FROM THE EDITOR:

Since the last issue of this magazine was published, I have moved back to Los Angeles. I have gone back and forth between the Bay Area and Southern California most of my life. This time I came south to work on a stop-motion animation, feature film in Burbank. For now I am keeping my apartment in San Francisco with the hope of returning to the Bay Area when the movie is completed. With modern internet service and the personal connections I made at Desert Survivors while living in Bay Area, my ability to produce this magazine has virtually been unchanged. The number of submissions for the magazine has gone up with every issue, which has been great for me now that I am working long hours and find it more difficult to fill the empty pages with my stuff. My heartfelt thanks to all the Desert Survivors writers and photographers who submitted work for this issue.

Going between the Bay Area and SoCal for as long as I have and as much as I have, I have been able to experience both “Californias.” With this I have witnessed the great Northern California vs. Southern California rivalry. Other than the Dodger vs. the Giants perhaps the biggest bone of contention is that northerners feel that Los Angeles takes all of its water and ships it south and wastes it on grass lawns, golf courses and pools.

While it is true Los Angeles reaches far and wide to collect water and the effect of this has been devastating to places like Mono Lake and Owens Lake and there is still much waste, the area has made great progress in conserving water. Since 2007 Los Angeles has cut back 17% on water use and long-term conservation measures have resulted in the same water use as 30 years ago with a population millions of people larger. The building codes have been amended to allow legal gray water systems for the irrigation of landscaping. Local groups such as the Tree People are active in promoting the capture of rainwater from roofs, and the LA Department of Water and power has a successful program of paying its customers to replace grass lawns with dry climate plants.

The trend toward “California Friendly” landscaping is already noticeable when driving through neighborhoods. Who knows, Los Angeles may be well on its way to reverting back to a desert. For a Desert Survivor that would be wonderful.

Nicholas Blake

P.S. For those of you who remember this column in the last issue of The Survivor, it was a tribute to Gerry Goss—who, when we went to press, was expected to step down as president of Desert Survivors. As it turns out we were able to talk him into serving for at least another year and we reelected him president at last October’s Annual General Meeting. Yay!

The Survivor


Desert Survivors is an affiliation of desert lovers committed to experiencing, sharing and protecting desert wilderness wherever we find it. We recognize the places we love to explore will not remain wild unless we give others the opportunity to experience them as we do and unless we remain vigilant and active in our efforts to monitor and preserve them.

Desert Survivors backs documentary film on CA deserts

At its first meeting of 2014, the board of directors of Desert Survivors voted unanimously to donate $1100 to Backcountry Pictures of Pasadena, CA for a very special film project about the desert, educating viewers about the beauty of the land. This donation completes the initial fundraising of seed money for research, scouting and scripting the project with the working title California Deserts. Backcountry Pictures plans to start filming once the desert shows signs of spring. An anonymous donor assisted Desert Survivors with the cost of the October 2013 Annual General Meeting in return for receiving a commitment that Desert Survivors spend a like amount of money on public education about desert issues. This project fits that requirement precisely.

Desert Survivors will receive film credit for the contribution. Excitingly, the project team at Backcountry Pictures is interested in our offer to assist by making available the combined expertise of our members and trip leaders in determining filming locations, discussing ideas and making use of our intimate knowledge of the desert.

The project team includes several long-time friends of the desert and Desert Survivors, including Laura Cunningham, Kevin Emmerich of Basin and Range Watch, Terry Weiner of the Desert Protective Council, and John Hiatt of the Sierra Club in Nevada. Bruce Pavlik, author of California Deserts - An Ecological Rediscovery, has agreed to act as a Senior Academic Advisor on the project.

Backcountry Pictures was founded by David Vassar and Sally Kaplin in 2001. The duo has produced films on conservation themes including Spirit Yosemite, Discover Hetch Hetchy and Save Our History - Yellowstone. In 2012 Backcountry completed production on California Forever. The two-hour documentary special aired nationally on PBS.

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Desert Survivors is proud to support Backcountry Pictures on this promising film project. One well-known trip leader is even testing out “Hollywood” as his middle name.

Norma Wallace

Cover photo: Desert Survivors trudge up steep terrain, that is so dry and inhospitable that virtually nothing grows, toward the lush flora of the Five Palms Oasis. This is in Anza Borrego State Park during the November 2013 Artist’s Car Camp. Photo by N.Blake.
Spring is the season of renewal. It’s the time we recall the scent of sagebrush, return to sleeping under the stars and reawaken to life’s possibilities.

Welcome the season of new beginnings by renewing your Desert Survivor membership. Your contribution keeps our service trips, car camping and backpack trips going year round. Membership builds community and sustains our desert preservation efforts.

April is Desert Survivors’ annual renewal month.

Please go to our website: desert-survivors.org and click on the Join/Renew button to pay by credit card. The cost is just $30. If you prefer regular mail, send your check to Desert Survivors, PO Box 20991, Oakland, CA 94620. There is a sign-up form on the backcover for new members or address changes.

For the 100 year anniversary of the Los Angeles Aqueduct Desert Survivors visited Mulholland’s super pipe at the Jawbone Siphon in December 2013. The story of the intrigue and deceit by the City of Los Angeles in acquiring the water rights for this project is one of legend. Check out the book Cadillac Desert by Mark Reiter to learn more of the tale.
‘I Feel Naked Without my Earrings’
Bejeweling the lonely Panoche Hills ephedra

by Jannet Schraer

This year’s Desert Survivors (DS) Annual General Meeting at Mercey Hot Springs was delightful. Soakers and hikers indulged in a few more ‘summer’ days ahead of fast-approaching cool, fall winds. The potluck was scrumptious, generous, and jovial, and the eerie, full moon hike was pre-Halloween haunting and exhilarating. Thanks to all who organized yet another joyful DS event: Gerry, Karen, Nick, Martina, Bob, the rest of the board and volunteers at our beloved Desert Survivors.

A highlight of the weekend was ephedra ‘coining’ and grass ‘corralling.’ What? On Saturday morning about 25 DS members helped Natural Resource Specialist, Mike Powers of the Hollister Bureau of Land Management (BLM), bag grass species and festoon ephedra—a native shrub—with quarter-size slugs of numbered metal tags in the Panoche Hills Wilderness Study Area. The effort reminded me of choosing earrings while dressing for a party, festive blue tags dangling from their hopeful, little branches. The BLM wants to identify the blunt-nosed leopard lizard (Gambelia sila) habitat down to the individual plant. Apparently, these lizards grow fond of just one plant for foraging, mating, and burrows. Read more about their work at: http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/hollister/outdoor_laboratory.html

Photos clockwise from top right: Mike Powers of the BLM (left) supervises our volunteers as they bag samples of organic matter gleaned from a 5m X 5m patch in the study area; attaching a tag to an ephedra shrub; Sam Moorman shows off a tag.
Although a fine way to spend a warm, fall morning, I couldn’t help but think that we were missing the big picture. Far more prevalent than ephedra and associated grasses was the thick coating of dry cow dung, the crisscross paths of worn cow trails, and the complete lack of plants in what had become a land devoid of diversity. See link: http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/public_lands/grazing/

The effort to monitor blunt-nosed leopard lizard habitat with the BLM was vigorous and sincere. But, of course, the real question is ‘why?’ Why are species endangered? Why is habitat shrinking? And finally, once we know how severely cattle grazing degrades all habitats, why do we continue the eating habits that result in endangered flora and fauna?

Of course fieldwork such as this has some value to me. I am more educated about the animal, enjoyed the camaraderie, and was heartened to know that the BLM has a Natural Resource Specialist. But the work seemed like the proverbial ‘drop in the bucket.’ In the main, the Panoche Hills are horribly degraded. The remaining oaks are very old, vulnerable to disease, and saplings have long since been browsed down to their tender roots. Diversity is nonexistent, and the once thick forests and deep, living soil, now give way to a fine dust over a rock and clay substrate that barely supports a hand full of species. Already scarce waterways are cow-trampled and dung-poisoned endangering all native animals that drink from denuded streams. Even the last few ranches along Little Panoche Road look like the Hollywood set of an abandon dust bowl farm.

Our most prolific leader, Bob Lyon, has lead many trips in this area, and participants have described the Panoche Hills as ‘beautiful, serene, peaceful.’ While coining bushes, foxtails riddled our shoes, dung dust coated our clothes, and long gone were the spreading oaks for a shady respite. I began to wonder what people mean by ‘beautiful.’ I tried to imagine what this environment used to look like and the diversity it once supported. I wondered if the word ‘beautiful’ would be appropriate after viewing side-by-side pictures of before and after grazing. To me, calling the Panoche Hills ‘beautiful’ is like searching for a kind word after a very bad meal. I suppose we were all trained to find something nice to say.... For this hiker, it was hard to find beauty in this ecological tragedy.

Every coiner and collector was energetic and thoughtful. Desert Survivors is known in the environmental community for its great monitoring, planting, fence removal, etc. In keeping with our motto, ‘Experience, Share, Protect,’ along with the great field work we do, perhaps we can also educate ourselves on the environmentally destructive nature of meat eating on behalf of a shy lizard living under a lonely ephedra.
17 November, 2013, Panamint Springs CA, 5:20 pm. Left Ridgecrest around 11:20 on East Ca 178. Drove through Trona and arrived at ~15:10. Generally this trip is much quicker. After 47 years of living in and visiting this area, I felt a more absorbing traverse was available. So I went slowly, stopped a few times, played the scofflaw for ~23 miles, and reacquainted myself with an area denizen.

Along this route are many highlights, one being the unintentional yet exquisite belvedere at the northern end of Searles Valley, smack dab where State Highway 178 begins a steep and serpentine descent to the mouth of Water Canyon and on into the Panamint Valley. It is one of my favorite belvederes, and I pretty much pull in there every time I pass through. Today was no exception. Residual haze from the previous two windy days muted the effect, but still it was worth the stop, and a good spot it was for a PB & J break and drinking in the view.

Word of Hwy 178’s condition beyond this point had reached me over a month ago. Heavy rains late last July washed out many roads in the Death Valley area. This is one of them. Details of the exact nature and extent of the damage were sketchy. I wouldn’t have come this way, except that what I considered a trusted source of local knowledge suggested one could easily by-pass the washed out sections by traversing the lower end of the valley via Indian Ranch Road out of Ballarat. So that’s where I headed.

At 178’s junction with the Ballarat Road, the highway north is blocked with signs and a major pile of dirt and rocks laid across the way. A small beaten path around the erected obstruction showed many tire tracks, some very recent too, of those choosing to take that route anyway. I took this as a bicycle exploration opportunity and rode several miles northward hoping to assess the damages firsthand. What a feeling to be in the midst of that vast expanse, pedaling free, without traffic, the day mild, the sun shining, and almost no breeze to be felt was truly an amazing moment for me.

Pulling into Ballarat, I quickly observed that Indian Ranch Road, the route of my intended direction, was barricaded with signage indicating that way too was closed! I stopped at the General Store, got a cold drink (Canada Dry sparkling green tea, a novelty for me), and spoke with proprietor Rocky Novak about the current road conditions. His opinion regarding Indian Ranch Road was that the closure was intended to dissuade folks from using it as a by-pass because Hwy 178 beyond where Indian Ranch Road connects at the northern end was also compromised by the July flooding. Apparently the entire 23 miles of highway through the Panamint Valley has been officially closed since late July. That seems like an inordinate amount of time and makes me wonder what’s really up with the highway repair.

Rocky & I is a backstory to my relationship with Rocky Novak. We met many years ago (circa 1993) when he was living with his late father George at Novak Camp (a.k.a. Chris
Wicht Camp) at the bottom of Surprise Canyon. I’d come to hike up canyon to Panamint City, a renowned ghost town Rocky called the “Big City.” The Novaks had several buildings in their camp, a small garden (replete with home-grown tobacco), free flowing fresh spring water, a pocket of land perched above the canyon’s channel shaded by mature cottonwood trees, chickens, and some semi-productive ore digging to work. Talk about off-the-grid living!

Finding these two desert rats living among a pile of mining odds & ends at the end of a very rocky but maintained dirt road was a pleasant event. During that first, albeit brief visit, we discovered a connection; Rocky’s cousins Dennis, Tom, and Donna Hart were neighbors of mine in Ridgecrest from ’68 through ’74. Rocky & I did most of the talking then, while George smashed away at some ore with a heavy bronze mortar & pestle. (The ore appearing to me like a highly mineralized mass of rock with a distinct reddish-orange color that Rocky assured me was a “sure sign of gold.”)

George was hard of hearing then, but once he understood my connection with the Hart family, he opened up a bit and began to pitch a bitch about the entourages of heavy duty 4x4 rigs grinding their way uphill to the Big City. He called them thieves, saying they were stripping the place of all it’s valuable stuff, leaving trash behind, and threatening his spring. He particularly hated the LAPD groups, saying they were the worst of the lot, being trashy, loud, and getting drunk and shooting guns. He was most disgusted with them for talking down about “the niggers.” That cemented it for me. I decided I liked these two guys and felt some sort of “in” with these men which made it easier for me during all of my future visits up canyon.

Before my next visit, a local BLM official warned me that the Novaks were known to try to extort some sort of fee from visitors parking at the end of the road. Among the mining detritus at Novak Camp was a small but sufficient front loader. Rocky claimed to use it to keep the road open after periodic floods washed it out. That was good for the Novaks so they could get out occasionally for grocery supplies. It was good for visitors too so we all could get a little deeper into the canyon and have a fairly large and level spot to park. That parking spot was not small either. I’ve see as many as 10 vehicles there at one time. The BLM folks didn’t challenge Rocky’s claim, only stating that where the public parked was not private property. Although I understand the inherent conflict here, it seemed reasonable to me that the Novaks would like some sort of remuneration for their efforts. I certainly benefited from it.

On my second visit I was leading a group of Desert Survivors to Panamint City. Rocky was at home, heard the
noise of our approach, and came out to greet us. It was interesting for me to see Rocky present his song and dance around road maintenance, and his asking for a donation to support the work he does, and also for watching the cars to discourage theft. (The last part sounded like a vague threat.) The first in that group to respond to Rocky’s plea was Survivor member Lynn Buckner. She offered a bag of fresh apples for the parking privilege. Rocky’s eyes lit up at the prospect of those fruity gems. He eagerly accepted the exchange, and we all went on our merry ways.

Many years afterward, Novak Camp caught fire and the whole place burned down. Rocky & George survived the devastation, retreating to Ballarat. That’s where George spent his last days, and that’s where Rocky now holds forth at the General Store.

Before leaving Ballarat, Rocky & I talked a bit about family. Dennis still resides in Ridgecrest at his Grandmother’s property, and Tom died from diabetes complications, while my immediate family has all moved away.

As I finished my cold drink, Rocky confided in me that many folks have been driving around the pile of dirt and using the highway illegally. Seems the damage isn't so bad to prevent auto traffic. He offered that since it was Sunday, no road crews would be on duty, and probably no law enforcement staff either. That was all the information I needed. Without delay, I said good-bye, drove back to the highway, around the dirt pile, and headed north toward Panamint Springs.

More and greater flood damage was revealed beyond where I biked. I enjoyed the solitary ride, but my heart went into my throat when I spotted a car approaching ahead. It was low, dark, with wide rearview mirrors, and its headlights were flashing. Shit, I thought, that’s probably a cop. Luckily the car was filled with concerned toothless female locals calling me darling and passing along warnings about how bumpy it was going to be some miles ahead. I thanked them and proceeded more cautiously. About 10 miles out I came upon an approximately ½-mile stretch of severely damaged roadbed - massively undercut on one side and buckled like so much putty. It was still passable though, by driving very slowly and even more cautiously, nay - judiciously over and around the deformed and missing pavement. Someday, after the fall of civilizations, I think all roads shall come to this end.

Besides the road damage, to me a more interesting aspect to the flooding came into focus as the miles accumulated- the creosote bushes were super green. Some were even in full bloom! Having passed this way many times in the last 40 years, I cannot recall seeing such abundantly vibrant green creosotes in this otherwise desiccated place. Those stunted little twiggy things I'd passed so many times before, thinking them dead, were filled with sprouts and festooned with dark glossy green leaves and yellow flowers. And the desert air was redolent with their sweetly acrid perfume shouting out their statement of life. Almost everywhere I looked, swaths of green bushes lined the slopes, each bush watered so well and so deeply during that storm. Such a quaff! Their greenness, in an otherwise sere landscape evidenced the path of the floodwaters.

Besides the invigorated creosotes, mushrooms lined the highway’s shoulder for many miles. Such curiosities - desert mushrooms and vibrant green blooming bushes so late in the season seem to me a great opportunity for biological study. 🐢
The Center for Biological Diversity with Desert Survivors and other environmental groups go to court to block the BLM plan for the Algodones Dunes.

New plan opens 40,000 Acres of protected lands to off-road vehicles.

by Nicholas Blake

In December 2013 The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) adopted a new plan to open 40,000 acres of previously protected, sand dune wilderness in Imperial County for the overrunning by dune buggies, dirt bikes, quad runners and other off-highway vehicles (OHVs.) The new BLM plan threw out an agreement by environmental groups, the BLM and off-road-advocacy groups in effect since 2000 that allowed 125,000 acres for OHV use and protecting 75,000 acres of the dunes for plant and animal life and non-motorized recreation. These protected lands are the habitat for endangered and protected species such as Pierson’s milkvetch, the desert tortoise, several types of lizards and insects. According to the Sierra Club Desert Report, “The new BLM plan is the largest desert conservation roll back in the past ten years.”

Oral arguments for the suit were heard in federal court in San Francisco on February 28, 2014, Judge Susan Illston presiding. Attorney for the plaintiffs—The Center for Biological Diversity, The Sierra Club, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility and Desert Survivors—Brendan Cummings argued that the new BLM plan sacrificed endangered species protection, wilderness, and air quality for an expansion of unbridled OHV recreation. In doing this, the BLM violated multiple substantive and procedural provisions of law. Plaintiffs asked the Court to overturn the BLM and Fish & Wildlife Service unlawful management decisions and require these agencies to comply with the Endangered Species Act and other statutes so as to protect the sensitive resources of the dunes.

Many legal points centered on the Pierson’s milkvetch—a purple flowered plant restricted to these dunes that has been listed as threatened since 1998 due to OHVs. The plaintiffs contended that the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) violated the Endangered Species Act by failing to develop and implement a recovery plan for the Pierson's milkvetch. Mr. Cummings also noted that the FWS was supposed to make a recovery plan for the Pierson’s milkvetch once it was listed as threatened in 1998 and failed to do so for over 15 years. He asked the court to order the FWS to make a recovery plan in the next two years. He also asserted that FWS relied upon a faulty Biological Opinion (required for the new plan) that did not take into account the endangered plant’s ability to survive in a much smaller protected area.

Another area of concern was the derogation of local air quality. On holiday weekends upwards of 200,000 OHV users can descend upon the dunes, creating a temporary city larger than the permanent population of Imperial County, driving over 93% of the sand open to OHV use and kicking up clouds of fine particulate into the air. The dust created by OHVs can be seen over the dunes for miles. The plaintiffs maintained that this cloud along with the exhaust from the OHVs, support vehicles and campfires was not properly acknowledged by the BLM in the plan and could not be relied upon for compliance with the Clean Air Act.

The defense—the Department of the Interior along with a pro-OHV group called the American Sands Association—argued the case had no support in the law or facts. The defense felt that they had addressed all the deficiencies identified in earlier court rulings and urged the court to end the litigation over the dunes and return full management of them to the agencies charged with the responsibility. Regarding the endangered Pierson's milkvetch, the defense contended most of the rules cited by the plaintiffs were for the protection of animals, not for plants and that a recovery plan is not required. They also challenged the factual basis of the increased air pollution that the new plan would cause.

The hearing lasted about 45 minutes. Mr. Cummings spoke for the plaintiffs, three attorneys—one person each from the BLM, the FWS and the American Sand Association—argued for the defense. From her comments and questions Judge Illston clearly understood the legal issues and what was at stake for the dunes. She took the matter under consideration, we expect a ruling by the end of March 2014.

The section of the Algodones Dunes at issue will remain closed and protected until mid-April 2014. If the BLM plan goes ahead we can expect the desecration to this wilderness by OHVs to begin shortly thereafter. Desert Survivors will notify its members of the court’s finding. Our hopes ride high for a favorable ruling.
One Woman’s Reminiscence of the Glass Mountain Backpack  Labor Day Weekend 2013

by Martina Konietzny

A yearning for life, longevity and a focus on fitness fueled my desire to spend Labor Day weekend in the rarely visited Glass Mountains of Mono County with the Desert Survivors. After reading trip leader Bob Davis’ description of the hike, a regular Homo sapien might have shied away; however, as a Desert Survivor I was shaking with excitement for the adventure ahead.

Leaving the Bay Area on the first day of the Bay Bridge closure toward Yosemite, my companion Kevin Pope and I were encouraged to take the Sonora Pass—circling the plume of the biggest fire of Yosemite’s history. Our route took us past the ghost town of Bodie to Lee Vining over a winding, high mountain pass at night. This was no easy task with only a sliver of moonlight where even the planet Jupiter did not help light the way.

The next morning, we drove east on Hwy 120 and guided by the smoky red, morning sun, we headed toward the meeting point. Here, a series of roller coaster dips in the road made speeding a hazardous game and one could easily miss the markers listed on the directions to the trailhead, “Doby Canyon Road, Taylor Canyon Road, a cattle guard, McGee Canyon Road” and a second “cattle guard.” Finally, we arrived at Black Canyon Road where we saw the first of 9 yellow ribbons carefully planted by Bob to guide the way. Coincident with turning onto this dirt road my heart started beating faster with anticipation of the adventure to come.

We dashed in our sedan along the gravel road. While running a little later than we planned we were still comforted by the GPS confirmation that we would arrive slightly before the 8:00 am start time.

I was on the lookout for the final milestone, the “...obvious duplex pit toilets,” when I saw a group of up-right hikers, completely decked out in ex officio beige, trekking poles, hats and gloves, who turned out to be none other than Bob Davis and our fellow Desert Survivors. All this at about 9,000 feet elevation—which extends cooking time and strains the breathing process with a sense of greatly diminished energy. Of the group of 8 hikers, I was most likely the youngest and perhaps the least fit.

We hikers headed out and up toward the summit of Glass Mountain, into a landscape filled with ash, pumice, rhyolite and most strikingly an abundance of obsidian. This is a dark purple, volcanic glass that if sliced thinly enough can become nearly transparent as if viewing life through your sunglasses. This glass stone can break into conchoidal fractures which was useful for making weapons and cutting tools used by people who walked these parts long before us. Regrettably we saw no evidence of them on this trip.
Two peaks topped the mountain. Debate ensued over which one was the true Glass Mountain Peak with the lesser peak being McCoy Peak. The peak register waterproof box and trail to Glass Mountain was on the south summit, yet the USGS map labeled the north mountaintop as Glass Mountain. In addition to this uncertainty, ominous thunderhead clouds began to rise in dark circles above us. Weather in high altitudes can turn on a dime and we were at risk of being exposed to rain and lightning.

Against all odds, we decided to climb to the other mountaintop. When we reached its summit we all agreed this was the true Glass Mountain, since it had a USGS marker as well as a solar collector for a radio repeater structure. As fate would have it, the sky cleared up too and we were able to relax while enjoying a magnificent view in all directions.

At home after the trip Bob Davis carefully reviewed the facts and learned that we had gotten it wrong that day and the high point of Glass Mountain is the south summit—the peak we went to first. The north summit—40 feet lower in elevation—was apparently incorrectly labeled Glass Mountain on the 1994 USGS maps, and has the misplaced Glass Mountain USGS survey marker. Even the USGS makes mistakes.

During the next two days, we hiked two more unnamed mountaintops. We found oddly twisted, coniferous needle trees that exist in this high altitude environment. With little moisture and meager nutrients these trees grow extremely slowly. The proud and unprotected trees are tenacious, withstanding extreme temperatures and exposure. The extreme dry air at high altitude saves the trees from rot, but it also dries a hiker’s sinuses and caused my nose to run. I surprised myself when looking for a tissue in my rain jacket; I actually found one, bringing about a sense of triumph of unexpected organization!

On the final day, on one of the mountaintops we enjoyed a stupendous view of a solid obsidian column protruding from the earth right in front of us with the mountains of Yosemite as a brilliant backdrop. Later, back in camp, we were all surprised by a hailstorm with hail stones the size and look of precious pearls. I contemplated the question of why hail in Texas can be the size of golf balls, but then I soon settled back into Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina where Levin was livid with the Doctor who first wanted to drink a cup of coffee at 5:00 am in peace and quiet before going to see Kitty who was about to give birth to Levin’s son. This was a wonderful moment for me.

With another constellation of magic desert moments under our belts the trip ended. Kevin and I drove back to the Bay Area with absolutely no traffic and little evidence of the Yosemite fire other than the occasional flurry of emergency vehicles. Soon after arriving home, in Desert Survivor-style, we immediately got ready for the next trip. A Desert Survivor never comes home but always is ready to venture into uncharted waters. As such, we will see you in the desert.
We met up at a proper campground in Anza Borrego State Park on Friday morning and caravanned off to the desert. We were Darrell, Karen, Elaine, Peter from Canada, Peter from Santa Cruz, Nick, and our venerable leaders, Bob Lyon and Marisa Seaman. Bob, unfortunately, was under the weather with a bad cold, sore throat and all, and it allowed Marisa to sparkle, which she did like a diamond, this being her first trip to lead.

Our first encounter was with a dragon, a magnificent sculpture elongated to the other side of the road, made of rusted metal like so many others to be found on the land. There were horses and tigers and dinosaurs, enormous birds, wildcats and on and on stretching out around the town of Borrego Springs. All were lifelike or larger than life and anatomically perfect. It was a sublime addition to the desert, their silhouettes beckoning from a long way off. We stayed here for a while, near the dragon, some people drawing or painting, some exploring the topography, sideways stone hills with their marble fudge markings.

Then we were off to the truncated rocks— a slot canyon made of blobs of hardened mud or so it seemed. We hiked through this marvel, with its tunnel like passageways, while others stayed in one spot to sketch the scenery.

Back at camp, our vehicles made a semi circle to keep the wind from thrashing us; it was a very windy night. Marisa had brought a lightweight and effective fire pit, so around the fire we feasted on sushi, salad, squash, spaghetti, dolmas and chocolate for dessert. As we sat around enjoying the fire, a small kit fox stopped by to say hello. It hid under a car for a while, watching us, before scampering away into the night.

Out here where the ocotillo stretches to the sky and the hills and mountains go on forever, all is still. The wind died down, leaving everything to take in the sun unheeded. Rocks pile up or are scattered everywhere. Cacti sprout from cracks between rock in undulating shapes, twisted, gnarled.

Animal life is largely hidden in daylight. At night, scorpions and tarantulas crawl up out of their tunnels, while a fierce wind comes whipping out of the west. Illuminated by moonlight, there is stirring the shadows.
The Survivor    Spring 2014

Next morning, we were off to see “5 Palms,” an oasis in an otherwise desolate badlands, then “17 Palms,” a bigger oasis with palm trees (as you might imagine from its name) and their fronds and other vegetation. The Pumpkin Patch was next. This is real geological oddity—a corral of rounded stones, really round, as if some one fashioned them purposefully into little globes. It was also a meeting place for off-roaders, with a kiosk set up by the Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area rangers.

Our last and most magnificent stop was Font Point. A dirt road through a wide wash led us to this overlook of monumental proportions. Here you could take in the Salton Sea to the east and intricate canyon lands below us as wide as the eye could see. We watched the sun set in the west, while a full moon rose up into the rosy pink darkening sky to the east. It was a time for taking it all in and perhaps do a little sketching.

Sunday, we were off to Palm Canyon near the Visitor Center. A hike up a rocky trail led to a waterfall. This lush oasis was a refreshing finale to the trip.

On the road home, we were a few hours outside the park when we came upon a few rusted metal creatures like the ones that were surrounding Borrego Springs. We had found the studio of Ricardo Breceda, the artist behind these fabulous sculptures. Inside his property, there were perhaps hundreds of animals, fantasy figures, people, even a whole stagecoach, all finely crafted from metal. See his website: ricoaboabreceda.com.

Far too soon we had to leave, onward for the journey home.

Photos, clockwise from top left: Sunset to the west at Font’s Point; The author and dragon sculpture by Ricardo Breceda; Hiking into a slot canyon; A fox that entered the camp looking for a handout. For the animal’s own good none was offered; The most prolific artist on the trip, Karen Rusiniak and her pastel landscape; Moon rise to the east (the same time as sunset) and the rugged terrain below Font’s Point; First time trip leader Marisa Seamon at Five Palms Oasis; The strange, rounded rock nodules of The Pumpkin Patch.
I have always been interested in obscure things and places. As a child, I had little interest in Disneyland. Maybe because I knew my parents would never take me to California. Instead, we went to places like Peterson’s Rock Garden in Eastern Oregon, Wall Drug Store in South Dakota and Hart Mountain Antelope Refuge. I have to admit, I wasn’t that excited about these places but the seed was planted and now I love quirky places steeped in history, mystery and obscurity.

For years I had been hearing tales of Joaquin Rocks, historically known as Las Tres Piedras or The Three Rocks, from fellow Desert Survivors (DS) as we spotted them from our cars on Interstate 5 along a 2 mile section near Derrick Avenue in Fresno County. In 1993 long time member, Bob Ellis called the BLM about them. They told him to come down the following weekend for a tour and after numerous subsequent trips he ended up on the Technical Review Team for nearby Clear Creek. He and Vickie Hoover eventually led several backpacking and service trips for Desert Survivors to Joaquin Rocks in the 1990’s.

The rocks are named after Mexican American folk legend Joaquin Murietta— known as the Mexican Robin Hood by some. Murietta along with his horse gang, allegedly had a hideout at the base of the rocks in the 1850’s. His story was romanticized in the 1854 book The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murietta, by Yellow Bird. This was California’s first novel and Yellow Bird was America’s first Native American novelist.

I checked out a newer version of the book from the library. The scholarly introduction indicated that there were at least 5 Joaquin’s who were involved in cattle rustling, murder, bank robberies and kidnappings. They were disenfranchised Mexican Americans marginalized by racist laws during the California gold rush. They were so successful that after 2 years of banditry, the State of California issued a reward of $5000 for the capture of the Joaquin deemed responsible. The person of Mexican decent that was eventually killed on Panoche Pass was probably not Joaquin Murietta and there was a lot of skullduggery involved in the collecting of the reward.

In 2011 I made my first attempt to visit the famed rocks with Desert Survivors on a trip led by Bob Lyon. We were unable to obtain permission to cross private property, and other possible roads were closed due to excessive mud or asbestos hazards. We went to the Griswold Hills instead.

In April 2013 my friend Beth and I were trying to find a backpacking place close to the Bay Area. I wanted a hike that was relatively easy and had no water carry due to my recent spinal surgery. Henry Coe State Park was becoming the likely choice when a third person joined us—a trip planning genius who I will call “Zorro” (in the spirit of bandito Joaquin Murietta.) Zorro started studying maps for Joaquin Rocks. He had never been there before but swore up and down that he had found a drivable road that would take us close to our destination. From Google Earth there appeared to be no gate. I was dubious because of past failed attempts but after being cooped up at home for several months for surgery recovery, I was itching for an adventure. We decided to go and just see what hap-
pened. It was also reassuring when he mentioned that there would be springs to get water from every day.

On a beautiful April morning Beth, Zorro and I met up at Exit 349 on I-5 to begin our journey. It became immediately clear that the 1986 U.S.G.S. 15 minute Domengine quadrangle map was out of date. The expected public road was now apparently, more a driveway heading for a greenhouse on private property dominated by grapevines. We drove up it but soon encountered a fence blocking our way. The road beyond was washed out. So we parked behind a blue water tank in a lame attempt to hide our cars and headed out on foot.

My hopes for a no water carry trip vanished while my irritability increased. It turns out that this adventure was just like all DS trips with the announcement from Zorro, “We will be coming to springs but it’s not known what condition they are in so you might want to carry all water just in case.” I pictured my surgeon rolling her eyes in disbelief as I loaded my pack with 2 days worth of water. Adding to my irritation was the fact that we were walking 4 extra miles than planned each way and who knew how much elevation gain was added? I didn’t want to ask. I could stew in my own juices or adopt the mantra: “Let the adventure begin!” The choice was clear.

Ducking under the fence, and onto a private ranch, we headed out following our GPS and noses to our first destination, Homestead Spring. We were now on grazing land and when we got to Homestead we found a trash dump that included veterinary medical waste—old jars of dark mysterious bovine medication, syringes mixed in to the usual assorted trash. Continuing on we came to a large water tank and a watering trough for the cattle.

Our route started heading up hill and after a couple of hours, we came to Martinez Spring. This would have been possible water source since it had been fenced and the trough wasn’t scummy. Besides a molasses lick and lots of cows, there was evidence that people had once called this area home.

There were many grinding holes marking the cooking areas of Native Americans. On the hillside was an old grave site with a rusted metal sign where we could make out the words “Spanish Infant” 1890. On a previous DS trip in the area I had learned about Mariana La Loca, a woman who lived in an adobe close to Martinez Spring in 1879 where she worked as a housekeeper for local sheepherders. Apparently, the solitude and fantastic shapes of the sandstone rocks stimulated her imagination and she started giving fiery sermons prophesying the end of the world on May 16, 1883. She convinced as many as 400 people from the surrounding communities that the only way to survive was to join her and wait for God to open the door in the rocks for the faithful to enter and be saved that day. It was wild to imagine a commune of 400 people living around Martinez Spring, a place that is so remote that no images of it could be found with an internet search.

After a contemplative rest, we picked up a dirt road that headed upward. The road snaked uphill through live oak and bright green grassy fields. Late in the afternoon we reached the crest of the coast range. There were more fences and a gate that allowed us to cross onto BLM land. We were happy to be on public land but it meant that there were no longer any roads and we would have to bushwhack. We started hiking up the brushy ridge.
following animal paths. It was late in the afternoon, when we reached a flat open space with good views to the east and west. We decided to stop here for the night.

While we set up camp, Zorro went ahead and did some scouting in preparation for next morning’s hike. After stopping for the day at a dry camp, I was feeling much better about all the water I had been carrying and treated myself to a one cup sponge bath.

The previous evening trail work paid off in the morning as we made our final approach to Joaquin Rocks. It was thrilling to finally arrive at these legendary sandstone monoliths. They glowed with an otherworldly light and resembled a massive spine of a mythic beast. We set up camp in a grove of live oaks to the west of the rocks.

Our thoughts soon turned to water and we set out to look for Joaquin Springs. We followed a trail steeply downhill from our campsite and after searching a bit, found a tank with some very unappealing water although the birds seemed to be enjoying it. We searched for the source but it wasn’t apparent where it was coming from other than buried pipes. Like the pain of childbirth, my feelings about the water carry were fading fast. Zorro had higher water requirements due to his energy expenditure on route finding and had to drink some of the water, treated of course. He said it tasted funny. The following day when we were hiking out, he was plagued by the laxative effect of the high magnesium content of the water (researched later).

While we were at the spring, we heard the distant roar of engines, that started getting louder. We looked around and saw 3 motorcycles approaching on the Clear Creek road that had been closed for several years by the BLM. We laid low to avoid any confrontation with the modern day outlaws. They rode to end of the road and turned around and left. We later noted and photographed several paths with motorcycle tracks in the grassy areas around the rocks where dirt bikes had trespassed and damaged the landscape. Spring wildflowers were blooming and we found a garden of Miner’s lettuce. We prepared a salad of fresh greens and used the oil packet from our freeze dried dinner for salad dressing. Having left all things Apple and other modern distractions behind, we were able to enjoy good company, the wind in the trees, the last golden light on the rocks, the slideshow of moving clouds and a connection to the spirits of past native peoples, outlaws, adventurers and seekers who had come before.

As the evening light faded we reminisced on the legend of Joaquin Mureitta who may have camped on the very ground we were on. He is not seen as a bandit by some people but a man of Mexican heritage who was falsely accused of stealing a mule and horsewhipped for it. As the legend (some say myth) goes, his brother was hung and his wife raped. He swore revenge and took up a life of violence. Upon his alleged capture, he was allegedly killed and his head was preserved in spirits and carted around. The head was eventually destroyed in the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire.

After a leisurely morning we made our final stroll through the rocks on our way out. We took another route to return passing The Big Blue Hills, rolling grassy hills of live oak, and an exposed cliff of large sea shells reminding us that the coast range was once the ocean floor now lifted up. We passed more springs with signs that the current home of cows (later discovered to be associated with Harris Ranch) was once home to native peoples.

We reached our cars which were untowed and untouched. We were elated to have been able reach the reach the Rocks by a new route. No one in Desert Survivors or among our other friends had been able to make it to Joaquin Rocks despite several attempts during the previous 10 years. I would not recommend our route to any organized group because of private property issues, poison oak and bushwhacking. At this point, BLM is talking about issuing permits for public access to Clear Creek. The BLM website has been down recently but there is a hotline for Clear Creek. 831-630-5060.
Backpacking Culinary Craft

Desert Survivors trip leader Bob Davis discusses backpack cooking kits and his own ultralight set up.

Backpackers on my recent trips have solved the food and cooking conundrum in a wide range of different styles. Their methods ranged from very heavy to extreme ultra-light. One carried a steel stove, cup, bowl, spoon, a rodent proof food bag and made multiple course meals from primary unprocessed ingredients, even green salads.

One took bagels, peanut butter, prepared hummus, fresh fruit and no stove. An extreme hiker took no stove or cutlery, ate sparsely of high-fat snack food and drank minimal water on the trail, then tanked up on food and water at pre-set cache sites.

If someone greatly prefers their usual food and a cooking gear regardless of pack weight, I say, "Carry on". However, for those who want to carry a lighter pack there are ways.

Alcohol stoves, either liquid or solid, are the lightest. The Esbet solid fuel stove is popular. An even lighter method is to burn fuel cubes under a pot that is supported by rocks. Alcohol burns slowly and steadily, good for boiling a cup or two of water.

Compressed gas stoves provide convenience, a reasonable weight, and are efficient. The fastest and most convenient but not the lightest is the Jetboil. Enthusiastic advocates can quickly make hot drinks and can boil water for three hot meals a day and be ready to go ahead of most.

I use a titanium Snow Peak Gigapower stove. Most of the weight for short trips is in the excess fuel. An empty canister used for a tare can allows determining remaining fuel weight in a partly used canister. By knowing from experience how much fuel is used per day the lightest canister available with enough fuel can be selected for a trip of known length. I use 12 grams of fuel to boil three cups of water each day.

A Lexan spoon and a MSR Titan cup and lid complete my cooking equipment. The cup weighs 13.5 oz, holds 1.6 cups, and serves as boiling pot and soup bowl. The stove folds to fit in the cup and the fuel canister fits in the top of the cup over the stove. The lid for the cup is homemade from an aluminum pie plate. For dinner I boil 1¼ to 1½ cups of water twice, the first for a prepackaged vegetarian stew and the second for a substantial soup.

A postage scale or a 10 lb. limit cooking scale is very useful when weighing food for a trip. When there is a choice, be influenced by the difference in weight. About 1½ lb. per day of dry food is reasonable. When you return home and unpack, weigh the remaining food. Note the volume of water carried back to the trailhead. Keep a record for each trip.

Will thinking about having to do this detailed preparation inhibit you from showing up at the trailhead ready to roll? Then find less demanding ways to lighten your load. Be satisfied with that accomplishment and let other concerns be soothed by your good food and the wonders of the wilderness.
Modesty aside, this was just one of the best car camps ever. We had a small, dedicated group, great weather and great rock art to look at. I had been looking for a site near the Owens Lake for almost two years. It was one of the sites in the Julian Stewart monograph published in 1929. It feels very much like a treasure hunt. It is mentioned in two other sources and all three give slightly different locations. The geographical misdirection does not feel like an accident and I will continue in that grand tradition here.

I came in two days before the trip and had a pretty heavy snowfall crossing the mountains and by the time I got over to HWY 395 all the passes were closed. I slept at the Tinnemaha campground and it pretty much rained all night. The morning was clear and the eastern slopes were completely covered in brilliant white.

Thursday 10/10/13: I headed out of the campground and stopped for a walk at the nearby petroglyphs. These are some of the best examples of archaic style that are a cross between a spider web and foam. They are difficult to photograph even in the best light so I try to sketch one or two on each visit. The wet surfaces made the glyphs almost impossible to see so I didn’t stay long.

This early start gave me most of the day to search for the site. I parked at a spot that seemed right and started walking. At one point I came on what I think is the terminus of the old tramway that crosses the mountains into Saline Valley. Finally, after about three miles in one direction and two miles in the other, I found the site! Yahoo! What a thrill. There is a lot of mystical hubbub attached to this site and I can see what the fuss is about. There is heavy emphasis on the spirals and radial patterns associated (at least in popular thinking) with the Sun. I did a little walking around to establish the limits of the site and went back to the truck. I was now set for the tour on Friday!

That afternoon I had a little time so I went to the Lone Pine Movie Museum and took the $5 tour. What a hoot! Hundreds of movies were shot in the Alabama Hills west of Lone Pine and this museum seeks to commemorate them all. The day I was there, the museum was flooded with visitors there for the annual film festival.

I ran into Vernon Kuska, waiting for Andy Cominios to go to the campground but it turned out to be a Department of the Interior site so naturally it was shut down in honor of the campaign for smaller government. We went to a deep canyon I knew in the Alabama Hills that was the site of one of those aforementioned movies, *Gunga Din*. Be sure to catch it.

Friday 10/11/13: We all met at the Interagency Visitors Center just south of Lone Pine, also closed due to the overall government shutdown. We had our introductions and orientation and headed off to the rock art site that I had confirmed the day before. The site is different from most other sites in that the base rock is a nearly white marble rather than the more common basalt with a dark, patinated topcoat. The grooves were smooth and rounded. There was an abundance of sun signs and fertility signs as well as a panel of bighorn sheep. We spent about an hour and a half roaming around the site. One of the overhanging issues is that at some recent time in the past, the rock that made the petroglyphs so interesting had attracted the attention of quarry miners and the site was cleaved in two. What was taken away, we will never know.

We had a few hours to go before heading off to the trail head for the next day’s hike and Andy mentioned a desert memorial to the band U2 at the site of the album cover photo so, naturally, that was our next destination! We parked the vehicles along the highway at Nick Blake’s direction and we headed across the desert to a certain reflected gleam in the distance. The reflection was from an aluminum suitcase sitting in the middle of nowhere in front of an old, dead Joshua tree with an old guitar, a monumental plaque and other band paraphernalia. We all took turns hamming it up for the photographer.
Next stop: Darwin Falls. I had not been there in ten years at a time when the canyon was badly choked with reeds and cottonwoods. Apparently, there had been a recent flood in the canyon and that had damaged the intake of a water system that diverts some of the outflow to a pipeline that runs out the canyon and down the way to a tourist lodging facility. In order to repair the pipeline, a backhoe had cleared a path almost all the way to the Falls so the walk was greatly improved. I commented that the permits required to get a backhoe into the canyon must have been prodigious. As a project manager, I know the paperwork can be intense for even the slightest modifications to federal land. Someone else in the group observed that emergency circumstances can often trump bureaucracy, even federal bureaucracy.

Near the Falls, a large cottonwood had defeated the backhoe by somehow dislodging the tire from the rim. Tools were spread around like the crew had just walked off. The Falls itself was in good working order in that sort of "Grotto of Seven Mysteries" that it has. It was moist, cool and shady back in the canyon so we all had a break and headed back to the vehicles and over to Lee Flat. We made it in easy time, threading through the Joshua trees and into familiar territory. We set up camp and settled in for the evening.

Saturday 10/12/13: We headed out in the morning for the mouth of a canyon that is hard to see from our campsite. I had to retrace our steps from the last time we entered the canyon but I did not want to repeat the descent of a loose basalt slope so I veered over a few hundred yards so I could enter on level ground. I have often noticed that canyons will have a small sign near the mouth but this one had a regular signpost with several figures. Notable is that someone had come along later and tried to complete the figures with a scratching technique. This just seemed so significant that I was expecting great art in the canyon. But, in reality, the art in the canyon was fairly modest. There were a few abstract bighorn sheep, a nice basket and an interesting panel depicting a row of atlatles. The basket was reminiscent in style of similar art in the area north of Bishop. Although my intent was to push on to the edge of the Saline Valley to take in the spectacular view, we decided that it was time to head back to the camp. (I am contemplating taking the same hike one more time but doing an overnight backpack so we can get to the overlook and have some time to enjoy it.)

That evening we had a visit from a young German couple who were asking advice about going into Saline Valley and up the Lippincott Mine Road. I did everything I could to get them to at least delay until daylight and they eventually agreed. They were driving a VW bus from the Austrian military which they had souped up for extended travel. They worked for Audi and—get this—the company let them work for 18 months at half pay and funded them for the next 18 months at half pay so they could have this adventure. Wow! Anyway, we traded stories and email and off they went the next morning. Later on I found out that they were barely able to make it into Saline Valley, much less up the Lippincott Mine Road. They re-routed to Death Valley, which, of course, was closed. According to their Facebook page, they were in Oaxaca at Christmas.

Sunday 10/13/13: That was pretty much it. We broke camp, said our goodbyes and hit the road. It was a fun and diverse group with two new members, Jane Totten and Maureen Stubblefield. Welcome new members!

On a sad note, I took a detour on the way home to see the rock art at the Red Rock site near Benton and observed what I think is a great deal of theft. There is a large rock which I remember along the top had etched footprints as though someone had left tracks along the edge. Some of it seems to be missing. It is really heartbreaking.

Reporting from Davis, CA, Chuck McGinn
January 10-12, 2014

*Trip Report by Bob Davis*

This backpack was to be a two night trip from Snaggletooth on the west border of the wilderness over an easy pass to Trampas Wash then through the wash to Lake Havasu on the east border. We would visit a spring, a big game guzzler, and a petroglyph site that we had located on a previous trip. We would look for Wildcat Spring, Whimpy Spring, and evaluate the access to Lake Havasu.

On a beautiful winter morning five backpackers—Pov, Andy, Esperanza, Burk and myself—set out into the desert. Early in the trip, we crossed a bajada where we saw WWII tank tracks and several 50 caliber machine gun shell casings. These were stamped L.C. 43. This headstamp code indicates that this shell was made at the Lake City Army Ammunition Plant in Independence, Missouri in 1943.

We hiked through orchards of teddybear cholla surrounded by mine fields of cholla pups anticipating the opportunity to snag a foot and hitch a ride to a suitable place to make a new orchard. Most everyone got hooked up in this process. Brittlebush was in bloom. We saw a few beautiful desert globemallow flowers and a giant ocotillo.

The several panels of petroglyphs at the guzzler site appeared to cover large spans of time, including a few that were very ancient and nearly faded away. There was one iconic bighorn image.

At a concrete dam at the spring site we found a BLM marker from a 1976 project. Only a small puddle of water stood behind the dam, however both guzzler tanks were full. A large truck muffler was buried in the sand nearby. Could this have been used for a water filter?

Burro dropping were everywhere. We saw six well fed burrows in three different groups including a mare and colt. They all stayed in place on the hillside and watched as we hiked by. Esperanza particularly enjoyed seeing the burros.

At our first camp it appeared some or all of us might need to return. Andy had developed a foot-to-boot incompatibility. Multiple remedies were suggested like band aids, moleskin pads, cutting a hole in the boot, and more. The next morning Andy ignored all of this and tried a thinner sock on an early morning walk and found the trouble resolved.
The phainopepla (*Phainopepla nitens*) is a unique desert bird with a distinctive call that gives notice that they are nearby. They are flycatchers with a long trim form. The males are black with a sheen like a raven. The females and juveniles are grey. They have a thin crest. In flight they have large white patches on their wings that make them easy to identify. We saw several of them on this trip.

These birds are particularly notable for an enigmatic pattern of breeding twice each year, in two different habitats. In the desert, they are territorial, actively defending nesting and foraging sites, while in the woodlands they are colonial, with several nesting pairs sharing one large tree.

Phainopepla’s favorite food is the desert mistletoe berry. They digest the mistletoe in a way that the skins of the berries become a sticky blob when excreted along with the seeds. The seed blobs attach to their perch, that is usually a branch of desert tree, where the seed germinates to grow into another mistletoe bush. On this trip we saw several examples of trees burdened with mistletoe under a perch that was covered with mistletoe seed blobs.

In Trampas Wash we found multiple, recent truck and motorcycle tracks. At the end of the wash, near the shore of Lake Havasu, the tracks merged into a dirt road leading toward the shore. The road was passable for vehicles except for the last 30 feet where a dense thicket of brush obstructed all but the burros from the lake.

We needed to find a way around the brush. There were burro paths that went through, but were too small for us to follow. We were hemmed in by high rock walls on both sides of the wash. When we reached the right side and found no access, Pov climbed to the top of a ridge and discovered an opening leading to the waters edge.

The lagoon water was clear with abundant fresh water clams. The large lagoons at the mouth of the wash were more than half choked with reeds.

On the way to the lake we did not see anything to suggest springs at the Wildcat Spring and the Whimpy Spring locations. On returning Pov investigated side ravines nearby and found both. Whimpy was a pocket of wet sand about 40 yards up the ravine. Wildcat was a series of small natural rock tanks about 60 yards from the wash. There were only a few inches of water in one of the tanks and no evidence of a spring.

On the first night of this trip there was some concern from the group that the degree of difficulty of this hike was not well explained. Packs were too heavy and the trip too long. On sighting the cars as we returned to Snaggletooth all were pleased to have accomplished this journey and there was an increased awareness of the value of ultralite packing.
Photos from Our

Karen elated at the discovery of a pictograph in Last Chance Canyon during the Holiday Car Camp, December 2013.

Above: Hefting an obsidian, boulder on Glass Mountain.

Happy to be out in the desert.

Our annual Groundhog Day Party, February 2014

Robert Lyon pointing out an important sight during the Mt. Jefferson Car Camp, August 2013.

Left: Desert Survivors, led by David Oline check out the buried Ruby Pipeline in Northern Nevada. Completed in 2011 this natural gas pipe runs from Wyoming to Oregon and left a scar to the earth some 50 feet wide over its 680 mile length.

Happy to be here too.

Leftovers from our feast at the 2013 Annual General Meeting.
Trips and Events

Jannet Schraer shows us the ephedra I.D. tags during the Panoche Hills Service trip, October 2013.

Kevin Pope & Martina Konietzny in the Glass Mountains, September 2013.


Left: It is all smiles before they depart. January 2014. Photo: Bob Davis

Below: As part of our continuing series When Cactus Attack, removing so gingerly a cholla from Jessica Rothar’s leg in 2009.

Left: Finding the perfect composition for her photo at 17 Palms Oasis, November 2013.

Mike Powers of the BLM explains the Panoche Hills studies to Desert Survivors volunteers, October 2013.

In Red Rock Canyon, during the Holiday Car Camp, December 2013.
Desert Survivors Membership Form

Membership dues are just $30/year, although additional donations are welcome. You can renew your membership by filling out this form and mailing it in with a check to the address shown below.

Name (req’d) _____________________________________________________________

Street Address (req’d) ______________________________________________________

City, State, Zip Code (req’d)__________________________________________________

Phone number: ___________________________________________________________

E-mail address: ___________________________________________________________

(Desert Survivors strives to prevent unsolicited use of members' e-mail addresses, and contact details, and will not knowingly allow misuse. Our email-list servers guard email confidentiality.)

I want to renew at the following rate (make check payable to “Desert Survivors”):

___ $30 - Tortoise (basic rate) ___ $50 - Roadrunner ___ $100 - Coyote

___ $500 - Bristlecone ___ $1000 - Bighorn

Photo: N. Blake