

1999 Tyndall Creek End-of-Season Report
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The 1999 ranger season at Tyndall Creek was quiet in terms of incidents and problems. This year there were a lot of visitors from June until the second week of September. In the Tyndall Creek area there were no medivacs or law enforcement incidents, however I was involved in a SAR with 311 near Trail Crest where a woman climbed until she collapsed and had to be flown out.

Stock use was quite heavy at Tyndall Creek meadow due to Shepherds Pass opening early. The NPS trail crew had 96 stock nights, Rock Creek Pack Station had 240 stock nights and Sequoia-Kings Pack Station visited three times. The meadows down near the shepherds cabin were hit quite hard. Near the ranger station, trail crew stock showed noticeable impact, near their camp and in the meadow near the upper crossing.

There was no bear activity in the Tyndall Creek area. I am concerned that the serious problem on Bubbs Creek could become a problem south of Forester Pass. On one visit north of Forester Pass, I observed bear scat ½ mile from the top of the pass. To me, that means that a Bubbs Creek bear had visited south of Forester pass. I feel the bear incidents at Crabtree and at Rock Creek could have involved one of those bears.

Fortunately, we have bear boxes and campers were not hit too hard. The bear that invaded the trail crew camp at Sandy Meadow could also have been one of those bears.

I feel that the pros outweigh the cons for a box at Wheelbarrow Camp on Bubbs Creek: there are enough sites for at least a dozen tents; it would take some pressure off the Center Creek area; it would allow visitors better access gaining Forester Pass; and most importantly, it would stop the bear problem in the Bubbs/Kearsarge area.

The trails in the Tyndall Creek area are in need of much repair. The JMT has a lot of erosion and needs many check dams and fill material and rocks removed. The

greatest problem, however, is the multiple trails being created, in some places four wide! In addition, the Shepherds Pass trail and the trail to the Kern River need some work. Hopefully the Kern construction crew can work this area next year.

There were more visitors in this area this year than in past years, the reasons being the low snow pack and the increased popularity of the Kearsarge to Mt. Whitney trip.

The archaeological site inspections resulted in a few obsidian chippings at each of the sites. 313 found many pieces at the Sheep Camp site.

Problems in the area are very few. Most campers use the Tyndall bear box sites or the frog pond sites. There were only two signs of illegal fires all season and hardly any trash. A few campers camped down near the ranger station, but not very often.

The cabin at Tyndall Creek is in fine shape. The equipment there is also in good order. Perhaps, some day, the loft and ceiling could be altered to keep the warm air down in the cabin instead of up in the loft. I will hold off on this project, unless the snow surveyors feel it necessary.

I performed frog and fish surveys in the Tyndall Creek area. I surveyed most lakes and ponds in the Upper Kern and Wright Creek drainages. I noticed fewer frogs this year than in past years. For instance, the small ponds between Wright and Wallace Creeks at the base of Mt. Barnard did not have any frogs or tadpoles this year. When I traveled by these ponds between 1985 and 1987, however, I always observed frogs and tadpoles. Something is causing our frog populations to disappear. Not a good sign! I would encourage more study by the research department. Also, if I'm stationed at Tyndall Creek next season, I will expand this survey to more lakes in the Milestone Basin and adjacent lake basins.

I spent a little time working in the Crabtree area. Use seems to be increasing. I still feel that attempting to persuade campers to camp before or after Guitar Lake on the Mt. Whitney Trail would be the best way to relieve pressure on Guitar Lake. Several good camping sites that are rarely ever used are located down to approximately ½ mile below Guitar Lake.

The military jet over flight situation has improved very little. Several low flyers were still called in by myself and other rangers. The problem seemed to be the worst in August, when visitor use was highest. I do not believe that the NPS is doing the right thing by leaving it up to the military to handle the problem. We have done this for the last 15 years and the problem remains the same! We need to get the Department of the Interior to put pressure on the military and have this abuse stopped. Last year, the DEIS for LeMoore Air Base showed a lot of public support against military jets in our park. The Park Service needs to follow up on this and get the military to stop abusing our park and the visitors in our park.

The backcountry in the Tyndall Creek area is some of the most scenic and remote in these parks. The area has remained unimpaired and continues to serve the needs of the many visitors passing through each season. The NPS and Forest Service are generally doing a good job in managing these areas, but must remain continually aware of visitor use and pressures in order to keep the area pristine.