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General Meeting

Time Aug 13, 7:30 pm – 9:30 pm

Where PCC
3921 E. Bayshore Road
Palo Alto, CA

Program Lingering and Lounging in
the Langtang - A Nepal
Climbing Trip

Presenter Julius Gawlas & Arun
Mahajan

In the fall of 2012, PCS members, Julius Gawlas and Arun Mahajan went on a climbing trip to the Langtang region of Nepal. While Langtang trails behind the Annapurna Circuit and the Kumbhu/Everest region in popularity, its scenery is almost equally impressive. The relative lack of people implies more solitude and also more of the unspoiled Nepal to savor. Julius and Arun huffed and puffed their way up three peaks while in the Langtang and discovered that it is better to ride on top of the public transport buses than inside.

Come and enjoy some of the photographs of the wonderful mountains of the Langtang, of climbing the peaks there and off course, of the wonderful people of Nepal.



Directions from 101

Exit at San Antonio Road, go east to the first traffic light, turn left and follow Bayshore Rd to the PCC on the corner of Corporation Way. A sign marking the PCC is out front. Park and enter in the back of the building.

Google <http://tinyurl.com/28ng>

Editor's Notes

The Sierra Club's Peter Grubb hut, near the I-80 by Donner Summit, is in urgent need of repairs and has been shut down. If you can help, check out savepetergrubbhut.org for more information. And enjoy all these great trip reports this month!
Judy

Chair Column

The high season in the Sierra is quickly passing. Hope everyone is getting out and having some interesting adventures. With August upon us, it's not too early to begin thinking about who our next leadership team is going to be. So this is a first call for volunteers for the nominating committee for next year's officers: chairman, vice-chair/trip scheduler, and treasurer. Let me know if you'd like to either be on the committee or especially if you'd like to take on one of these positions for 2014.

At this month's meeting we're going to be treated to a view of another slice of the always fascinating Nepal, its mountains and its people, by Arun and Julius. And maybe we'll also learn how it is that Arun keeps blowing out his ACL when going there.

"It doesn't have to be fun to be fun." -- Barry Blanchard

Terry

Heads Up For Our September Meeting

To accommodate availability of our speaker Sibylle Hechtel, who lives in Colorado, we'll need to hold our September meeting a week later than usual, Sept 17th. Topic to be announced in the September Scree. Many will know of Sibylle as one-half of the first all-female team to climb El Cap. She's done many things since in climbing.

Preliminary Trip List For Late Summer (still tentative)

August 24, Kelly Maas -- Tenaya Canyon descent.

Sept. 6-8, Lisa Barboza, Rick Booth, & Linda Sun -- Mt. Humphreys (E. arete)

Sept. 14, Lisa Barboza & Daryn Dodge -- North Peak (& LIST-FINISH Party, Saddlebag Lk.)

Sept. 23-29, Bob Summers -- Spiller & Whorl Mtns (+?), from Virginia Lakes

PCS Trip Calendar

These are required statements.

Note: CST 2087766-40. Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California.

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

<http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/signinwaiver.pdf>

August 3 - 4 - Mount Winchell
Leader: Liza Barboza

August 16 - 18 - Giraud Peak
Leader: Lisa Barboza

August 30 - September 1 - Deerhorn, W Vidette, E. Vidette
Leader: Lisa Barboza

September 27 - 29 - Emerald Peak
Leader: Aaron Schuman

PCS Trip Details

Mount Winchell

Goals: Mt. Winchell (13,775')

Location: Big Pine, east side of the Sierra

Dates: August 3 - 4

Leader: Lisa Barboza

Day 1: On Trail: From Glacier Lodge TH, proceed up the North Fork of Pine Creek to camp at 5th lake. If interest, we will have a Happy Hour. The hiking distance is 6 miles with 3400 feet of gain.

Day 2: Climb Winchell: glacier travel and CL3 climbing: 2600 feet of gain and 4 miles, glacier travel probable. Return to camp, hike out 6 miles.

Leader: Lisa Barboza Co-lead: Aaron Schuman. I have secured permits for 4.

This is an advanced trip with CL3 climbing and glacier travel. Be prepared to be self-sufficient in

lodging, mess, stoves and other gear. We will decide at the TH on sharing gear. Sierra Club policy is not to arrange carpools; but I will send out a list of participants as the time get closer. Please send climbing resume and recent experience to Lisa.barbozaATgmail.com

Giraud Peak

Goals: Giraud Peak (12,608')

Location: South Lake, east side of the Sierra

Dates: August 16 - 17

Leader: Lisa Barboza

Day 1: On Trail: From South Lake TH, proceed up to Bishop Pass and camp in upper Dusy Basin below the peak. 2400 feet of gain, about 6 miles to camp on Lake 11340 near the Dusy Basin Trail, enjoy Happy Hour.

Day 2: Climb Giraud, gain of 2500, 6 miles RT back to camp, hike out 6 miles to TH.

Leader: Lisa Barboza Co-lead: Aaron Schuman. I have secured permits for 6.

This is an intermediate trip on CL2 with some CL3 terrain. It is intermediate because participants must be in excellent physical condition to complete the significant elevation gain and mileage. Be prepared to be self sufficient in lodging, mess, stoves and other gear. We will decide at the TH on sharing gear. Sierra Club policy is not to arrange carpools; but I will send out a list of participants as the time get closer.

Please send climbing resume and recent experience to Lisa.barbozaATgmail.com

Deerhorn, W. Vidette, E. Vidette

Goals: Deerhorn (13,281'), W. Vidette (12,533'), E. Vidette (12,356')

Location:

Dates: August 30 - September 1

Leader: Lisa Barboza

Day 1: On Trail: From Onion Valley TH, climb over Kearsarge pass, drop down to Bubbs Creek, cross the creek near Vidette Creek. About 3800' of gain and 8.5 miles over the pass to our camp at the Vidette Lakes up Vidette Creek. If we have time, climb West Vidette from our camp- about 1900 of gain.

Day 2: Climb Deerhorn – CL3 climb, about 5 miles RT with 2800 gain. This is a CL3 climb up the ridge.

Day 3: Climb East Vidette about 6 miles RT, 3000 of gain. Hike out to Onion Valley TH.

Leader: Lisa Barboza Co-lead: Needed. I have secured permits for 4.

This is an advanced trip on CL2 with some CL3 terrain. It is advanced because participants must be in excellent physical condition to complete the significant elevation gain and mileage. Be prepared to be self-sufficient in lodging, mess, stoves and other gear. We will decide at the TH on sharing gear. Sierra Club policy is not to arrange carpools; but I will send out a list of participants as the time get closer. Please send climbing resume and recent experience to Lisa.barbozaATgmail.com

Emerald Peak

Goals: Emerald Peak (12,546')

Location: Florence Lake

Dates: September 27 - 29

Leader: Aaron Schuman

Emerald Peak, western bulwark of the Evolution region, has a splendid prospect of the rugged Glacier Divide. It's not the end of the earth, but you can see it from there. We enter the wilderness from the west side of the range, in the Sierra National Forest. From the Florence Lake (7340) ferry landing, we hike 10 miles along the South Fork of the San Joaquin River, past the legendary Muir Trail Ranch, to our campsite (8400) near the junction of Goddard Creek and Evolution Creek. We climb 4000 feet of class 2 talus, slabs and scree, across three miles of ground, to the summit of Emerald Peak (12546). We return by the same route. Toto, I think we're not in Kansas any more. Leader: Aaron Schuman a.j.Schuman AT gmail DOT com Co-leader: Lisa Barboza Lisa.Barboza AT gd-ais DOT com Difficulty: Class 2

Private Trip Calendar

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

August 1 - 3 - Cirque Peak (12, 900')

Leader: Rod McCalley

August 9 - 12 - Center Peak (12,760'), Mt. Keith (13,977'), Mt. Bradley (13,289')

Leader: Kelly Maas

August 17 - 18 - Whorl Mountain (12,033')

Leader: Jeff Fisher

August 17 - 18 - Mt. Goode and Clouddripper

Leader: Matt Blum

August 19 - 30 - Peaks Along the Great Western & Kings-Kern Divides

Leader: Robert Summers

August 24 - 25 - Trans-Sierra Dayhike

Leader: Jeff Fisher

August 31 - Sept 9 - Kilimanjaro, Tanzania

Leader: Emilie Cortes

September 12 - 15 - Muir Gorge Swimming

Leader: Robert Summers

November 7 - 23: Annapurna Base Camp, Nepal

Leader: Emilie Cortes

Private Trip Details

Cirque Peak (12,900')

Location: Cottonwood Lks TH, above Lone Pine on east side of the Sierra

Dates: August 1-3, 2013

Leader: Rod McCalley -- (650) 493-2378, rodmccalley@sbcglobal.net

Backpack on Thursday (from a July 31 car-camp at the Cottonwood Lakes TH), branching left past South Fork Lake to camp at Cirque Lake at 11,100' (about 5-6 miles). On Friday, August 2,

climb Cirque Peak directly up to west from camp (Class 1 in Secor), with possible loop return via New Army Pass trail. The loop route is about 5 miles RT with 1800' of gain. Rod's 70th birthday will be celebrated back at the Cirque Lake camp after the climb. Hike back out Saturday.

Be prepared to be self-sufficient in food, stoves and camping gear. We can decide at the TH about sharing gear. Sierra Club policy is not to arrange carpools; but I will send out a list of participants as the time get closer.

Center Peak (12,760'). Mt. Keith (13,977'), Mt. Bradley (13,289')

Location: Onion Valley, East Side of the Sierra

Dates: August 9 - 12

Leader: Kelly Maas

This 4-day trip takes us over Kearsarge Pass and into Center Basin. From a base camp there, we'll explore as many of the surrounding peaks as our legs and lungs can handle. The peaks listed are general suggestions, so it's possible that the objectives may change slightly. Expect a mix of class 2 and class 3 climbing. This is a beautiful area.

Leader: Kelly Maas, 408-378-5311, kellymbase-pcs@yahoo.com

Whorl Mountain (12,033')

Location: Twin Lakes, East Side of the Sierra

Dates: August 17 - 18

Leader: Jeff Fisher

Permit for 8 to go up Robinson Creek. From Twin Lakes. Longer route than Horse Creek, but better trail. Whorl is rated 3rd or 4th class depending on who you talk to and the route finding. If interested please e-mail me. If you have been there before and can help with the route finding, that would be a plus. It is a low snow year, so we should be able make it under the often mentioned chalk stone. Leader: Jeff Fisher, E-mail; jeff_fisher_5252atsbcglobal.net Cell. 650-207-9632

Mt Goode (13,085'), Cloudripper (13,525')

Location: South Lake TH, east side of Sierra
Dates: August 17-18
Leader: Matt Blum

We will do both these peaks as day-hikes starting from South Lake near Bishop. We will camp at South Lake or nearby depending on availability of campsites. Given the high elevation of the starting point at South Lake, these peaks are moderate length day-hikes.

Climbing difficulty is class 2. Details on summitpost are at:

<http://www.summitpost.org/mount-goode/151070>

- we will probably go up the class 2 slope from Bishop Lake

<http://www.summitpost.org/cloudripper/151202> -

we will probably do the north slope from Green Lake

Peaks Along the Great Western & Kings-Kern Divide

Goals: Thunder Mtn (13,588'), Mt. Jordan (13,344'), Geneva (13,055'), Mt. Ericsson (13,608'), Deerhorn Mtn (13,265')

Location: Onion Valley, east side of the Sierra

Dates: August 19 - 30

Leader: Robert Summers

The trip will go in and out over Kearsarge Pass. From East Lake we will go to a high camp below Thunder Col. We will cross over Thunder Col and climb Thunder Mountain (4th class). Then we will move to a camp below Mount Jordan. The next objective is Mount Jordan (4th class) and Geneva. Mount Ericsson will be climbed on the way to Harrison Pass, Deerhorn Saddle, and a camp below Deerhorn Mountain, in the upper part of Vidette Creek. We will climb Deerhorn Mountain and then descend past the Vidette Lakes to the Shorty Lovelace Cabin on Bubbs Creek.

An ice axe is required for the north side of Thunder Col and crampons are recommended. A rope will be brought for Thunder and Jordan. There will be strenuous off trail travel.

I have a permit for 6.

Leader: Robert Summers

rsummers@usgs.gov 650 329 4823 w/msg,
650 324 2341 h w/o msg

Trans-Sierra Dayhike

Goals: Enjoy crossing the Sierra!

Location: Florence Lake

Dates: August 24 - 25

Leader: Jeff Fisher

Florence Lake to North Lake 27 miles. 4,000ft + or- gain on Saturday or going west to east, 3,000ft+ gain going east to west on Sunday. We will be going over Piute Pass at 11,400ft. going either direction. There will be 2 groups. With a key exchange (yes, someone besides you may be driving your car).

Saturday Sat. 24 Group 1, will hike from Florence Lake to North Lake trail head (west to east). They will be picked up at the North Lake trail head by the Group 2 that will be traveling east to west the next day. Everyone will camp together Saturday night.

Sunday Aug. 25 Group 2 (east to west) will be dropped off at the North Lake trail head by the Saturday Group 1 will drive Group 2's cars back to the bay area. The Group 2 will pick up Group 1's cars at Florence Lake and drive home Sunday evening. Group 1 (west to east) will have to have 2 sets of sleeping gear, one that they will bring to the trailhead on Friday night and one that Group 2 will bring over for them to use on Saturday night. Group 2 will have to arrange for campsites when they arrive at North Lake on Saturday. This will be a long day and everyone should know their own abilities and be up for it. Everyone should have good map reading abilities. I will be going with Group 1 starting at Florence Lake.

Also if someone wants to do a short day hike around Florence Lake and then shuttle a car around to the east Side let me know. Please contact me if you interested and which direction. Also if you can drive, carpool or either. Leader; Jeff Fisher 650-207-9632, e-mail; jeff_fisher_5252@sbcglobal.net E-mail is best. CO-LEADER WANTED For Group 2

Mt. Kilimanjaro, Tanzania

Goals: Kilimanjaro (19, 341')

Location: Tanzania

Dates: August 31 - Sept 9

Leader: Emilie Cortes

This is an all female expedition to the roof of Africa with Emilie's new company, Call of the Wild Adventures, Inc. Emilie will be guiding this trip personally. Kilimanjaro is one of the seven summits and stands at 19,340ft. We will ascend via the Machame route over 7 days total. The Machame (aka "Whiskey Route") is a bit more challenging due to its rolling nature and scramble up the Barranca Headwall, but has a better summit success rate. Climbers typically try to ascend over 5, 6, or 7 days. The more days you take, the better your chances, so why fly all that way not summit because you tried to save a day of vacation? While this peak is "just hiking," you will need to train in order to handle 7 days of trekking without rest days and to prepare your body to acclimatize as best it can. This trip is scheduled over the Labor Day holiday weekend to help those who are vacation constrained. There are additional optional extensions to do a camping safari and a trip to the island of Zanzibar. Cost is \$3995 (compare to other outfitters!) with a 10% discount for current PCS members. Contact Emilie Cortes at 415-260-3618, emilie@callwild.com, or sign up at <http://www.callwild.com/trip.php?id=64>.

Muir Gorge Swimming

Goals: Have fun swimming!

Location: Tuolumne Meadows, Yosemite

Dates: September 12 - 15

Leader: Robert Summers

The Muir Inner Gorge is 15 miles downriver from Tuolumne Meadows. The gorge can be descended in late season. The upper part of the gorge is easy wading and swimming. The lower part is blocked by a rock step that can be down climbed (difficult), rappelled, or jumped. Below the step the deep pool continues down the gorge and around the corner. A rappel rope will be available.

Leader: Robert Summers

rsummers@usgs.gov 650 329 4823 w/msg,
650 324 2341 h w/o msg

Annapurna Base Camp

Goals: Anna Purnapura Base Camp (13,550')

Location: Nepal

Dates: November 7 - 23

Leader: Emilie Cortes

This is an all female expedition to the famous Annapurna Base Camp in the Annapurna Sanctuary. Emilie will be guiding this trip personally.

This challenging trek is one of the most popular in Nepal and for good reason! Annapurna Base Camp (ABC) is surrounded by a cirque of awe-inspiring peaks, including the awesome south face of Annapurna I (8,091m), in a natural amphitheatre which is quite simply mind-blowing. Our trek starts from Pokhara with a short drive to the road head. A short diversion up to Poon Hill (3,190m) offers us a chance to obtain great views of Himalayan giant - Dhaulagiri (8,167m).

The sunrise views from here are legendary. As we climb through ancient oak and rhododendron forest, across sparkling streams and past waterfalls, the world of snow and ice starts to unfold above us. This combination of villages and terraced fields of millet and rice, coupled by the majestic splendor of Machapuchare (6,993m), Annapurna I and Himchuli (6,441m) make this an extremely rewarding trek. Climbing up the Modhi Khola valley towards the sanctuary, we are teased with views of towering peaks and dizzyingly high rock walls with waterfalls tumbling down into the roar of the river below.

We ascend to Machapuchare Base Camp (3,700m) on the lateral moraine of Annapurana South glacier. The steady climb up to ABC reveals the full splendor of this natural amphitheatre. When we reach our destination, we are spoiled with a 360-degree views of Himalayan peaks, the 'Throne of the Mountain Gods'.

Cost is \$3295 with a 10% discount for current PCS members. Contact Emilie Cortes at 415-260-3618, emilie@callwild.com, or sign up at <http://www.callwild.com/trip.php?id=66>.

Trip Reports

Conness West Ridge

June 22, 2013

By Linda Sun

Bruce and I started at the sawmill campground parking around 5:50am. Being the longest day of the year, it was already bright when we started hiking. The first mile is on a good trail and it was snow free due to the low snow year.

From there we scrambled north cross country through slabs and grass to the left side of an obvious cliffband. Some class 3 scrambling staying left of the waterfall got us to a tarn below the east ridge. Bruce filled his water bottle there and I had some snacks. Then we basically followed just below the east ridge to the plateau. We encountered some firm snow on the way. Once on the plateau we dropped our packs and changed to small climbing packs. I left our food in my ursack and secured it with a rock. From the plateau we aimed for a notch a couple of hundred feet lower, and down climbed a steep gully with loose rocks and big talus to the base of the west ridge.



It really helped that Bruce had been to the base before. There is a very big cairn to mark the start of the descent. I think getting to the start is the crux, effort-wise. We roped up and started climbing around 10:15am. The toe of the

buttress consists of two ridge lines with a wide gully in between. We took the left ridge line. The first three pitches are around the 5.5 - 5.6 level, not hard. I found some very big loose blocks near the belay of the 2nd pitch, so be very careful. The two ridges come together at the end of the 3rd pitch and the technical difficulty eases off. We started simu-climbing and switched leads once we ran out of pro. It's mostly 3rd to 4th class, but the exposure is huge so I opted to simul instead of soloing. Most of the ridge is very solid and enjoyable. We coiled the rope after the last gendarme and hiked the last 200 yards of 2nd class to the top around 2pm.



We took our summit pictures, enjoyed the view, then came down to the plateau, only to find our food missing! Miraculously Bruce found the food bag 30 yards away, with the food crushed but otherwise undisturbed inside the ursack. I guess the marmot dragged it but couldn't open my ursack. Next time I'm going to put bigger boulders on the food bag. We had to downclimb some steep sun cup snow on the way back, with wetted shoes, got back to car after 5pm. An 11.5 hours day.

Gear: 9.5mm x 60m rope, doubles from green alien to #1 camalot, one #2, one #3, a set of stoppers, many slings.

From Mineral King to the Great Western Divide

June 29 - July 7, 2013

By Aaron Schuman

Sonja Dieterich and I had big plans. We were going from Mineral King to the Great Western Divide for the first week of July, with a different peak climb every day. But there are intentions and there are outcomes. Each day brought a new storm, with dawn clouds building into morning rain, with thunderclaps just too close, with no desire to be up on the summit ridge electric zone.



We did tag the top of Mt Eisen one morning, but the weather arose, and so we retreated down the reverse slope of the mountain to Black Rock trail. Since the pattern wasn't improving, we headed home a couple of days early. In Lost Canyon, we were treated to Independence Day fireworks. Confetti of hail covered the pine duff, but the ice melted fast and filled sprawling puddles.



The Longley Way South Guard (13, 214')

June, 2013

By Lisa Barboza

On a sunny Friday morning, I arose early and started driving at 5:30 from our home in San Jose. My goal was to hike in to Lake Reflection from Road's End in Cedar Grove, camp overnight, and the next day climb South Guard via Longley pass. I had planned on climbing South Guard, along with Brewer earlier in June, but a pair of ill-fitting boots (my feet were literally killing me – all toes black, and I could hardly walk – but that's another story) and a work commitment the next day resulted in only climbing Brewer (I had already climbed North Guard, back in 2006).

I arrived at 10:30 am at Cedar Grove after a brief stop at the Park Headquarters near Grant Grove. I was able to easily get an overnight walk-in permit, and after spending 20 minutes with the rangers who explained all of the bear concerns ("scrawny bear will steal your food from your pack, even if you put it down for 5 minutes to pee"), I was off down the trail. It was hot – in the 90s, which is quite hot, even for Road's End at

about 5000 feet. Before me, I had about 15 miles, and 4500 feet of gain if I was to camp at Lake Reflection. Tramp tramp tramp, the first 2 miles through the piney plains, through the horsetail forest, to the Bailey Bridge which crosses the South Fork of the Kings River just below where Sphinx Creek joins it. This particular 'Bailey Bridge', named after WW2 British Inventor Donald Bailey, is just one of thousands of these bridges used since 1942 that are still in use around the world, even today. He was knighted for his modular bridge design that could be erected by hand, and without heavy equipment. Over 3000 were erected during the fight for Western Europe in 1944-45. And the highest bridge in the world, at 5602m (18379ft), in Ladakh, India, is indeed a Bailey Bridge.



After the bridge, the trail climbs steeply up switchbacks to the Sphinx Creek junction at 6500 feet. From there, the trail climbs an additional 6.5 miles to make the full 12 miles from the trailhead to Junction Meadow. It was hot, hot, hot, and I jumped into Bubbs Creek a few times to cool off. Finally, I came to the Bubbs Creek crossing to the East Lake Trail, which was inconsequential. In a higher snow year, this can be a difficult and quite dangerous crossing. As it was, care was needed as the water came up to my upper thigh in a few places. From there, it is 3 miles on a very good, well maintained trail to East Lake. I arrived there

at 7:00PM, about 8 hours after my departure from Road's End. Fifteen miles and 4500 feet can be enough for a half day – and it was. I was delighted to find bear boxes at both the North and the South End of East Lake – I stayed at the North end of the lake and was all alone. The lake was hauntingly beautiful.

Day 2, up early and moving by 6:30 AM. It was so beautiful to lie and listen to the songbirds that I didn't get up at my intended 4:30 AM wakeup – But I had a long day – 12 miles RT to the peak and 4300 feet of gain, and I wanted to hike out the 15 miles as well, making for a 27 mile day. From the East Lake camp, it's about 2 miles to Lake Reflection. But the trail can be indistinct at times.



Arriving at Lake Reflection – so named because of its resistance to the effects of wind – being sheltered in its own small basin – it was time to go cross country. The northwest side of the lake is preferred – staying higher up keeps you on slabs – until finally you get into the drainage. For the first 500 feet of gain, I chose to rock-hop on the south side of the drainage. Finally some grassy ramps appeared and led me to the stream itself – hopping in and out of the stream. Finally, I got to the higher lakes above 11400 feet, and saw Longley pass for the first time. Staying on the rocks to the right of the sandy chute is easiest, and both sides around the unnamed lake at 11,800 work.

Once at the pass at 12,200 feet, South Guard is an easy climb of 1000 feet. Once up on the broad saddle, you will be tempted to climb the northern citadel at first. You will be tempted by the incredible number of sky pilots springing into view and forming masses of purple. But don't let yourself be swayed. Instead of climbing the cool looking routes on the northern citadel, content yourself with climbing the three turrets of South Guard. The turret with the register is the middle one in the southernmost group. I summited at 11AM, after a 4.5 hour climb, and found a register there dating back to 1966. This peak is not climbed often, and I was the 2nd to climb it in 2013. The views were fantastic – and I lounged on top for some time enjoying the panorama. I didn't want to leave – but managed to make it back to camp at East Lake by 3pm.

It was 15 miles back to the trailhead and I decided to go for it. A long trip downhill, at maximum speed, about 2.5 miles per hour, enabled me to cover quite a bit of ground. I was glad that my pack had only a package of soup, some oatmeal, and a power bar as it made for a light load. But I did not make it back – you can't camp below Sphinx Creek, and so I camped there. Just at the campground, I came upon a young rattler who had just killed a small bird – and was desperately trying to eat it.



I watched from a few feet away, fascinated – I had never seen a rattler gorging on its prey. I

slept just a few yards away; I was sure the snake had better things to be doing. The next morning, I was back at the trailhead by 8am. A fun trip, but a long one – many go over Sphinx Lakes to climb these peaks – this was a longer way, but quite beautiful.

Rucu Pichincha, Ecuador

(4627m/15,480')

July 14, 2013

By Debbie Bulger

I was in Ecuador with my daughter, Suzie, to visit the Galapagos and had not intended to climb any peaks. Suzie and I have backpacked together, but she is more interested in bird watching than climbing.

Additionally, the guidebooks uniformly warn about the dangers of climbing, particularly alone. One book cautions, "There have been a number of robberies and assaults around this peak, so you're strongly advised to give the hike a miss."

There is an alpine-style cable car that many people take to an observation area at 14,000 feet with wonderful views of Quito and its surrounding mountains. On the weekends there are crowds of people, horses for rent, and food being barbequed for purchase at the top of the cable car.

After reviewing a few trip reports on the internet, Suzie and I decided to take the cable car and check out the route to Rucu Pichincha. We left our passports and most of our money in our hotel. There were enough people along the route that Sunday that I felt completely safe.

The climb is relatively easy with only a few low third class moves here and there. The difficult part is breathing at that altitude. There is a trail most of the way and a little rock scrambling near the summit. Multiple trails near the start may be confusing to some. Climb the grassy ridge ever upward. There are no directional signs. I had neither map nor compass.



The true summit is behind the peak in the background

As one ascends, the environment changes from one astounding habitat to another. Breathtaking grasslands with unfamiliar plants and strange, colorful flowers spread out on all sides. Fellow hikers consist of an international mix from Belgium, Australia, Switzerland, Ireland, of course Ecuador, and other countries.

We spent more than an hour on the summit, the highest I have ever attained. The clouds parted occasionally to reveal marvelous views of Quito. To Suzie's particular delight two Carnunculated Caracaras, (a vulture-like falcon) landed and walked very close to us. To add icing to an already exhilarating cake, a Paramo Ground-tyrant also hopped about. This cute little bird is a flycatcher of the high altitude grasslands.



The author and her daughter Suzie Silverman on the summit of Rucu Pichincha

The climb took us eight hours including at least an hour on the summit. A free shuttlebus takes one from the bottom terminus of the cable car to a transit stop down the hill where one can catch a cab or city bus.



Caracaras on the summit

Elected Officials

Chair

Terry Cline/ terry_cline@yahoo.com

Vice Chair and Trip Scheduler

Rod McCalley/rodmcalley@sbcglobal.net

650-493-2378

Treasurer and Membership Roster (address changes)

Yoni Novat

Publicity Committee Positions

Scree Editor

Judy Molland / screeditor@gmail.com

PCS World Wide Web Publisher

Joe Baker/ pcs@joebaker.us

Joining the PCS is easy. Go to <http://www.peakclimbing.org/join>

PCS Announcement Listserv

If you join the PCS Announcement Listserv you will receive announcements and updates of trips and meetings. Use the

<http://lists.sierraclub.org/SCRIPTS/WA.EXE?A0=LOMAP-PCS-ANNOUNCE&X=&Y=> web page.

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: Climbing using hands for balance.

Class 3: Climbing requires the use of hands, maybe a rope.

Class 4: Requires rope belays.

Class 5: Technical rock climbing.

Trips may also be rated by level of exertion: easy, moderate, strenuous, or extreme.

Deadline for submissions to the next Scree is Saturday, August 24. Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month.