



Volunteer NEWSLETTER

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"100 years of Caring for the Land and Serving People"

The Coulter Pine...

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Special points of interest:

- Extensive repair work to the septic system of the bathrooms across the street from the Big Pines Station has been completed.
- Volunteers are needed for the 2012 Bighorn Sheep Survey conducted by the CDFG and the USFS. For more information click here:

[2012 Bighorn Survey](#)



Coulter Pine

Big Pines, CA – We continue with our series describing the various trees that are found in the Big Pines area of the Angeles National Forest. This month we consider the Coulter pine (also known as the big-cone pine), a native tree, which has a unique feature that makes it stand out among the rest of the pine trees in the world.

While found throughout our area of the forest, there are large concentrations of them in the vicinity of Jackson Lake and Ball Flat.

The species was named after Thomas Coulter, an Irish botanist and physician. He "discovered" this species, pinus

coulteri, in 1831 after it had been missed by David Douglas, for which the Douglas-fir was named.

The tree ranges in size from 30-80 feet tall, with a trunk diameter up to 3 feet. The leaves are needle-like, stout and found in bundles of three between 6-12 inches long.

The most outstanding characteristic of this tree is the large, spiny cones which are 8-16 inches long, and weigh 4-10 lbs when fresh. Coulter pines produce the largest and heaviest cones of any pine tree species. Although the slender cones of the sugar pine can be longer, their flimsy cone scales do not weigh nearly as much.



Coulter pine cone



The largest pine cones in the world

The heavy cones of the Coulter pine, with talon-like curved scales, are definitely a hazard to anyone standing or sleeping under a cone-laden limb. These cones can be deadly if they fall on your head. Old loggers nicknamed them "widow makers" as cones actually killed loggers when they dropped. Today, people are advised to wear hard hats when working around Coulter pines.

The wood of the Coulter pine is very soft and weak; so much so that the species is little used other than for firewood. It is also occasionally planted as an ornamental tree in parks and large gardens.

Weather Extremes Big Pines Station

January 2012

Low: 24th 25°

High: 3rd 69°

Wind: 21st 40

Precipitation: 0.80 in

Claws and Effect:

A light-hearted look at the prickles on pine cones...



Big Pines, CA – As we learned last month, pines are separated into a genus from other conifers by having needle-like leaves bundled together in a papery sheath. Pines are further separated into species by the number of needles in the bundle, among other characteristics.

We have three species of three-needle pines in the San Gabriel Mountains – Coulter, Jeffrey and ponderosa. Sometimes ponderosa is referred to as yellow pine, sometimes ponderosa and Jeffrey together are referred to as yellow pines. Jeffrey pine is the most common species in our local forest.

What we call a “pine cone” is the female seed cone. It takes two years to form. The pine cone has a stalk that extends throughout its length. It is attached to a branch at one end and scales grow along the remainder in a spiral like a snail shell.

The female cone has two types of scales. One is the bract scale which can't be seen on these pines, but on the bigcone spruce cone it's the papery rat's-tail. The other is the seed scale which, when mature, usually has two winged seeds resting in small impressions on the surface that faces away from the stem attachment.

On the opposite surface, the one facing toward the stem attachment, the tip of the seed scale is enlarged and thickened.

Sometimes there is a ridge going from side to side. In the center of this enlargement is a raised area. This raised area in our three-needle pines has a prickle, variously called spike, spine, claw, spur or hook.

The central raised area with the prickle is the first year's growth, while the thickened, enlarged part is the second year's growth after fertilization. This thickened part changes shape as the cone grows but the raised area with the prickle does not. It is the shape and direction of this prickle or claw that distinguishes ponderosa and Jeffrey cones, and makes Coulter cones so wicked.

On Coulter pine cones, the scale tip is strongly ridged and the raised area is elongated and curved to form **upward**-turning claws about one inch long and knife-like.

On a Jeffrey pine cone, the scale tip is not ridged and the raised area has a curved, J-shaped prickle that points **inward**. How convenient! J-shaped for Jeffrey.

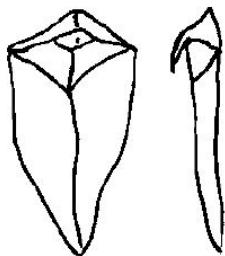
On a ponderosa pine cone, the thickened tip of each scale has a crosswise ridge and the raised area has a straight, stiff prickle that sticks **outward**. It pokes you when you touch it.

The effect of these features is that a ponderosa pine cone will hurt and a Jeffrey won't when you press on them. Thus, we have the useful mnemonic: “gentle Jeffrey and prickly ponderosa.”

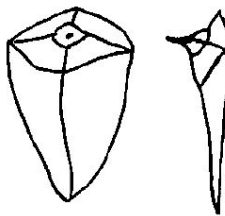
- Contributed by Jane Strong



Coulter Claw



Jeffrey Claw



Ponderosa Claw

Sketches by Jane Strong

Big Pines History... "Holiday Hill"



"Holiday Hill" 1948 - 1980

Big Pines, CA – "Holiday Hill", now known as Mountain High "East", was the third ski area to be developed around Big Pines. The first was "Table Mountain" in the late 20's. It later became Ski Sunrise and now Mountain High "North" and is called the "North Pole Tubing Park". The second was "Blue Ridge", now known as Mountain High "West". It began its ski history in 1930.

Holiday Hill was developed in 1948 by Sepp Benedikter. Sepp was born in Vadgestein, Austria in 1911. He began skiing at the age of 2½. A "competitive" skier since the age of 6, he amassed a collection of 200 trophies and was a member of the Austrian national team at the 1931 F.I.S. World Championships. In the late 1930's when Sun Valley was being developed, Sepp was one of six ski instructors to leave Austria and come to the United States to Sun Valley, at the request of the developers.

Sepp Benedikter would play an important role in the United States as an instructor, ski actor, consultant, ski tour promoter and ski area developer. He came to California about 1945 and for a time he worked at Hollywood Tennis and Golf. There he promoted skiing, and would come to Big Pines on the weekends to teach skiing at Blue Ridge.

He moved to Wrightwood and for a short time managed the Wrightwood Lodge. He then began Holiday Hill in 1948 and was responsible for clearing the initial runs.

In 1950 Sepp built the first swivel chair lift and took on a partner, John Steinman. John Steinman and his family had left Switzerland to come to the United States in 1948. The partnership didn't work out, and by 1951 Sepp

sold his share to Steinman.

In 1959 John's sons, Hans, Kurt and Heinz, bought Holiday Hill from their father. In time they added another partner, their brother-in-law, Hans Gadiant. In 1963 Heinz Steinman and his wife Lora, became the sole owners of the ski area.

During the Steinman years the family tried various projects to help support the business during the off seasons. One of these was the Heidi House, a rustic log cabin built to resemble the house of the Heidi story. On a busy holiday weekend the Heidi House might attract several thousand tourists.

In 1980 Terry Toganzzini, a businessman from Orange County, bought Holiday Hill. He had already purchased "Mountain High", formerly known as Blue Ridge, in 1978. He then merged the two to create a single resort known as Mountain High Ski Area. Holiday Hill was renamed Mountain High "East" and Mountain High was now known as Mountain High "West". During the next 18 years, Mountain High grew to become one of Southern California's leading winter resorts.

In June of 1997, Mountain High Ski Area was purchased by a company today known as Mountain High Holdings LLC. Extensive renovations to the lifts, grooming equipment and snowmaking facilities were made. In the summer of 2005 ownership of the resort transferred to the current owners, the Valor Equity Partners out of Chicago, who added the North Pole Tubing Park.



Holiday Hill c.1948

(Photo: Wrightwood History Museum)



Sepp Benedikter 1911 - 1982

(Photo: Wrightwood History Museum)



Holiday Hill Chair Lift (1950)

(Photo: From the Marica Myers Collection; Wrightwood History Museum)



"Heidi House" Holiday Hill 1963

(Photo: Wrightwood History Museum)

-Contributions to this article by:
Terry Graham, Bobbi Holmes, George
F. Tillitson and Mountain High Resort



Current Fire Danger



c. 1925



c. 1930

Interested in Volunteering out of the Historic Big Pines Station?

Call: (760) 249-3504 or Email:
 Todd Cook: mtcook@fs.fed.us or
 Ron Heinig: rheinig@fs.fed.us

Photos: From the Collection of Terry Graham



*The Wrightwood
 Communications Group
 has a disaster
 preparedness net each
 Sunday evening at 6:00
 pm.*

<http://www.kw6ww.com/>



*Wrightwood CERT has
 weekly FRS Nets on
 Sundays at 5:30 pm*

<http://www.wrightwoodcert.com>



Non-profit 501 (c) (3)

Upcoming meetings (3rd Tues each month)

Tues Jan 17, 2012
 Tues Feb 21, 2012
 Tues Mar 20, 2012
 Tues Apr 17, 2012
 Tues May 15, 2012
 Tues Jun 19, 2012
 Tues Jul 17, 2012
 Tues Aug 21, 2012
 Tues Sep 18, 2012
 Tues Oct 16, 2012
 Tues Nov 20, 2012
 Dec 2012 - No Meeting

7pm, at the
 Wrightwood Museum
 6000 Cedar St.
 (Old Fire Station)

Meeting Information:
 (760) 249-5248



Grassy Hollow
 Visitor's Center

www.grassyhollow.net

The Volunteers of the Angeles...

Meetings of the Volunteers are held on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm at the United Methoist Church located at 1543 Barbara Street in Wrightwood. All meetings are open to the public.

Volunteers of the Angeles National Forest

Wrightwood, CA

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