



IN REPLY REFER TO:

# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Kings Canyon National Park  
Sequoia National Park  
Three Rivers, California 93271-9700



## SEASON END REPORT, CRABTREE MEADOWS 1994

In 1994 Crabtree Meadows had fewer incidences than most years. There was still alot of activity but not like usual. Incidences were down at Rock Ck. this summer also.

Human use in this area has not changed greatly since the backpacker boom of the early seventies, use is down a little from that time.

The areas of greatest use are Crabtree Meadows, around the ranger station and Guitar Lake. .

The area around the ranger station handles alot of campers very well. There are several good camp areas, with fire-pits, spread out along Whitney Creek , on both sides. Just a short walk in almost any direction gives visitors spectacular views.

The area near the bear box gets trampled quite a bit from people coming and going, but I feel that the location , near the trail intersection, is the best place for it; because it is centrally located and keeps people from all camping right on top of each other or right next to the ranger station, which has been a problem in the past. A sign on the bear box asking people to try and stay off the meadow in this area may help . Something to try next season.

The other area of greatest human impact is Guitar Lake. Because Guitar Lake is a destination for everyone climbing Mount Whitney from the west side ; it gets alot of use during the peak of the season. It requires regular ranger patrols (at least once a week) during the peak of the season to pick up litter and bury toilet paper.



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This year, to try to lessen Impact on Guitar Lake, I posted a sign at the Crabtree, JMT intersection, listing alternate camping areas from  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile above Timberline Lake to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile beyond Guitar Lake going toward Mount Whitney. This sign probably reduced use at Guitar Lake by 50%. After putting the sign up campers were spread out over a two mile area, instead of all camped together at Guitar Lake.

Guitar Lake, unlike Trail Camp on the east side, has a big area for campers to spread out over. If campers use good wilderness habits in burying human waste there is plenty of room for sanitary camping. I am strongly opposed to putting a pit toilet here because: #1, of the maintenance problems involved, #2, it would tend to concentrate use in a smaller area, #3, toilet would collect a lot of trash ( people are always trying to lighten their load before going over trail-crest), #4, it would be an intrusion to the environment.

This year, starting about July 1st, it required me  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour per week to keep up with clean-up at Guitar Lake, and after Labor Day only about fifteen minutes to do the T.P. and clean-up patrol. I do not feel that this is too much of a demand for one of the bussiest areas in the backcountry.

The summit of Mount Whitney is doing fine, considering the number of people visiting there daily ( as many as 200-300 per day). The amount of litter picked up is amazingly small. The maintenance on the outhouse is very light, only requires emptying once a season. This year I had to repair the walls of the wind screen due to high winds last winter. I added an extra brace on each of the three sides, hopefully this will not happen again this winter.



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There were two medical evacuations this season. One a sixteen year old boy scout with HAPE was flown from the ranger station. The other a twenty four year old climber who fell climbing the face of Mount Chamberlin from above Upper Crabtree Lake. He was lucky and only broke his leg. He fell eighty feet before his third piece of protection finally stopped him three feet short of a ledge.

Two law enforcement situations happened this season. One was the Roman Jabiello incident which involved Cindy Wood, Eric Morey, Pete Allen and myself. Roman was scaring visitors with his behavior in the Kern River area. After taking reports on Roman at Crabtree Cindy and I responded to contact Roman; before we were able to contact him he left the park for forest service land and the front country. Eric Morey wrote a letter stating the facts to Roman that this kind of behavior would not be tolerated in the Sequoia-Kings backcountry. Roman was not seen or heard from after this.

The other incident involved the theft of a camera from a camp at Wallace Creek crossing. The suspect crept into camp at night and walked off with a six hundred dollar camera. Reports of the suspects ID were radioed to the Charlotte Lake ranger but he was never contacted.

Incidences like these two are rare in the backcountry but they show that crimes of this sort are possible out here.

The only Bear incidences in this area occurred at Tyndall Creek on a few occasions. The bear probably came from Bubbs Creek on the north side of Foresters Pass, reports gave evidence of this( I took numerous reports of bears getting food at Wheel Barrow Camp or above) . We need a bear box





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at Wheel Barrow camp!

I also heard, to my dis-belief, that the Forest Service removed the bear containers on the east side of Kearsarge Pass, because they were collecting too much trash. I feel that poor management was involved there. Until we cover all the bases the bears in the Kearsarge, Bubbs Creek area are going to continue to roam. We are getting the repercussions of that down here in this part of Sequoia, thus resulting in the only bear problems we have. I hope that the rangers in these other areas see the full scope of this someday.

Stock use was less this season, probably due to cottonwoods business being down. A lot of other pack stations used the area: Rock Creek on several occasions, Sequoia-Kings (mostly to Tyndall area), Golden Trout pack station and Glacier Pack Station. The trail crew had by far the most stock nights of anyone.

Upper Crabtree and Lower Crabtree did not get overgrazed but Lower Whitney Creek, Nathan's, and Tyndall certainly did. One of the problems with the trail crew stock is that they just stand around and graze all week. I feel that (and so does Ray, the packer) they should be packing out to resupply the crew in between moves and this would save the meadows and lessen their helicopter expense.

The greatest intrusion in this area is the military air traffic. Granted there are fewer low flyers but what difference does it make if they are 3000 feet or 10,000 feet. They still make a hell of a lot of noise. They should not fly over the park at all, and the park service should accept no compromises. I heard that Yosemite got all over flights banned, so why



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not Sequoia-Kings? What are the results of the federal study done in the late 80's? The administration of this park needs to do more about this at some higher levels. The military air noise all summer was ridiculous. The Kern and Mt. Whitney area is the focal point for military air traffic. The noise really breaks up the peace out here. We should not accept their statements like "our adversaries leave us no choice" and "this is the cost of freedom!" The military is violating the very thing they are supposed to be protecting. I'll repeat what a concerned backpacker told me once: "South of Kearsarge Pass in Sequoia and Kings National Park no longer sustains a wilderness experience, due to the presence of Military Jets." This is very true and has not changed in all these years.

The weather was very hot and dry this summer. Only in the last two weeks of my season did we get any measurable precipitation. We got over an inch of rain the last week of September and on October fourth we got 12-15 inches of snow.

Crabtree Meadows is a beautiful area and receives a lot of visitor traffic due to it being a place where trails converge on the way to Mount Whitney. With a lot of visitors there are bound to be a few problems, but the magic of the area definitely dominates. This ranger feels honored and privileged to work here and hopes to again in the future. Thanks for your time in reading this report.

DARIO MALENGO

CRABTREE RANGER, SUMMER 94'

U.S.N.P.S.