

ENFIAInterpreter

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A Message from the President

If you are like me, we are anxiously awaiting the opportunity to safely get out and enjoy the Eldorado National Forest.

Fortunately it appears that Carson Pass Information Station will be opening this summer with appropriate precautions. Karen Heine will discuss plans for the Station in this newsletter and the steps we will take for safety.

ENFIA also looks forward to exploring the areas accessed from Hwy 50 with new interpretive walks organized by Carl Gwyn and his committee of volunteers.

A special heartfelt thank you to the Board members for keeping ENFIA's spirit alive during the last year; Frank Tortorich, Keli Gwyn, Karen Heine, Bruce Odelberg and our Webmaster Carl Gwyn, and our Forest Service Liaison Kristi Schroeder.

It has been a long year but fortunately the mountains are calling us back.

"There are some of us who can live without wild things, and some who cannot. For us the minority, the opportunity to see geese or wild flowers is a right as inalienable as free speech". Aldo Leopold

Larry Moore

The Oxen's Tale

History of the Silver Lake Cabin

By Frank Tortorich

One of the great perks of being a docent at the Carson Pass Information Station is being able to stay in the US Forest Service (FS)-owned Silver Lake Cabin.

ENFIA has an agreement with the FS for its exclusive use.

To stay in the cabin and enjoy sleeping in alpine air only to wake up to a sunrise (and sun set) over Silver Lake, a docent must sign up to work for two or more consecutive days at the station.

An example: If you work three consecutive days, then you may sign up for three consecutive nights beginning with the first night before your first day of work.

You must move out on the morning of your last day of work. This leaves the cabin vacant for those moving in that same afternoon.

Information on how to sign up for the cabin by email and other procedures will be explained during the docent training in May from the new Carson Pass Manager Karen Heine.

The setting is peacefully quiet among the pines and a view of the lake. With windows on three sides of the building facing the lake and trees. It might seem that you are living in the forest itself.

The cabin has hot and cold running water (most of the time), a propane cooking range, a refrigerator, and lights, along with a wood burning stove for heat. A huge additional benefit is having your own indoor toilet and shower.

The cabin is made up of two rooms. The kitchen-dining room with a

daybed that can be made into a double bed (kind of).



The second room is a bedroom overlooking the lake, which can sleep three with one twin bed and one set of bunk beds all in the bedroom.

The garage is a storage area with a 500-gallon tank with fresh potable water to be used until the Silver Lake Campground water system is operational. Until then, the water in the tank, not connected to cabin water pipes, must be carried by hand in a container to the cabin.

If you have the great fortune to stay at the cabin, just be informed that you must bring your own food and bedding. Upon leaving the last day of your assigned work days at the station, you must leave the cabin better than when you moved in, that is, currently Covid-clean.

Next door to the cabin is the Kit Carson Lodge that does have a restaurant. The Kirkwood Inn is usually open for meals and Kirkwood also has a grocery store.

The cabin was once used by the FS as a seasonal residential guard station. It was equipped with a FS interagency telephone switchboard. It had a wood burning stoves for cooking and heat. It did have running cold water to the kitchen, the same water system in use today.



I had a friend who was stationed there for several seasons as a patrol person. He was permitted to have his wife stay with him. It was a common but unpleasant experience for an inconsiderate FS employee to burst into their private residence to use the telephone without knocking. I am sure there must have been some unpleasant words exchanged. In those days, the FS battery-operated radios were just coming into use.

I worked for the FS on the summer project crew in 1957. We spent about a week or so headquartered at the cabin.

We were a crew of six and set up our bunks in the garage. We had the wonderful use of the outhouse, did our cooking inside, and our bathing in the lake. If I recall, there was no one staying there at that time, but I do remember the telephone switchboard.



Other facts:

- In 1937, the cabin was built with the garage and an outhouse. The outhouse is still standing, but out of service. Phew, thank heavens.
- In 1961, there was a plan to move the cabin down the highway to the area where the FS Burke's cabin is now located. The reasoning was to remove it from the campground to permit public access to the shoreline from the campground. As one can observe this was never done. Yea!
- The entrance to the campground was what is now the footpath across the road from the entrance to Kit Carson Lodge. I do not recall when the entrance was moved directly off SR 88.

- In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the FS wanted to move all the residential cabins away from the shoreline. As you can imagine this did not go over well with the cabin lessees. That plan died a slow painful death.
- In 1985, the FS added a shower and toilet to the front of the cabin and installed a septic system.
- In 1998, the FS replaced the wooden shingles with composition shingles.
- In 2000, the FS fire crew ripped off the composition shingles and replaced them with a metal roof incorrectly. ENFIA volunteers came to their aid and corrected the problem.
- Today, the building has been deemed eligible for the National Historic Register for Historic Places which carries a new set of responsibilities all its own.

Let us hope that by this summer (2021), the covid pandemic will be under enough control so we can open the information station and the Silver Lake cabin in a closer to normal way.

Photos by Carl Gwin, an ENFIA volunteer and past board member.

A Twofer - A Fun Hike Plus Learn About Meadow Function and Restoration

By Lester Lubetkin

Have you been looking for a new place to explore? A chance to see some wildflowers, beautiful meadows and maybe learn a little about Forest management and restoration? Well then, the Cody Creek trail (also known as the Cody Meadow trail) is a great choice for you. This trail follows Cody Creek through a mixed conifer forest, up into a series of subalpine meadows surrounded by red fir and lodgepole pine. And when you get to the uppermost meadow, Cody Meadow, you can explore the recent



restoration work completed by Placerville Ranger District Hydrologist Steve Markman and others from the Placerville Ranger Station. So, let's dive in!

The trailhead is a little tricky to find, which is part of why this trail is little



used. From Highway 50 just west of Strawberry, follow Forest Road 71, the Packsaddle Pass Road

(also marked as 11N23) south for about 2.5 miles to a sharp switchback turn.



Watch at this turn and you will see a dirt road heading south right at the sharpest point of the turn (Road 11N21). This dirt road can be pretty rough, so you will want to park near the intersection. Follow the dirt road about 1/2 mile to the trailhead - which



isn't much more than a point where the road narrows down to a trail and becomes a bit steeper. From here, you are following a narrow trail that has had a long history. The trail even shows up on the 1916 Eldorado National Forest map, serving as an important route for bringing sheep and cows up to the high mountain meadows. Ranchers would drive their livestock right up Highway 50 (then known as the Lincoln Highway).

You follow the trail uphill for about 1/2 mile to an unmarked trail intersection. The trail to the right leads up to Cody Lake, a small cirque lake that makes for a wonderful stop or even your final destination. Otherwise, following the main trail, you will stay along the west side of Cody Creek. For the observant, you will notice that the canyon begins to widen at this point. This was the downslope end of the glacier that filled this valley, flowing down from the south some 15,000 years ago. And it is because of the carving by this ancient glacier that the series of meadows now enhance this canyon.



Cody Meadow with its fringe of conifers

At the head of Cody Creek is the 65 acre Cody Meadow, which was originally a wet meadow, but due to erosion, downcutting and widening of Cody Creek into the meadow surface, the meadow had become drier with disturbing changes in vegetation. Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frogs (SNYLF, an endangered species) had been seen in Cody Meadow back in 2004 and 2005, but haven't been seen since, likely in part due to the degraded condition of the meadow. For many that had visited this meadow, it looked healthy and alive, but detailed studies of the stream channels and other meadow features highlighted the damage that had occurred. The culprits causing the changes in the meadow are the roads in and adjacent to the meadow, past grazing and public uses such as camping and OHV use.

In 2016, Eldorado Forest Staff took on the admirable task of working to restore Cody Meadow to a functioning wet meadow that supports the native plants and animals that need this habitat. The work to be done included removing or rehabilitating roads and trails around and through the meadow, restoring the meadow hydrology by **plug and pond** technique, hardening the trail through the meadow to avoid further meadow damage, hand planting vegetation to restore the dry areas and removing encroaching conifer trees.

What is a Wet Meadow

A wet meadow is a type of wetland with soils that are saturated for part or all of the growing season. Wet meadow result from either high infiltration or water from rain and snow and/or from poorly drained soils. These types of meadows often have unique, water-loving plants, such as sedges, rushes and wild orchids, and are favorite sites for song birds and other animals.

What is Plug and Pond

Plug and Pond is a type of meadow restoration in which incised stream channels cutting into the meadow are plugged with material excavated from upstream, forming ponds in the meadow surface. The ponds fill up with sediment over time and become the stream bed, thus raising the water table.

Other Ways to Get to Cody Meadow
For those that prefer, you can drive to
near Cody Meadow by following the
Packsaddle Pass Rd to Forest Road
10N14 (Forest Road 10N14 will require a
high clearance vehicle), turn left onto
10N14 and proceed about 3 miles to
where the road takes a sharp bend to
the south. At this point you can park and
walk along the decommissioned road up
Dark Canyon up to the ridge, and then
bear left (northwest) to Cody Meadow (a
total of about 2 miles).

The design and work to restore the meadow was a collaboration between the Forest and Plumas Corporation, a firm that has done a lot of Sierran meadow restoration (led by long-time expert Jim Wilcox). With these improvements, the meadow should become wetter and stay wetter for a longer period of time in the summer and early fall. This in turn should result in an increase in the abundance of riparian/wetland vegetation in the meadow and the active erosional

features will no longer exist.



Headcut before restoration

Interestingly, installing the plugs and ponds would degrade the conditions for SNYLF in the short term, but would enhance their habitat in the long term, improving the likelihood that they will return to Cody Meadow.



Same site after restoration

Much of the restoration work was completed during the summer of 2019, although there are still a few elements to be completed. An excavator and a front-end loader were brought up to Cody Meadow when earth-moving began in earnest. Actually, when you visit the meadow, it is impressive how little disturbance can be seen. The excavator removed material from areas along the margin of the meadow and filled in channel segments that had become downcut.



Recent research in meadow function has shown that healthy meadows have small, shallow channels that allow the flow of water to spread out across the meadow, rather than being channelized in only a few well-defined channels. Meadow vegetation is filling in naturally from seeds in the soil, although willow planting and planting of other meadow vegetation was started during Summer 2020

If you are interested in helping in the future in restoring the meadow vegetation in Cody Meadow, please contact Kyle Johnson (kyle.johnson@usda.gov) at the Placerville Ranger Station.

In undertaking restoration of Cody Meadow, Hydrologist Steve Markman shared that "the reality is that meadow restoration is not an exact science. No-one knows exactly what Cody Meadow will look like in 10 years." Steve went on to say that it's still "too soon to make any big conclusions about the degree of success of the project. A few more years is needed for that. A few winters with a lot of snow would accelerate the recovery."

In looking to the future, Steve noted that "the biggest challenge is and will be to keep motorized vehicles from driving down to the meadow, and then possibly into the meadow. The plan is to install more barriers and signs along the segment of road 10N04 near the meadow." Steve has established a number of photo points that allow him to return to the same location each year and record how the meadow is recovering and returning to a more natural condition. This ongoing monitoring is a significant part of the project, in that it will document which treatments were effective and highlight if any new measures are needed. We will look forward to seeing "the art of meadow restoration" displayed in Cody Meadow.

All photos by Steven Markman unless noted otherwise.

Summit City Canyon and Monte Wolf's Cabin Adventure (part 2)

By Mark Sandperl

Part 2 of our two adventures into Summit City Canyon and Monte Wolfe's cabin. But a short recap of Part 1. In August 2017, Greg and I attempted to reach Monte's Cabin. It was hot, rocky, and had too many rattlesnakes. We got within a half mile or so of the cabin before turning around and heading back up the canyon. Now jump forward to October we began attempt 2. If you

remember in Part 1, we were counting and locating downed trees and taking note of the overall trail condition. This was for a planned trail maintenance trip by the Forest Service. The aforementioned trip took place, we did not participate but a second maintenance trip was planned for October. Greg and I would piggie-back on this trip.

We met up at the Evergreen trailhead, we being the ranger, four other trail volunteers, one guy hiking to Horse Canyon (the same guy that met us on trip 1), Greg, and I. Along with us volunteers we had a mule pack crew to haul the tools down the trail. The pack crew would not be staying with us. The trip down was similar to our August adventure but with a couple of minor differences. There was no rain and it was October, therefore it was colder and our campsite was only about 6 miles down the trail opposed to 8.



Cold Fall Morning

We all meandered into camp at different times, tent sites located, tents set up. Now it was time to earn our keep. The mules were unpacked and we headed down the trail to start tackling the trail maintenance.

Tread-work was completed while we wandered down the trail to the first of many downed trees. Tread-work, using hoe like tools (McLeod) and

loppers to better define the location of the trail. The log that is pictured took us a couple of hours to remove. Fortunately not all were so big and stubborn. After several hours of hard work we returned to camp, tired and hungry. For the record, I had homemade chili that I had dehydrated. It is a well documented fact, all food tastes better when camping.



The next morning Greg and I packed up and said our goodbye and headed down the trail. We passed our previous camp, this time Summit City Creek was easy to cross, even I was able to rock hop across. We found a nice wide area to camp, just off the trail and close to water. We actually knew about this site from our August trip. We set up our camp, this would be our base for the next two nights. Distance to our destination 1.35 crow miles, piece of cake. By the way we were still working at this point, we took loppers with us to help clear and define the trail and by setting up rock cairns.

The following morning was the same routine, coffee, breakfast and daypacks packed.



Breaking Camp

Off we headed, although it was cold it would warm up nicely. Our first goal was to reach the Mokelumne River, then we would turn upstream, north/east for those of you playing along at home. This portion of the trek would be about 1.5 miles. Like trip 1, some of this would be on a known trail and parts of it we would make up as we went along. The cooler weather kept the snake count to zero.



Lower Camp

Zero is a fine number when referring to rattlesnake encounters. Once we reached the river it was all crosscountry and just trying to pick the most "easy" route. The first plan was to follow the river bank but it was way too treacherous, no life risking for us. We did notice cairns (or trail ducks) all over the place but just because there were cairns, it does not mean the people who placed them knew what they were doing or where

they were going. We chose our own path. We did encounter brush, granite and other obstacles but altogether a much easier path than our first trip.



Moonset over our camp

Our rock scrambling, brush avoiding, culminated in a flat forested area, and there, through the trees the cabin was located. As we approached it, it was pretty amazing to realize that one man built this cabin in the middle of nowhere using tools and equipment that he could haul down here with horse and/or mules. He may have had help but there is nothing in the records that would indicate he had help.



Cabin is located

We wandered around, and found the spring that fed the cabin with fresh water and other artifacts of past usage. Although Mr. Wolfe disappeared in the 1940s the cabin and the area around it has been visited and used by many over the years. The Forest Service has secured the cabin so entry is shut off. But from the smell, I don't

think I would want to enter. If Hantavirus had a smell, the odor coming from the cabin is what I would think it would smell like. We hung around for awhile, had our lunch. Greg told stories of when he had been here in the 70s, photos were taken but it was time to head back up the hill.



Young Greg

Not as young Greg

The hike back up to camp was uneventful, no snakes, no running out of water. We talked about dinner and building a small fire (fire restrictions had been lifted). But... but by the time we got back to camp the wind had picked up, there would be no fire. We finished eating, the wind was blowing so hard I needed to add extra guylines to my tent and we both retreated to the comfort of our tents.



They were the only place free from the wind. Downside, spending the next 14 hours in a small tent to stay warm. The upside, having the small tent to stay in to keep warm. The next morning it was coffee, eating and packing. Up the hill we headed, our destination was the campsite of the first night. When we arrived back, there was only the ranger and one other volunteer left from the original group. One more night was spent, it happened to be the coldest night that either of us had ever spent backpacking, well below freezing, then back up to the trailhead and home.

Four nights, one night below freezing, 30 miles, 4700 feet of elevation, mission completed. There is an adage that goes something like this: it is the things that go wrong that make a story more interesting. Fortunately for Greg and I we planned our hike and we hiked our plan with very little going wrong or unplanned, but unfortunately, for the reader, the story was a tad less exciting. Maybe next time we will have some near disasters to report on (but I hope not). The next goal, Camp Irene, maybe from Highway 4, just a thought.

Here is a link the photos from this trip

https://photos.app.goo.gl/HeYtch86w 7bKafcB7

Exciting News from Caron Pass Information Station (CPIS)

By Karen Heine

I am happy to announce the Forest Service believes the Carson Pass Information Station will be able to open this season. The details are still uncertain, but we plan to move forward and open on May 29th, the Saturday before Memorial Day weekend.



I do have a clean-up day planned for May 22 at 10 am at the Carson Pass Station. We will need about 10-15 volunteers that Saturday to take the plywood off of the porch, to remove and store the bracing off of the inside (across the map counter), and to wipe the dust off of the walls. Some snow may need to be removed as well. Then, the merchandise will be loaded in on May 27th, the Thursday before we open. If anyone is interested in getting involved, please contact Karen Heine at 775-790-0659 (call or text).

The CPIS calendar will open on May 9th at 8 am. I will share more details at the May 8th docent meeting at 10 am via Zoom. This link will be sent in the next group email to all docents.