

World Wide Web Address: <http://lomaprieta.sierraclub.org/pcs/>

Next General Meeting

Date: Tuesday, March 11

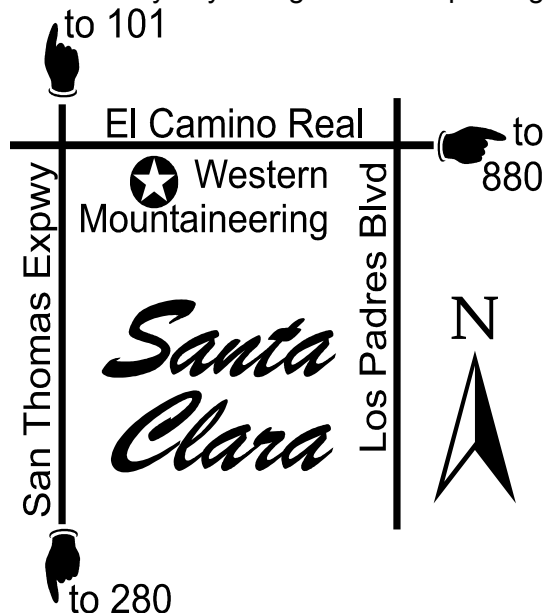
Time: 8:00 PM

Program: California Desert & Winter Birdwatching by Joe Budman

Winter is the best time to explore desert parks such as Death Valley, Joshua Tree, Anza Borrego, & Mojave National Preserve. Also Sacramento River Wildlife Refuge, Elkhorn Slough, Morro Bay, Point Reyes, Crater Lake.

Location Western Mountaineering 2344 El Camino Real, Santa Clara (between San Thomas and Los Padres)

Directions: From 101: Exit at San Thomas Expressway, Go South to El Camino Real. Turn left and the Western Mountaineering will be immediately to your right. Limited parking back.



to 280

Deadline for submissions to the next Scree is Sunday 3/23/2003 Meetings are the 2nd Tuesday of each month.

Two Wilderness First Aid Courses

20 Hour Course

This is a great 20-hour class for those who want to practice wilderness first aid skills in an outdoor setting. In addition to a half day of outdoor scenario practice of first aid and leadership skills, this class focuses on practicing skills and covers wilderness first aid topics: patient assessment, shock and bleeding, head and spinal injuries, wounds, musculoskeletal injuries, heat and cold illnesses and much more. Adult CPR and Wilderness First Aid certifications are available upon successful completion of this course and passing a written wilderness exam. There are pre-class reading assignments. Class will be taught by Bobbie Foster of Foster Calm, former Outdoors Unlimited First Aid Program Coordinator. She has been teaching wilderness first aid in the Bay Area for 8-9 years.

Pre-requisites: None

Dates: Tuesday March 4, 2003 -- 6-10pm - adult cpr optional
Weekend March 8-9, 2003 -- 8am -5pm

WFA with No Adult CPR: \$120 General Public

WFA with Adult CPR: \$140 General Public to register contact BAWT at 415-788-3666 ext 125

Click here to download a registration form:

http://www.bawt.org/forms/BAWT_Workshop_Registration.pdf

Leaders 10 Day Course at Donner Summit

Bobbie and Atwood of Foster Calm are teaching a 10 day wilderness first responder class in May at Donner Summit for any Sierra Club leader.

Dates: Friday, May 16 (evening) till Monday, May 26th

If you are interested in this class you can register on line at Sierra Club leader extranet <http://mitchell.sierraclub.org/outings> or you may call the office at 415-977-5522 and ask to register for the WFR, which is trip number 03991 and also please let Bobbie know that you are registering for this class.

For questions about either class, contact Bobbie at bobbie@fostercalm.com or 530-265-0997

Bobbie Foster Calm
15135 Lake Lane
Nevada City, CA 95959

Chapter Awards!

We are looking forward to our 70th anniversary celebration on June 7th.

Not only will this be an opportunity to celebrate the chapters wonderful history but it will also be a chance to recognize those who have made a special contribution to our chapter.

Help us recognize the dedicated folks throughout the chapter by nominating them for an award. Please consider who in your midst has made a unique contribution. The chapter recognizes individuals for the following awards:

Duveneck Award: especially outstanding contribution over extended period, ExCom approval required

Service to Chapter: service towards growth and maintenance of chapter

Chapter Conservation: service towards chapter conservation goals

Activities Section: contribution to activities section

Regional Group: contribution towards

New Activist: major contribution in past 12 months

10/25 Year Activist: contributions over 10 or 26

Special Achievement: special contributions

Please include the following information in your nomination: Name of nominee, address, phone, email, chapter group or issue, award name, a good description of the reasons the person deserves the award (positions held, issues worked on, years on which trips were led, etc.), and finally, your name and contact information.

Nominations are due by Friday April 11th!

There are many deserving individuals and this is a great chance to acknowledge them. Please submit nominations by email to rkreyes@yahoo.com or fax (650) 390-8497, attention Rafael Reyes. The nominations committee for 2003 is made up of Clyde Lerner, Gary Bailey and myself. If you have any questions don't hesitate to call (650-342-0674).

• *Rafael Reyes, Chapter Chair, Sierra Club - Loma Prieta*

2003 Advance Trip List

This is the list of trips planned for Spring and Summer. Please do not contact the leaders until the trips are announced in the "Scree" or on the broadcast list.

DATES	PEAKS	LEADERS
MARCH		
Sat 1 –Sun 2	Freel Peak	Nancy Fitzsimmons, Charles Schafer
Sat 8 –Sun 9	Desolation Peaks	Pat Callery
Fri 21–Sun 23	Disappointment, Bolton Brown & The Thumb	Steve Eckert
Sun 23	Round Top	Arun Mahajan
APRIL		
Fri 18–Sun 20	Birch Mountain & Mt Tinemaba	Aaron Schuman, Steve Eckert
Sat 24–Sun 25	Yosemite Rock Climbing Weekend	Ron Karpel & Rick Booth
MAY		

Sat 3–Sun 4	Pilot Knob & Owens Peak	Mike McDermitt
Sat 3–Sun 4	Needham	Charles Schafer & Bob Suzuki
Fri 9–Sun 11	Shasta	Arun Mahajan & George Van Gordon
Sat 17–Sun 18	Skiers Snowshoe Weekend: Stanford North & Morgan North (Angels Chapter SMS)	Mike McDermitt
Sat 24–Mon 26	Diamond and Baxter	Steve Eckert & Bob Suzuki
Fri 30–Sun 1	Pinchot & Wynne	Charles Schafer
JUNE		
Fri 6–Sun 8	Muah, Cartago & Olanca	Bob Suzuki & Steve Eckert
Fri 13–Sun 15	Grand Canyon of the Toulumne	Charles Schafer
Sat 14–Sun 15	Bloody Mountain	Aaron Schuman
Sat 14	Mt Davis	Bob Suzuki
Fri 20–Sun 22	Trojan & Versteeg	Bob Suzuki
Sat 21–Sun 22	Mt Shasta	George Van Gordon
Sat 28–Sun 29	Middle Palisades	Ron Karpel
JULY		
Fri 4–Sun 6	Izaak Walton	Bob Suzuki
Fri 4–Sun 6	Mt Brewer	Stephane Mouradian
Fri 18–Sun 20	Clyde Minaret	Jim Ramaker
Sat 19–Sun 20	Donner Summit Cabin Trip: Castle Peak & Basin Peak	Debbie Benham & Chris Macintosh
Sat 26–Sun 27	Disappointment Peak	Aaron Schuman & Steve Eckert
AUGUST		
Fri 1–Sun 3	Matterhorn Peak	John Wilkinson
Fri 8–Sun 10	Mt Stanford: South, East Ridge	Charles Schafer
Sat 9–Sun 10	Tuolumne Meadows, Car Camping	Debbie Benham
Sat 16–Sun 24	Climborama	Steve Eckert & Aaron Schuman

Fri 22-Sun 24	Winchell & Gayley	Charles Schafer
Fri 30-Sept 1	Le Conte, Mallory, etc	Chris Kramer
Fri 30-Sept 1	Julius Caesar	Nancy Fitzsimmons
SEPT		
Sat 6-Mon 8	Trans Sierra	Nancy Fitzsimmons
Fri 12-Sun 14	Palisades Crest	Charles Schafer
Sat 20-Sun 21	Mt Ritter	Jim Ramaker
Thur 25-Sun 28	Marion & State	Charles Schafer
OCT		
Sat 4-Sun 5	Goethe & Lamarck	Stephane Mouradian
Sat 11-Sun 12	Yosemite Valley Car Camping	Chris Kramer
NOV		
Sat 1	Excelsior	Aaron Schuman

PCS Trips

PCS trips must be submitted through the Scheduler (see back cover for details). Trips not received from the Scheduler will be listed as PRIVATE, without recourse.

Desolation Peaks

Peaks: Jacks Peak (9835'), Dicks Peak (9974')
 Date: Mar 8-9 (Sat-Sun)
 Difficulty: avalanche skills, class 2, class 3, ice axe, skis, snowshoes
 Location: Desolation Wilderness
 Leader: Pat Callery (haishan1@yahoo.com)

If you have braved the permit quotas and plied the crowded trails of scenic Desolation Wilderness in the summer, you may have wondered how this oft-visited wilderness area got its ominously enchanting name. In the snowy grasp of winter, however, we will likely have the desolate alpine valley to ourselves. On Saturday, after packing in on skis or snowshoes over Echo Lakes into the vast, snow-covered Lake Aloha basin, we will set up base camp for our Sunday attempt of Jacks Peak and, time permitting, Dicks Peak.

Experience with ice axe + crampons, avalanche awareness, and winter camping is recommended. This is a PCS Restricted trip, Sierra Club membership required.

NOTE: All Sierra Club trips require you to sign a Liability Waiver.

The Yosemite Decimal System as Explained by Bôté Anchouré

Class 1: Trail all the way to the top. Suitable for small children, cats, and Sierra Club leaders with at least 20 years' experience. Bôté doesn't do these.

Class 2: No trail to the top but straightforward walking without the use of hands. Suitable for Boy Scouts, dogs, and geezers with bifocals. Bôté doesn't do this junk either.

Class 3: No trail to the top and steeper requiring the occasional use of the hands. Bôté used to climb these blindfolded and naked until a few years ago when he accidentally stomped on a critical body part.

Class 4: Steeper than Class 3 and exposed to the extent that a fall could cause death. Mandatory use of the hands. Bôté climbs these unroped and uses his hands to play with his girlfriend.

Class 5:

5.1 to 5.10 all done solo without a rope on sight.

5.11 Steeper and more sustained than 5.10, Bôté solos unroped but wears his lycra.

5.12 Worse than 5.11, Bôté brings his lycra, a rope and a penthouse playmate for belayer (as it were).

5.13 Worse yet than 5.12. Bôté brings his special brown lycra, a rope, and two penthouse playmates for belayer.

Known to mutter "sacre bleue" and "merde" on occasion.

5.14 Mandatory special brown lycra, rope, and penthouse belayers. Nonstop muttering of "merde", occasional use of the English "holy s\$#@!", screaming "je tombe!" (I'm falling!)

preceding the occasional huge cart wheeling fall, and mandatory recovery with the playmates at the nearest hot tub.

5.15 Only for Chris Sharma.

• By Allan Ritter and Rick Booth

Sawtooth Sojourn

August 31 - September 3, 2002

This "vacation trip" led by Steve Thaw circled northern Yosemite's Sawtooth Ridge and included Audrey Staton, Jack Bowers, Lasta Thomasovich, Skip Perry, and myself (Jim Ramaker). After meeting at the Bridgeport Ranger Station on the morning of Sat. Aug. 31, we had a leisurely breakfast at the excellent Hayes Street Cafe at the south end of Bridgeport, drove up to Twin Lakes, and hit the Barney Lakes trail about 9:30. We had lunch at Barney Lake, hiked up some switchbacks, and arrived at Crown Lake at 3:30. We camped in a flat sandy area at the foot of a cliff at the south end of the lake, then washed up in the shallow lake. After supper, Lasta, who's a yoga instructor, led the group in elaborate yoga stretches, which became a nightly routine on the trip and no doubt did great things for our leg muscles.

Sunday we hiked through beautiful forest and small meadows to Mule Pass (10,400), then dropped our packs and argued about which of the humps on the ridge to the right of us was the summit of Slide Mountain (11,084). We angled over to the middle hump

(class 2), but then decided that the right (west) hump was higher, so descended a tiny bit and strolled across a sandy plateau and up easy boulders to the top. Back at Mule Pass after a two-hour round-trip, we continued along the trail through nice up-and-down terrain with interesting rock formations and small meadows and tarns. After lunch at a creek in the woods, we hiked gently uphill into the spectacular timberline valley south of the Sawtooth Ridge, with its jagged, two-mile long wall of beautiful orange-tinged granite on our left. A short cross-country jaunt to the southwest brought us to a beautiful camp at Finger Lakes (10,300) at 3:45.

Steve, Audrey, and Jack immediately dropped their packs and took off for nearby Finger Peak (11,498), while Lasta, Skip, and I debated whether we had enough time to do the peak before dark, then finally decided to give it a try also. From the lake, you can see a large hump left (east) of Finger Peak, then the east peak and central peak (which is the highest), with the west peak not visible from the lake. Steve, Audrey, and Jack went left of the eastern hump and traversed across its south side, but found tedious class 3-4 climbing across steep ribs.

Lasta wanted to angle far to the right toward the west peak, but Skip and I preferred a more direct approach, up the gully between the east and central peaks, which looked pretty easy except for a questionable section at the top. The gully went fine on slabs and boulders until we got near the top, and then what looked like a steep sandy ramp turned out to be hardscrabble morainal dirt embedded with loose rocks, with the rock walls around it of the "pull-apart" variety. Lasta took cover while Skip and I slowly clawed our way up this ugly section, then joined us at the saddle. From there we spotted Jack several hundred feet directly above our heads, climbing exposed blocks near the summit.

We traversed steep class-3 ribs across the south side of the central peak, then climbed up steepening class-3 slabs and cracks toward the top. Just below the top, we crept up a sloping class-4 ledge with big air on our right, then were relieved to see that the summit block 30' away was only class-3 and not class-4 as the guidebook had implied. The summit register container was unique -- an ancient rusted iron cylinder about two inches in diameter with the Sierra Club emblem on it, but the register itself was not that old.

I had feared an after-dark epic, but it was only 6 p.m., so we still had time to get down before dark if we hustled. The three of us quickly climbed down to join Steve, Audrey, and Jack, who were waiting for us at the saddle between the west and central peaks. For the descent, we scoped out the gully there, which we'd avoided on the way up because it had a snowfield at the top and we had no ice axes on this trip. The snowfield was hard dirty ice, 35-40 degrees, but there was a moat on its left side that looked possible, so we crept down that and then continued down on the dirty ice using the rock wall of the gully for handholds.

We then had to cross the gully, and luckily there were just enough rocks and gravel patches embedded in the ice to make this doable. A little more boulder hopping took us down to a lower-angled snowfield where we could glissade and then finally down onto the talus. From there, camp was surprisingly close, and we were back at 7:15. From the lake, the gully between the east and central peaks that Lasta, Skip, and I took seems to offer the easiest route, but instead of climbing the dirt ramp at the top right of the gully as we did, climb the loose boulders at the top left.

From our camp that evening, the alpenglow lighting up the Sawtooth Ridge was magnificent, with Blacksmith Peak, Cleaver Peak, the Sawblade, the Three Teeth, the Doodad, and the Dragtooth all beckoning the climber with many great routes, a few of them class-3 but most of them class-4 and 5.

On Monday, the group split into three, with Jack soloing the northwest face of Matterhorn (12,279), Audrey, Lasta, and Skip

tackling the west ridge, and Steve and I heading for Dragtooth (12,160), directly across the valley from our camp. Jack ran into a short class-4 section on his route, while the rest of us enjoyed fun class 2-3 climbs on solid boulders on our respective peaks. From the summit of Dragtooth, Steve and I looked down its precipitous northeast face into Horse Creek Canyon, then spotted four tiny figures on top of Matterhorn about 1/2 mile away. We conversed back and forth, which works if you pause 3-4 seconds between each shouted word to let the echoes dissipate.

Steve and I were back in camp for lunch, and I had a first-ever experience on a climbing trip and spent the afternoon dozing, washing up in the lake, and taking a long walk around the upper end of our beautiful valley. Audrey, Jack, Lasta, and Skip descended Jack's class 3-4 route, then traversed over to Dragtooth, making four peaks in two days for them.

After the four Matterhorners got back to camp at 4 p.m., Jack treated us all to a lengthy and animated reading from "The Dharma Bums," Jack Kerouac's colorful story of his attempt on Matterhorn with two friends back in the 1950s. After that, we enjoyed a leisurely supper as the alpenglow painted the Sawtooth Ridge, then had another yoga lesson.

Tuesday, Audrey and I headed out, hiking up and over Burro and Matterhorn Passes as a strong wind came up. Interestingly, a permanent snowfield marked on the map between the passes was completely gone. Matterhorn Pass is not trivial with a full pack -- we climbed up to the south end of a 100' wide flat area at the top of the pass, then scrambled to the north end of the flat area. From there, we zig-zagged down ledges and slabs, including a smooth class-3 ramp with a bit of exposure. Once down in Spiller Canyon we were on familiar ground, and the powerful wind pushed us through the slot at Horse Creek Pass and down into the spectacularly rugged scenery of Horse Creek Canyon. The use trails in the canyon have changed slightly since my last visit, and the best way through the willow thicket halfway down is now right along the creek, and not up on the talus as before. Audrey and I reached the cars at 2 p.m.

Lasta and Skip followed in our footsteps later that day and camped near Horse Creek Pass. Meanwhile, Steve and Jack were climbing Blacksmith Peak (11,760). They went up to the left of the loose central gully and climbed a short class 4-5 section near the top unroped. Then they too hiked over Burro and Matterhorn Passes, and camped with Lasta and Skip. The winds blasted all day and increased in the evening, eventually exceeding 100 MPH over the peaks, according to Steve. At dawn Wednesday, some rain came in to add to the fun, and Audrey, Jack, Lasta, and Skip skipped breakfast and beat a hasty retreat down Horse Creek Canyon. Back in civilization, they rewarded themselves for an exciting trip with hot showers at the Twin Lakes campground and lunch at the Hayes Street Cafe.

Trivia note: Of the nine peaks mentioned in this report, all of them except Slide Mountain offer interesting and challenging routes on good rock, but only one of the nine (Matterhorn) is on the SPS list.

• *Jim Ramaker*

Mount Lassen

Spring climbing in January

January 18-19 2003

Trip participants: Rick and Dee Booth, Tom Driscoll, Nancy Fitzsimmons, Tony Stegman, Chris Prendergast, Kirsten Mouradian and leaders Steve Eckert and Stephane Mouradian, scribe and his third attempt to Lassen in winter.

This trip was originally scheduled in December 14, 2002, the same week end the remnants of the "Super Typhoon" hit Northern California. For once it was worth rescheduling as we had perfect weather for the second try.

We left the Chalet around 8am on foot initially and later on snowshoes and skis. We followed the road the whole way to Helen Lake. We did not take the Diamond peak cut off on the way up. We snowshoed / skied past Helen Lake and continued to the point where the road reaches a saddle. Lassen SW ridge starts just above the saddle. From this point, we headed up a steep slope toward the ridge to reach a bench about 300 feet above the saddle. This bench offers some protected camping spots and put us in the best position to climb up the ridge the next morning. In addition, the bench offers very open views with morning and evening sun. It took us 7 hours to reach this spot after a fairly slow climb up the road.

We started from camp with crampons at 7am on Sunday morning. Following the ridge, we reached the summit at 9am, achieving 1000 feet/hour. There was only moderate wind at the summit considering we were there in January. Three of us glissaded down the bowl. The snow had softened and although it started steep, the glissade ended in a very gradual flat run. The glissaders were back to camp at 10:30am. The rest of the group who hiked down the ridge reported bad cases of balling crampons, due to the softer snow and arrived at camp around 11am.

As we were packing, Heather Kirkby and Austin Meinert arrived at our camp as they were day touring in the park. Interestingly, they said it had taken them 3.5 hours from the chalet, taking all the short cuts and also probably less breaks than we did.

We left camp around noon. The snowshoers took the diamond peak cut off and the skiers followed the road all the way. Overall it took about 4 hours down for the entire group to come down.

We had two nice days above the Valley fog. Lassen Park in winter is a beautiful place which begs for more exploration. Other possibilities include day trips to Broke off, Mount Diller or Eagle Peak. Stay tuned for some more trips in the area.

• *Stephane Mouradian*

The Lost Trail of the Incas.

February, 2003

The upper reaches of the Oyacachi Gorge lie in the high, windswept Paramo region to the southeast of the glacier cloaked volcano of Cayembe, a 19,000' mountain that dominates the landscape of the region.

We were to start close to the Rio Oyacachi's origin near the highland village of Oyacachi and head south throughout the cloud forest towards the Amazon basin. There were 19 of us - five women and 14 men - with ages ranging from 19 to 62. Two of the team were from California; Liz Harvey, a former native of Berwick, where her mother still resides, and Raoul Carlson from Los Gatos.

The route from Oyacachi to the rain forest has historic significance and is believed to have been a trade route used by pre-Inca and perhaps the Inca people themselves, between the cool highlands - dominated by the snow capped mountains of the Andes - to the hot, humid rain forests of the Amazon basin. 17th century Jesuit priests are also thought to have used the trail to service their missions on the far flung fringes of the rain forest. Descending more than five thousand feet the trail is a sinuous, sometimes elusive pathway, paved with interlocking rocks. The trail is still intact over most of the distance through the cloud forest but much of it is slowly being consumed and overgrown by trees and a phalanx of impenetrable vines.

From the outset there was no guarantee we would successfully navigate this route or, that at the journey's end we would be able to successfully get the group across the fast flowing Rio Santa River - a major tributary of the Oyacachi. If we couldn't cross the Rio Santa we would be trapped. Unable to exit we would be forced to retreat and ascend the 5000 feet back to the village of Oyacachi. It was a gamble. The very beauty and intriguing nature of this kind of adventure is that so much is unknown. There is no certainty of success, just a hope. The pace and agenda would be determined by the difficulty of the environment. Success would depend on the collective response, strength and wisdom of the group.

For a paltry seven dollars each we negotiated for a bus to take us on a journey through the Andean highlands to the village of Oyacachi. The driver didn't know how to get there and had to stop frequently along the way to ask directions. Signposts have apparently not yet taken hold in the countryside where most of the people cannot read or write. Leaving the balmy warmth of Quito we gradually ascended on deteriorating roads into the temperate highlands where subsistence farmers grow potatoes and beans, and then even higher into the cold, unpopulated and treeless paramo region where low, wind blown clouds perpetually shroud the grey mountainsides. We climbed over a 13,000' pass, and leaving the Pacific drainage behind, descended rapidly into the watershed of the Amazon Basin. The village of Oyacachi appeared unexpectedly, a thousand feet below like a re enactment of Brig O'Doone, the fairy tale village that appears only every 100 years - and then only for a day. On our approach to the village we were surprised to be joined by another bus carrying an evangelical Swedish choir, comprised mainly of young women, whose minister had been born in this valley and had married a visiting Swedish missionary a few years earlier. He was now returning with his wife and small child to present his new family and a "pumped up" choir to a very excited and receptive village.

We paid our driver the money we owed him. He then departed in high spirits for Quito. He failed to show up for work the following day and apparently made off with the money we had paid him. He hasn't been seen since.

We camped across the river from the village. The minister kindly invited us to join the community for an extraordinary evening of singing and cultural exchanges in the village hall. We had the great fortune of being welcomed into the Oyacachi community of indigenous, Quechua speaking Indians at an event that was at least comparable to a Carnegie Hall extravaganza.

It was the village headman who suggested we would need a machete to cut our way down the trail. This information was a hint that the trail through the forest is rarely visited. He insisted that we take government issued facemasks to deal with a nearby and re-occurring volcanic eruption that was spewing vast quantities of fine dust across the region. An erupting volcano was a contingency we had not anticipated. We accepted the face masks with skepticism and thanks.

For the first few miles we walked through a landscape of small fields carved by machete and axe from an encroaching forest whose upper slopes soared into the clouds. As we descended the trail became narrower and we slowly began to leave behind all signs of human intrusion. We entered a world of moss draped trees, vines and broad leaved plants some bearing exquisite flowers. Our first camp on the north side of the Oyacachi was at a point where we finally left behind much of the evidence of human intrusion and entered an undisturbed, primeval like world of impenetrable forest, vines and an uncanny silence. A map was of no value. A GPS unit might have helped to tell us where we were but would have been little assistance in helping us find a trail that was becoming increasingly more elusive. Fallen trees, fast growing undergrowth and landslides - caused by frequent earth tremors - all contributed to obscuring or destroying the trail. It was always a pleasure after hours of cutting through the undergrowth to discover the paved trail again, undisturbed by centuries of disuse. Why would these early people build a trail that was much too narrow for wheeled traffic or a man on horseback? This was a trail that was obviously designed for foot traffic. Perhaps it was on account of the rugged terrain in much of the Andes that the wheel was never deployed, or perhaps and more convincingly it was the absence of the horse or similar draft animal. It was not until the arrival of the Spanish Conquistadors in the 16th century that the wheel and horse came to South America.

As the terrain became more rugged the trail became even more obscure and unpredictable. We were now forced to climb over fallen trees and clamber up and descend steep section using vines and exposed tree roots. The trek was becoming an adventure. By now we were convinced that the person who had first described the route could not have done it. Our consensus was that the route description might have been written in a bar by an inebriated, though imaginative, writer.

Because of the large size of our group I asked Jules Roy, who had experience in the Brazilian Rain Forest, to take charge of the front of the group along with Brett. Their job was to locate the trail and open up a passable route with machetes. David was stationed in the middle with Mike and I at the rear making sure we left no one behind. On the hour and every hour Jules, Mike and David made radio contact to share information.

By 6:00 PM on the second day we were still in the thick of the forest. Light was fading fast. The steepness of the terrain and dense vegetation precluded any place to camp. It had been raining all afternoon. We were drenched. The muddy trail was making it increasing precarious to climb some of the steeper sections. The situation was beginning to look unpleasant. We made radio contact at 7:00 pm by which time it was already dark but were delighted to hear that Jules and Brett had carved out the trail that had descended to the river and that we that we would be there in an hour. What a relief! Prepared for such an eventuality we all carried headlamps - a wise precaution - and like an army of lost fireflies we pushed our way through the rain drenched vegetation towards the boulder-strewn banks of the Oyacachi River.

The incessant and tumultuous roar of the river consumed our thoughts, invading our consciousness as we searched for a bed of sand between the large boulders where we could place our tents and rest. We had been going for 11 hours with only a break for lunch.

I was awake in the pre-dawn hours thinking about the river crossing we would have to negotiate the following morning across the Rio Santa. I was concerned. The steady rainfall would have led to rising river levels. We would have to cross this river to exit the cloud forest.

Dawn brought all the promise and hope of a new day, dispelling the fears that lingered through the night.

Today the trail became even more rugged. Around mid-day we crossed a wide swarth of the forest that had been carried away by a fairly recent landslide. The trail had vanished. Small trees and shrubs had re-colonized the bare earth. We had to reconnect with the trail without any clue as to where it might be. Faced with a dense wall of vegetation Jules and I set about to look for where the trail might connect. The task looked hopeless. Jules investigated the section above where we had emerged from the forest. I went down to the river and worked my way back towards Jules. It continued to rain and we were getting tired. I kept thinking about the rising rivers and the crossing we had to do the following day. I was becoming too preoccupied with problems that would eventually speak for themselves. For now we had to find the trail or we were trapped.

Guided by pure instinct, I tried to imagine where a pre-Inca trail builder might have proceeded. I shouted to Jules and asked him to look at what might be the trail. It was just a hunch. Jules came over and we both moved from the clearing and pushed our way onto the forest though a phalanx of vines and branches. Enveloped by the darkness of the forest, drizzling rain, and so much vegetation, created an odd sensation of isolation. No sunlight penetrated to the forest floor. Every plant in its fight for survival had to reach for light at the forest canopy, far above. This unyielding wall of vegetation can be an intimidating obstacle. Constantly probing and searching for a trail that was built more than four centuries earlier became a frustrating and daunting task.

We were in luck! We had found the trail. The journey continued through terrain that was becoming even more challenging. On one section I was near the front with Jules and heard a crash. I looked behind and Bill, who had been there just moments before was gone. I was momentarily stunned. We couldn't afford to lose a judge in the equatorial cloud forest. How would I explain this calamity back in the States? A muffled voice came out of the undergrowth ten feet below the trail. All I could see were the vibram soles of a pair of boots. Lucky again! Jules and I scrambled down to discover Bill with his back against two small trees that were slowly giving way under his 220 pounds and a 40 pound pack. We had to work fast. Bill was poised to take another more serious plunge. Jules, following his para-med training, told Bill not to move in spite of Bill's protestations that he was fine. As Jules checked Bills vital signs I strained to hang on to Bill in case the trees gave way. Detecting no breaks or dislocations we worked to get Bill upright and back onto the trail. It had happened so fast and I figured it could happen again and to anyone. One moment he had been there and then gone. We had to be careful.

You can tell a person over and over again to be careful but your best ally in this endeavor is always the person's own sense of self-preservation. No one wants to get hurt. But, the combination of fatigue, running on emotional empty, and an unfamiliar and difficult terrain, creates a ripe environment for trouble.

The last light of day was fading fast - as it does in the tropics - and I was concerned that someone might get hurt if we continued to push on in the darkness. We had to reach the banks of the Rio Santa Maria for open ground where we could camp. I asked Jules to slow down the pace so we could compress the group along a two hundred yard section. This way it would be easier for us to communicate and keep an eye on everyone. In spite of the darkness, the heavy packs, constant rain and general fatigue after another eleven hour day, there were no complaints; just silence and the occasional distant sound of the machete hacking through a tree limb. And then, when it didn't seem possible, we made radio

contact with Jules to discover he and Brett had finally exited the forest and had reached the banks of the Rio Santa Maria. It was dark when the last of the group finally emerged from the forest. We had made it! We searched around in the darkness to find a space for our tents, cooked a quick meal, crawled into our sleeping bags and passed out. What a day. All we had to do now was get the group across the rain swollen Rio Santa Maria. That could thankfully wait until dawn.

I awoke early. The sun still lingered below the horizon of the rain forest to the east. We had barely been able to cross this river the previous year when we had mistakenly tried to forge a route up the Rio Santa Maria Gorge. Now the river was higher. While the group ate breakfast and packed, oblivious to the last remaining obstacle, Jules and I searched the river for a place where we might cross. We had to find a place where, in the event of someone being washed downstream, we wouldn't lose them in a class five rapid. There were few prospects. All the possible crossing places had serious white water rapids immediately downstream. We would have to be innovative. The water was almost waist high and fast. We might have tried the New Zealand technique of lining up the group in teams of six to eight, parallel to the riverbank, and slowly crossing. This technique relies on the upstream member of the team breaking the force of the water while being supported by the rest of the team who lock arms and hold onto the pole. Only three of on the team had used this technique before and this was no place to practice. There had to be another way. Along the banks of the river were large tree trunks, bruised and stripped of their bark by the violence of earlier floods. Jules Thought that maybe we could use one of the logs to create a safe causeway across the river. I was skeptical. The logs looked too large to handle, but it was our only option. We had to give it a try.

We waited for the group to join us and then collectively lifted a three-foot diameter log and ran it up-stream into the fast current where it was swung around and pushed downstream. The plan worked. The tree trunk lodged itself against two mid-stream boulders. All we had to deal with now was ford a narrow, waist deep channel of the river that raced between the home bank and the safety of the jammed log. To ensure the log didn't get washed downstream, Mike waded out and straddled the log to provide additional weight. Forming a human chain, and one at a time, we were able to support each person as they fought their way across the narrow channel to where Mike waited for them on the log. The rest of the passage across the river, though not easy, was safe.

• Roy H. Smith

February 2003

Anyone can sign on a trek such as this but not everyone can lead it-we were fortunate to have shared this with Roy Smith. There were many enjoyable "side dishes" to this entrée too numerous to mention. The village of Oyacachi where we began was an undiscovered gem, best know for its clean and hot mineral springs. A river flows next to the hot springs providing an opportunity to contrast bathing in cool pristine waters. There are no restaurants in Oyacachi but the townspeople prepared a delious trout dinner for us before the music fest.

Crawling through cloudforest Jules kept us energized-Always wet, never dry, never quit, never die! Our motto-Urban life cannot compare.

I shall always remember this trip as the "Endless Ecuadorian Adventure", after just one day to dry our gear in Quito we headed to climb Illiniza North.

• Liz Harvey

Private Trips

Private trips may be submitted directly to the Scree Editor, but are not insured, sponsored, or supervised by the Sierra Club. They are listed here because they may be of interest to PCS members.

Freel Peak

Peak: Freel Peak 10881' ; class 2, winter conditions
Dates: March 1-2, 2003 (Sat, Sun)
Map: Freel Peak 15 min
Contacts: Charles Schafer
Nancy Fitzsimmons 408-957-9683
pkclimber@aol.com.

An easy, late-winter backpack, on showshoes or skis, to the high point of the Tahoe Basin. On Saturday we'll cover 5 or 6 miles and camp below the summit ridge. On Sunday we'll grab the summit and descend. Total distance is about 14 miles with 5000' of climbing/descending. Meeting point will be in the town of Meyers, 7 AM on Saturday morning. Call leaders if interested.

Roundtop

Peak: Roundtop
Date: March 23, 2003
Details: Roundtop, 10,381 feet, snow/winter
Contacts: George Van Gorden 408-779-2320 before 9pm
Arun Mahajan: arun.mahajan@att.net
650-327-8598, (after 9 pm)

Join us on this private trip to Roundtop and celebrate the arrival of spring.

The peak is approached by snow shoes or skis from the Carson Pass and you need ice axe and crampons for the final few hundred feet.

We will meet Sunday morning at Carson Pass snowpark at around 8:00. We should be back to the cars by 3:00.

Please note that the parking at the Carson Pass trailhead is a 'SnoPark', meaning that you need a day-permit, per car, to park there. Permits are to be had at Western Mountaineering and other outdoor stores and possibly, even the Kirkwood XC Ski Area. There is also a substantial fine if found to be without one.

The Lakota Indians have a saying. "Tell me and I will listen. Show me and I'll understand. Involve me and I'll learn."

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Rock Climbing Classifications

The following trip classifications are to assist you in choosing trips for which you are qualified. No simple rating system can anticipate all possible conditions.

- Class 1: Walking on a trail.
- Class 2: Walking cross-country, using hands for balance.
- Class 3: Requires use of hands for climbing, rope may be used.
- Class 4: Requires rope belays.
- Class 5: Technical rock climbing.

Deadline for submissions to the next Scree is Sunday 3/23/2003. Meetings are the second Tuesday of each month.



Peak Climbing Section, 789 Daffodil Way, San Jose CA 95117

"Vy can't ve chust climb?" - John Salathe

First Class Mail - Dated Material