the canyon and to finally appreciate the expansive, if rather smoky, summit views.

The descending wash was steep and very loose, with dense patches of cholla, catclaw, and yucca to maneuver around (or more often through!). Around the middle of the descent the loose sand started turning to large boulders and steep rock, requiring a few class 3 downclimbs and threatening to leave us cliffed out without any climbing equipment. But with the confidence of the DPS guide in hand, we pressed on until the terrain slowly leveled out and the fire department helicopters slowly grew larger and larger on the horizon.

At around 4pm we found ourselves back on the canyon floor, retracing our steps towards the parking lot and reflecting on the lessons learned from what could have been a very bad day.

One: Always bring your paper map! Two: Prepare for alternate routes on the mountain. We were fortunate to have cell signal on the summit, but in a more remote location could have found ourselves needing to improvise a descent. The south face of Indianhead has numerous routes that turn into 4th and 5th class climbing, and without the guide we could easily have gotten into terrain we were not prepared to handle. Three: Know who you're gonna call. With Jeremy on speed dial, we had an experienced leader familiar with the area who could contact search and rescue and knew what information they would need to help us. Four: DPS route A is really not a lot of fun. Go for route B unless the canyon is on fire!

We reached the parking lot just as the sun hit the horizon, our car the last one remaining amidst a sea of fire trucks. We gave a wave and greeting to the fire crew to let them know we were safe and finally circled back to the car for a celebratory fizzy limeade and then on to meet the rest of the group for the next adventure.

Since that weekend, the parks service has confirmed the fire was started by a visitor to the park and burned about 85% of the palm oasis, but is optimistic the trees will start to regrow within a few months. The Borrego Palm Canyon trail remains closed, but with luck other hikers will again be able to experience this fun, scrubby route up Indianhead.







# DESERT BOOKS

By Burton Falk

## DESERT BOOKS

### THREE PRIZE-WINNING AUTHORS VISIT THE DESERT

Several excellent desert descriptions by noteworthy authors first appeared in other than desert-related volumes. Examples of finely crafted desert prose by John Steinbeck, Wallace Stegner, and Barry Lopez, first published elsewhere, are presented below:

#### JOHN STEINBECK (1902-1968)

Steinbeck, author of *Cannery Row*, *Tortilla Flat*, *East of Eden*, et al., was the recipient of the 1962 Nobel Prize for literature for his Great Depression-themed novel, the *Grapes of Wrath*. Published in 1939, Steinbeck's story follows the dirt-poor Joad family who, driven out of Oklahoma by Dust Bowl conditions, travel west to find work in California's San Joaquin Valley.

Leaving their farm, which had been re-possessed, the Joads pack their few possessions on an aging Hudson Super-Six, modified into a truck and sounding like "a threshing machine," and begin driving west on old Route 66.

"66 is the path of a people in flight, refugees from dust and shrinking land, from the thunder of tractors and shrinking ownership, from the desert's slow northward invasion, from the twisting winds that howl up out of Texas, from the floods that bring no richness to the land and steal what little richness is there. From all of these the people are in flight, and they come into 66 from the tributary side roads, from the wagon tracks and the rutted country roads. 66 is the mother road, the road of flight."

Upon reaching, "the end of Arizona...(t)here's California just over the river, and a pretty town to start it. Needles, on the river. But the river is a stranger in this place. Up from Needles and over a burned range, and there's the desert. And 66 goes on over the terrible desert, where the distance shimmers

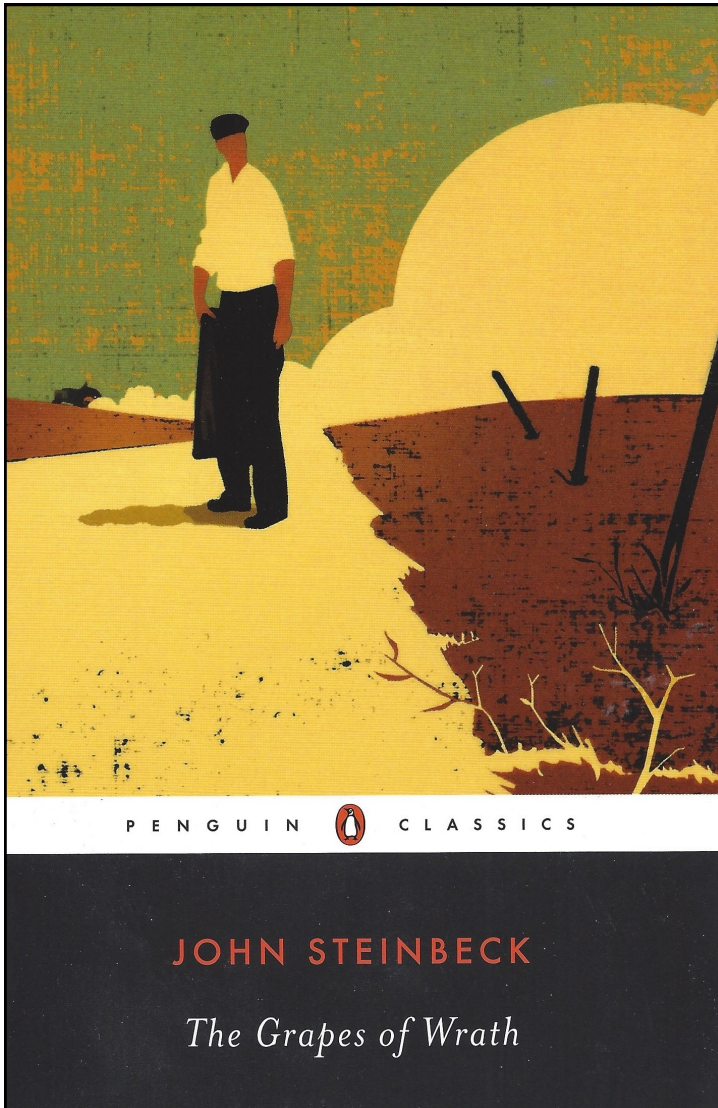
and the black center mountains hang unbearably in the distance."

Pulling out of a Needles gas station, the Joad family, now extended to twelve, start a late afternoon summer crossing of the Mojave: "The truck took the road and moved up the long hill, through the broken, rotten rock. The engine boiled very soon, and Tom slowed down and took it easy. Up the long slope, winding and twisting through dead country, burned white and gray, and no hint of life in it. Once Tom stopped for a few minutes to let the engine cool, and then he traveled on. They topped the pass while the sun was still up, and looked down on the desert—black cinder mountains in the distance, and the yellow sun reflected on the gray desert...The dusk passed into dark and the desert stars came out in the soft sky, stars stabbing and sharp, with few points and rays to them, and the sky was velvet. And the heat changed. While the sun was up, it was a beating flailing heat, but now the heat came from below, from the earth itself, and the heat was thick and muffling...On the back of the truck, Ma lay on the mattress beside Granma, and she could not see with her eyes, but she could feel the struggling body and the struggling heart and the sobbing breath was in her ear. And Ma said over and over, "All right. It's going to be all right." And she said hoarsely; "You know the family got to get across. You know that"...The night hours passed, and the dark was in against the truck. Sometimes cars passed them, going west and away; and sometimes great trucks came up out of the west and rumbled eastward. And the stars flowed down in a slow cascade over the western horizon. It was near midnight when they neared Daggett, where the inspection station is. The road was floodlighted there, and a sign illuminated, "KEEP RIGHT AND STOP."

And it was in Daggett that the family discovered that Granma Joad, ill before they left Oklahoma, had passed away during the night. Welcome to California, where the Joad's troubles were just beginning.

## Desert Books – continued

In 1960, Steinbeck, along with his aging French poodle, Charley, set out from his home in Sag Harbor, New York, intending to get a fresh perspective on America and Americans. Driving a



heavy-duty pickup truck equipped with a custom-built camper top (rare at the time), he proceeded, via Maine, the Midwest, and Montana to California, where he then crossed the Mojave on Route 66, heading in the opposite direction of the Joads in the thirties.

In his resulting 1961 volume, *Travels with Charley*, Steinbeck described crossing the Mojave thusly: “It’s easy enough now, on the high-speed road in a dependable and comfortable car, with stopping places for shade and every service station vaunting its refrigeration. But I can remember when we came to it with prayer, listening for trouble in our laboring

old motors, drawing a plume of steam from our boiling radiators...The Mojave is a big desert and a frightening one. It’s as though nature tested a man for endurance and constancy to prove whether he was good enough to get to California. The shimmering dry heat made visions of water on the flat plain. And even when you drive at high speed, the hills that mark the boundaries recede before you.”

### WALLACE STEGNER (1909-1993)

Wallace Stegner, novelist, short story writer, historian, and environmentalist, was often referred to as the Dean of Western Writers. His 1971 novel, *Angle of Repose*, which included actual quotes from letters of the wife of a mining engineer who worked throughout the American West, won the Pulitzer Prize, and his 1976 novel, *The Spectator Bird*, won the National Book Award. Born in Iowa, Stegner grew up in many places, including Montana, Saskatchewan and Utah. He earned his B.A. at the University of Utah in 1930, and his M.A. and PhD at the University of Iowa in 1932 and 1936 respectively. Later in his career, he founded the Creative Writing Dept. at Stanford University, where a few of his more notable students included Edward Abbey, Ken Kesey, Thomas McGuane, and Larry McMurtry.

In 1968, Stegner published *The Sound of Mountain Water*, a collection of essays, memoirs, letters and speeches. One essay, “The Rediscovery of America, 1946,” described an overnight campout on the Mojave Desert, somewhere off the old Highway 91, which, prior to I-15, was the main road leading from Southern California to Las Vegas.

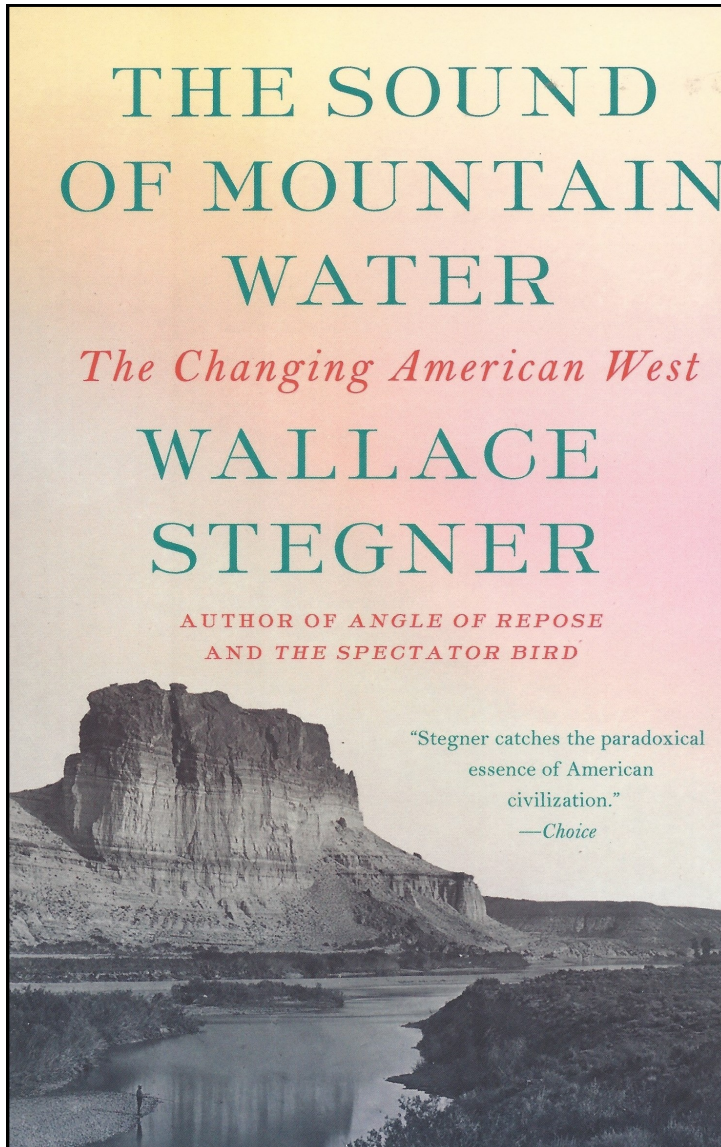
“From Windmill Station...we took a dirt road toward Cima, turned off that onto a still smaller road, and off that onto a trail that dwindled out in a wide wash. The wind was blowing hard, and it was cold. To get the protection of a reef of sandstone, we lugged food boxes and water-butt and sleeping bags two hundred yard through the sand. The place was dense with Joshua trees and cholla and barrel cactus. Every shrub we touched stabbed. Young Page (Stegner’s son) stabbed himself on a yucca, which is not called Spanish bayonet for nothing, and then was clawed by a cholla. Only his discovery of the bleached and sutured shell of a desert tortoise consoled him for the



## Desert Books – continued

cold and wind and thorns. The rest of us, trying to get camp set up before dark, and get some food going, fell back on a jug of heavy sweet wine which Dave insisted was the best of all desert giant

the slightest. Snuggled into our bags with the renewed wind in the mesquite over our heads, we do not rise up to watch the headlight creep down the valley, and if it whistles for the crossing at Cima we do not hear it for the wind.”



killers—swift and potable and uncomplex. Oddly enough, he was right.”

“We sit up till midnight, until the talk has run down and the jug has run out. Up aloft the stars are scoured and glittering, and far down the valley the headlight of a train crawls along the Union Pacific’s main line. The tracks probably pass within a dozen miles of our camp, and the main Salt Lake-Los Angeles highway is only a dozen back of us...The road we came in on won’t see a half dozen cars a month, and the highway and the railroad will pour their thousands past without affecting this wash in

Later during the same trip, Stegner and his companions attempt to drive their two-wheel-drive station wagon from Death Valley Junction, up Greenwater Canyon, to Dante’s View—this before the paved road was completed to the now popular vista point. “There is a line of stones across the entrance to the Greenwater trail, but they merely whet Dave’s appetite. He assures us that those are probably put there for casual tourists unprepared for desert travel. For several miles we bounce across scrubby flats, past an abandoned borax mine, and on into a shallow canyon. By now the road is definitely not good. In fact, there is no road, but only the flood-washed gravel. There are tracks, however, and the wash has nothing alarming about it. We creak and warp and bounce and low gear our way on and up...Ahead there is a narrow slot between two big boulders, the slot itself deep with sand, and beyond it a high crown grown with rabbit brush. There is nothing to do but hit it. The wheels begin to chatter, the whole body shudders and shakes, and the pushers grunt and strain. Then there is the sudden settling that says the bottom has gone out...There we sit, high-centered and dug in to the hubs, and the motor vapor-locks again.”

### BARRY LOPEZ (1945-)

Barry Lopez was described by fellow environmentalist and author, Edward Abbey, as “...going straight to the heart of the peculiar sensations, both physical and mental, known to all who have allowed themselves open communion with the land.”

Raised in Southern California and New York City suburb, Lopez earned undergraduate and graduate degrees at Notre Dame, was a landscape photographer, and became a best-selling author of both fiction and non-fiction works. His 1978 volume, *Of Wolves and Men*, was a National Book Award finalist, and his 1986 volume, *Arctic Dreams*, won the National Book Award for Nonfiction. Lopez currently lives near Finn Rock on the McKenzie River in Western Oregon, and his



## Desert Books – continued

manuscripts and other works are archived at Texas Tech University, where he is the university's Distinguished Scholar.

The following excerpts are from Lopez' "The Stone Horse," which was first published in *Antaeus* magazine in 1986, and later included in *Crossing Open Ground* (1989), a collection of his essays. In this piece, we follow the author's effort to find and study a three-hundred-year-old horse intaglio located at a purposefully vague site somewhere in Imperial County near the Mexican border. \*

"I ate breakfast at four a.m. in El Centro and then drove south. The route (explained to him by a BLM archeologist) was easy to follow, though the last section of road proved difficult, broken and drifted over with sand in some spots." After parking, "I traversed the stone plain as directed, but, in spite of the frankness of the land, I came on the horse unawares. In the first moment of recognition I was without feeling. I recalled later being startled, and that I held my breath...I felt as if I had stepped into an unoccupied corridor. I had no familiar sense of history, the temporal structure in which to think this horse was made by Quechan people three hundred years ago. I felt a headlong rush of images: people hunting wild horses with spears on the Pleistocene veld of Southern California...a short-legged Comanche, astride his horse like some sort of ferret, slashing through cavalry lines of young men who rode like farmers..."

"The horse had been brought to life on ground called desert pavement, a tight, flat matrix of small cobbles blasted smooth by sand-laden winds...I was not eager to move. The moment I did I would be back in the flow of time, the horse no longer quivering in the same way before me. I did not want to feel again the sequence of quotidian events—to be drawn off into deliberation and analysis. A human being, a four-footed animal, the open land. That was all that was present—and a "thoughtless" understanding of the very old desires bearing on this particular animal: to hunt it, to render it, to fathom it, to subjugate it, to honor it, to take it as a companion."

Thinking about the intaglio as he leaves the site, Lopez muses: "The idea of a desert impoverished by agricultural poisons and varmint hunters, by off-road vehicles and military operations, did not seem as

disturbing to me, however, as the other horror, now that I had been those hours with the horse. The vandals, the few who crowbar rock art off the desert's walls, who dig up graves, who punish the ground that holds intaglios, are people who devour history. Their self-centered scorn, their disrespect for ideas and images beyond their ken, create the awful atmosphere of loose ends in which totalitarianism thrives, in which the past is merely curious or wrong."

"I thought about the horse sitting out there on the unprotected plain. I enumerated its qualities in my mind until a sense of its vulnerability receded and it became an anchor for something else. I remembered that history, a history like this one which ran deeper than Mexico, deeper than the Spanish, was a kind of medicine. It permitted the great breadth of human expression to reverberate and it did not urge you to locate its apotheosis in the present."

\*In later research on Lopez, I found he made the following statement in a review for the *Alpine Review*: "I have been scrupulously honest in nonfiction. I never make anything up, but some thirty years ago, I did a story about the Mojave Desert, an essay called "The Stone Horse." As part of the research I was given directions to find a ground glyph of a horse that was probably six- or seven-hundred years old. I did find it, and I saw that it had been damaged, and when I wrote about it, I described it being in a place where it wasn't."

Do you know of likewise worthwhile but buried desert material? If so, let me know at [burtonafalk@gmail.com](mailto:burtonafalk@gmail.com). I'd be happy to review and share it.

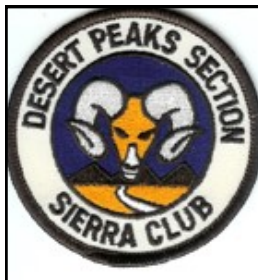


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