



Big Pines Volunteers

Volunteer NEWSLETTER

24537 Angeles Crest Hwy, Wrightwood, CA 92397 (760) 249-3504

Volume 3, Issue 11

November 2011

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

Jeffrey or Ponderosa Pines?...

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Special points of interest:

- November 11th, Veterans Day, is a "Fee Free" day in the forest. No Adventure Pass is needed.
- The "Fireman's Ball" held at the historic Big Pines Recreation Hall on October 8th, was a huge success with 150 in attendance.



Mature Jeffrey Pine Tree

Big Pines, CA - Many have wondered whether our part of the forest is filled with Jeffrey Pines or Ponderosa Pines. While we have both, there are far more Jeffrey than Ponderosa Pines.

The Jeffrey Pine (*Pinus jeffreyi*), named in honor of its documenter John Jeffrey, is a North American pine and is actually related to the Ponderosa Pine. Many botanists believe that Jeffrey and Ponderosa Pines should be combined into a single species; with each being a sub-species.

Around here they are often called "Western Yellow Pines", John Muir called them "Silver Pines", because they seem to hybridize in this area. The

Jeffrey Pine is tolerant of serpentine soils, and is often dominant in these conditions, even on dry sites at fairly low altitude. On other soils, it only becomes dominant at higher altitudes where the usually faster growing Ponderosa Pine does not thrive.

The Jeffrey Pines may be distinguished from Ponderosa Pines by the needles, which are glaucous or less bright green than those of Ponderosa Pines, and by the stouter, heavier pineapple shaped cones with larger seeds and the "gentle" tips ("claws" curved under so you can pick them up without pain).

One of the easiest ways to tell the difference is by smelling them. The Jeffrey Pine is very distinct from the Ponderosas in its resin scent. While the Ponderosa Pine smells like turpentine or is odorless, the scent of the Jeffrey Pine has been described as reminiscent of vanilla, lemon, pineapple, violets, apple and quite commonly some even smell like butterscotch brandy.

They all smell different so go ahead and take a sniff. Break off a small shoot or some needles, or smell the scent of the resin in between the

plates of the bark. The smell is the strongest after they've been in the sun awhile. This difference in scent is related to the very unusual composition of the resin, or the pitch that oozes out when their tissues are lacerated.

The resin of the Ponderosa, and nearly all other pine trees, is made up of a class of chemicals called terpenes, the ingredient of turpentine. But Jeffrey Pine resin contains the hydrocarbon known as normal heptane. This is a highly explosive compound.

Before the Jeffrey Pine was distinguished from Ponderosa Pines as a distinct species in 1853, resin distillers making turpentine and operating in its range suffered a number of 'inexplicable' explosions during distillation. We now know those to have been caused by the unwitting use of Jeffrey Pine resin instead of Ponderosa Pine resin.

The Gray Pine is the only other pine known to harbor normal heptane, making California's forests unique in yet another way; the only place where both of the world's "gasoline" trees reside. So, watch out for those explosive Jeffrey Pines!

Preparing for the Inevitable...

Weather Extremes Big Pines Station

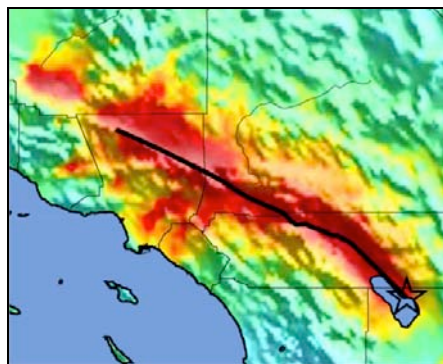
October 2011

Low: 7th 29°

High: 13th 83°

Wind: 5th 54

Precipitation: 1.40 in



The San Andreas Fault

Grassy Hollow, CA – You're enjoying a beautiful day in the Big Pines area of the Angeles National Forest with your family, when suddenly and without warning, that event we've all heard about for many decades strikes.

The San Andreas Fault erupts. The 7.8 earthquake is 5,000 times larger than the 5.4 earthquake that hit southern California on July 29th, 2008 in Chino, CA. It lasts nearly 2 minutes with the strongest shaking occurring along the fault, of which you are standing nearly on top of. Land to each side of the fault shifts up to 25 to 30 feet in opposite directions; severing roads, highways, phone lines and conduits of water & electrical power.

The good news is: you find yourself in one of the most prepared areas for such a disaster in all of California; as many of the people that live, work and volunteer in this part of the forest have been preparing for this event for many years.

Of the 34 "Volunteers of the Angeles National Forest" who work out of the Grassy Hollow Visitor's Center, a third of them are members of CERT (Community Emergency Response Team). Add to that, many working for the various Organizational Camps in the area are also involved with CERT, making for a large team of individuals trained in disaster preparedness and disaster response skills such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, disaster medical operations and first aid.

In addition many of these individuals are HAM radio operators who train weekly to hone their skills in disaster communications. Time and time again HAM radio is the only means of communication during a large scale disaster.

While it is estimated that a 7.8 earthquake on the San Andreas will expose 10 million people to heavy shaking, only 1,800 deaths and 50,000 injuries are predicted due to California's preparation and the educating of the public as to what they need to do. While many in our area, including those at Grassy Hollow and the Organizational Camps are prepared, are you?

"If you tell enough people what you're doing, you'll find someone who will want to help"

Michelle Sturm
Volunteers for Outdoor
Colorado 1990



Comparison of Jeffrey (left) and Ponderosa pinecones



CERT Members Prepare for a Disaster Drill

Amphitheater Construction Begins ...

Grassy Hollow, CA – The construction of the amphitheater at Grassy Hollow Visitor's Center has begun. When finished, it will be used by the many groups that visit the center for various programs. All the wood being used was reclaimed from the "Station Fire" and was "planked" and kiln dried at Camp Fenner.



Big Pines History... "Ghost Rider of Table Mt!"



Table Mountain

Big Pines, CA – Legend has it that if you hike the forest behind the Big Pines Ranger Station and listen very carefully you can hear the sound of a rider on horseback; the sounds of the clicking of a bit as a horse worries it in his mouth and the creak of an old saddle as its rider encourages his mount to ride through Jeffrey and Ponderosa Pines, buckthorn and sage down the rocky slopes of Table Mountain. While many attribute this phenomenon to the imagination, others attribute it to the "ghost rider of Table Mountain".

Interestingly, three separate and very respected sources (obtained through diaries, writings and oral interviews) had made specific references to a shooting death of a Verde Ranch "cowboy" that took place in the Table Mountain vicinity of Big Pines in the 1920's. All the statements pointed to the cowboy's demise as being related to water rights; to diverted water sources used by the old Verde Ranch to water and graze their cattle.

The scenario of the cowboy's demise went like this: A cowboy from Verde Ranch (now called Kemper/Campbell, in Victorville) was checking cattle at graze near present day Pinon Hills, and ended up on Table Mountain in the Big Pines area to check on the reason why water that had been previously used by the Verde Ranch had been diverted. History of the Verde Ranch revealed that their grazing extended to present day Table Mountain. The Verde hand was reported to have been shot and killed by a ranch hand from a Wrightwood ranch. Five cowhands from Verde Ranch returned to the area of the shooting and shot and killed the other cowboy who had shot their friend.

In a 1970 interview a Verde Ranch cowboy and long time Victorville resident, George (Tex) Rankin, stated that ranch hand Ernest Sockel (his father was a Texas ranger) was the "cowboy" found shot to death through the under part of his chin. Officially, it was never determined if the shooting was accidental or by the hand of another. Sockel's gun was found yards away from his body. His body was found days after his untimely demise and any track or evidence had been erased by the elements.

Since "water" appeared to be a factor in the cowboy's demise, and according to two of the sources, he met his demise by being shot by a "Wrightwood" cowboy; who might be responsible? During that time there were really only two working ranches in the general area. One was William Hagenbaugh's Ranch up Boulder Canyon, just over the hill to the northwest of Wrightwood. Hagenbaugh had five wells in lower Mescal Canyon and operated in that location during the time of the incident. Was his outfit involved?

Sumner B. Wright, (Wrightwood's founder) owned the second ranch, The Circle Mountain Cattle Co. Wright also owned the Mescal Water and Company which diverted water from the Big Pines and Jackson Lake areas. He was working on a tunnel in Mescal Canyon that would provide needed money revenues. Upon near completion the project was stopped abruptly in 1921 and remains a little suspicious. Was the water project stopped because of dangerous work conditions as claimed, or was there another reason? After all, it was almost finished and the halt came at an interesting time, right around the time that the Verde Ranch cowboy was shot and killed.

It remains a 90 year old mystery and just another missing piece of Big Pines History. As for the "ghost rider", reportedly heard on the slopes of Table Mountain, is there more to it that meets the eye... or just plain imagination?

- Contributed by Terry Graham



Sumner Banks Wright
Photo: "Wrightwood Men" (1981)
Wrightwood Historical Society



Jimmy Prince and Frank Bogert,
"cowboys" who worked for The Circle
Mountain Cattle Co.
Photo: Wrightwood Historical Society



100 year old water pipes that carried
water from Mescal Canyon to Big Rock
and Pallet Creek ranches still exist today
along Big Pines Highway
Photo: From the Bob Morgan Collection



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 18, 2011
 Tues Feb 15, 2011
 Tues Mar 15, 2011
 Tues Apr 19, 2011
 Tues May 17, 2011
 Tues Jun 21, 2011
 Tues Jul 19, 2011
 Tues Aug 16, 2011
 Tues Sep 20, 2011
 Tues Oct 18, 2011
 Tues Nov 15, 2011
 Dec 2011 - 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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