

Inyo CCC Backcountry Trail Crew
May 2013 Overview
Supervisor: Peter Martinez

Overview:

Greetings from San Jacinto!

One month into our season and the Wolfpack is off to a great start! We've begun mastering the necessary techniques; such as pissanting, using the Pionjar and grip-hoist, and properly laying multi-tiered walls, rip-rap, and steps.

While our weekdays have been spent improving these newly-learned skills, our weekends are devoted to a combination of personal improvement and exploration. For our first weekend trip the crew went to Caramba, a site approximately seven miles from camp, to go bathing in the beautiful pools tucked away off the trail.

The following weekend the crew summited our first peaks of the season. We all left Saturday morning and headed to campgrounds two to three miles away. Some reached the top of Cornell Peak, at 9,721 feet, and others San Jacinto Peak, at 10,834 feet. Both enjoyed amazing views of the desert below.

After several classes teaching us about the area surrounding our mountaintop the Wolfpack was eager to take an excursion to one of the places we'd learned about, the Salton Sea. Our first time out in three weeks we found that listening to the radio, taking showers with running water, and doing laundry in a machine instead of a bucket were among the once-familiar things we found newly novel.

Having the opportunity to experience the desert environment surrounding our conifer oasis, and one of the few salt lakes in the United States is something which will surely stick with us. The Salton Sea was a great example of the positive and negative impacts people can have on the environment and how important it is that we are aware of our influence.

The last weekend of May we packed up, piled in the van and headed north to Bishop, CA to represent the CCC and its Backcountry Trail Crews in their annual Mule Days Parade. This is the longest non-motorized procession in the world, according to [The Inyo Register](#).

Here we got our first taste of what to expect once we move to our new home in the Inyo National Forest at the end of June. After the parade, Peter took us to South Lake where we made a leap of faith into the frigid, snowmelt lake. The Wolfpack soaked in the amazing views, almost as breathtaking as the water, before heading back into town to the rodeo. This event was a first for about half the crew, and entertaining for all.

Sunday we headed a bit further north to visit Mono Lake, another salt lake, and to relax in hot springs. The latter seems to have been a high point of the season, thus far, for many.

With May rapidly approaching its end the Wolfpack is happy to already have celebrated three birthdays (Amber, 24; Ivan, 22; and Matt, 26) and welcomed two new members, Zach Staley and Mark Vandebout. We will be sure to teach Zach and Mark the ways of camp, especially how to defend it from the pesky critters that persist in trying to sneak in. The Wolfpack looks forward to one more month in San Jacinto State Park.

Curriculum:

Anthropologist Corinne and environmental scientist Ken came to the worksite to teach us about the threatened sub-species of Bluecurl flower which grows only in that location and the history and cultural importance of Hidden Lake, especially to the Cahuilla Native Americans.

Naturalist George discussed the four major conifers of San Jacinto (Jeffery Pine, Lodgepole Pine, Sugar Pine, and White Fir) and three desert types (continental, fog, and rainshadow), as well as the major role the San Jacinto mountains play in the creation and sustenance of the desert surround them. Water rising from the distant Pacific Ocean and streams, rivers, and lake gets caught by and falls into the mountains, preventing moisture from reaching the lands beyond San Jacinto. The area between the San Bernardino range and San Jacinto range is called the Sultan Sink. There is a legend in the history of that area known as the Lost Peal Ship of the Desert. In the area beyond San Bernardino is the somewhat-infamous Salton Sea.

Map and compass expert Carl came to teach us the basics of orienteering. As 95% of lost people do not know how to read a map, this training is an invaluable survival skill that will also allow us to cross-country to locations off of designated trails. Important highlights include:

- Magnetic declination: magnetic poles cause declination
- Contour interval: the difference in incline from one line on a topographic map to another
Closer lines indicate steeper terrain while lines further apart indicate flatter area
- The red arrow on a compass is the orientation dial. Orient your map to magnetic north based upon your position to obtain true north
- Easterly decline: point degrees on compass toward the east
- Westernly decline: point degrees on compass toward the west
- Obtaining a bearing: hold compass flat and away from the body, straight at desired bearing, use mirror to line up red arrow with orientating arrow record degrees
- Obtaining your position: obtain bearings to two landmarks on your map, orient your map to true north, draw lines along bearing from landmarks. Where the two lines meet is your approximate position

Lance, one of our sponsors, taught us four different, important, and useful knots: bowline knot, figure-8 knot, figure-8 follow-through knot, and the Blake's hitch.

Bart, a park ranger, talked to us about the different projects being done in San Jacinto State Park, including those by the CCC crews; about future plans for Long Valley including making it ADA accessible tearing down the old corral, and restoring trails; and about the work done originally by the

Civilian Conservation Corps in San Jacinto creating the trails and building and living in the cabin on Mount San Jacinto. He also discussed the process involved in becoming a ranger, such as: needing 60 college units before starting academy, the tests involved before and while at academy, the ranking system, and obtaining and changing park positions.

The Last Season readings: Each Sunday the crew participates in a reading of the book about the adventurous story of Randy Morgenson's life and ultimate death in California's national parks, where he disappeared. His body was found five years later in King's Canyon by Peter Martinez and members of that year's Backcountry Crew. The book enforces the importance of safe practices while cross-countrying to prevent potential disasters.

Summary: Through the critical first month of May in San Jacinto, the crew was properly educated on the area in which we are residing and working, as well as surrounding areas. The knowledge presented not only protects the crew now and in the future, but also allows access to a deeper appreciation for and understanding of the precious wilderness of San Jacinto State Park.

Odds and Ends: Thank You's!!

First, we would like to thank Lance, Efrain, James and Lori for showing us the way out on the grade – for teaching us hands-on and for their patience and skills. Our success in San Jacinto has been dependent on your direction, and we appreciate you leading us onto the right trail!

Next, to Karlson and Agnes – We could not ask for a better support system. Your high expectations and passion for the program and people in it, keep it going! Thank you for giving your all and making sure we do the same.

To Art, George, Bart, Carl, Ken, and Corrine – We have so much to learn, and without your expertise we would be lost! It is always easier to learn from teachers who genuinely believe in what they are teaching. Thank you for sharing your love for what you do and know. We are grateful for the knowledge and will be applying it out here in the Backcountry!

To John Nickcantro, Carl Knapp, and Steve Fischer – We have so much respect for your experience and expertise we would be lost! It is always easier to learn from teachers who genuinely believe in what they are teaching. Thank you for sharing it with us and giving us this opportunity! Your kind and inspiring words and work keep us looking forward and pushing on.

We would also like to thank Michael Morse, Lee, Vic, and Steve in Bishop for helping us during our visit to Mule Days!

A shout-out to Trinity packers Matt Carson, Eric Cordtz, and Mike McFadin for visiting us as the Bishop Camp!

Excerpt:

Last night we ventured out on our first solo mission. Peter begrudgingly let us leave with a forceful handshake and a soft hug; we were off. Our Wolfpack had divided only to converge once more; down a hellish, unmaintained trail we all wandered into the night. Our first stop: we walked past the worksite; proud of all the rock we had moved, set, rolled, and broken. We joked; our first weekend out and what if we stayed and worked? Our journey continued to the lookout to find the strange, wandering lights of a city we once understood; I truly know now all I need is what is in my backpack.

As we wandered down the winding trail; our minds weary with a week of work; our feet sore, blistered and wrinkled like a piece of fruit set out in the hot, summer sun; the thought loomed over our heads like the towering lodgepole and Jeffery pines of San Jack: maybe we should stop for fear of being lost or disoriented by the dark and hazardous trails that lead to Caramba.

-Ivan Durovchic, 5/4/13

Mission Statement: Inyo Backcountry Trail Crew

With wide eyes and childlike wonder we followed the captivating call of Backcountry into the austere mountains of California. We were a motley crew of strangers bound together by fate, common purpose, and a willingness to leave our lives and old comforts behind in order to become wild again. Seventeen willing hearts teetered anxiously on the precipice of unknown adventure as we swore loyalty to the program, the work, the crew, the Earth, and to our own aspirations. We sacrificed the pleasures of family and friends, and yoked ourselves to these unfamiliar faces, this unfamiliar land, this unpredictable taxing labor. How young we were then.

The darkness of the night, the biting cold, yesterday's wounds all commend resignation from our arduous task. Yet each day duty moves us to rise while the rest of the world sleeps to face the trial of the trail. We are all baptized by the white hot fire of pain into perseverance and anointed unto discipline by the oils of our sweat, blood, and tears. Our purpose: to pour the energy of our lives back in the soil from which it came like water, nurturing the land in honor of all that came before us and for the sake of all that will come after us. We choose in each moment not to blind ourselves to the ever occurring destruction of our Mother Earth, and we accept onto ourselves the responsibility to protect, preserve, and improve the beauty surrounding us.

In doing so we have committed to breaking. It is there in the breaking where we shed the unnecessary. The unfamiliar faces become family, the land becomes home, the work becomes our teacher, and soon what we once named sacrifice becomes a gift that we are overjoyed to give. We are blessed by the bounty of our experience, thankful to sleep under the stars, amazed by the beautiful simplicity of life.

As time moves on we become stronger as individuals and the stronger each one of us is the greater we become when we stand together – as steadfast and immovable as the mountains that cradle

us. Together we will leave a legacy. With each rock we lay we leave our mark, our testament, rejoicing that we are alive and not alone. We, the unnamed builders, wearing the dirt on our faces like war paint, celebrated in each step on our trails.

Who are we? We are the Wolfpack. We are Inyo.