Volunteers Crucial to BLM Wilderness Programs

In the last two years, volunteers have helped the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM) Ridgecrest Field Office in thirteen wilderness or wilderness study areas. Without volunteers, the Field Office would not have a functioning wilderness program. In this time of budget shortfalls, wilderness programs are critically understaffed. Most California Desert District (CDD) offices have only one staff person working fulltime in wilderness, despite the fact that there are more than 3.6 million acres of wilderness in the CDD.

Like most wilderness coordinators, I have a hard time getting out from behind my desk and on-the-ground. I must respond to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements of all programs with projects in wilderness, as well as pushing my own wilderness projects through the system. The NEPA requirements for wilderness are stiff and time-consuming. The NEPA work is virtually a job in itself.

One Park Ranger for five wildernesses

In Ridgecrest, I am most fortunate to have one Wilderness Park Ranger, Ruby Allen. Ruby spends virtually all of her time on the five wildernesses closest to Ridgecrest that have the most problems with Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) trespass.

To give you some idea of how hard Ruby works in just these five areas in a single month of the busy use season, she drives over 1,000 miles of boundary roads, replaces/installs about fifty signs, builds ten vehicle barriers, and repairs fifteen restoration sites.

Ruby also monitors Furnace Creek, Great Falls Basin, and the barrier in Surprise Canyon once a month. For Ridgecrest’s eleven other wildernesses and two wilderness study areas, I must rely almost entirely on my cadre of dedicated volunteers to help me out with mission critical on-the-ground tasks.

How volunteers contribute

Individual volunteers have “adopted” special places, trails, or wilderness areas. They regularly visit, monitor, inventory, file reports, and perform other work in these areas. Volunteers have monitored and performed work in the Great Falls Basin and White Mountain Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), the El Paso, Sylvania, Piper, and Inyo Mountains Wildernesses, and the Malpais Mesa, Darwin Falls, Coso Range, Bright Star, Sacatar Trail, Surprise Canyon, and Manly Peak Wildernesses.

Individuals who volunteer come to the office, pick up detailed boundary maps, carsonite signs and pounders, wood posts, shovels, and stickers, and go to work, often camping out overnight and working an area for 2-3 days. They note special problems and offer suggestions on how to make things work better. When a proposal requires NEPA, I do the paperwork and begin planning a group service project, if needed.

Group projects bring out many hands

Group service trips are wonderful ways to employ many hands to accomplish a great deal in a short amount of time. With the help of Desert Survivors, we were finally able to stop vehicle trespass into the Steam Well petroglyph site in the Golden Valley Wilderness. First we mechanically de-compacted the heavily

Without volunteers, the Ridgecrest Field Office would not have a functioning wilderness program.
The Flat Tailed Horned Lizard

The Flat Tailed Horned Lizard (FTHL) got a boost when a judge ruled that Interior Secretary Gale Norton violated the law when she failed to consider shrinking habitat as part of a decision not to pursue federal protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The ruling means that the small sand-dwelling lizard could be back in line for ESA protection.

The FTHL has a broad flat tail and long, sharp horns on its head. Once widely distributed, it is now found only in four populations: Coachella Valley, the west side of the Salton Sea, eastern Imperial County, and the Yuma Desert in Arizona.

The judges ruling does not require that the FTHL be listed under the ESA, but rather that the Fish and Wildlife Service must reconsider whether to list.

SLAPP Suit Slapped Down

SLAPP suits are “Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation.” Such suits are brought to intimidate people from using the right to speak out on public issues.

Recently a developer brought a suit against a private individual and Forest Service employees for speaking out to protect the bald eagles at Big Bear Lake. The Forest Service employees and the Executive Director of the Friends of Fawnskin were fighting the proposed Marina Point development which would place 132 luxury condominiums, a 175-slip marina and tennis courts on 12.5 acres on Grout Bay on the north shore of Big Bear Lake near the tiny town of Fawnskin. The huge pines circling Grout Bay are the perches for the bald eagles, which are listed under the Endangered Species Act.

Last spring, Los Angeles District Judge Manuel Real threw out the suit saying the Forest Service employees and the individual were exercising their 1st Amendment rights.

Now, the Judge has ordered the developer's lawyers to pay $267,000 in sanctions for filing a ‘frivolous’ action against federal workers and a community activist.

Surprise Canyon EIS on Fast Track

Late September the BLM put completion of the Draft version of the Surprise Canyon Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), in the works since mid-2001, on a Fast Track. The goal is the end of September. The DEIS then goes to the Cooperators—Inyo County, the Timbisha Tribe, the Lahontan water board, and the Fish and Game department, for comment. It’s expected the preferred alternative will allow some form of motorized traffic in this restored canyon that extends into Death Valley. This would reestablish the extreme 4WD route, now completely invisible, in the stream in the rugged, narrow flowing falls and through vigorous riparian areas above and below the falls.

Destroying the National Parks

The management of the national parks has always had at its core the leaving of the parks unimpaired for future generations. This is now threatened.

Recently, a secret draft revision of the national park system's basic management policy document has been circulating within the Interior Department. It was prepared, without consultation within the National Park Service, by Paul Hoffman, a deputy assistant secretary at Interior who once ran the Chamber of Commerce in Cody, Wyoming, was a Congressional aide to Dick Cheney and has no park service experience.

The rewrite undermines the protected status of the national parks. It is a political document that changes the vision of the park system. It subtly changes such words as “protect” to “conserve” and it is a frontal attack on the idea of “impairment”. It would open up nearly every park unit to off-road vehicles, snowmobiles and jet skis.

This is not a policy for protecting the parks, but destroying them. Mr. Hoffman does everything possible to strip away a scientific basis for park management. His rules would essentially require park superintendents to subordinate the management of their parks to local and state agendas. He also envisions a much wider range of commercial activity with the parks.

The rewrite has been kept hidden from park service employees. The document gives us a road map of what could happen to the parks if the present political appointees are allowed to have their way.

Flawed Panamint Range Mining Activity Report

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has issued a flawed mining report for the Panamint Mountains. As required by the California Desert Protection Act of 1994, the BLM recently issued an assessment of mineral activity and potential in the ‘Section 106’ area of the Panamint Mountains. The document was deeply flawed.

The report overstated mining claims in the area by double counting 25% of them and including exhausted claims. It overstated production, employment and local impact of the area’s Briggs Mine by 35%, 20%, and 25% respectively, and implied a high level of activity when only the Briggs mine has been active in the last fifteen years. The report stated there is ‘existing and ongoing mineral activity’ and ‘current and planned mining activities’, when there are none (unless you count shut-down of the Briggs mine as mining activity). Evidence of lack of mineral interest was omitted.

Desert Activist Tom Budlong has noticed the BLM of the flaws in the report, but has received no response.

(For a copy of the full report and analysis, e-mail Tom Budlong at TomBudlong@Adelphia.net)
Wilderness Programs

continued from page 13

compacted trespass route. Volunteer hand crews then applied some labor-intensive restoration techniques, pitting, rocking, vertical mulching, and camouflaging. We created a vehicle pull-out at the site entrance and defined a winding footpath to the petroglyphs. Illegal vehicle access was replaced with an aesthetic, wilderness-appropriate foot and equestrian trail.

In the Great Falls WSA, the community of Trona worked with BLM to clean up a local party place at the base of the falls. This has been an on-going multi-year project, with annual community cleanups and regular monitoring and spontaneous work parties by members of the community to keep the place clean and graffiti-free.

We have picked up trash, restored 4 illegal hill climbs in the vicinity of the falls, blocked vehicle access to the immediate base of the falls and to Austin Spring. We also placed boulders, sand-blasted graffiti off the rocks, brought in clean sand, and relocated fire pits outside of the “beach” area at the falls. A place that has always been special to Trona has been restored. Illicit drug activity and wild parties have stopped. Families, scouts, and churches have returned. Great Falls will be featured now as one of the local places of special interest in the interpretative kiosk we are building at the Trona Rest Stop.

Special projects lure committed individuals

Individual volunteers also help with special projects. A volunteer accompanied me early this summer on a cultural inventory trip along a segment of trail from Pat Keyes Spring to the McEvoy mill site in the Inyo Mountains Wilderness. This was the second of five such trips I have planned for the Inyos. The trip involved a grueling six-day backpack over severe terrain that is little known and infrequently visited. We filled-out Site Steward forms and photographed sites and artifacts in-place that the archeologists have no record of in the Ridgecrest Field Office.

This year, three volunteers, working independently, completed 75–100 percent of the tamarisk surveys needed for six of the most affected wilderness areas in the Ridgecrest Field Office. The result? The Ridgecrest Field Office will be provided with additional funding to remove tamarisk in wilderness. We will be scheduling some group-service tamarisk removal projects upon completion of an Environmental Analysis (EA), based in part on the information these volunteers gathered.

This spring, Desert Committee volunteers worked with Ridgecrest BLM Law Enforcement Officers (LEOs) to apprehend OHV trespassers in an innovative operation in the Kiavah Wilderness. Volunteers hiked to prominent high spots in the wilderness with binoculars, radios, and cameras and reported violators to undercover LEO’s patrolling in the area. The first operation resulted in ten wilderness citations. The second resulted in seven, with a perceived deterrent effect by the second day. More importantly, volunteers demonstrated that they could work effectively in conjunction with LEOs patrolling in vehicles outside wilderness to catch offenders. The LEOs did not need to resort to staging vehicles inside of the wilderness area.

Volunteers are an invaluable resource

Most of my time on-the-ground is project-driven, i.e., Adopt-A-Cabin, guzzlers, and the Surprise Canyon Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Having additional eyes and ears out there to regularly monitor, inventory, and file reports on general conditions and features of special interest is enormously helpful. This is one way to get a sense of the trends developing, perceived problems, and any specific attributes requiring protection.

Often a volunteer exploring an area, particularly one who has explored the same area for a number of years, will notice something important that may escape our notice altogether or for several months running. We simply can’t be everywhere at once, and there are many obscure and out-of-the-way places we never get to at all! Volunteers find significant things, sometimes so significant that we act upon them almost immediately. Examples are the marijuana farm discovered in Cottonwood Creek or the new trespass structure that appeared in the Bright Star Wilderness.

A network of committed activists

The CDD is fortunate to have such a committed and well-organized group of activists to call upon. These activists realized the work was not completed after passage of the California Desert Protection Act in 1994. They are willing and eager to help BLM realize this great wilderness vision that we are now all embarked upon together.

As partners, we can capitalize and expand upon this base. We can help people get involved and provide them with a real opportunity to be effective. At the same time, we need to reach out and find common ground with those more resistant to change, including those individuals in our volunteer efforts whenever possible.

We continually need to make the case for wilderness. We need to make these wildernesses work as wilderness for as many people as possible. The more people we get invested in wilderness, the stronger our wilderness programs will be.

A strong and broad volunteer base is helping us build a lasting and more knowledgeable constituency that will speak up for wilderness.

Marty Dickes is a wilderness coordinator for the Ridgecrest BLM Field Office

This year, three volunteers, working independently, completed 75–100 percent of the tamarisk surveys needed for six of the most affected wilderness areas in the Ridgecrest Field Office.
The Oxford American Dictionary first defines volunteer as noun, as “a person who offers to do something”. The word voluntary is an adjective, it tells us much about that person - the volunteer, and is defined as: 1) acting or done or given of one’s own free will; and 2) working or done without payment. In today’s society, where either self-indulgent apathy or the often obsessive pursuit of the dollar drives peoples’ lives, those who volunteer are very special human beings indeed. These are people who have offered to come and spend their free time working, without monetary compensation. They often travel significant distances. The work is dirty… clothes get worn or ruined. The weather isn’t always the best for hard work; it’s often really hot or really cold, and sometimes wet. Occasionally they lose blood in the process... however; they’re usually cheerful through it all! Why do they do this? I think because these are passionate people. They care about what they do. They want their actions to mean something. They want their time to be well spent. They want to contribute to something they believe in.

There are countless endeavors in conservation that owe a great deal, often the attainment of success itself, to the work of volunteers. Wind Wolves Preserve has benefited hugely from the generous efforts of such people. For seven and a half years we have hosted what we call a “volunteer work party”. It happens one weekend each month. Our volunteers arrive Saturday morning and work most of that day. Those that desire are invited to camp in one of our group campgrounds, where we provide them with a barbecue dinner. If enough remain on Sunday, we offer a morning tour of the Preserve. Over the years we have accomplished great things, and worked on a wide variety of projects. We have cleaned up rubbish from around two old homestead sites; we have, removed derelict fences and corrals; we have planted trees and shrubs to landscape around our facilities; we have planted several hundred valley oak seedlings in an on-going restoration project. But the thing we have worked on most is what we call “tamarisk whacking!” To date, old growth tamarisk or salt cedar has been successfully removed from three of the five major drainages. We are at work on another, Pleito Creek, which is proving to be a real struggle. However, in time, because we have great volunteers, Pleito Creek will also be free of tamarisk!

One of the remarkable aspects of our volunteers has been the durability of a core group of people that have been showing up time and time again since the beginning. Andy Schouten is a rock art enthusiast who works in magazine publishing. Andy drives from San Diego to work one day each month. Bill Palmer is a carpenter and a professional bicycle racer. Bill will be here if he does not have a race on Saturday. On occasion, he’ll work Saturday, and leave after the barbecue to drive some great distance for a race on Sunday. Paul Gipe, a globally recognized guru of wind energy, together with his wife Nancy Neis, rarely missed a day before they moved to Toronto. When they returned a year and a half later, they jumped back in and have not missed a day since. Dale Chitwood helps us out on a regular basis. He drives from his home in Pine Mountain Club twice a week to continued on page 18
Volunteers Critical to Wilderness

Volunteers’ interest in protecting wild lands does not end once an area is designated as wilderness. Individuals and groups work with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to restore and maintain wilderness areas designated by the California Desert Protection Act (CDPA). They help in restoration work by getting rid of illegal routes, removing invasive species like tamarisk, and hauling trash out. They help maintain the integrity of wilderness boundaries, through signing, erecting informational kiosks, monitoring resources, and participating in enforcement efforts.

Volunteers leading these efforts, and building collaborative relationships with BLM managers met on August 3rd, 2005 with BLM managers from across the desert to discuss wilderness management and opportunities. The plan is to meet regularly; wilderness advocates from organizations like California Wilderness Coalition (CWC), Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, Desert Protective Council, and agency staff would continue to discuss concerns about how wilderness areas are managed and more effective ways for managers and volunteers to work together to reach common objectives.

For the first time in several years, all five resource areas within the Desert District have wilderness coordinators. The meeting provided a great opportunity to meet one another and hear how managers in different parts of the desert deal with various issues. A common thread throughout much of the discussion was how volunteers can support better management.

Volunteers and managers alike shared stories about successful volunteer efforts and why they were successful. For example, volunteers who like to get out into the core of desert wilderness can help monitor resources, including water resources and recovery of closed routes far from the boundaries of the areas. One idea for improving communications between land managers and wilderness organizations is to hold a meeting at the beginning of the year outlining potential volunteer projects so that the project information can be disseminated to volunteer organizers. Participants left feeling that we had a productive discussion that laid a good foundation for future meetings and collaborative opportunities.

Volunteers are the threads that hold the fabric of wilderness together. From the inception of the Wilderness Act to the designation of new wilderness areas and the maintenance of those areas, volunteers have been at the forefront.

Under the Wilderness Act, only Congress can designate new wilderness areas. This allows every-day citizens a strong voice in the process of protecting wild areas and volunteers have risen to the occasion. A great example of this was the passage of the California Desert Protection Act in 1994 (CDPA), which protected over 7.5 million acres in the desert as wilderness, and would not have come into being if not for the tireless effort of so many volunteers.

The California Wild Heritage Campaign (CWHC) is a current example. In 1997, a group of citizens joined together in an unprecedented effort to map and inventory potential wilderness areas throughout California. Organized by the California Wilderness Coalition (CWC), hundreds of volunteers donated thousands of hours of labor to determine the wilderness potential of lands in California. Four years later, the inventories were complete; 7.4 million acres of potential Wilderness and nearly 4,000 miles of potential new Wild and Scenic rivers had been found. The California Wild Heritage Campaign, begun in 2000, recruited others to support protection of the lands. By May of 2002, a broad base of support for local areas was in place and Senator Barbara Boxer introduced the California Wilderness Act (CWHA) which would protect 2.5 million acres and 400 miles of rivers.

continued on page 22
Owls and the Salton Sea

continued from page 8

Al had also noticed that burrowing owls tended to hollow out holes dug by ground squirrels on the edges of irrigation ditches. This could be problematic for farmers who tripped in the holes while walking the field-side edges of the canals at night when receiving a 24-hour water delivery. Kalin reasoned that if the owls were on the outer side of the canal, the street side, their holes would not pose a hazard for the ditch walkers. So, with the help of a visiting biology professor from the University of Utah, Dan Rosenberg, Al designed an owl box that could be buried on the street side of the ditch. Al presented the plans he had designed for owl boxes at the workshops. Vance Russell then explained ways that Audubon could help farmers find financial aid to build the boxes and set aside land for other wildlife use.

The Farm Bureau credited the promise of food for the unusually high attendance (a total of 246 attended the four workshops). Vance Russell has already made connections with several farmers who are interested in working on land stewardship projects. The Water Education Foundation is very pleased to have played a part in this valuable partnership. We hope that any resulting reduction in silt into the Salton Sea will help improve that fragile ecosystem.

Judy Maben is Education/Tour Director of Water Education Foundation.

Wind Wolves

continued from page 16

maintain the plantings and the irrigation systems serving them. Without his diligence we would have lost most of the seedling oaks we have planted over the last three years. Hank Goebel missed only one weekend in six years before he grew too weak to work. Cancer took him from us in January of 2004. Hank was the father of Wind Wolves’ Education Director Sherryl Clendenen. An oak tree was planted in our new campground in his honor at a memorial service attended by nearly all our long time volunteers. Many were people who did not know either Hank or each other before our volunteer work parties began, but they all became lasting friends through those shared days of toil at Wind Wolves Preserve. All our volunteers are unique and remarkable people, each in their own way, just as each work party is a unique and remarkable experience, because of those wonderful humans.

There have been many times over the past few years that my energy was sapped, and I really wanted nothing more than a day off to recharge my batteries. I found myself wishing that the volunteer event was not going to happen that weekend. I’ve had ridiculous thoughts of slowing down, and just not doing it anymore. But each time the day arrived, a great group of people showed up, and there I was away from the phone and computer, out there in a beautiful place with great people, working together on something that we all cared deeply about. Low and behold, those batteries got recharged every time!

David Clendenen is a Wildlife Biologist who is Manager of the Wind Wolves Preserve.
Water Victory in Owens Valley

continued from page 1

the form of monetary punishments and reductions in groundwater pumping in order to provide LA DWP with an incentive to complete the Lower Owens River Project as soon as possible.

The Lower Owens River Project (LORP) is the name of a huge mitigation plan for the tremendous destruction of springs and wetlands by LA DWP groundwater pumping not in the early part of the 20th Century but between 1970 and 1990, long after environmental damage from other water projects. Massive pumping begun in 1970 to fill the ‘second’ Los Angeles aqueduct lowered water tables in the Owens Valley causing the death of large springs and wetlands. A dry river since the first Los Angeles aqueduct was finished in 1913, the LORP’s goals call for the creation of 62 miles of riparian habitat and a warm water fishery. Extensive willow-cottonwood stands as well as marshes and meadows were to be created. However flows in the river, agreed to by LA DWP in 1997, which were to have begun two years ago in June of 2003, have still not occurred.

Deadlines not properly met

Re-watering on this scale in the American arid west is as rare as the occurrence of rain. It is nearly as rare as a judge who will help water find its way back into a dry river. “This case has gone on long enough,” spoke Judge Cooper. “LA DWP has been out of compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act since 1973. This mitigation should have been accomplished years ago. This can’t be tolerated. No deadlines have been properly met. It’s time it stops.”

Cooper’s order was a strong and severe one. He ordered that LA DWP be denied the use of its ‘second’ aqueduct unless his list of conditions is met. If these conditions are not met, then the order to shut off the second LA aqueduct will be made permanent.

Initial flows in the river must begin by January 25, 2007. Full flows must be underway within six months after that. Groundwater pumping will be reduced from 90,000 acre-feet per year (AF/yr) to 57,412 AF/yr until the Lower Owens River Project is completed. LA DWP is ordered to spread 16,694 AF/yr of surface water to recharge lowered water tables (water tables are from two feet to twenty feet below the 1985 baseline levels in all well fields in the Owens Valley). Currently the 16,694 AF are filling the McNally Canals near Laws west of Bishop that were unilaterally dried up by LA DWP several years ago after having flowed for more than 100 years.

Beginning September 5, 2005 Los Angeles Department of Water and Power will be fined $5,000 per day until the project is completed. From the fines the California Department of Fish and Game receives $100,000 for future monitoring of the project. And Inyo County receives the remainder for partial coverage of its portion of the LORP expense.

Water begins flowing

So now it appears that the Lower Owens River has a real chance to begin flowing in January 2007 and to be complete by June 2007. Four years late, but thanks to Judge Cooper and his list of conditions, there are impressive incentives for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power to truly honor its commitments. “Even the mighty DWP has to obey the law,” said California Attorney General Bill Lockyer. The Los Angeles Times in a July 30, 2005 editorial stated, “Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa,…should charge the (new LA DWP Commission) with changing an old-boy culture of arrogance and disregard.”

(Editors Note: Since the LA Times editorial appeared, Mayor Villaraigosa has appointed an all new commission.)

The champagne will be chilled and ready for the initial flows. Be prepared to join all of us in the Owens Valley for celebrations. Come and explore the rich riparian corridor of the Lower Owens River meandering below the crest of the High Sierra in Mary Austin’s Land of Little Rain.

Mike Prather is an Owens Valley Activist and Secretary of the Desert Committee

Canoeing Owens River

Student Conservation Association

continued from page 10

history of working in wilderness areas using techniques appropriate in wilderness. In recognition of this commitment and expertise, the Forest Service has presented SCA with its Primitive Skills Award, one of several annual wilderness awards.

2005 and Beyond

In 2005, SCA recruited and placed more than 40 young adults on our Desert Restoration teams in the California Desert. Their efforts, combined with the efforts of previous interns, have resulted in restoration efforts at hundreds of locations. Based on our success to date in the California Desert, SCA will expand its Restoration Program in the 2006 field season and beyond. For example, having secured funding from the National Forest Foundation, SCA will deploy a wilderness resource team in the Eastern Sierra in partnership with the Inyo National Forest, and Friends of the Inyo. Another wilderness team will be located to the north in the King Range - California’s “Lost Coast,” where it will tackle projects in areas proposed for wilderness in the North Coast Wilderness and Wild Heritage Act.

Jay Watson is the Regional Development and Communications Officer with the Student Conservation Association.
California/Nevada Conservation Committee
Desert Committee

Outings

The CNCC Desert Committees purpose is to work for the protection, preservation, and conservation of the California/Nevada desert; support the same objectives in all desert areas of the Southwest; monitor and work with governments and agencies to promote preservation of our arid lands; sponsor educational and work trips; encourage and support others to work for the same objectives; maintain, share and publish information about the desert.

All Desert Committee activities, unless stated otherwise, are suitable for anyone who enjoys the outdoors. Special physical conditioning is not necessary. The average car or high clearance vehicle will be adequate for most trips; however, many of the roads used are dirt and, as with all desert travel, you should come prepared. For a good guide to desert travel we recommend the Sierra Club book Adventuring in the California Desert by Lynn Foster.

We want you to enjoy our study trips and work parties. They are designed to help you see the desert in a way you have not seen it before. We usually have a campfire in the evenings with lots of food (potluck) and camaraderie.

For a complete listing of CNCC Desert Committee trips, send a large SASE with 60 cents postage to: Craig Deutsche, 2231 Kelton Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90064. Trips may also be received via e-mail from deutsche@earthlink.net.

Like nearly all organizations that sponsor outdoor travel, the Sierra Club is obliged to require participants to sign a standard liability waiver at the beginning of each trip. If you would like to read the Liability Waiver before you choose to participate on an outing, please go to: www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms, or contact the Outings Department at (415) 977-5528 for a printed version.

Panamint Valley Exploration
Oct 15-16; Saturday-Sunday
Come with us to this spectacular, seldom visited, desert landscape just west of Death Valley. Camp at the historic ghost town of Ballarat (flush toilets & hot showers). Sat do a challenging hike to Lookout City, followed by Happy Hour, potluck and campfire. On Sun, more short hikes to visit other historic ruins. Group size strictly limited. Send $8 per person (Sierra Club), 2 sase, H&W phones, email, rideshare info to Ldr: Lygeia Gerard, 1550 N. Verdugo Rd. #40, Glendale, CA 91208; (818-242-7053). Co-Ldr: Bill Spreng, (760-951-4520). Mojave Group/CNCC Desert Com.

Turtle Mountains Rescue
October 15-16; Saturday-Sunday
The Turtle Mountains, in the low desert northeast from Joshua Tree, are known for their colorful volcanic peaks and for the wide variety of minerals found there. Unfortunately visitors along the northern end of this wilderness have left an appalling quantity of trash. We will assist the BLM in collecting the larger objects and bagging smaller debris in preparation for removal. Recreation will include a dayhike to the interior of the area, but our reward will be in knowing that we have helped restore a truly beautiful place. Contact Leader: Sandy Suzanne Swedo, wild@inet-world.net, (818-781-3321). CNCC Desert Com.

Desert Report is on the web
Access all the information in Desert Report and a complete list of outings online at www.desertreport.org
Little Picacho Wilderness - Past, Present, and Future
October 22-23; Saturday-Sunday
This tiny wilderness in the southeast corner of our state is little known and seldom explored. It is also immediately adjacent to a site proposed for a large wind farm and is a part of the traditional lands of the Quechan Indian tribe. Our hike will explore Senator Wash, Ferguson Lake, and the Old Hess mine. We will visit the proposed wind development site, and will carcamp and will perhaps talk with tribal activist Preston Arrowweed. These places belong to us all, and our voice concerning their future should be heard. Trip Leader: Craig Deutsche. For information and reservations contact Kelly Fuller, kelly.fuller@cg.edu, (619-445-4390). CNCC Desert Com.

Whipple Mountain Carcamp
October 28-30; Friday-Sunday
For this trip in the far eastern San Bernardino County, we will need 4x4 vehicles. Bring all your drinking water as there is none available. We will explore Whipple Wash which is supposed to rival the Zion Narrows. To get on the trip, send $20 made to Sierra Club to David Hardy, Box 99, Blue Diamond, NV 890004. If you show up or cancel more than 10 days before the trip, you get the $20 back. Ldr: David Hardy, hardyhikers@juno.com, (702) 875-454. Toyabie Chap/CNCC Desert Com.

East Mojave Primitive Carcamp
November 5-6; Saturday-Sunday
Join us on this weekend near the dark moon to hike 1 mi, 700' gain to the top of beautiful Kelso Dunes where we'll enjoy the desert panorama and hear the booming caused by the grains of sand sliding together. Sat night Happy Hour, potluck and campfire. On Sun, we'll do another beautiful hike through a Joshua Tree forest. 2WD ok. Group size strictly limited. Send $8 per person (Sierra Club), 2 sase, H&W phones, email, rideshare info to Reserv/Co-Ldr: Bill Spreng, P.O. Box 129, Victorville, CA 92393; (760-951-4520). Co-Ldr: Lygia Gerard (818-242-7053). Mojave Group/CNCC Desert Com.

Antelope Protection Carcamp (Nature Study/Work Party)
November 19-20; Saturday-Sunday
The Carrizo Plain holds a special place in California ecology. With little rainfall and few water sources, the species that live here are both hardy and endangered. Particularly beautiful are the pronghorn antelope which evolved in these wild, open spaces. Then cattle ranching left a legacy of endless fences - which are deadly to the pronghorn. Join us for a weekend in this remote area removing fencing for their benefit. Only 50 miles of fence to go! Camp at KCL campground, bring food, water, and camping gear for the weekend. Potluck Sat night. For fence removal, bring heavy leather gloves, old long sleeved shirts and sweatshirts, long pants and boots. Rain cancels. Resource specialist: Alice Koch. For more information, contact Leaders: Cal and Letty French, 14140 Chimney Rock Road, Paso Robles, CA 93446, (805-239-7338). Prefer e-mail ccfrench@tcsn.net. Santa Lucia Chap/CNCC Desert Com.

December Escape Carcamp
December 10-11; Saturday-Sunday
An exploration of two seldom traveled wilderness areas in eastern San Bernardino County: the Dead Mountains and the Chemehuevi Mountains. We will carcamp with appropriate amenities, climb one peak in each wilderness, and explore a portion of the Mojave Road. These low ranges should provide us with moderate weather, long views, and winter solitude. Limit 12 participants. Leader: Craig Deutsche, deutsche@earthlink.net, (310-477-6670). CNCC Desert Com.

Holiday Service in Carrizo Plain National Monument
December 27, 2005 - January 1, 2006; Tuesday-Sunday
Give the gift of service in one of our national monuments. Carrizo Plain, west of Bakersfield, is one of our last vast grasslands, home to pronghorn antelope, tule elk, kit fox, and a wide variety of birds. A welcome hike Dec. 27, 3 days of barbed wire removal, and a day of play topped off with a New Years Eve party are planned. Use of Painted Rock Ranch included. Limited to 12 participants, $25 covers 5 dinners. For more information, contact either leader: Melinda Goodwater, MGGoodwa 651@aol.com, (408-774-1257), Craig Deutsche, deutsche@earthlink.net, (310-477-6670). CNCC Desert Committee

CNRCC outings are online at www.desertreport.org

www.sierraclub.org/membership

Outings/Articles Deadline is November 15, 2004
Submit articles to Elden Hughes, 14045 Honesuckle Ln, Whittier, CA, 90604. Via e-mail at eldenpatty@aol.com
Volunteers Critical

continued from page 17

Of the 900,000 acres of desert lands identified as potential wilderness during the inventory over 400,000 acres were proposed as wilderness in the CWHA: the Avawatz Mountains, Soda Mountains, Cady Mountains and additions to Death Valley National Park, Joshua Tree National Park, and the Kingston Range Wilderness. Volunteers leading trips into these areas introduce others to the beauty of these lands. Others share by hosting or organizing presentations, and talking to desert residents. Circulating petitions, writing letters, and talking to their elected officials are other tools used to promote the CWHA. Some volunteers continue to inventory other desert lands for their wilderness or other important qualities.

So, volunteers are involved in every stage of wilderness protection - from inventory and data collection, through organizing support, Congressional action, designation, and subsequent management. The cycle continues today with a role available for anyone with time and interest.

Bryn Jones is the Desert Program Director for the California Wilderness Coalition. She can be reached at bjones@calwild.org or (951) 781-1336.

DESSERT QUIZ

Where Is It?

We recently ‘discovered’ this fascinating rock formation (it was Maureen who first spied it). Hints: It is composed of differentially eroded and exfoliated rhyolite. It is in a National Park located in California. It can be plainly seen from a paved road. It is about a twenty minute uphill walk from said paved road. We have dubbed it “Mushroom II.” There are two other weirdly eroded rocks nearby, which we have named Cerberus and Dumbo. Answer below.

Maureen Cates standing beneath Dumbo.
Sign up for CNRCC’s Desert Forum

If you find Desert Report (DR) interesting, sign up for the CNRCC Desert Committee’s e-mail listserv, Desert Forum. Here you’ll find open discussions of items interesting to desert lovers. Many articles in this issue of DR were developed through Forum discussions. Electronic subscribers will continue to receive current news on these issues—plus the opportunity to join in the discussions and contribute their own insights. Desert Forum runs on a Sierra Club listserv system.

To sign up, just send this e-mail:
To: Listserv@lists.sierraclub.org
From: Your real e-mail address [very important!]
Subject: [this line is ignored and may be left blank]
Message: SUBSCRIBE CONS-CNRCC-DESERT-FORUM YOURFIRSTNAME YOURLASTNAME [this must fit on one line.]

By return e-mail, you will get a welcome message and some tips on using the system. Please join us!
Questions? Contact Jim Dodson:
jeim.dodson@sierraclub.org (661) 942-3662

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Our Mission
The Sierra Club California/Nevada Desert Committee works for the protection and conservation of the California/Nevada desert; supports the same objectives in all desert areas of the Southwest; monitors and works with governments and agencies to promote preservation of our arid lands; sponsors education and work trips, encourages and supports others to work for the same objectives, and maintains, shares and publishes information about the desert.

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