



# *The Sierra Echo*

Volume 67 ▲ Number 2 ▲ April-June 2023

## High Sierra Trail, Stewart and Eagle Scout

*Story on page 17*

*(Photo by Romain Wacziarg).*

## Also in This Issue

*Daryn Dodge's second list  
finish, SPS Banquet, Scrambler  
Ratings, Mystery Peak and more*





## Echoes from the Chair

Hi Everyone,

I would like to introduce myself as the new chair of the Sierra Peaks Section. I spent childhood summers in the Sierra on fishing trips with my dad—while drowning nightcrawlers from the benches of aluminum boats, I daydreamed about exploring the peaks that loomed above me. It wasn't until college that I went on my first "backpacking"

trip—three newbies with sleeping bags tied to the outside of daypacks, Jiffy Pop for dinner, and a glass bottle of Apple Juice! It was to the top of Yosemite Falls, on to North Dome, and down to Mirror Lake. Despite the obvious blissful ignorance, I was hooked. I spent most of my twenties to forties just backpacking and exploring, picking off a few peaks here and there.

Back in September 1997, I joined a Sierra Club weekend trip to climb Mt. Dana and Mt. Gibbs, led by Pete Yamagata. At the time and even after, I was not aware of The List. I did not become aware of The List until the ripe age of forty-eight. I was pleasantly surprised to see that I had ticked off a number of peaks without knowing they were on The List, so I was able to join the SPS right away. Then, in 2022 I joined a Sierra Club trip led by my chair predecessor Jason Seieroe. A short twenty-five years between SPS trips! Surely that must be close to a record.

Since joining the SPS, I have enjoyed the *Echo* and the online camaraderie through social media. I look forward to all copies of the *Echo* (and have even gone down the Archive Rabbit Hole available on the SPS website). Unfortunately, due to a second bout of COVID, I missed seeing Travis Soares' inspiring presentation in person at the SPS Banquet—I did watch the excellent video put together by member John Sheehe (<https://youtu.be/P5-U6AFvqko>). If I am ever able to complete The List, I plan to set the SKT (Slowest Known Time) to bookend with Travis' record-setting FKT of 117 days!

I look forward to a stellar Sierra season with all that snow deep into the summer. Make your plans, don't forget your crampons and ice axes, and get out there boldly and safely. For any outings leaders, please reach out to Phil A. Bates if you need assistance planning and posting your trips.

Jason Pair

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## Time to Renew!

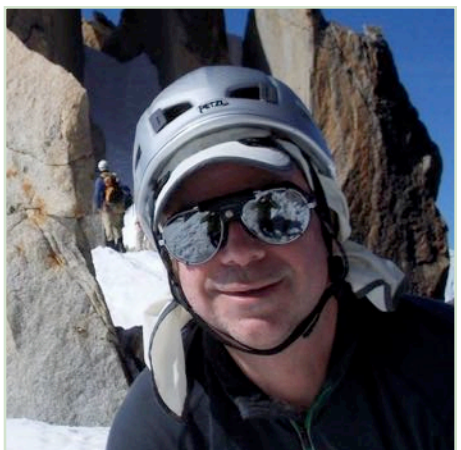
Subscriptions to the *Echo* expire on December 31st. If you haven't renewed, please do so! You can download the renewal form from the SPS web site here: <https://www.sierraclub.org/angeles/sierra-peaks/membership>.



# SPS Election Results for 2023

Fifty-one voted by SurveyMonkey, three by mail. Elected were Phil A. Bates, Phil S. Bates, Paul Garry, Laura Newman, and Jason Pair. There were two write-in candidates: Travis Soares and Nathan Longhurst, but they aren't members (yet). Both proposals to change the ratings of two peaks on the SPS list passed: changing Mt. Kaweah from class 1 to class 2 passed 48 to 3 and changing Split Mountain from class 1 to class 2 passed 47 to 4.

The elected management committee (seen clockwise) will hold these positions: Jason Pair, chair; Paul Garry, vice-chair/banquet; Laura Newman, treasurer; Phil S. Bates, secretary; Phil S. Bates, fifth officer.



## 2023 Sierra Peaks Section Management Committee

### Elected

Jason Seieroe	Chair <a href="mailto:jasonpair@gmail.com">jasonpair@gmail.com</a>
Paul Garry	Vice-chair/banquet <a href="mailto:vicechair@sierrapeaks.org">vicechair@sierrapeaks.org</a>
Laura Newman	Treasurer <a href="mailto:sierrapeakstreasurer@gmail.com">sierrapeakstreasurer@gmail.com</a>
Phil S. Bates	Secretary <a href="mailto:philsabates@gmail.com">philsabates@gmail.com</a>
Phil A. Bates	Fifth officer/outings <a href="mailto:philipabates@gmail.com">philipabates@gmail.com</a>

### Appointed

Archives	Dan Richter <a href="mailto:dan@danrichter.com">dan@danrichter.com</a>
Conservation Chair	Sharon Moore <a href="mailto:justslm@earthlink.net">justslm@earthlink.net</a>
Echo editors	Tina Bowman <a href="mailto:tina@bowmanchange.com">tina@bowmanchange.com</a> , Beth Epstein
Echo mailer	Tina Bowman
Emblem Committee	Phil S. Bates, Kathy Rich, Daryn Dodge, Ron Bartell, Bob Pickering
IT Support	Greg Mason <a href="mailto:admin@sierrapeaks.org">admin@sierrapeaks.org</a> , Harry Lagenbacher <a href="mailto:admin2@sierrapeaks.org">admin2@sierrapeaks.org</a>
Keeper of the List	Tina Bowman
Merchandise	Patty Kline <a href="mailto:patriciakline@aol.com">patriciakline@aol.com</a>
Mountain Records	Harry Lagenbacher <a href="mailto:register@langenbacher.org">register@langenbacher.org</a>
Outings	Phil A. Bates <a href="mailto:philipabates@gmail.com">philipabates@gmail.com</a>
Safety Chair	Doug Mantle <a href="mailto:sierradoug@icloud.com">sierradoug@icloud.com</a>
Webmaster	Joe Wankum <a href="mailto:jbwankum@aol.com">jbwankum@aol.com</a>
Asst. Webmasters	Harry Lagenbacher <a href="mailto:register@summitregister.org">register@summitregister.org</a> , Tina Bowman <a href="mailto:tina@bowmanchange.com">tina@bowmanchange.com</a>

### Regional Representatives

San Diego	Joe White
Central California	Daryn Dodge
Northern California	Lisa Barboza

# Welcome New Members!

## Damon Vincent

Damon moved to Southern California in 1996 and did six trips with the SPS between 1998 and 2000 before moving away. He's been back climbing in the Sierra almost every year since, traveling from the midwest. He moved to Reno in 2020 to be closer to the Sierra and appreciates how much easier it is to get to the mountains now. He also enjoys trail running and backcountry skiing.



## Jenna Horiuchi

The Sierra Nevada range holds a special place in Jenna's heart. After working with Yosemite's High Sierra Camps for seven seasons and then transplanting to southeast Ohio for a few years, she now resides on the East Side. Each morning brings a hot cup of coffee and a spectacular view of the Sierra. Jenna likes a good uphill slog, the solitude of a remote trail, and spying critters big and small along the way. She looks forward to another season of challenge and discovery!



## Dylan Kilby

Dylan grew up in Florida thinking that he hated hiking, but spending summers in undergrad working at a Boy Scout camp in north Georgia changed that opinion for good. As a public health consultant, Dylan worked in Sacramento for the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. On weekends, he would drive to Lake Tahoe and explore the Tahoe Oguls list, which inspired a torrid love affair with the Sierra—even from his home in Maryland. He joined the SPS to learn more about the mountains and meet partners for big outings. This upcoming summer, he will be taking off work for four months to work on as much of the SPS and associated lists as possible, north-to-south. In addition to mountains, Dylan is passionate about sled dogs, 1990s video games, and death metal music.



## around-the-web/

By Dave Sholle

*Editors' note: Dave Sholle is our correspondent for this column, sharing web links that SPS members may find interesting. If you see something you think would interest other members, please send it to Dave at [dsholle@verizon.net](mailto:dsholle@verizon.net).*

Some of these links may be behind paywalls.

From Jason Pair, Yosemite ends timed entry reservation system:

[https://www.backpacker.com/news-and-events/news/yosemite-ends-reservation-system/?itm\\_source=parsely-api](https://www.backpacker.com/news-and-events/news/yosemite-ends-reservation-system/?itm_source=parsely-api).

From Beth Epstein, more on Valley Fever:

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-04-04/how-climate-change-is-making-valley-fever-worse>.

California's soaring snowpack will impact hiking and climbing this season:

<https://www.outsideonline.com/outdoor-adventure/hiking-and-backpacking/california-snowpack-pacific-crest-trail-thru-hiking/>.

Danger on Mount Baldy and other Southern California mountains in winter:

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-02-02/beautiful-sight-deadly-climb-las-favorite-mountain-can-be-a-killerlivepage.apple.com> (From Tom Bowman and Beth Epstein—Ron Bartell and Christine Mitchell make cover of *LA Times*);

<https://www.cnn.com/2023/01/18/entertainment/julian-sands-missing-hiker/index.html>

<https://laist.com/news/climate-environment/heres-why-its-especially-dangerous-to-hike-socal-mountains-right-now>;

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/feb/11/mt-baldy-california-hikers-danger-julian-sands>;

<https://laist.com/news/climate-environment/missing-hiker-julian-sands-mt-baldy-storm>;

<https://laist.com/news/airlifted-off-mt-baldy-one-hikers-story-of-getting-help-before-things-got-seriously-bad>;

<https://www.outsideonline.com/outdoor-adventure/exploration-survival/why-mount-baldy-dangerous-los-angeles/>.

Maybe get some Kleenex before reading about "The Brief, Wondrous Life of Little Leo":

<https://www.outsideonline.com/culture/love-humor/little-leo/>.

How to raise kids to love the mountains:

<https://www.latimes.com/travel/newsletter/2023-01-19/hiking-with-kids-tips-super-hiking-twins-the-wild>.

Colorado bear takes 400 selfies:

<https://www.adventure-journal.com/2023/01/colorado-bear-takes-400-selfies-tells-your-teenager-to-match-that/>.

Climber free-soloing near San Diego falls to his death:

<https://www.outsideonline.com/outdoor-adventure/climbing/a-free-soloist-has-died-at-el-cajon-mountain-near-san-diego/>.

Hiker dies on a paid hike led by an unlicensed guide:

<https://www.outsideonline.com/outdoor-adventure/hiking-and-backpacking/unlicensed-guide-convicted-over-death-on-buffalo-national-river/>.

When hikers die, why are we so quick to judge?:

<https://www.outsideonline.com/outdoor-adventure/exploration-survival/when-hikers-die-why-are-we-so-quick-to-judge/>.

Colorado search and rescue funding law:

<https://www.backpacker.com/news-and-events/news/colorado-search-and-rescue-funding-law-2023/>.

## around-the-web/ continued

Patagonia:

Sean Villanueva Fitz Roy Moonwalk solo traverse video:  
<https://www.planetmountain.com/en/news/alpinism/watch-sean-villanueva-complete-fitz-roy-moonwalk-traverse-piolet-dor-2022-video.html>.

Cassandra Doolittle dies in storm after soloing in Patagonia:  
<https://www.climbing.com/news/american-climber-cassy-doolittle-dies-patagonia/>.

Alps:  
First successful Eiger North Face rescue:  
<https://www.climbing.com/people/eiger-first-rescue-accident-survivor/>.

Fastpacking the Alps:  
<https://www.sidetracked.com/attitudes-and-altitude-mountains-of-the-mind/>.

Endurance achievements:  
Everesting is running or biking the same hill until you gain 29,032 feet, and only one person has done it on a unicycle:  
<https://www.outsideonline.com/outdoor-adventure/biking/everesting-now-has-23000-finishers-only-one-has-done-it-on-a-unicycle/>.

Another Everesting record:  
<https://www.velonews.com/news/road/jack-ultracyclist-thompson-smashes-everesting-world-record/>.

Ultra-runner Camille Herron:  
<https://www.cnn.com/2022/12/07/sport/camille-herron-100-mile-world-record-usatf-spt-intl/index.html>.

Follow-up story:  
<https://www.outsideonline.com/health/running/culture-running/camille-herron-keeps-running-faster-and-farther/>.

Himalayas:  
Everest pioneer Ed Webster dies:  
<https://www.climbing.com/people/remembering-ed-webster-66/>.

George Everest didn't want Mount Everest named after him:  
<https://gripped.com/profiles/george-everest-didnt-want-mount-everest-named-after-him/>.

Nanda Devi—the mountain and the woman:  
<https://www.outsideonline.com/outdoor-adventure/exploration-survival/nanda-devi-unsoeld/>.

From Beth Epstein, a story about Lhakpa Sherpa:  
[https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/31/sports/lhakpa-sherpa-everest.html?unlocked\\_article\\_code=gmffdZilvBJ9kVMOz4YhMCLLTed8dlcJXYaXCsXfZaVxg5Mk8\\_ttW3AIzPudGBNOcntP-WJ9xyjBcLHYJMU5WPZ-Soy9NHaUzJ7Ikmac98Ew6tIG9r-Rd0aKsmUZPjCwUHqFD5x3sKtIHYPMLdROMfkRxbtjz8LEIEJLF\\_buE56nkqKKzMzFwdhYLUjLZo5\\_0lg9zXUCg-z\\_9gZpt4LH84FSJMhR36nhQcARbthIMA4-1KMSHaOdAIAbMQEFJMIMIXy\\_QqfdwzhlwYIWI5sVe5TrTUmXqHdEyaJpcgteYXtUQ6AUvqxXobrpuhmUibCjHDOI8cX6UfefWMOM4&s\\_mid=share-url](https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/31/sports/lhakpa-sherpa-everest.html?unlocked_article_code=gmffdZilvBJ9kVMOz4YhMCLLTed8dlcJXYaXCsXfZaVxg5Mk8_ttW3AIzPudGBNOcntP-WJ9xyjBcLHYJMU5WPZ-Soy9NHaUzJ7Ikmac98Ew6tIG9r-Rd0aKsmUZPjCwUHqFD5x3sKtIHYPMLdROMfkRxbtjz8LEIEJLF_buE56nkqKKzMzFwdhYLUjLZo5_0lg9zXUCg-z_9gZpt4LH84FSJMhR36nhQcARbthIMA4-1KMSHaOdAIAbMQEFJMIMIXy_QqfdwzhlwYIWI5sVe5TrTUmXqHdEyaJpcgteYXtUQ6AUvqxXobrpuhmUibCjHDOI8cX6UfefWMOM4&s_mid=share-url).

## Sierra Red Fox Detected in Southern Sierra

*From California Department of Fish and Wildlife News*

Until a few Sierra Nevada red foxes were discovered in the Sonora Pass area in 2010, the species was thought to exist no longer in the range. Now a Sierra Nevada red fox has been spotted in the Taboose Pass area. The species historically inhabited the higher elevations of the Sierra Nevada and Cascades in California and Oregon. For more of the story, see <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Subscribe/c/546/ce/436489246/view/preview#lcpreview>



(Photo courtesy California Department of Fish and Wildlife).

# Sierra Peaks Section Annual Banquet

By Mary Motheral

This year's January 29, 2023, banquet at the Almansor Court in Alhambra was particularly special in that it was the first time after a hiatus of three years, thanks to Covid, that SPS members were able to celebrate together in person. We said good-bye to Zoom while enjoying our entrees of prime rib, salmon, and vegetarian fare (wine included!).

Prior to dinner, members socialized and caught up with friends' activities during the previous year. This writer is an old timer and recognized the following attendees: Ron Bartell and Christine Mitchell (who, incidentally, were featured in a front page *L.A. Times* article on the dangers of climbing Mt. Baldy five days later), Tom and Tina Bowman, Ron Eckelmann and Doris Gilbert, Beth Epstein, Jim Fleming, Bruno Geiger, Mark and Joy Goebel, Pat Holleman, Ron Hudson, Scott and Yvonne Jamison, Barbara Lilley, Doug Mantle, Gene Mauk, Jim Murphy, Gary Schenk and Mary Jo Dungfelder, Dave and Barbara Sholle, Don Sparks, Larry and Barbee Tidball, and Jack Wickel.

This group represented a small number of total attendees. Not having been active in years, I'm unable to recognize younger and more recent SPSers, and I apologize for my shortcoming. You are much appreciated for keeping our section alive with new blood. Thanks!

*My relationship with the Sierra Nevada began on the coast of Rhode Island in 2012 where mountains exist in a distant world. As a high schooler longing for adventure, the prose of John Muir captured my imagination. His story of climbing the north face of Ritter was my favorite. I knew I wanted to explore the Sierra.*

*Ten years later in 2022, I explored the Sierra Nevada more thoroughly than I thought possible. I climbed all 247 mountains of the Sierra Peak Section list in 117 days. My relationship with the range of light reached incredible depths. I am eternally grateful to have experienced such a magical journey and beyond excited to share the story!*

- Travis Soares



*Top: Travis Soares on Mt. Conness (Photo courtesy Travis Soares). At left: Barbara Lilley and Travis Soares seated together at the banquet (Photo by Dave Sholle).*



Outgoing Chair Jason Seieroe briskly followed traditional format in conducting the business part of the evening before Travis Soares entertained us with his epic presentation of climbing the entire SPS List in less than a year. After expressing his honor representing the section this past year, Jason introduced the new management committee: Philip A. Bates, Philp S. Bates, Paul Garry, Laura Newman, and Jason Pair. Other election results regarding changes in the ratings of Mt. Kaweah and Split Mountain from class 1 to class 2 passed.

Then came honors: Tina Bowman received a well-deserved Lifetime Achievement Award, presented by Doug

*Clockwise from top left: Barbee and Larry Tidball; outgoing chair Jason Seieroe; John Sheehe and Donovan Pair; Keith Christensen, Ron Bartell, and Lisa Hazan (obscured) (Photos by Dave Sholle).*



Mantle in a great roast; and Gary Schenk presented Paul Garry the SPS Leadership Award. In addition, leaders were acknowledged and thanked. Tina led three trips last season; Jason Seieroe led two; and a number of other members each led one. Barbara Lilley, former SPS officer and founding member with an impressive climbing history, was introduced to the audience as well.

A somber few minutes of the evening were spent remembering climbing buddies who had passed in 2022. We lost Gerry Holleman who completed the Sierra Peaks List with his wife Pat on Taylor Dome in 2001. Besides being a competent mountaineer, Gerry was a superb Nordic skier and classical music enthusiast. Mike Manchester, a fabulous raconteur who made trips memorable with his self-deprecatory sense of humor and wry observations, lost his life hiking the Pacific Crest Trail on a particularly hot July day. Active SPS member Nile Sorenson succumbed to leukemia in October 2021, not too long after he summited the Matterhorn in



*Clockwise from top left: Beth Epstein, Bruno Geiger and Barbara Sholle; Gene Mauk; Alexander Smirnoff, Kim Gimenez, Anne Mullins; Pat Holleman and Yvonne Jamison (Photos by Dave Sholle).*



*Clockwise from top left: Paul Garry receives the SPS leadership award from Gary Schenk; Travis Soares; some of the proud Soares family, dad Paul and sister Julia (Photos by Dave Sholle).*

Switzerland in 2019. Lastly, Carlton Shay, ten-time Hundred Peaks Section List Finisher, Sierra mountaineer, and skier passed last February at age of ninety-eight.

In concluding the business portion of the evening's program, Jason requested that everyone in the room stand, so that individuals' level of accomplishment was recognized: First non-members were requested to sit down, followed by emblem holders, senior emblem holders, etc., until Tina Bowman with three list completions under her belt remained standing, followed by Doug Mantle with his awesome eight time list finishes (and he has soloed the list twice).

Now, to the really entertaining portion of the evening—Travis Soares' account of climbing all 247 peaks on the list, many of them with Nathan Longhurst. These two climbers represent a new age in climbing using technology (Cal Topo and Gaia apps in addition to Secor's guide for navigation) to document their progress for family, friends, and web followers. I especially appreciated Travis' aerial shots of the Sierra showing the mountains clustered together in their geological locations. His

presentation was a walk (hike?) down memory lane for the audience who relived their own conquests with his narrative. As for web followers, Travis and Nathan raised \$3,500 from them to donate to Bishop's Paiute Tribe food sovereignty program.

Travis reported that Nathan approached him in October 2021 with the idea of FKT—climbing the list in the Fastest Known Time. As setting speed records was useful for testing his limits in competition with himself, Travis was on board. His talk started with a short biography, showing childhood photos and mentioning his admiration of John Muir, Sierra Club's founder. He liked sports, took National Outdoor Leadership School guiding/wilderness courses and became a proficient rock climber. For background he segued into the geology of the Sierra and mentioned Clarence King of the 1860's California Geological Survey. Our two intrepid climbers started with the Whitney zone and used what Travis called link-ups to climb all the peaks in an area of the Sierra, i.e. following ridges. At times they used bikes to reach trail heads. Both climbers were comfortable on 5.6 without ropes, and only

once needed one on Thunderbolt's summit block. The Palisades proved to be the most difficult peaks. Travis climbed in Altras and regretted not having climbing shoes on Starr King. One memorable peak was Sirretta. The route formed half a heart on maps, so they returned from the peak by a different route, forming the other half of the heart and posted their track on their website, sending the heart image to their mothers on Mother's Day. They tackled the Hermit with Travis getting an assist by standing on Nathan's shoulders. Nathan was the first to finish the list in less than a year in 138 days on Agassiz, while Travis had 73 peaks left. His last peak was San Joaquin. Family and friends joined him to celebrate his amazing feat: Time it took—117 days, 8 hours, 34 minutes; 1,890 miles hiked; and 730,000 feet of elevation gain.

Travis concluded his presentation with the observation that if you love something and have the time and energy, you can go to amazing places. One can find joy in little things in the mountains.

Of course, the audience had questions. How did he train? Surfing and tanning on a beach in Baja.

What was his favorite peak? Bago.

What food did he eat? Oreos, mac and cheese, oatmeal, mashed potatoes.

What water filter did he use? His gut.

How much weight did he lose? Fifteen pounds, which he gained back, gained more, and then stabilized at his normal weight.

What equipment did he take? Sleeping pad, quilt, a small backpack, and a tent.

How many pairs of shoes did he go through? Seven and a half; Travis was wearing the remaining .5 at the podium.

The number of questions were indicative of how much Travis' talk resonated with the audience as they relived their own experiences.

Travis' next adventure is to establish base camp in Flagstaff and explore the Grand Canyon. We wish him well.

## Lifetime Achievement Award Presentation Speech

*By Doug Mantle*

Tina Bowman and I have been friends for forty-five years.

I only saw her drink alcohol, or at least put it near her lips ONCE, for Y2K. Brace yourself, Tina; tonight you may need a belt or two as I get going!

Doctor Tina has worn many hats in service to the SPS: Keeper of the List, chair, LTC, *Echo*, leader, climber.

Sometimes all of these at ONCE.

Arguably, not since the third ruler of the ninth dynasty, Ramses II, has a single person amassed so much power.

SPS chair: many times, Grover



*Tina Bowman accepts her Lifetime Achievement Award from Doug Mantle (Photo by Dave Sholle).*

Cleveland would be envious. Her terms were not always tranquil. Once, the outgoing chair, the saintly RJ Secor, accused her administration of criminality! Criminal or not, her tenures helped steer our once shriveling, elitist cadre to health. This is fortuitous as many of us former elites, I for one, can barely get over Taboose Pass anymore.

The LTC and LRB, leadership training course and reference book, grew out of the SPS, and Tina was a force in both.

Before Dan Richter began directing our would-be leaders in rockcraft, who led the practices and checkouts? Tina (you too, Ron Hudson and others).

Before Nile Sorenson, who manned the ice axe arrest stations and tested snow skills? Tina (you too, Larry Tidball and others).

And for grammar, prose, and content, who helped husband Tom Bowman revise, update, and write the *Leader's Reference Book*? Tina.

Tina leads more trips than anybody. Some of the death marches came earlier and may have had zero participants. On one tough trip a victim participant complained of being "scared, and I mean scared to death" on it.

But there are also the intro trips, two National Sierra Club outings, LTC, and joint trips with the WTC.

Fortunately, given Tina's inadequacies in the kitchen, she never attempted any gourmet backpacks to the relief of Ron Campbell.



Along with Beth Epstein, Tina has edited *The Sierra Echo* forever. I think it's the best Sierra Club publication, period. She has confided in me that coeditor Beth is a drag on the process and inevitably Tina winds up doing the whole job herself [NOT TRUE!]. She can be a nag for *Echo* copy. Just one example: maybe it's a bit ghoulish, but Tina is always prodding Mary McMannes to keep an eye on the infirm and get a head start on prospective obituaries.

She finished the SPS list three times. This, despite the fact that she devotes every other year to track events; otherwise, she would have many more list finishes. (I have always encouraged her to pursue her track career.)

What? A hint of competition? Should Tina look askance at Travis and Nathan?

Bing Crosby once said of Frank Sinatra that "someone like that comes along once on a lifetime. Why my lifetime?" No there's no competition. For the Sierra Club, someone like Tina, and for me a friend like Tina, indeed comes along once in a lifetime.

So tonight we present Tina Bowman with the Lifetime Achievement Award.



Above: Tina Bowman accepts her Lifetime Achievement Award from Doug Mantle. At left: Tina is congratulated by outgoing vice-chair Jim Fleming (Photos by Dave Sholle).

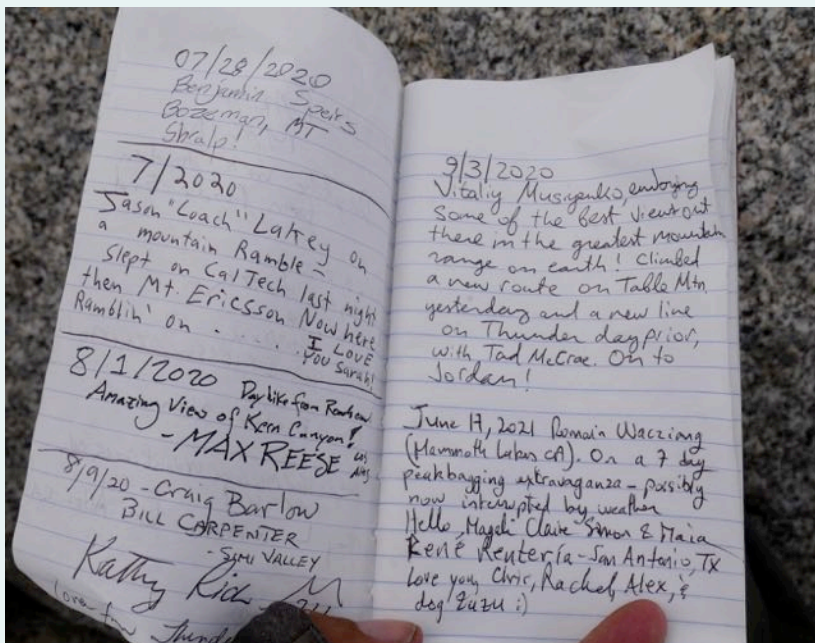
# SPS Listed Peaks: Summit Register Needs

By Harry Langenbacher

Time to pass the torch! I want to pass it to a new Mountain Records Chair before the flame goes out! I have been doing this for sixteen years, during which time I established a summit register website, and later staved off a threat to remove a lot of registers from SEKI peaks. But lately I have not been doing justice to the job at all. I need someone who loves registers and can keep this list up to date and respond to inquiries about registers from the public. Please contact me for more info at [register@Langenbacher.org](mailto:register@Langenbacher.org), and I will answer all your questions.

Here are the peaks on the SPS list that are in need of register books or containers, or both, as of February 23, 2023.

For a more verbose description of these needs, see <http://summitregister.org/> or contact me at [register@Langenbacher.org](mailto:register@Langenbacher.org) for updates. Be aware that summits needing containers may also need books, since the books there were in temporary containers. Some of the last reports I got on these peaks are quite old, so the list may be out of date. Temporary storage might not have lasted over the years. Please send me updates on any peaks you climb so I can add them or remove them from this list, or verify that they are still OK. And PLEASE always carry a spare PENCIL and don't leave pens since ink washes away. A whole pencil weighs almost nothing!



Mt. Geneva register (Photo by Romain Wacziarg).

Peak	Need	Peak	Need	Peak	Need
Agassiz Mt	Container	Leavitt Peak	Container	Royce Peak	Both
Alta Peak	Both	Lone Pine Peak	Both	Sawtooth Peak N	Both
Black Hawk Mtn	Both	Lyell	Both	Sirretta Peak	Container
Black Mtn	Both	Merriam Peak	Both	Stanford S Mt	Both
Clyde Minaret	Both	Morrison Mt	Both	Stanislaus Peak	Both
Dana Mt	Both	Muah Mtn	Container	Starr King Mt	Container
Disaster	Both	Mokelumne	Both	Three Sisters	Both
Eagle Scout Peak	Both	Muir Mt	Both	Tower Peak	Both
Elwell Mt	Both	Needham Mtn	Both	Twin Peaks N	Both
Emerson Mt	Container	Perkins Mt	Container	Tyndall Mt	Both
Excelsior Mtn	Container	Pyramid Peak S	Container	Vandever Mtn	Both
Four Gables	Both	Recess Peak	Both	Virginia Peak	Both
Haeckel Mt	Both	Red And White Mtn	Both	Vogelsang Peak	Both
Kaweah Mt	Container	Rose Mt	Both	Whorl Mtn	Both
Langley Mt	Both	Round Top	Both	Williamson Mt	Both

# My Second Run through the Sierra Peaks List

*By Daryn Dodge*



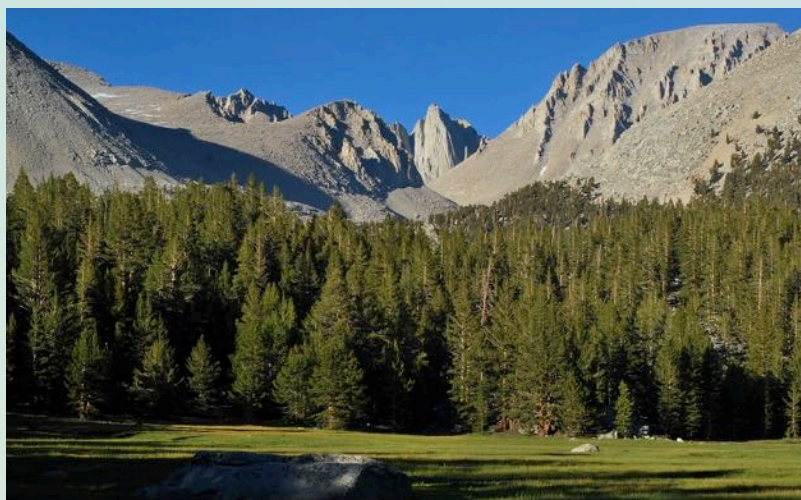
My first time through the SPS list I was quite motivated to go climbing all summer almost exclusively in the Sierra. I would go climbing whether I had company or not, sometimes bagging twenty-five or more SPS peaks in a summer. This was not always easy combined with a full time job and quickly dwindling vacation time. But I was pretty focused. I found I enjoyed many of the more challenging peaks, repeating some before I finished List #1 in 2009. While repeating many of



***Daryn chose the photos included here to represent some of his favorite places and experiences during his runs through the list - Eds***

*Top: Midway Peak and Table Mountain above the upper Kern Basin. At left: Greg Gerlach and Shane Smith relaxing at Baxter Pass (Photos by Daryn Dodge).*

the peak climbs, since I knew the routes, I went with other climbing friends and acquaintances and helped where I could with route finding. I found climbing the peaks on the SPS list a second time to be more relaxing and in some ways more enjoyable and rewarding. It was a lot of fun accompanying other buddies on their way towards their first list finish. So I actually climbed only a few peaks solo the second time through. And I went at a slower pace, climbing only about fifteen SPS peaks per year. This was mainly due to now



*Above: Fin Dome and Sixty Lake Basin. Left: Mt. Whitney from Crabtree Meadow. Below: View of Black Kaweah and Red Kaweah over Little Five Lakes (Photos by Daryn Dodge).*

going other places outside of the Sierra for climbing trips.

I have many good memories of trips taken with friends in the Sierra during my second run that I will always remember. These included a week-long climbing trip with Bob Wyka and six other buddies (in what became known as the legendary Wyka Week) into the King-Kern Divide area, listening to Dan Richter tell tales of his life experiences around a non-burning campfire after successfully getting twenty people up Tehipite Dome for





*At left: Corinne Livingston and Mt. Guyot (Photo by Daryn Dodge).*

Shane Smith's list finish, repeating a multi-day Clark Range trip with co-leader Kathy Rich and participants thirty-four years after a similar backpacking trip to the four SPS Clark Range peaks with high school buddies, an amazing trip with John Hooper climbing Devil's Crag, pioneering a route up Observation Peak from the east with Corrine Livingston (after Greg Vernon told us the day-before that it couldn't be done).

I will also always remember the very long climbing days in the Sierra with my climbing buddies, especially the ones when we returned to camp long after dark. There is a satisfying quality with these long days, as long as it doesn't involve major route-finding debacles. Some of these trips include a delightful three-peak day (and night) of Ritter, Banner and Davis with Keith Christensen, Jim Ramaker and Sandra Hao; a scintillating fifteen-hour ridge run of Tower Peak and several Sierra Crest/

Vagmarken peaks with Keith and Kathy; a fine day (and windy night) climbing Disappointment Peak from camp at Birch Lake with Tina Bowman and Paul Garry; and a rewarding night out on Recess Peak with Keith, Kathy, and Corrine.

No plans for a third round of the SPS list. There are too many non-listed Sierra peaks I would like to climb, along with all the other peaks I would like to visit that are beyond the Sierra. However, I hope to renew my SPS leader status so I can lead Sierra trips later this year and into next year. When I do, please join me for some long enjoyable treks up our incredible Sierra peaks—but be sure to bring your headlamp.

Wear 'em! Give 'em!

# SPS TEES



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# The High Sierra Trail, Mount Stewart, and Eagle Scout Peak

By Romain Wacziarg

A thru-hike of the High Sierra Trail, with ascents of Mount Stewart (from Nine Lakes Basin, class 2) and Eagle Scout Peak (from Big Arroyo, class 2), with Claire Wacziarg, September 4-10, 2022.

## Timeline:

The logistics for this trip were quite involved. Claire and I had gone to Mammoth a couple of days before the entry date to acclimatize. I had arranged for Simon to drive up to Lone Pine so he could meet us there on September 3. We met at the Mount Whitney Motel, where Simon had spent the previous night. We parked my 4Runner at Whitney Portal, taking with us only our full backpacks. We then drove Simon's Mini Cooper across Highway 178, to Visalia and Three Rivers. Wanting to pick up our permit on the same day, we drove up to the Giant Forest and made it just before the permit station closed. With the permit in hand, we drove back to Three Rivers and Simon dropped us off at the Sierra Lodge (a run-down motel managed by a grumpy man). He then drove back to LA.

**September 4, 2022.** I had booked a bus to the Giant Forest, leaving the Three Rivers museum at 9:00. We were about one mile up the road from there, and the motel breakfast did not seem appealing, so we left early and hiked down the road with our packs in search of a better option. But we found no breakfast place nearby, so had to walk farther and found a crowded café. Fearing arriving late for the bus, we hiked back up the road to the museum, and ate our

Above: Hamilton Dome from the High Sierra Trail.  
Right: Claire Wacziarg at the trailhead (Photos by Romain Wacziarg).



breakfast on a picnic table there. But 9:00 came by and we saw two buses drive by without stopping. I was worried they had forgotten us. The museum's keeper, a nice gentleman, contacted the bus company to inquire about the status of our ride (we had left our phones in the 4Runner). After much back and forth, it emerged that an extra shuttle, which was running late, would stop for us. This was a rickety old bus, full of tourists who were irate because the AC did not work. This, however, took us to the Giant Forest, and from there we boarded a shuttle to Crescent Meadow: we had finally reached the start of the High Sierra Trail.



This of course had taken time, and after a snack we departed on the trail at 11:48, first through a forest of sequoias, then along a flat trail that follows the south side of Panther Peak for miles. Claire had a massive nosebleed shortly after we started, and we were occasionally swarmed by some annoying gnats. The miles went by easily, and we soon found ourselves at the first possible campsite, at Buck Creek. We stopped to soak our feet in the stream and met a nice French couple, Marion and Valentin, who were postdocs at NASA and JPL. We still had a bit of energy left, so we continued on to Bearpaw Meadow, where we found a nice, isolated campsite near some boulders (6:33). That evening, we saw some deer, and a mother bear with two cubs hiked through our camp. It was a hot night, but we slept comfortably. (A 6:45 hour day, 5:04 hours moving, 11.8 miles, 2,232 feet of elevation gain.)

**September 5.** This day was going to feature some of the most impressive scenery of the trip, and I knew it, having visited Valhalla in [September 2013 with René](#). It did not disappoint. We left camp at 8:16 and hiked by the ranger station, where we had a nice chat with the ranger.

*Above: Claire taking a break at Hamilton Lake. Below: Looking back at Valhalla (Photos by Romain Wacziarg).*





We made our way toward Valhalla, enjoying great vistas toward Hamilton Dome. At Hamilton Lake (10:45), we took a long break, and met a hiker named Sean Cole. Sean had planned to hike the HST with a number of friends who one by one abandoned the endeavor, so he had decided to set out alone. We would hike together for most of the rest of the day, camp near each other in Nine Lakes Basin, and eat dinner together that evening. Sean later told me that our company on that day gave him renewed motivation to complete the HST alone.

The trail above Hamilton Lake affords some of the most beautiful views in the High Sierra. One stares down toward Hamilton Lake, Hamilton Dome, and Angel Wings—a veritable sea of granite. After the famous tunnel that trail builders had to blast through the rock in order to overcome a steep chasm, we stopped for lunch. Then we reached Precipice Lake (2:08), one of the most beautiful lakes in the Sierra and the subject of a famous Ansel Adams photo ("[Frozen Lake and Cliffs](#)"). I tried to replicate the shot. Above that, the area around Kaweah Gap and, beyond, Nine Lakes Basin, offers spectacular alpine scenery—Mount Stewart, Eagle Scout Peak, and Black Kaweah loom above. Every turn

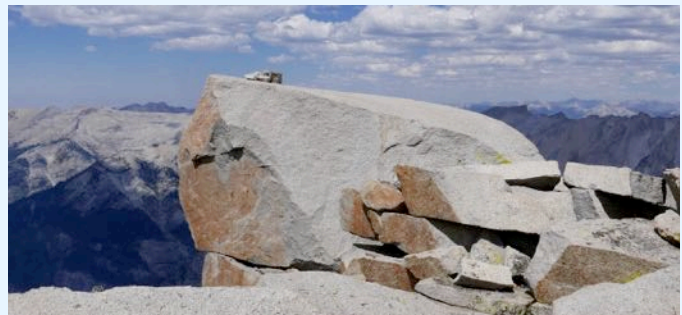
of the trail gives opportunities to marvel. Near Kaweah Gap, we again crossed paths with Marion and Valentin, who were returning from a dayhike from their basecamp at Hamilton Lake. We greeted them and went on our way, finding a nice campsite at Lake 10,440 (3:58). (A 7:42 hour day, 5:32 hours moving, 9.46 miles, 3,768 feet of elevation gain.)

**September 6.** I had planned to climb two peaks on this day, so it would be a rest day for Claire. I left camp at 7:09, heading for the grassy Southeast slope of Mount Stewart above Lake 10,440. This went quickly: I was on the summit at 8:58. Stewart has a fun, pointy class 3 summit block. I stayed for a while, headed down and reached camp at 10:11, for just about three hours on the outing. Claire was reading in the shade of a big boulder. I took a break, had a snack, and set out to climb Eagle Scout Peak at 11:11. One traverses across the Big Arroyo to reach



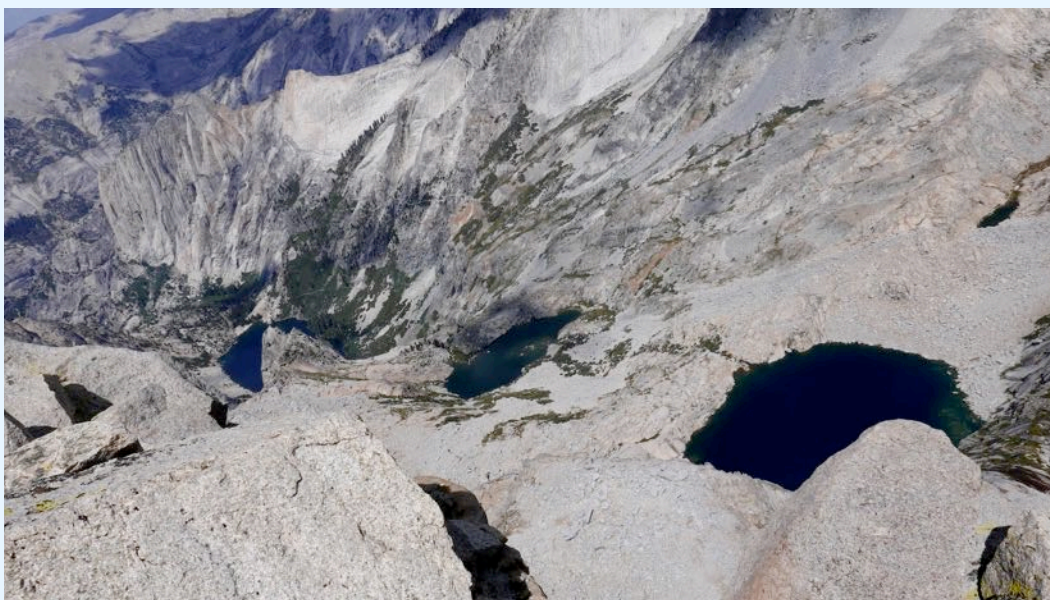
*Above: Eagle Scout Peak from Lake 10,440. Right: Summit of Mt. Stewart (Photos by Romain Wacziarg).*

the eastern slope of the peak. This leads to Eagle Scout Pass, at the base of a ridge that one then follows NW to the summit (12:46). That final portion is fun, and the summit itself is a diving board that juts out into thin air. The register, of course, was placed on the very tip of that diving board. The view from the top is absolutely astounding—especially when one stares down at Precipice Lake and Valhalla. I took lots of pictures, signed the register, and left at 13:06. I took a slightly different way down, descending a bit more into the Big Arroyo to catch the trail back to Nine Lakes Basin. I was back in camp at 2:32. We briefly toyed with the idea of packing up and hiking a few miles but decided against it and spent the rest of the afternoon playing cards and enjoying the scenery. (A 6:20 hour day, 5:49 hours moving, 6.57 miles, 3,561 feet of elevation gain.)



**September 7.** Mileage-wise, this would be the biggest day of our trip. My ambition was to hike all the way to the Kern Hot Springs (about 18 miles), though we would fall slightly short of this goal due to rain. We left camp at 8:10, hiking slightly downhill toward the Big Arroyo Cabin. We took our first break there (9:23). We continued on toward the Chagoopa Plateau, skirting Mount Kaweah along its SW flank. We reached Moraine Lake around 1:15, and it started raining. We set up the tent, resupplied our water, and had lunch in the tent. We took a nap and played cards, waiting for the rain to abate. When it did, we set out again on the trail (4:05), hoping to hike a few more miles toward Kern Canyon. It

started to get dark as we reached the canyon floor after a long descent, but we found no campsites in the dense forest at the junction. So we continued on along the HST until we



*Top: The Kaweahs from Eagle Scout Peak. Center: Eagle Scout summit block. Left: Hamilton Lake (L) and Precipice Lake (R) from Eagle Scout (Photos by Romain Wacziarg).*



of the four previous days. We then continued up along the mostly burnt-out Kern Canyon, toward Junction Meadow. The 2020 Rattlesnake Fire devastated this area, up to a sort of bottleneck in the canyon where the fire seems to have stopped. It is a depressing hike through the burn area, but things improve as one gets higher up the canyon. The trail soon turns east toward the Wallace Creek drainage. This is a beautiful area. We took a break at the junction of Wallace Creek and Wright Creek, where jumbled granite blocks were sculpted by both streams in spectacular fashion. We set up camp

found a clearing. This was a sort of horse camp, with burnt out trees around – not the most attractive place, but it would have to do. It was another hot night, but after a long day of hiking, we were happy to get some rest. (An 11:06 hour day, 7:20 hours moving, 17.52 miles, 1,359 feet of elevation gain.)

near the junction with the JMT and spent a nice evening in camp. (A 10:13 hour day, 6:37 hours moving, 13.74 miles, 3,801 feet of elevation gain.)

**September 9.** This day was to be a short one, as I wanted to camp above Guitar Lake to climb Mount Hitchcock the next day. Alas, that was not to happen, on account of the weather. We left

**September 8.** We were but a short distance from the hot springs, our next goal. We left camp at 7:49 and reached the hot springs at 8:00. There were some people in camp, including a nice couple we would see frequently that day. We took a great bath in the tub, rinsing away the filth



*On the way to Kern Canyon from Nine Lakes Basin, top: Claire at the Big Arroyo cabin. Center: Romain and Claire at the Wright Creek junction (Photos by Romain Wacziarg). Below: Romain and the Kaweahs from Sky Parlor Meadow (Photo by Claire Wacziarg).*

camp at 9:39, hiking up to Crabtree Meadow, then on to Timberline Lake, and finally to Guitar Lake (1:45). There, major clouds started to come in. We continued on higher to a nice tarn, where three parties were camped. We had a nice evening in camp, chatting with the others. But the weather took a turn for the worst that night, and there was intermittent rain. It was tough to sleep with all the commotion, and we were worried about being caught on the switchbacks to the Sierra Crest in a storm. At least we would not be alone, as there were several other parties intent on exiting the next day. (A 4:56 hour day, 3:59 hours moving, 8.14 miles, 2,225 feet of elevation gain.)



*Above: Claire nearing Trail Crest as the weather worsens. Below: Success! Claire and dad Romain at Whitney Portal, where it's burger time (Photos by Romain Wacziarg).*

**September 10.** This day was epic. I quickly abandoned any thought of climbing Mount Hitchcock, focusing instead on a strategy to get us out of the area by managing weather risk. It rained most of the early morning but there was a lull around 9:00 so we took advantage of that, packing up our wet gear and heading up the trail at 9:32. We were fine for most of the way to Trail Crest, but it started raining again shortly before we reached the crest. After that it became a veritable deluge of rain, sleet, and hail, creating a river of icy water flowing down the ninety-nine switchbacks. We were soaked to the bone, including our feet, and feeling miserable as there was no shelter from the downpour. I was quite worried about hypothermia, but we soon reached Trail Camp and I relaxed, knowing that those camped there would assist us

if we got in trouble. We met a couple of parties who thought they were going to climb Mount Whitney that day. I don't know if any did, but even trying would have been foolish. We hiked mostly continuously until Outpost Camp, feeling safer with every mile (I have no photos from the segment between the west side of the Sierra Crest and Outpost Camp, because I stored away my camera to keep it dry). At Outpost Camp (1:55), we took our first break, eating a bar and rehydrating. It had been a continuous push from the start of the day, as we did not want to stop and risk getting cold. By then we were impatient, and the last few miles to Whitney Portal seemed interminable. We were glad to cross the portal, and to settle for burgers at the Whitney Portal Store, where we had a nice chat with

other hikers. The nice couple we had met in Kern Canyon arrived at that point, surprised to see us ahead of them. After our well-deserved burger, we rushed back to Mammoth, happy to have survived this harrowing day. (A 6:15 hour day, 5:41 hours moving, 10.91 miles, 1,636 feet of elevation gain.)

**Trip totals:** 53:17 total hours, 40:03 moving hours, 78.14 miles, 18,582 feet of elevation gain.

**Photos:**

Please check [here](#).



# Mount Eisen (12,160')

August 3-August 6, 2022

By Greg Gerlach



On day one, Daryn Dodge, Keith Christensen, Jim Ramaker, Kathy Rich, and I backpacked from Mineral King over Glacier and Black Rock Passes to Little Five Lakes, where we set up camp on the north side of the middle lake (shown as elevation 10,476' on the topo map) near the bear box. Daryn climbed Sawtooth Peak on the way to the lake and was then down to needing only three peaks in order to finish the SPS list for the second time. Also, it rained about two hours starting at Black Rock Pass down to our campsite, conveniently stopping just as we arrived at the lake.

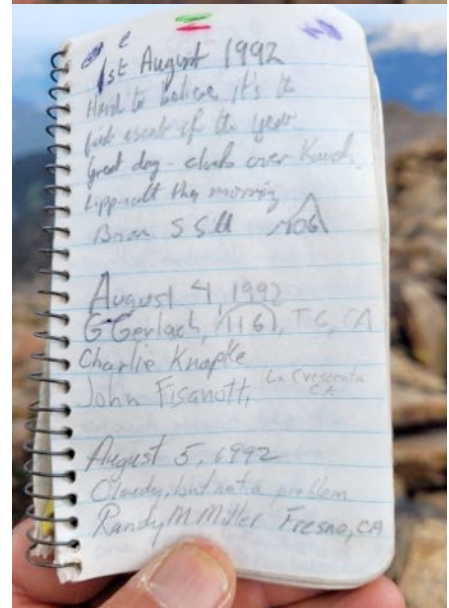
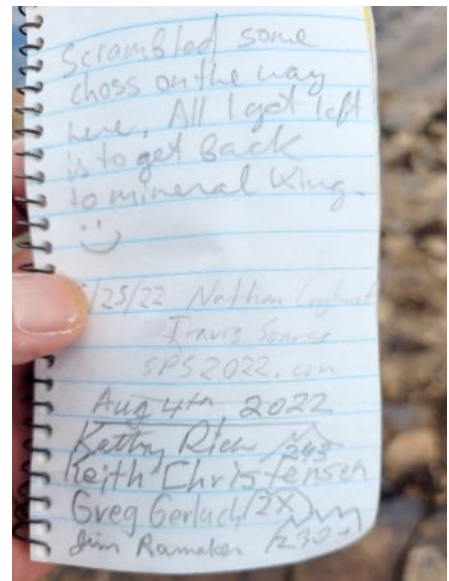
On day two, Keith, Jim, Kathy, and I climbed Mount Eisen via the guidebook's "Little Five Lakes" route. We broke camp, then backpacked

down the Black Rock Pass Trail to about 10,400' in elevation, stashed our overnight gear, then headed west to the uppermost Little Five Lakes (elevation 10,410'), staying on its south side as we climbed up to the small tarn located at about 11,400' in elevation in the basin southeast of the peak. From there, we climbed up to the peak's south ridge, which we followed up to the summit. The route is class 3 and the southernmost summit contains the summit register (placed in 1977) and is the high



*Above: View of Upper Little Five Lakes from the west. Right: Keith Christiansen and Kathy Rich walking along Upper Little Five Lakes (Photos by Greg Gerlach).*

point. This was Kathy's 243<sup>rd</sup> SPS peak, with four more to go. Also, this was my second ascent of Mount Eisen, exactly thirty years from the date of my first ascent of the peak when I climbed Mount Eisen on August 4th with John Fisanotti and Charlie Knapke way back in 1992. Afterwards, rain, along with thunder and lightning, fell on us as we dropped down off of the ridge and made our way down to the Black Rock Pass Trail. The four of us packed up our gear and backpacked down to the Big Arroyo in the rain, where, for the second day in a row, the rain stopped just in time to set up camp near the bear box. Meanwhile, Daryn successfully climbed Kaweah Queen and then met us at our camp in the Big Arroyo.



It rained all night, finally stopping around 11 AM the next morning. Keith and I decided to bale and backpacked out over Back Rock Pass to Spring Lake, where we had a great campsite on the western side of the lake in some trees, then, on day four, we backpacked over Glacier Pass and then down to the car at Mineral King. Meanwhile, the weather improved and the three die-hards, Daryn, Kathy and Jim, stuck it out, with Kathy climbing Mount Stewart and Lippincott Mountain, Jim climbing Eagle Scout Peak and Empire Mountain, and Daryn climbing Mount Stewart and Lawson Peak on days three and four. Kathy picked up two more SPS peaks and so needed only two more to finish the SPS list.

On day five, Kathy, Daryn, and Jim backpacked out to Mineral King and their vehicles.

Trip stats: 32.6 miles and 10,100' of elevation gain.

*Clockwise from top: Kathy Rich on the summit of Mt Eisen. Eisen's register, August 4, 2022, and the entry twenty years previous to the day. Wet camp in the Big Arroyo (Photos by Greg Gerlach).*



# Scrambler Ratings Updated

By Philip S. Bates



Reflecting contributions from SPS members and other High Sierra climbers, the two lists of Scrambler Ratings on the SPS webpage have been updated with new ratings of 144 non-technical routes up Sierra Nevada peaks, including coverage of an additional fifty-eight mountains. Suggestions and discussions resulted in the revision of twenty-two Scrambler Ratings, with most of the changes pertaining to the easiest routes up SPS peaks. In total, the two tables covering SPS peaks and other non-SPS High Sierra summits now provide Mountain Scrambler Ratings for 611 non-technical routes up 433 mountains in the Sierra Nevada, representing more than a 30% increase in coverage relative to the last updating of the tables in April 2020. The tables of Scrambler Ratings now include 383 non-technical routes up SPS peaks, including the easiest route up each of the 247 mountains on the official SPS Peaks List. Now 108 SPS peaks have ratings of multiple non-technical routes. Also, Scrambler Ratings coverage now includes at least one route up each of the one-hundred mountains on the Vagmarken Club Sierra Crest List. All non-SPS High Sierra peaks covered by Scrambler Ratings are listed as summits on the GNIS (Geographic Names Information System) of the USGS or have been approved by the SPS as Sierra summits that qualify for the Andy Smatko Explorer Emblem.

*Examples of two S-1.1 peaks.  
Above: Ascending Clouds Rest.  
Right: South Slope of Mt. Langley  
(Photos by Philip S. Bates).*



Based on the article “Improving Ratings for Mountain Scramblers” in the April-June 2019 issue of *The Sierra Echo*, the new framework for rating the difficulty of non-technical mountain scrambles has benefited from some refinements over the past four years, with the most recent clarifications of the Scrambler Rating Definitions highlighted in red on the SPS website. Likewise, new and revised ratings resulting from the most recent update of Scrambler Ratings lists are highlighted in red. During the most recent updating of the Scrambler Ratings, comparative examples of Scrambler Ratings were posted on the SPS Facebook page in order to elicit comments and suggestions on existing ratings. As in the past, SPS members and other Sierra Nevada peak baggers are encouraged to offer additions and changes to the lists of Scrambler Ratings for non-technical routes up mountains in the High Sierra.

The Scrambler Ratings framework divides each of the four, non-technical Yosemite Decimal System (YDS) categories into three parts and expands the scope of

ratings. While the YDS ratings address only the difficulty of the hardest section of the route, Mountain Scrambler Ratings also consider the length of the most challenging segments and other factors distinguishing the severity of mountain hikes and scrambles. As with the YDS system, Mountain Scrambler Ratings are subjective, but they are based on a few objective variables that determine the severity of a route's most difficult segments. The key variables include steepness and stability of terrain, which together are the major determinants of exposure to hazards, such as the risk posed by the climber falling off steep rocks or loose rocks collapsing on the scrambler. Additional factors for cross-country travel and lower angle scrambling include the presence of other obstacles in the form of vegetation, waterways, and snow.

For each Scrambler Rating category, the definition addresses the extent and challenges of any off-trail travel, the length and difficulty of any scrambling, the steepness and stability of the terrain and the degree of exposure to hazards. Paralleling the practice with YDS ratings, the Scrambler Ratings only address the extent and stability of the most difficult class of rock encountered on the route; the ratings do not address the extent and stability of terrain of lower degrees of difficulty on the route. For example, while Mount Ritter's Southeast Glacier route and Castle Peak's West Ridge to East Face route are each rated S-3.0, reflecting very short sections of Class 3 scrambling, the Ritter route has long and sometimes unstable Class 2

scrambling compared to mostly Class 1 hiking and very short bits of Class 2 scrambling on the Castle route. As in the case of YDS ratings, Scrambler Ratings do not assess seasonal and daily variations in the risks posed by the angle, quality, and extent of any snow that may cover the route.

One of the objectives of the new Scramble Ratings framework is to provide finer distinctions in the relative difficulty of non-technical climbs up mountains in the Sierra Nevada. The tables below provide a comparison of the frequency distribution by rating category for Scrambler Ratings of the easiest routes up each of the official 247 SPS peaks, as well as for the total 611 routes now covered by the two lists for SPS and non-SPS High Sierra summits. For each table, a comparison is provided with the Yosemite Decimal System (YDS) ratings for the same routes. Where applicable, it is important to note that the rating distributions shown below are based on the separate, higher rating of the summit rocks, which raise the ratings of thirty-six (15%) of the easiest routes up SPS peaks and seventy-eight (13%) of all rated routes up Sierra Nevada summits.



*Examples of two S-2 peaks. Top: S-2.2 South ridge of Mt. Bradley. Bottom: S-2.1 Northwest Slope of Mt. Baldwin (Photos by Philip S. Bates).*

# Ratings Distribution Tables

## Easiest Routes Up Official SPS Peaks: Distribution by YDS and Scrambler Rating Categories\* (percent)

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4
<b>Total</b>	13.1	53.9	24.7	8.2
<b>S-X.0</b>	1.2	9.9	14.0	4.5
<b>S-X.1</b>	4.5	21.8	6.6	1.6
<b>S-X.2</b>	7.4	22.2	4.1	2.1

\* Where a separate rating is provided for the summit rock, this higher rating is used for the route. Accordingly, three peaks with technical summit rocks are excluded (i.e., Thunderbolt, The Hermit, and Clarence King). Also, Starr King is excluded as all routes are technical.

## Routes Up All Rated SPS & Non-SPS High Sierra Peaks: Distribution by YDS and Scrambler Rating Categories\* (percent)

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4
<b>Total</b>	12.6	50.0	30.6	6.8
<b>S-X.0</b>	1.8	12.6	17.0	3.8
<b>S-X.1</b>	3.0	20.4	9.8	1.7
<b>S-X.2</b>	7.8	17.0	3.8	1.3

\* Where a separate rating is provided for the summit rocks, this higher rating is used for the route. Accordingly, four peaks with technical summit rocks are excluded (i.e., Thunderbolt, The Hermit, Clarence King, and Isosceles, east summit). Also, Starr King is excluded as all routes are technical.

Several interesting patterns are revealed by the rating distribution tables. First, unsurprisingly, there are very few formal trails to the top of SPS peaks and more generally any of the rated routes up High Sierra summits. A significant majority of Class 1 routes consists of substantial off-trail hiking, resulting in S-1.2 Scrambler Ratings for 56% of the Class 1 ratings for the easiest routes up SPS peaks and 62% of all Class 1 routes with Scrambler Ratings.

Second, while about half of rated routes are Class 2, the vast majority entail intermediate to long distances of scrambling. For the easiest routes up SPS peaks, about 40% are rated S-2.1 and another 41% are rated S-2.2. A similar pattern is evident for the full list of Class 2 routes up all SPS and non-SPS High Sierra summits.

Third, while almost 25% of the easiest routes up SPS peaks contain some Class 3 rock scrambling, about 57% of such routes entail only very short segments of Class 3

rock, as evidenced by S-3.0 Scrambler Ratings. For all Sierra routes with Scrambler Ratings, a bit over 30% are Class 3, with 56% of such routes assigned an S-3.0 rating. Also, among the easiest routes up SPS peaks with Class 3 ratings, fewer than 17% of such routes have Scrambler Ratings of S-3.2, which indicate extensive scrambling on Class 3 rock. For all Class 3 rated routes up High Sierra summits, only slightly over 12% of such routes have S-3.2 Scrambler Ratings.

Finally, a similar pattern can be observed among rated routes with Class 4 rock. For the



*Examples of three S-3 peaks. Clockwise from above: S-3.1 Southeast chute of Whorl Mtn; S-3.1 East Ridge of Mt. Russell from the S-2.0 summit of Mt. Carillon; S-3.2 North Couloir of Mt. Abbot (Photos by Philip S. Bates).*



*Examples of three S-4 peaks. Clockwise from left: S-4.1 summit rocks of Bear Creek Spire; S-4.2 Leconte Route via the Southwest Face of North Palisade; S-4.0 summit rocks of Mt. Darwin (Photos by Philip S. Bates).*



easiest routes up SPS peaks, a bit more than 8% of routes entail Class 4 scrambling, but about 55% of these routes are rated S-4.0, which indicates very short and stable segments of Class 4, and only 25% are rated S-4.2, which involves extensive or unstable Class 4 scrambling. For all rated routes on High Sierra summits, a little under 7% encounter Class 4 rock, with 56% rated S-4.0 and only 19% rated S-4.2.

# Stream Crossings

By Doug Mantle, SPS Safety Chair

Caesar crossed the Rubicon and made history. Pharaoh failed to cross the Red Sea which “covered his chariots and horse soldiers.” There are many lessons in this, but the bottom line, as Madam Sosostris tells us is: “Fear death by water.” This year’s broodingnagian snowpack calls on us to recall some SPS history.

The first, and for many years, the only death on an SPS trip was a drowning, notwithstanding a log ford of Illillouette Creek. RJ Secor needed to be rescued at least four times: on skis, ice, Mount Baldy, and crossing a creek. Burly Dave Dykeman snatched him from oblivion at Crown Creek. Dykeman did the same for another SPS chairman, “Gnarly” Bill Oliver, on another occasion.

On a more positive but still serious note, to cross a swollen South Fork of the Kern in 1973, fearsome and fearless Dave King hoisted May Heishi on his shoulders and started across. The waters reached his elbows, then shoulders, neck, before Dave completely disappeared. Somehow, he turned around and made it back, he had not got halfway across.

Here are my thoughts for crossing a serious-looking stream.

Take off your socks and cross in your boots. Sorry that they’re wet. Sturdy tennis shoes laced up are OK. Maybe crocodiles. No thongs or unsecured sandals, lift your foot and they are off to the sea. Use trekking poles or ad lib. an equivalent. Cross like a hominid . . . using all four points (feet, poles), one at a time. Shuffling is good. Act as if in a heavy wind, expecting to be knocked about. Face the current, or it will buckle your knees.

If the stream looks really bad? We’ve seen the diagrams, the triangle, using ropes, anchored to a stable

item like a tree. For fun, we acted this out on stage one SPS meeting; Mary Motheral played the tree, hilarious!

After, a serious, Dave Vandervoet-type fellow took me aside: “If you have to resort to that sort of scenario, you shouldn’t be trying to cross.” He was right in my opinion.

Once, a South African certified guide showed me a two-person technique. Hold each other by the waist, step in unison. We started across and quickly decided to return, hike some distance, take the bridge.

An easy crossing first thing in the cold morning or before some rain may be a lark and later, NOT. Think *Into the Wild*.

Here are a few of the more problematic crossings:

Bubbs Creek (Deerhorn, Brewer . . .)

Convict Creek (Baldwin, Bloody)

Crown Creek (Tehipite, Tunemah)

Evolution Creek (Muir Trail)

Illillouette Creek (Clark, Star King)

Middle Fork Kings (Wheel, Devils Crag)

South Fork Kings (Taboose area. Hey after a big rain last summer a bunch of us were stranded out there for a day)

South Fork Big Pine Creek (Middle Palisade)

Give crossings much thought in pre-trip planning. Check the maps, ask the rangers, and look for internet updates. Once you’re THERE, assess soberly, unhurriedly . . . don’t be afraid to turn back. One source for more info: the Pacific Crest Trail Association has a thorough article, Google “Stream Crossing.” There is much good info there, although I don’t agree with their take on group crossings.

And send me an email if you like; I’m happy to discuss!

## Dare to Lead! Virtual Leadership Training Spring Seminars 2023

Interested in starting on your path to become an Angeles Chapter outings leader? The first step is to take the Leadership Training Seminar offered virtually this spring on Sunday, May 7<sup>th</sup> (the April 1<sup>st</sup> class is full). The five-hour class costs \$25. The application is on-line at <https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/default/files/sce/leadership-training-committee-and-outings-management-/2022-LTP-seminar-app-fill2.pdf>, where you can also check for the dates for future seminars. At this site, <https://www.sierraclub.org/angeles/leadership-outings/angeles-chapter-leadership-training-program>, you can learn more about the Leadership Training Program.



**Please note:** Currently the Sierra Club requires all participants on an outing more than an hour from help to complete a medical form, and leaders for such outings must complete a safety management plan. Both are fairly simple forms, which are available at the LTC web site here: <https://www.sierraclub.org/angeles/leadership-outings/forms-resources>.



We've chosen the photo above taken by Mat Kelliher, showing climbers ascending Mt. Emerson on an SPS trip, to represent the outings section. Do you have a photo you would like to see here? If so, please send your submission as an email attachment to [tina@bowmanchange.com](mailto:tina@bowmanchange.com) or via USPS to Tina Bowman.

**Apr 1 | Sat** LTC

**LTC Seminar Spring 2023 #1:** The Angeles Chapter Leadership Training Committee is kicking off 2023 training with another "hybrid" seminar, all virtual. Learn about essential topics from Sierra Club Values, Conservation and Safety, to best leadership practices, group management, trip planning, steps to leadership and a First Aid overview, followed by our legendary scenarios. Because there's an online e-learning component and homework and a pre-exam, you'll want to register enough in advance to guarantee your spot as space is limited. Later applications may be accepted on a space-available basis but are not guaranteed, so register early. Come learn all about the best leadership practices of our outings program. **Note:** Our *Leader's Reference Book (LRB)* was revised in 2022 just

**SPS outings can always be viewed online on the electronic Angeles Chapter Schedule of Activities:**

<http://angeles.sierraclub.org/activities>  
<https://sierraclub.org/angeles/sierra-peaks/outings-schedule>

as National Sierra Club launched a new Outings Leadership Training ("OLT") presenting the latest training on Sierra Club values, commitments, equity and more. Angeles is already incorporating these trainings into our own, refining our seminar throughout 2023 and including National's online e-learning. For registration and more information go to <https://act.sierraclub.org/events/details?formcampaignid=7013q000002Ng1xAAC&mapLinkHref=>.

**Apr 1-2 | Sat-Sun** LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS

**I: Navigation: Mission Creek Preserve**

**Navigation Noodle:** Navigation noodle at Mission Creek Preserve to satisfy the basic (I/M) level navigation requirements. Saturday for practice, skills refresher, altimeter, homework, campfire. Sunday checkoff or additional practice. Medical form required from all participants. Send email with contact info (mailing address, phone numbers), navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare to Leader: Robert Myers. Assistant: Ann Shields. Note: Early (at least two weeks prior to the event) sign-up for all navigation checkoffs and practices is recommended. These outings require substantial pre-outing preparation work, including completion of both a comprehensive written exam and a route planning assignment that will be mailed to you prior to the checkoff. See Chapter 6 of the *Leader's Reference Book* for more information.

**May 7 | Sun** LTC

**LTC Seminar Spring 2023 #2:** The Angeles Chapter Leadership Training Committee is kicking off 2023 training with another "hybrid" seminar, all virtual. Learn about essential topics from Sierra Club Values, Conservation and Safety, to best leadership practices, group management, trip planning, steps to leadership and a First Aid overview, followed by our legendary scenarios. Because there's an online e-learning component and homework and a

# OUTINGS

## Leaders in this issue's schedule:

Tina Bowman (562) 438-3809 [tina@bowmanchange.com](mailto:tina@bowmanchange.com)

Ron Campbell (714) 425-5169 [campbellr@verizon.net](mailto:campbellr@verizon.net)

Lubna Debbini (714) 457-0237 [lubna.debbini@gmail.com](mailto:lubna.debbini@gmail.com)

Jim Fleming (805) 405-1726 [flemingjim174@gmail.com](mailto:flemingjim174@gmail.com)

Robert Myers [rmmyers@ix.netcom.com](mailto:rmmyers@ix.netcom.com)

Ann Pedreschi Shields [apedreschi@sbcglobal.net](mailto:apedreschi@sbcglobal.net)

Gary Schenk (626) 244-4616 [gary@hbfun.org](mailto:gary@hbfun.org)

pre-exam, you'll want to register enough in advance to guarantee your spot as space is limited. Later applications may be accepted on a space-available basis but are not guaranteed, so register early. Come learn all about the best leadership practices of our outings program. **Note:** Our *Leader's Reference Book (LRB)* was revised in 2022 just as National Sierra Club launched a new *Outings Leadership Training ("OLT")* presenting the latest training on Sierra Club values, commitments, equity and more. Angeles is already incorporating these trainings into our own, refining our seminar throughout 2023 and including National's online e-learning. For registration and more information go to <https://act.sierraclub.org/events/details?formcampaignid=7013q000002Ng1xAAC&mapLinkHref=>.

### May 6-7 | Sat-Sun LTC

**C: Wilderness First Aid Course:** The course runs from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm on Saturday and Sunday in Fullerton plus four hours of video lectures (on-demand) during the following week. This course meets the 24-hour WFA requirement for I/M/E leader ratings. Fee includes instruction, pdf of course notes and two laminated cards with response protocols. COVID precautions include distancing when possible and masks. Proof of CPR within previous 5 years, signed release of liability and proof of COVID vaccination status are required to enroll. Fee \$180 (full refund until 10/14/22). For sign-up, see instructions and application at <http://wildernessfirstaidcourse.org>.

### Jun 10 | Sat LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS SPS

**I: Navigation: Mt Pinos Navigation Noodle:** Navigation noodle at Mission Creek Preserve to satisfy the basic (I/M) level navigation requirements. Practice skills or checkoff. Send email with contact info (mailing address, phone numbers), navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare to Leader: Robert Myers. Assistant: Ann Shields. (This is a

backcountry outing; a medical form will be required.) Note: Early (at least two weeks prior to the event) sign-up for all navigation checkoffs and practices is recommended. These outings require substantial pre-outing preparation work, including completion of both a comprehensive written exam and a route planning assignment that will be mailed to you prior to the checkoff. See Chapter 6 of the *Leader's Reference Book* for more information.

### Jul 8-9 | Sat-Sun WTC, SPS

**I: Muah Mtn (11,016') and Trail Pk (11,605) Gourmet Backpack:** Join us for Decadent Wilderness Weekend! Sat backpack 4 mi, 700' gain from Horseshoe Meadow to Mulkey Meadow for 5-star dining experience. Sun work off those calories with 2.6-mi, 1400 gain to Muah. Then pack and return to cars with optional side trip to Trail Peak, adding another 3 mi, 1200' gain. Preference given to recent WTC students. Send email and cell phone, recent conditioning, and your most outrageous culinary ideas to Ldr: Ron Campbell. Co-Ildr: Lubna Debbini.

### Aug 4-6 | Fri-Sun SPS

**I: Mt. Bago (11,868'):** An SPS Intro Trip suitable for newcomers and WTC students. Day 1 hike from Onion Valley to Charlotte Lake, 5.8 miles, 2600' gain. Day 2 climb Bago by class 1 east slope, 2 mi rt, 1500' gain. Day 3 pack out. Send experience and conditioning information to Ldr: Gary Schenk. Co-Ildr: Tina Bowman.

### Sep 21-24 | Thur-Sun SPS

**I: Mt Kaweah (13,802'):** Join us to climb an SPS emblem peak, starting from Mineral King. We will backpack on the

***Thinking of leading a trip or looking for info on a trip you've already decided on?***

SPS Safety Chair Doug Mantle invites you to e-chat about it, get his input, flesh out your ideas—[sierradoug@icloud.com](mailto:sierradoug@icloud.com).

# OUTINGS

Sawtooth Pass trail and then use trail to Glacier Pass and down to Spring Lk (10,600'), x-c to the Black Rock Pass trail, over the pass, and down to Little Five Lakes to camp (c. 11 mi, 4850' gain). Fri we'll backpack to Big Arroyo and set up camp (2.9 mi), then pick up the High Sierra Trail for about 3 mi, leaving that to climb Mt Kaweah, mostly a sand slog with some easy talus at the top. Return to camp (totals for the day c. 15 mi, 4600' gain, 5400' loss). Sat we'll retrace our steps over Black Rock Pass and over to Spring Lake to camp (c. 8 mi, 2500' gain, 2100' loss). Sun over Glacier Pass and back to the cars (c. 4.5 mi, 1000' gain, 3600' loss). Medical form required. Send conditioning to Ldr: Tina Bowman. Co-Ldr: Jim Fleming.

## From the Outings Chair

By Phil A. Bates,  
SPS Outings Chair

If you aren't a leader, please consider becoming a SPS Leader! Elsewhere in this issue is a "Dare to Lead" box with information about signing up for the Leadership Training Program. The first step, the seminar, is coming up on April 1<sup>st</sup> with another training on May 7<sup>th</sup>.

This year is anticipated to be a banner year for snow in the Sierra—who would have thought Mammoth would have a record level of snow at this point! As such, some of the approaches and normal routes will be impacted into the summer months so pay extra attention to your route planning when it comes to stream crossings. But don't despair, just plan ahead!

Inyo Permits can generally be reserved six months in advance, so book permits now. Currently, it seems that most Inyo Permits are being released at 7am PST, so you'll need to watch the [time.gov](http://time.gov) clock and hit send about 5 seconds before 7am. We expect the Sierra to be stunning this spring and summer, so we would love to see SPS members out bagging peaks and posting awesome pics on social media. Leaders, please remember to give the outings chair(s) and the MOC time to review and approve any M, MR, or ER trips.

Sep 23 | Sat

LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS SPS

**I: Navigation: Mt Pinos Navigation Noodle:** Navigation noodle at Mission Creek Preserve to satisfy the basic (I/M) level navigation requirements. Practice skills or checkoff. Send email with contact info (mailing address, phone numbers), navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare to Leader: Robert Myers. Assistant: Ann Shields. (This is a backcountry outing; a medical form will be required.) Note: Early (at least two weeks prior to the event) sign-up for all navigation checkoffs and practices is recommended. These outings require substantial pre-outing preparation work, including completion of both a comprehensive written exam and a route planning assignment that will be mailed to you prior to the checkoff. See Chapter 6 of the *Leader's Reference Book* for more information.

Dec 2-3 | Sat-Sun LTC, WTC, HPS, DPS, SPS

**I: Navigation: Mission Creek Preserve Navigation Noodle:** Navigation noodle at Mission Creek Preserve to satisfy the basic (I/M) level navigation requirements. Saturday for practice, skills refresher, altimeter, homework, campfire. Sunday checkoff or additional practice. Medical form required from all participants. Send email with contact info (mailing address, phone numbers), navigation experience/training, any WTC, leader rating, rideshare to Leader: Robert Myers. Assistant: Ann Shields. Note: Early (at least two weeks prior to the event) sign-up for all navigation checkoffs and practices is recommended. These outings require substantial pre-outing preparation work, including completion of both a comprehensive written exam and a route planning assignment that will be mailed to you prior to the checkoff. See Chapter 6 of the *Leader's Reference Book* for more information.

## FREE First Year's Membership or Echo Subscription

New subscribers and members can receive their first year's subscription for free! Download the Membership Application Form at <http://sierraclub.org/angeles/sierra-peaks/new-members#mr>. Please contact the chair if you have any questions.

# OUTINGS

You can visit the SPS website for an up-to-date listing of outings at <http://www.sierraclub.org/sps>.

## Wilderness Permit Info

Most wilderness permit reservations are now made through <http://recreation.gov>. For day use permits for Desolation Wilderness, get a free permit from a local Forest Service office any time of year or at the trailhead in summer. For overnight permits year round, go to [recreation.gov](http://recreation.gov).

### INYO NATIONAL FOREST

Web site: [www.fs.usda.gov/main/inyo/home](http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/inyo/home)

All wilderness permits are reserved through <http://recreation.gov>. Follow instructions regarding permit pick up. This includes the "walk-up" permits (and you now have to pay for them!).

Eastern Sierra InterAgency Visitor Center, Lone Pine, CA  
(760) 876-6200

White Mountain Ranger Station  
Bishop, CA 93514  
(760) 873-2500

Mammoth Lakes Visitor Center  
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546  
(760) 924-5500

Mono Basin Scenic Area Visitor Center, Lee Vining, CA 93541  
(760) 647-304

### KERN PLATEAU

Web site: [www.fs.usda.gov/sequoia](http://www.fs.usda.gov/sequoia)

Wilderness permits are required only for overnight stays in the Golden

Trout Wilderness. For trips departing from a Sequoia National Forest trailhead, permits are free via email using the application you'll find at [https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/sequoia/passes-permits/recreation/?cid=fsbdev3\\_059517](https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/sequoia/passes-permits/recreation/?cid=fsbdev3_059517). For entry into the Golden Trout Wilderness from Inyo NF or Sequoia/Kings Canyon NPS, make your reservation through <http://recreation.gov>.

Cannell Meadow Ranger District  
105 Whitney Road  
P.O. Box 9  
Kernville, CA 93238  
Phone: 760/376-3781  
Fax: 760/376-3795

Tule River Ranger District  
32588 Highway 190  
Springville, CA 93265  
Phone: (559) 539-2607

### YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Web site: [www.nps.gov/yose](http://www.nps.gov/yose)

Yosemite wilderness permit reservations become available by lottery twenty-four weeks in advance through <http://recreation.gov>. Any remaining reservations become available on a first-come, first-served basis after the lottery process is complete for that week's reservations up until seven days in advance. May-October walk-up unreserved permits (40% of the trailhead quota) are available on a first-come, first-served basis beginning at 11:00 a.m. on the day before the intended date at permit issuing stations. Reservations aren't needed from November through April, but permits are required. Trailhead quotas are in effect in winter. See <https://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/wildpermits.htm>.

If your starting trailhead is outside Yosemite NP, obtain your permit from the land agency that manages that trailhead.

### SEQUOIA AND KINGS CANYON NP

47050 Generals Highway  
Three Rivers, CA. 93271-9599  
Phone (559) 565-3766 for permit & trail info. Fax (559) 565-4239

For general information go to [www.nps.gov/seki](http://www.nps.gov/seki). For wilderness permits go to [www.nps.gov/seki/planyourvisit/wilderness\\_permits.htm](http://www.nps.gov/seki/planyourvisit/wilderness_permits.htm).

Up to six months in advance of your trip, permits may be reserved at <http://recreation.gov>. Permits may be self-issued outside the quota period, from roughly mid-September to mid-May.

### SIERRA NATIONAL FOREST (WESTSIDE) ENTRY

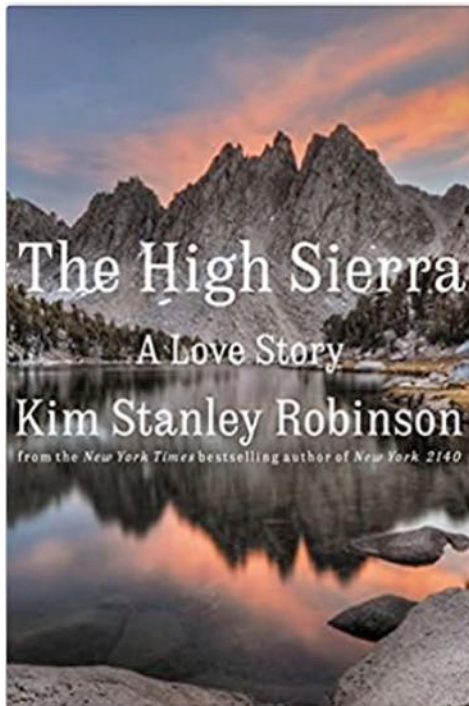
Web site: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sierra>

Ansel Adams Wilderness—North  
Bass Lake Ranger District  
57003 Road 225  
North Fork, CA 93643  
Phone: (559) 887-2218

Ansel Adams Wilderness—South  
John Muir, Kaiser, and Dinkey Lakes  
Wildernesses  
Pineridge/Kings River Ranger District  
29688 Auberry Road  
Prather, CA 93651  
Phone: (559) 855-5355

See [https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/sierra/passes-permits/?cid=fsbdev7\\_018115](https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/sierra/passes-permits/?cid=fsbdev7_018115) for wilderness permit information; reservations are made at <http://recreation.gov>.

# BOOKS



## ***The High Sierra: A Love Story* (2022)**

Kim Stanley Robinson (1952-)

*A Review by Burton A. Falk*

During the spring of 2022, the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal* all published glowing reviews of *The High Sierra: A Love Story*, by Kim Stanley Robinson, an author unknown to me at the time. Since I have a penchant to buy and read almost any newly published volume of mountaineering literature that I can find and because I've spent fifty years or so attempting to climb the Sierra Peaks Section's peak list, I was ready to order a copy.

Before placing the order, however, I looked up Robinson on Wikipedia, where I discovered that *The High Sierra* was his first work of non-fiction, and, furthermore, that he was the author of a series of award-winning sci-fi novels, including the *Mars* trilogy (1991-96) and *The Ministry for the*

*Future* (2020). Wary though I was—I'm not a science fiction fan—I bought the book anyway, and I'm glad that I did.

*The High Sierra: A Love Story* is a 537-page volume, supplemented with an abundance of photographs and maps, and divided into several subsections, including "My Sierra Life," "Moments of Being," "Routes," "Sierra People," and "Names."

In an early "My Sierra Life" section, Robinson recalls his initial entry into the Sierra Nevada in August 1973, when he and two friends, buoyed by LSD, backpacked into the Desolation Wilderness, west of Lake Tahoe. At the end of his first day, lying in his sleeping bag, Robinson realized he had been "seriously electrified" by the mountain scenery. "I didn't know that my life had changed for good. . . . I couldn't know. But I did know I had just lived one of the greatest days of my life. And I knew that this granite world, holding me in its cupped hands as I lay on it . . . was a magic place. . . . That feeling has never gone away."

Robinson recounts his fifty-year Sierra Nevada history in thirteen additional "My Sierra Life" sections woven into the text in chronological order. In Part 5, for example, he writes, "Those first Sierra years of ours were pretty ramshackle. Our trips were mostly planned at the last second, and for almost all of them we went to Desolation despite the fact that we were living in San Diego, so the southern Sierra was both nearer and grander."

By the time Robinson was in his mid-twenties, he had made "perhaps 25 trips, in all seasons," into the greater Sierra, and had come to consider those excursions as "aesthetic, philosophical, or spiritual . . . partly like walking through a great art museum, partly like orienteering, and partly like fooling around on a jungle gym when you were five years old." More specifically, he and his hiking friends had begun to advocate something they referred to as "rambling and scrambling," an activity far different than mountain climbing, the latter of which the author suggests dominates "contemporary culture's idea of what people are supposed to do in mountains."

Instead, Robinson and his friends had come to consider traversing across wild trail-less basins as an activity to be celebrated. On an average day, "we are usually either continuing up to some pass, or going down into some canyon before making a rise to some farther pass. Rare is the day we don't go over a pass, and two in a day is not unusual. This comes from going cross-country, and hiking where basins are high and small. Those clusters of basins are what we seek out."

In "Routes" sections interspersed through the volume, Robinson reviews, like a film critic, ways to enter the two hundred-twenty-mile-long section of the Sierra Nevada between Tioga Pass and Lake Isabella across which no roads pass. "It's really a big wilderness, about the same size as Switzerland."

On the east side of the range, "where the Sierra escarpment begins its big jump to the sky," the lowest trailheads begin on the floor of the Owens Valley, around 5,000-6,000 feet above sea level. Robinson observes, "Since all the passes over the crest are between 11,000 and 13,000 feet high, when

you start from the lowest trailheads your first day will ascend about 6,000 vertical feet. Yikes!”

Because of their difficulty, Robinson considers the following four routes to be bad. 1. The Shepard Pass trail, a thirteen-mile grunt with 6,000 feet of gain: “The best thing about Shepard Pass is that after you cross it, you are immediately in the heart of one of the greatest parts of the range.” Bad route #2, the Baxter Pass trail, thirteen miles long, with 6,300 feet of gain: “Despite the good road leading to it, it’s an unmaintained trail . . . so overgrown with alder and willow that (at one point) you have to fight your way through the brush.” Bad route #3 is the Sawmill Pass trail, thirteen and a half miles long, with 6,800 feet of gain: “Reaching the pass feels easier than reaching the other Four Bad Passes.” Bad route #4 is the Taboose Pass trail, eight and a half miles long with 6,800 feet of gain: “This one is a beauty. . . . It’s no surprise that it was a major pass for Native Americans crossing the Sierra.”

In his “Six Good Passes” section, Robinson lists, again in south to north order: New Army Pass, one of the highest trailheads of all, leading to the Miter Basin, and “if you like, an ascent of **Mt. Langley**”; Kearsarge Pass, “The road to the trailhead is great, the parking lot at Onion Valley is huge, and you’re already at 9,000 feet when you get out of your car”; Bishop Pass, “This is a Very Good Pass, maybe the best. You start from South Lake at 9,300 feet, and Bishop Pass is at 11,900 feet, some five or six beautiful miles away”; Piute Pass, an easy five-mile hike takes you to the 11,400 foot pass, over which you come to the Humphreys Basin “with any number of nice ponds scattered over it”; Pine Creek Pass (11,120 feet), “Not a good name, by the way. It should be called The Tungsten Mine”; and Mono Pass, “the highest trailhead of all,” and, after a three-mile hike you’re at 12,040 feet, the top of the Mono Creek drainage,” with the Four Recesses and the Pioneer Basin ahead of you.

Continuing, Robinson may lose some reader’s empathy as he opines, “North of Mono there are okay passes, like McGee, or Agnew, or Mammoth, but none of these rise to the level of the Six Good Passes.” He goes on to characterize the Mammoth region as “weird and unsatisfactory. The whole area is less impressive than the high Sierra anyway, which ends, for me, a bit to the south, around Silver Pass and McGee Pass.” He finishes the section with another negative opinion, “Did I mention I don’t like Yosemite? Maybe I shouldn’t.”

In “Some West-Side Entries,” a continuing “Routes,” section Robinson admits that because he started most of his high Sierra trips from the east side, he doesn’t know as

much about the west side. He does, however, offer short descriptions of Mineral King, Wolverton, Kings Canyon, Wishon Reservoir, and Florence Lake as respective trailhead locations for the Kaweahs, the Tablelands, the Copper Creek/Bubbs Creek/Woods Creek areas, the Tehipite Valley, and the Muir Trail. He notes, “On the west side of the range the trailheads are mostly pretty low in altitude, from 5,000 feet to 7,000 feet.” Because of their low elevations, however, a longer hike is necessary to reach the “high” Sierra, and thus these entry points are not as popular as the eastern trailheads: “That’s one of the reasons I like them.”

In the “Routes” section titled “Basins Have Characters,” Robinson reviews several of his favorite places in which to ramble and scramble, including Kaweah Basin: “Hard to get into . . . mostly absent of trees, and even of lakes . . . . In the summer, sunlight pours over the crest right into the Kaweah Basin, and hits the [Kaweah] peaks before it hits the basin floor, creating a dawn alpenglow on the red rock that goes scarlet.” He also admires three basins surrounding **Mt. Clarence King**, i.e., Sixty-Lake Basin—“constricted, forested,

Treasurer's Statement Year to Date (1/1/2023–02/28/2023)		
Money In		\$4790.20
Donations		425.00
Interest		0.20
Membership		890.00
Banquet Income		3475.00
Money Out		-\$5654.80
Banquet		-900.00
Banquet - (Other)		-253.52
Speaker Honoraria		-422.31
Office Expenses		-99.00
PayPal Fees		-61.17
	Money In	\$4790.20
	Money Out	-\$5654.80
	<b>Net Total:</b>	<b>-\$864.60</b>
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Paypal		\$2400.94
Checking		\$6340.02
Savings		\$2650.16
<b>NET WORTH</b>		\$11,391.12

the many lakes (not quite 60) mostly tiny pothole ponds”; Gardiner Basin, “a majestic world, deep inside the range,” and, to the north, a nameless basin where no one goes, “a lost jewel, a reward for your efforts to get there”; Humphreys Basin, just over Piute Pass, “a giant tilted trapezoid, handsome everywhere, especially next to the astonishing Desolation Lake”; Palisades Basin, “one of the greatest of them all,” the Palisades themselves providing “one of the great cross-country routes in the Sierra.”

In eighteen sections scattered throughout the volume titled “Sierra People,” Robinson describes several of those who left indelible footprints in Sierra Nevada, including, among others, the First People—the Native Americans, whose long history in the area has been affirmed by scientists who can determine when obsidian chips or tools were flaked by measuring how far water had penetrated a newly exposed glass surface. He mentions “Several meadows in the high Sierra, where [Indians’] summer camps could easily have been set up feature extensive fields of obsidian chips.” Other Sierra People include John Muir, “He spoke for the Sierras as an expert and advocate, a scientist clearly in love with his object of study”; Clarence King, a “candidate for the first Sierra backpacking trip . . . predating as it does Muir’s wanderings by almost decade”; Mary Austin, who wrote, “Sitting . . . on some gray peak above the encompassing wood, the soul is lifted up to sing the Iliad of the pines”; and Norman Clyde, “one of the clearest cases ever of a man who fell in love with the Sierra and then changed his life to act on that love.”

In five sections titled “Names,” Robinson playfully rates several Sierra place names as good, bad, or ugly. Some of the Sierra’s good names, Robinson contends, are the Inconsolable Range, the Gorge of Despair, Iridescent Lake, Shout-of-Relief Pass, Confusion Lake, **Black Giant, Milestone Peak, Table Mountain, Red and White Mountain, Red Slate Mountain, Cloudripper, Seven Gables** and **Four Gables**.

As for bad names, Robinson opines that many “are simply too plain, or too obvious, or somehow wrong or just lame. Often all these at once.” A few bad names, according to Robinson, are **Matterhorn Peak**: “The peak looks nothing like the real Matterhorn from any angle, nor is it a horn”; **Bubb’s Creek** and **Joe Devel Peak**, which were named for early pioneers who merely passed by them in early Sierra history; any place with Granite, Round, Rock, Twin, or White in its name, because there are already places with similar names in the area; and **Mt. Whitney**, because it was named for “an undistinguished professor and bureaucrat,” who, according to someone in a 1910 edition of the *Sierra Club Bulletin*, “named everything after himself and his friends.”

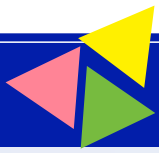
Further, Robinson believes that the two adjacent Sierra crest peak names **Whitney** and **Muir** should be switched to reflect their relative importance, and that Pioneer Basin, the granite bowl surrounded by the four peaks, Huntington, Hopkins, **Stanford** (north), and Crocker, should be renamed Robber Baron Basin. Or, if Pioneer Basin’s name were to remain, Robinson suggests, why not honor four great pioneers of American women’s literature, Mount Willa Cather, Mount Edna Ferber, Mount Zora Neale Hurston, and Mount Edith Warton?

While many peaks in the Sierra Nevada were named in honor of famous evolutionary theorists, including **Darwin, Lamarck, Wallace, Spencer, Fiske, Mendel, and Haeckel** in the Evolution Basin area and “at the west end of the Palisades, stands Mount **Agassiz**, [and] more than one feature [in the Sierra Nevada] is named for Joseph LeConte, Sr., the Berkeley scientist who helped form the Sierra Club,” Robinson is concerned as some of those were guilty of holding racist opinions. Indeed, after due consideration, Robinson suggests that some of the men so honored, including Herbert Spencer, Ernst Haeckel, Louis Agassiz, and Joseph LeConte, Sr., should have their names removed.

Late in the book, in a passage that feels like an apology for his earlier too-harsh judgements, Robinson describes watching the movie, *Meru*, and being astonished by the mountaineers’ dedication and finally recognizing that theirs was no less passionate or rich than his own. Admitting that he was wrong about mountaineers, Robinson acknowledges that “climbing was what they lived for.” A dangerous activity in which “a pretty hefty percentage were going to get killed by accident and die young . . . but they had to do it anyway, because that’s the way they were. They were climbers, simple as that. Not many people are, but if you are, you are.”

*The High Sierra, a Love Story*, at 537 pages, covers a lot of ground but, unfortunately, has no index. Some of Robinson’s subjects not considered in this review are geology, snow camping, gear talk, animal life, personal glimpses of Robinson’s rambling and scrambling friends, and the High Route—a trek that the author believes provides a better Sierra experience than the Muir Trail.

Although I started reading the book as a skeptic, I finished it with a high regard for Kim Stanley Robinson. *The High Sierra: A Love Story* is a noteworthy addition to the Sierra Nevada literature genre, and a wonderful literary journey, especially for me, an 87-year-old Sierra Nevada lover who, like the author, considers his many seasons spent roaming the Range of Light with family and friends to be among the high points of my life.



# Mystery Peak Challenge Answer

Matt Hooper was standing on Mt. Stanford (North) in this photo with Red and White on the left, Red Slate on the right in the background. First to answer (about twenty minutes after the new issue went out) was, again, Ron Bartell! Way to go! Does he sit by the computer whenever he's not out bagging peaks? Second to answer was Romain Wacziarg, who had taken a very similar and striking photo. Next was Tom Becht.



## Help Save California's Native Wildlife and Plant Species When Filing Your Taxes

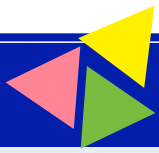
California Department of Fish and Wildlife (*From CDWF News*)

Would you like to help the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) recover and rehabilitate animals after they've been injured or orphaned by wildfires? What about supporting CDFW's research into why the California sea otter population is unable to flourish in its native coastal waters? Or how drought and climate change affect California's native plants and wildlife?

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Get the rest of the article here: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Subscribe/c/296/ce/439005351/view/preview#lcpreview>



# Mystery Peak Challenge

This occasional just-for-fun puzzle is for you to figure out which Sierra peak or peaks are featured in the image. If you have a fine mystery peak puzzle to challenge *Echo* readers, please send it to [tina@bowmanchange.com](mailto:tina@bowmanchange.com). We welcome any mountain images, including those from popular culture—imagery used and abused in film and print!

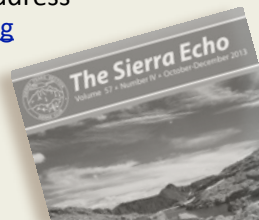
Ron Bartell submitted this photo. Where was he when he took it and what SPS peak can you identify?

Send your answer to Tina Bowman at [tina@bowmanchange.com](mailto:tina@bowmanchange.com).



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## The Sierra Echo

is a quarterly publication of the Sierra Peaks Section of the Sierra Club's Angeles Chapter. For more information, see the back of this newsletter. All questions, copy, and photo submissions should be directed to Tina Bowman, Editor, *The Sierra Echo*, preferably via email at [tina@bowmanchange.com](mailto:tina@bowmanchange.com). The *Echo* will be available as a PDF download at the SPS website and via a link sent to all SPS members and *Echo* subscribers.





# The Sierra Echo

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**Deadline for all submissions is three (3) weeks prior to the publication date, i.e., Feb 22, May 25, Aug 25, and Nov 24.**

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**Sierra Club, Angeles Chapter  
Sierra Peaks Section  
3250 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1106  
Los Angeles, CA 90010**

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