



Mule Pack Section



Spring 2007

Annual Newsletter

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Leadership of MPS Changes

By John Kaiser, Chair



SCOTT MEEK, JULIE SMITH-MEEK, AND JEAN NELSON, long-time officers and leaders for the Mule Pack Section, have decided to step down and pass their duties on to others. Scott and Julie became co-Chair/Outings Chair of the section in 2000 at a time when the number of trips had reached a low point of two. They recruited new leaders and provided valuable information to assist the leaders in planning successful trips. Through their efforts we have been able to offer five to seven trips each year since.

Jean Nelson served as Treasurer and edited the newsletter for many years. She led mule pack trips from 1991 through 2000. Although she did not attend trips in recent years, she continued as Treasurer providing valuable assistance to the section. Our thanks go to Scott, Julie, and Jean for all the service that they have given to the section and to their efforts in creating the successful trips that we all enjoy.

I also want to express appreciation

(Continued on page 7)

Highlights of 2007 Trips

MULE PACKS are great opportunities not just for people who love to backpack and appreciate the opportunity to be free of weight, but for couples who enjoy the outdoors, one of whom does not backpack, peak baggers (especially those who want to pick up some Sierra Peaks), photographers, fishers, folks who are past their backpacking days, and people who love to enjoy the outdoors in relative comfort.

Five trips are planned for 2007. For those who prefer long weekend trips, the season opens July 12 with a trip to Rush Creek in the beautiful Thousand Lakes area, near the John Muir trail with lots of opportunities for lake and pass hikes.

Three trips last a full-week. At the start of August, we go to Purple Lake where the John Muir trail, Virginia Lake, Ram

(Continued on page 7)



Participants on Saddlerock trip at Bishop Pass with Agassiz in the background

2007 Mule Pack Trips

GUIDELINES FOR ALL TRIPS: On all trips, mules carry gear to the campsite, drop it off, and return at the end of the trip to carry it out. The weight per person that the mules will carry is shown for each trip. In addition, you may carry as much as you like in your pack when you hike in. All trips provide wine for the nightly “happy hours,” which typically can substitute for dinner. Participants chip in pot luck style for the Happy Hour food. Campsites below 10,000’ generally allow campfires. During the trip, each participant may do as he or she chooses, within safety guidelines. Usually, the leaders will plan some optional hikes as well. To apply, email the indicated leader with info about your condition and experience. Leaders’ email addresses are on the first page. After you are accepted for a trip, the leader will provide the details you need about what to bring and trip plan. **Note reservation/cancellation policy on page 3.** Sign up and have fun!

Jul 12-16

Thu-Mon

O: Rush Creek (9400’): An opportunity for folks who can only take a few days for a trip. We will have a Thursday morning start from the Frontier Pack Train, located across from Silver Lake on the June Lake loop. The trail leaves from the pack station and after a short level stretch we will have a steep climb of 1900’ over the next 2.5 miles. The good news will be the panoramic views of the June Lake basin to admire as we climb. After passing above Agnew Lake, the trail levels out past Gem Lake to our campsite alongside Rush Creek just east of Waugh Lake. Total gain for the 6.5-mile hike is 2500’. Evening campfires are allowed for our Happy Hours. It’s Winnette’s first mule pack lead but she is well known as the “Happy Hour Maven” for her wonderful concoc-



A marmot visits—Dingleberry Lake

tions and sunny disposition. Participants can choose from many potential day hikes during the layover days. On the easy end are round trips to Weber & Sullivan Lakes (600’ gain, 3 mi rt) and exploring along Rush Creek or Waugh Lake. A more strenuous, featured hike will explore the upper reaches of Rush Creek, going to Marie Lakes (11,200’) at the base of Mt Lyell and Rodgers Peak. Other possibilities are hikes to a falls on the way to Gem Pass, to Island Pass for an overlook of Thousand Island Lakes, to Clark Lakes, or to Lost Lakes via a class 1 cross country route. Wildflowers are expected to be abundant on this early season trip; John Kaiser is an expert on Sierra flora. We will hike out on Monday without having explored it all. Up to 45 lbs of gear will be allowed on the mules and there is a limit of 15 participants. Trip cost is \$220. Contact Co-Ldr: **Laura Joseph**. Ldr: John Kaiser, Co-Ldr: Winnette Butler **Waiting List only.**

Aug 5-11

Sun-Sat

O/I: Purple Lake (9960’): This one is for lake lovers!

Sunday start from Mammoth Lakes and hike 8 miles, 2300’ gain to beautiful, secluded Purple Lake. We’ll have five days to hike, fish, photo, relax, and possibly bag some peaks or passes. We will have campfires with our happy hours. Mules return to pack us out on Saturday. At this time of year, mosquitoes should not be a problem. Purple is close to the John Muir trail and Duck Lake. Possible hiking destinations include Duck Pass, Tully Hole via Lake Virginia, Cascade Valley, Glen, Ram, Duck, Pika and Glennette Lakes. Leaders promise lots of adventurous hikes for those so inclined. 50 pounds of gear will be allowed. Total cost of trip \$220. Contact co-leader **Yvonne Tsai** to apply. Co-leaders Laura Joseph and Sandy Burnside.

(Continued on page 3)



On the trail to Purple Lake—View of Duck Lake

2007 Mule Pack Trips, cont.

(Continued from page 2)

August 19-25, 2007 Sat-Sun

O/I: Virginia Canyon (9400'): Virginia Canyon, west of Virginia Lakes, is in the beautiful seldom visited northeast corner of Yosemite. Mules will carry our gear in on Sunday and return to pack us out the following Saturday. Our trek to the campsite will be an easy 7 miles with 1500' gain to about 9400'. We'll have five days to hike, fish, photograph, relax, read, and bag some peaks, lakes and passes. This is the trip for serious hikers. The trip is led by George Wysup — a legend in the Hundred Peaks section for being the 10th person ever to lead the list and the first to hike 200 peaks by three different routes each. Laura Joseph, also a peak-bagger and mule pack regular, is co-leader. Possible hikes include Excelsior Peak (SPS list), Carniace and Epidote Peaks, Grey Butte, Virginia Pass, and many lakes. Evenings feature the famous Mule Pack Happy Hour by the camp fire. At this time of the year, mosquitoes should not be a problem. Up to 50 lbs of gear. Total cost of trip \$220. Contact co-leader **George Wysup** to apply. Co-leader Laura Joseph.

Aug 26-Sept 1 Sun-Sat

O/I: Crown Lake: The Crown Lake trip will start at Twin Lakes, near Bridgeport (on the 395 north of Mammoth). We'll hike in on Sunday about 8 miles with 2500' gain to our campsite at Crown Lake

(9500') in the Hoover Wilderness bordering the northeast side of Yosemite. The mules will carry up to 50 pounds per person. There will be five days to hike, fish, relax, swim, and enjoy nature. On Saturday, we'll hike out as the mules carry our gear back. The trip is led by "The Sandies" who are known for coordinating outstanding happy hours (you won't need dinner) and creative exploring. Up to 50 lbs of gear. Trip cost is \$250. Contact co-leader **Sandy Spurling**. Co-leader Sandy Burnside. **Waiting List only.**

Aug 31-Sept 3 Fri-Mon

O: Ten Lakes Basin of Yosemite: Finish the summer in style at the incomparably beautiful Yosemite National Park. Hike from Yosemite Creek through Half Moon Meadow and then climb a ridge with rewarding views of the Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne and the north country before dropping into the Ten Lakes basin. Many lakes to explore, great sunsets, and an extended weekend to explore the surrounding area. Hike in 6.5 miles with 2190' gain to a campsite at 8940' at one of the lakes. We will have the extended weekend to explore the surrounding area. Maximum weight 45 pounds. Trip limit is 15. Trip cost is \$175. For this trip only, please send the deposit of \$25 and the final payment of \$150 together; the check for final payment will not be deposited until 60 days before the trip. Contact co-leader Christine Gutierrez to apply. Co-leader David Cross.

Reservation/Cancellation Policy: To reserve or ask questions, email (or call if you have no email access) the specified leader for the trip you are interested in. The leader will ask for information about your condition and experience. If you are accepted for the trip, you will be asked for a nonrefundable \$25 deposit and your contact information. You will receive a short message confirming your reservation. About 90 days before the trip begins, you will be asked to send the balance of the trip cost. Your check must be received no less than 60 days before the start date. Upon receipt of your check, you will receive a long message detailing the information you'll need for the trip. If you cancel less than 60 days before the start date, you will receive a refund of 80% of the total trip cost ONLY if a suitable replacement is found.



Participants on Dingleberry (left) and Saddlerock 2006 tips



2006 Trip Reports

Saddlerock Lake Mule Pack Trip July 23-29, 2006

It was a little chilly and overcast when nine of us left the Rainbow Pack Station for the South Lake trail to Saddlerock Lake but, after weeks of 100+ temperatures in Southern California, no one was complaining. An easy 4 mile trek got us to perhaps the prettiest and most ideally situated campsite in the Sierra. Located on a rise adjacent to the Lake, there are at least a dozen excellent, fairly secluded tent sites among the trees. The view across the Lake is of Mount Goode and, to the southeast, of the scary-looking Agassiz. To the north is the yummy sight of Chocolate Peak.

The group included seven participants who have mule-packed together a number of times: Leaders Yvonne Tsai (the mosquito magnet), Laura Joseph

(never without at least one bandaid on her shins) and Sandy Burnside (the cross-country maven), as well as John Kaiser (the expert rain shelter engineer and horticulturist), Rich (champion senior hiker) and Bill Rowland (campsite guard), and Winnette Butler (ever cheerful). Newcomers were Stan Rosenwald (always ready to help) and Betsy Horgan (Dusy Basin expert).

During the week, we were honored by visits from Bob Mullens, a mule-pack veteran who backpacked in for a few days, and Ron Zappen, a well-known HPS-er who has a way of turning up in the most unlikely places, who bagged Agassiz and joined us for the wimpy climb up Chocolate. Mike Gosnell and Brent Crookham stopped by to say "hi" on their way to bag Agassiz and other peaks in the area.

Among our group, only Stan and Yvonne actually made it to the top of Agassiz — even Yvonne, a seasoned climber, admitted that the massive peak has a few "tricky spots." The rest of us contented ourselves with hikes over Bishop Pass to the beautiful Dusy Basin, several hikes to Chocolate (couldn't get

enough of the sweet stuff) and "lake-bagging." Sandy and Laura managed to do a number of creative cross-country romps without getting irretrievably lost and enjoyed adventures along the way.

John K shared with the group his knowledge of the wide variety of beautiful flowers we saw as we explored the very beautiful area within a five mile radius of the Lake.

Although it rained every day, the rain never started before 4 pm nor lasted after 9 pm so it did not interfere with our enjoyment of the outdoors. But what about Happy Hour, you ask? That's where John's talent was crucial. The very first day, with assistance from Laura, Yvonne and Sandy, John erected a tarp over the HH area.

When it rained, we all clustered under the tarp and enjoyed the variety of goodies (thanks especially to Sandy and Winnette), wine and congenial company. A sampling of comments about the trip: Betsy, who has backpacked, enjoyed not having to carry stuff, getting comfortable in one spot, having a variety of food and a pillow. Moreover, she says, you see more without a backpack cause you can "keep your head up."

The Happy Hours are a great opportunity to be social and to eat (too much).

Yvonne, who first mule packed in 1999, found the scenery "outstanding," the group congenial and the mosquitoes "awful." The Agassiz hike, while a bit scary, was the best of the week for her.

Rich, a geologist from whom we all learned a lot, was excited at seeing rock glaciers while his brother, Bill, especially enjoyed bagging Chocolate Peak.



Bishop and Saddlerock Lakes from Bishop Pass

(Continued on page 6)

2006 Trip Reports, cont.

Dingleberry Mulepack Trip

August 6-12, 2006

Musings by Jane

Leaders: Sandy Burnside, Sandy Sperling,
Participants: Susanne Blessington,
Keith Burnside, Winnette Butler, Dane Hill, John
McCarthy, Jane McCord, Carole Shawver

It had been years since I had gone on a mulepack trip, so I had forgotten a lot. We were informed that we could bring 50 lbs including our easy chairs. This seemed good to me until I got all my stuff together. Four days to take-off, and I've got over sixty pounds. This doesn't look so good after all. I start taking out things. The new snazzy chair purchased especially for this trip is over 7 lbs. I don't know what else to do. Two days to send-off. I inform the leaders that I will have to jettison the clothes, food, or chair. I either starve, go naked, or sit on hard rocks Indian style for a week. Not an easy choice. The Sandies assure me that it will all work out. I am not convinced. The night before D-Day, Susanne and I are madly re-packing our stuff in the motel room and miss the Pizza party attended by the rest of the group.

D-Day. We haul our (more or less) 50 lbs of whatever we decided on, and meet the group. My solution has been to carry everything over 50 lbs on my back. Thus, I am carrying approximately what a mule is. I'm sure these mules are unionized, and I got the short end of the stick. This is a real eye-opener about the advantages of collective bargaining. There is extensive effort to get a group photo even though some of the group has gone ahead. Sandy Sperling, who I will come to find out has a solution for anything, solves the problem, and we get that photo.

The group gets going and we have a beautiful hike past Lake Sabrina. It was a crisp and clear morning and the rising sun on the peaks was beautiful. We passed flowers still blooming and more incredible vistas on our way to Blue Lake. This beautiful clear lake is set among towering cliffs and a tree lined shore. About mid-afternoon, we arrived at our destination: Dingleberry Lake. (A survey indicated that there were those among us who had no idea what a dingleberry was.)

This was a stunning fully beautiful lake in spite of its name, and it was a mad scramble to see who could get lakeview squatters' rights for their tent site. Even though some of us didn't manage such a view from our tent, we all found good flat places to pitch them. By late afternoon, we were all en-

sconced in our new homes for the week.

Now this group is known for their great Happy Hours, which I was to learn are really dinners. Although many members had known each other for years, there



*The Sandies get ready to serve their world famous quesadillas
Dingleberry Lake 2006*

were several of us who were new to the group. Sandy Burnside presided over this first Happy Hour by announcing that, as an icebreaker for those naturally taciturn Sierra Club members, we would begin by introducing ourselves, telling the group something about us, and that others were free to ask questions. Let it be noted that this process took the rest of the week, because our group had a pretty colorful past. It is truly amazing what good food and wine will do when it comes to getting to know someone.

For five glorious days, we explored the lakes and peaks in our area. The weather was perfect with hardly a cloud in the sky. The numerous lakes that we visited were all set among towering snow covered peaks and forests. We saw lakes that were deep blue and emerald green. (It might be noted that there were those that were so moved that they shed their clothes and indulged in some skinny dipping.) At one of our communal dinners, we counted over forty varieties of flowers that we had seen on our hikes. Some of us scrambled over boulders and ridges. Others of us did not stray from the trails. Others chose to just relax in their campsites on some days.. It was with sadness the following Saturday that we bade our mountains good-bye and returned to our worlds.

We all enjoyed the company of each other, and most of us made new friends that we will travel with again. Our leaders were inspirational, supportive, wonderful cooks, and provided the backdrop for a very special week. We all felt very lucky to have had the opportunity to share in this experience.

2006 Trip Reports, cont.

(Saddlerock, Continued from page 4)

Stan also found mule packing a great alternative to backpacking with all its advantages and then some. He never felt better than when he reached the top of Agassiz (Stan, I believe, has suction cups on his boots). He vows to do at least one mule pack per year, selecting a trip that includes Winnette so he can look forward to good Happy Hour food.

Winnette, who has participated in many mule packs and is well-known for her sunny disposition as well as her contributions to Happy Hour, remarked that, even with the rain, Saddlerock was another wonderful trip.



Mules en route to Saddlerock Lake



Just another beautiful lake



A typical Sierra view



Getting ready for Happy Hour in the rain

(MPS Changes, Continued from page 1)

to those who have taken over the officer positions of the section: Sandy Sperling is the new Vice-Chair, Sandy Burnside the Treasurer, Yvonne Tsai the Outings Chair, and Laura Joseph has taken over as Newsletter Editor. Sandy B and Yvonne attended their first mule pack in 1999, Laura and Sandy S in 2002. Each became regulars on the trips and then moved into leading our trips. Sandy, Sandy, and Laura are I-rated leaders active with the Hundred Peaks Section. When Yvonne is not leading Sierra Club outings, she is usually climbing with the Southern California Mountaineers Association. Christine Gutierrez and David Cross continue as trip leaders.

Lastly, I have agreed to take over as the chair of the section. For those who do not know me, I first participated in a mule pack in 1997 that was led by Jean Nelson and Sus Yonemori and have not missed a year since. I want to personally thank Jean for convincing me after a 1998 trip to Purple Lake to become an outings leader for the Angeles Chapter. I led my first mule pack trip in 1999 and have led one to three trips every year since except for 2006. I will be leading a trip in 2007 as well as returning to Purple Lake in a non-leader role. In addition to the mule pack outings, I lead local hikes with the Sierra Sage group and lead the Sierra Club's trail maintenance activities in the San Mateo Wilderness. Although I have been a Sierra Club member for about 30 years, it took that first mule pack trip in 1997 to get me actively involved with the club.

(Highlights of 2007 Trips, Continued from page 1)

Lakes, and Franklin Lakes provide many day hike possibilities.

Next on the calendar is a trip to Virginia Canyon, a spectacular area in the northeast corner of Yosemite.

At the end of August, we have scheduled a trip to Crown Lake in the Hoover Wilderness.

The last trip of the summer is a short one over Labor Day Weekend. This trip goes to a campsite below Vogelsang Peak in Yosemite Park.

See the write-ups beginning page 2 for detailed information about these trips. Reservation and deposit information is on page 3.



MULE PACK SECTION ANNUAL MEETING 2007

The annual meeting of the Mule Pack section is scheduled for September 30, 2007 at 1:00 PM. The main business of the meeting is to plan trips for 2008. In addition, we must elect officers for the coming year. All Angeles Chapter members who participate in Mule Pack Section trips are considered members and entitled to attend the meeting, make nominations, and vote. This is also an opportunity for a post-season visit with Mule Pack friends. Please RSVP to Sandy Sperling (contact info on front page) who will give you directions to the meeting.





If your address label says "It's time to renew" we want you to do just that. Just send an email, saying "please continue MPS" to ljoseph2@earthlink.net.

We're on the Web

For the earliest notice of each summer's trips, check the website, www.angeles.sierraclub.org/mps in December. You can also view or download copies of this and previous newsletters in pdf format with pictures in full color.

Newsletter Subscription Policy:

The Mule Pack newsletter is published annually and is sent at no charge to all who subscribe. Subscriptions are for four years and can be renewed as often as you wish. Subscriptions and renewals are automatically given to participants on trips. Others should contact the newsletter editor:

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