

SEASON END REPORT 1995  
LECONTE CANYON RANGER STATION  
RANDY MORGENSON OCT '95

It was a big snow year. For example: on July 12 on the south side of Muir Pas snow was solid from 10,300' on over the pass, down the north side to approximately Evolution Lake. On the north side of Mather Pass snow was between lower Palasade Lake and the pass, then down the north side into lower Upper Basin, below treeline. Mather Pass was very difficult, nearly vertical snow on the south side (cornice remnant); Only four hikers had crossed it up to July 10.

There was no safe crossing of Palisade Creek at the Middle Fork of the Kings River until after the middle of August. Going down the Middle Fork Kings, there stream crossing at 7200' (between Leconte Canyon and Simpson Mdw) was very hazardous (I wouldn't do it) until August.

In Dusy Basin in mid-July there was 50% snow cover in the lower basin around Dusy Lakes, and 80% - 100% snow cover in the upper basin and on to Bishop Pass.

Some of these conditions are the same early every year, during the time of high water. It might be worth starting a data base for the Kings District office of trail conditions; where there are bridges, stream crossing during high water and safe alternate locations; and also special regulations like fire closures, bighorn sheep areas and restrictions, grazing restrictions, etc. Something quick and easy to pull up on the screen by people answering phones.

*Good  
Suggestion*

Up until the end of July hikers entering from the eastside told me they couldn't get trail information, mostly about snow on the passes, from the forest service office in Bishop; the forest service people didn't seem to know. Many (not all) of the wilderness permits issued from there did not have Park regulations attached. These things will take constant work each season.

Radio communication with Grant Grove was difficult again this season; everyone knows. We hope it'll be better next year. Basically transmissions from there are so weak it is very difficult to hear what's being said. Transmissions from Ash Mt. come in loud and clear. Perhaps the radio shop can fix the system so that transmissions from Grant and Cedar are received loud and clear in the backcountry/

*Radio  
Shop*

~~Requirements:~~ It would be useful to have more current wildlife information and knowledge. We could benefit from talks by John Wehausen on bighorn sheep, a DFG person on local deer herds (their health, ranges, forage areas hunting

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pressures, anything), and Dr Graber or someone on bears - what is known.

And there might be some things we could share with wildlife people. "for example, the southern limit of Belding ground squirrels is apparently Little Pete Mdw. and Dusy Basin. Various backcountry rangers have observed this but I don't know that it shows up on the wildlife observation forms. If we were trained to take good traditional field notes (get some old time naturalist to talk to us about this? teach us the art of taking field notes) there's a lot of information that would find its way into park files.

*Wildlife  
info on  
Ranger  
people*

Along this line, I think it would be valuable for copies of station logs and reports to be at the ranger stations for historical reference.

On another training topic, I suggest the EMT refresher be at the beginning of the season when we need it, not after our season and maybe even after some seasonals have terminated and left the park. Also, the backcountry rangers could stay in the backcountry all of Sept. for end of season work projects like cleaning, eliminating, reducing the size of firepits. End of season is a good time to do this.

A Porcupine chewed on the cabin again this year and did a fair amount of damage, especially to the shed on the rear. It was also chewing on the floor underneath the cabin, a difficult thing to defend against. This has been a battle here since at least 1980.

It doesn't chew on the shingles on the outside of the outhouse (yet) so I wonder if putting shingles on the outside of the cabin would save it. Ralph Moore said he has put mothballs under cabins when he had this problem and that kept porcupines away. This would be the easiest to try. (what's toxic in mothballs?) We need to try something. We could also ~~put wire mesh around the base of the cabin, up about~~ ~~and paint it brown like the cabin.~~ Apparently plywood is the problem. We probably shouldn't use it.

*order?*

In other wildlife news we had a real bear problem in LeConte Cyn. This year, which is unusual. This bear became pretty persistent in going after human food. In late August he was a problem in Dusy Basin for a few nights before going across Bishop Pass. He was apparently back in late Sept. for a hiker left food hanging at Grouse Mdw. (I saw it; it was a good hang) while he was camped at Rambaud Lakes for 4 nights

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and during that time a bear chewed the branch off the tree and ate much of the food. the problem started in early August when some climbers left food at Grouse Mdw. while climbing the Devil's Crags. At that time the bear tore up a tent, and subsequently tore up several trail crew tents.

Devil's Crags climbers are a little bit of a problem here. Three parties I know of were packed in by Rainbow to climb there. They bring extra, and heavy (fresh, canned) food and leave some in LeConte Cyn while camped at Rambaud Lakes. I'd like to see this not allowed (property unattended more than 24 hours). Is it worth adding this to our handout literature, and to "backcountry basics"? And is there a way to get Rainbow Pack Station to co-operate with this by telling their customers we don't allow food to be left in LeConte Cyn. while away from it for several days? Maybe next year it would be enough to just work through Rainbow to get the word to these people and try to prevent food being left unattended.

'96 plan

Rainbow was very co-operative with the extended grazing restrictions this year and carried feed when they came into LeConte. The major meadows got no grazing and its a good thing for sod was wet in much of them even at the end of September. I guess in a 200% year we can't count on the LeConte Cyn meadows getting dry enough for grazing all year.

The meadows were extraordinarily beautiful because they weren't grazed. the grasses grew up waist high in places; tall, dense, and gorgeous. Trail crew people also commented on how unusually beautiful the meadows were. Its too bad we can't recognize and encourage this in our management policies. Surely we can find ways to let these mdws grow and flower in their natural ways, without precluding stock users rights to be here. Working with the stock users to achieve a little better protection the mtn meadows would improve our stewardship.

In late Sept. and early Oct. I concentrated my work efforts on ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ and ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~. This meant ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~. I like to get a lot of this work done at the end of the season so the camps are neat and tidy at the start of the following year. Most of the campsites in the area were worked over.