

July 2013 Overview
Inyo Backcountry Trails Crew
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Overview:

We kicked off the month by saying farewell to the San Jacinto and hello to the Inyo National Forest. Everyone was anxious and eager to get here, but quite relieved to have a safe and smooth transition. This would not have been possible without the guidance of our supervisor and support from our sponsors.

The first two weeks began by pulling and organizing our gear and moving to Agnew Meadows, where we were tested in all out while working near Rainbow Falls. After getting a taste of what was in store for our long holiday weekend, everyone was thrilled to volunteer some time on Thursday the 4th with the Inyo Forest Fire Department. This day of service was spent working with the fire department to talk to the community about the importance of forest fire prevention as well as facilitating activities such as: games with kids, face painting, decorating cookies, and pictures with Smokey the Bear.

By midafternoon, our service was done and we were greeted by visitors Steven and Marissa. Steven came from Arizona and Marissa from Southern California to visit Chris and Megan. They came to get a little taste of how we do things. New faces and their energy was a treat for the entire crew. For the long holiday weekend, folks visited many beautiful lakes including Shadow, Garnett, Thousand Island and Waugh Lakes. We travelled as far south as the Devils Postpile and as far north as Agnew Lake.

The following weekend was spent preparing mentally and physically for the big move into the backcountry, an approximate 15-mile hike into Cascade Valley. Those who didn't make it to Thousand Island over the long weekend took the opportunity to do so and everyone else headed to Ediza Lake. In prep for the big move we cut our weekend a little short to ensure we fit in some last minute errands and instructions.

The hike into our new camp was beautiful. The breathtaking views from the intense switchbacks and passes solidified the transition from San Jacinto and even Agnew Meadows. The log out on the way into camp was also a reminder of why we're here—to work. Once we established camp we got right back to the grail. Later that week, we celebrated Josh Huntley's 20th birthday into a wilderness character party. Tom Sawyer, Johnny Appleseed, Tom Hanks from 'Cast Away.' The Wild Thornberries and many more made an appearance for the slug wrestling that ensued. Our costumes are proof that creativity happens within parameters.

With the energy lingering from the move and the party, the crew was ready to hit the trail for the weekend. Some went to soak in the Ira Bell Hot Springs, and others took a tour of the nearby lakes. These included Purple, Virginia, Squaw, Lake of the Lone Indian, and Beethbug Lakes. This gave everyone a chance to get acquainted with our surroundings and to finally feel settled into the meat of our backcountry experience.

In the last week of July we celebrated one birthday (Agnes 7/22), two half birthdays (Chris 12/24 and Chelsea our cook 12/21) and Christmas in July. This was quite the festive week! For Christmas, we decorated a lonely lodge pole with bandanas, cooking utensils, paper snowflakes, parachute cord, and tie-dye. After work we held a white elephant gift exchange hosted by Santa Sabrina, Rudolph Juan, and Helper Elf Sam. We ended the night by leaving thoughtful notes in one another's "stocking" (or bandanas used to wrap gifts). Overall, Christmas was not only entertaining but expressive of how a little goes a long way. We can't run to the store to get a gift, so we gave things like extra batteries and coupons for cookies or favors (ex. cleaning one's tupperware). It's safe to say most everyone went to bed with a smile on their face.

Working with what we've got, in many ways, sums up the month. We worked together to get where we needed to go and although it was exhausting and stressful at times, we kept it as light and functional as possible.

Curriculum:

Despite the many transitions and festivities we still managed to hold several classes that varied from educational to community building all of which supported us during this time. For example, the class on community focused on asking the entire crew direct questions related to some of the potentially more challenging things about doing everything together all the time. This paired well with the conflict resolution class because it offered solutions for how to deal with issues when they came up. These classes also opened up a comfortable space for folks to address anything about the community that bothers them. This not only makes us a tighter group but helps push us forward. Its one thing to talk about community and conflict but it's another to actively practice these skills. When the Boot Fairy, George Hawley, came to visit, he taught a massage class. This certainly helps with the aches and pains that come with trail work, but his overall message was about taking note of each other's needs and of being compassionate enough to help each other despite frustrations.

We have also continued to conduct 10-minute interviews for everyone on the crew. Even though we see each other every day, it's amazing how little we know about one another. In these interviews the interviewee can be asked any question by all other corpsmembers. They can choose to pass or answer whatever question they're comfortable with. We've found that even the silliest questions can tell a lot about a person.

Just before we hiked into Cascade Valley, the Bear Whisperer, Steve Searles, from the Animal Planet Show, came to talk to us about wildlife. This was a crew favorite, not only because he calls things the way he see them, this came through when he described how he got the town of Mammoth to change their practices related to killing local bears. This way of thinking outside the accepted wildlife management practices is an example to us all as conservationists. It forces us to ask ourselves to not only consider what we're doing and how we are doing it, but why?

We put our conflict and community classes into action when discussions surrounding the crew T-shirts began. As the final design date approaches, we have nailed down a general concept and now a

few of the more artistically gifted corpsmembers are finishing the final kinks. There is no doubt that the design will be worked and re-worked and something we're all proud to wear when the time comes.

Finally we are getting closer to finishing the last season with only four chapters to go in August. We weren't able to read every Sunday this month, but with a somewhat more regular schedule in August, we're ready to get through and hear the book's conclusion.

We appreciate you:

Thanks very much to George and Robin for your visit, class, support, and inspiration.

Thank you to Steve Searles for taking the time out of your busy schedule to teach us about bears.

Thanks to Kevin Dawley for teaching us trails the Inyo way and especially for brining Josie to motivate us. Thanks also to Clancey for all your help on the trail.

Thanks to all of our pack support for bringing us all our food, supplies and of course our mail! Big thanks to Michael, Lee, Kathy, and Bent.

Thank you very much to Lance and Morla for the surprise visit! You're welcome with us anytime and it was so great to see you!

Most of all, thanks to Chelsea Vidaurri, our lovely cook. She provides the fuel for us to be able to do the work. The food is always amazing. She always goes the extra mile or makes due with what we have. Thank you so much!

Work Production:

Maintenance Miles: 9.5 miles

Retainer Bars: 19 each

Log Check: 12 each

Waterbars: 6 each

Log waterbars: 3 each

Multi-tier wall: 48 ft²

Rip rap: 2.5 LY

Corpsmember words of wisdom:

Lying on the table, surrounded by crumbs, I realized inside of Juan's bivvy, I'm a perfect bear burrito. There was even a pan and a big, bear-sized spoon in case it wanted to eat me all fancy-like.

– Jacob McNamara

We have finally come to the place of our namesake, the wilderness we must rise to meet, the backcountry we have been destined for. Each one of us has inside the endless potential to grab hold of it and make it into whatever we wish it to be. Look out, Inyo, for the wolves have come...

– Matthew Scully

Our new camp is everything I expected and a lot more; it feels like home away from home.

– Chris Rivera

It's safe to say we're out of our honeymoon and have begun to take on the more challenging things. Things like frustration, humility, mosquitoes, pride, rain, more miles, ideas...dealing with each other.

I would like to call it the good fight. We may not realize it, but how we come through this is what we are likely to recognize as the experiences that made backcountry most worth it.- Chelsea Taylor

I came out here because I wanted to get my hands dirty.

–Megan Smedley

I can see myself living out of a backpack for the next five years.

– Nate Wigren

Hindsight is always 20/20, and you want to leave this place with no regrets

– Agnes Vianzon