



# The Interpreter

“The mission of the Eldorado National Forest Interpretive Association (ENFIA), a non-profit organization, is dedicated to helping the Eldorado National Forest serve the public.”

July 2009

## Joel Knowles Celebration

Chuck Lowery, June 29, 2009

We are gathered here to celebrate Joel Knowles and this information station, which wouldn't be here today but for his perseverance, creative problem solving, organizational talent, inspiration and dedication.

Twenty years ago ENFIA information volunteers here at Carson Pass served the public out of a converted two-hole toilet building that offered little protection from the elements for either the volunteers or visitors being served.

Janice Gordon, the Amador District Resource Assistant at the time, based on her experience with the Forest Service Challenge Cost Share grant program, saw an opportunity to change that. She prepared and submitted a grant application for roughly \$20,000 with provision for seeking donations for a like amount from stakeholders to provide seed money for an approximately 15 x 30 foot log structure to be built by volunteers. In 1990 the application was approved and the stage was set for commencement of the project.

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Donations and pledges for time and equipment from individuals, groups, families, permittees, local governments and businesses started to flow in.

Lacking, however, was a volunteer project superintendent to provide supervision and organization for construction of the building. In this hour of need, ENFIA's Art Edwards stepped forward saying he had a candidate named "Joel Knowles" who might be willing to undertake the project.

A meeting followed in which we in the Forest Service met with Art and Joel, who was a Sacramento State University business management professor, former Air Force officer, and had experience with building. Having located a log kit manufacturer for the cabin and estimating that it could be erected in a season, the project was presented to Joel. In his

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## *Joel Knowles Celebration (cont.)*

characteristically low key manner he agreed to take on the superintendence.

Construction, using an all-volunteer work force, began in 1991. It soon became evident, however, that it was going to take a lot more than one season to build the station. The kit itself did not go together as easily as anticipated. Then a record snow winter that covered the partially completed building with heavy wet snow to the ridge top, tipped the structure off center.

Through it all, thick and thin, Joel in his calm, resourceful way took each new setback as it came, undaunted, treating it as a challenge—persevering and through all, creatively resolving the issue.

The volunteer work force, which he organized and held together over the duration of the project and inspired to persevere through his own cheerful, optimistic outlook and dedication to the project, at various points during construction numbered from a few to a dozen or more and all totaled over 100.

By the mid '90s, the “cabin” (as Joel called it) was far enough along to start serving Carson Pass and Mokelumne Wilderness visitors, and by the turn of the century it was largely complete. But, Joel’s commitment to the project was ongoing as he creatively worked to make improvements in the functioning of the information station both for ENFIA volunteer docents serving there and for the visitors being served.

But for Joel Knowles the Carson Pass Information Station would not exist as we know it today. For docents and visitors alike, there is no end to the good that he has done.





## *Travels, Trails & Tales—The Mojave Preserve*

*By Richard Kennon*

We are old hands with the Mojave Desert but had not visited it for many years. A large portion of it has been turned into the Mojave Preserve run by the National Park Service. A Preserve is one step below a National Park in that they allow hunting and we did not see the usual NP prohibitions against dogs. If you are not a desert lover, you probably should not read this and certainly should not visit the Mojave upon my recommendation. You either like deserts or you don't. It is easy to explain why people do not like the desert and impossible to explain why we do. The Mojave can be considered many deserts in that it has a range of elevations. The flora and fauna change markedly from one elevation to another. The park brochure claims there are at least 30 identifiable habitats for plants and animals. Besides flora and fauna, I am particularly attracted by the history of the desert for the last 200 or so years. Ghost towns and defunct mines are particularly photogenic.

One major problem with spending time in the Preserve is that there is practically no indoor place to stay. The nearest motels are in Barstow, which is 50 to 100 miles away from most portions of the Preserve. There are campgrounds but they do not hold the appeal to us they once did. The one notable exception to the motel situation is the Hotel Nipton. Drive northeast from Barstow on Interstate 15 until you are just ten miles from Primm, NV and turn right on Nipton Road - it doesn't even have a number. Ten miles east of this intersection is the town of Nipton. I thought the hotel was quaint with its five sparsely furnished rooms and two bathrooms down the hall. Aileen said, "This place is a dump!" The eye of the beholder, again. Anyway, Nipton is the gateway to the east side of the park just as Barstow is for the west side. The southern edge of the park is defined by Interstate 40 and it does not have any motels between Barstow and Needles.

Near the far western boundary is Zzyzx. This was a health spa run by a radio evangelist in the 1930s and 40s. He had a radio station and solicited donations. Apparently he forgot to declare some of his income and the IRS shut him down. Now the site is a university desert research station and there is not much for the public to see other than a large spring fed pond surrounded by palm trees. A little further up I-15 we turned right onto the Kelbaker (Kelso to Baker, get it?) Road. Nineteen miles down this road is the Aiken Mine Road that leads to, among other things, cinder cones and a lava tube. The road is unmarked and I complained about that to a ranger at the visitors' center in Kelso. He whipped out a detailed map/instructions and gave it to me saying, "Here, we have this for people like you." I didn't know there were people like me. Kelso was once a railroad town as they kept spare engines there to help push trains upslope to the east. They built a beautiful station that I photographed, again. The station is the park visitors' center, now.

Seven miles south of Kelso, turn right for four miles onto a well graded gravel road to the Kelso Dunes. This is a massive area of high sand dunes that is very impressive. Hiking to the top of the first dune is a mile long hike in loose sand. We just looked at the dunes and then turned northward through Kelso to Cima where we were touted onto a store run by "very

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## *News from the Path*

**Carson Pass Report:** The Carson Pass Station opened May 24th to many visitors under ideal weather conditions. My, did that change for the next two weeks!. Daily thunder storms persisted and visitors were few.

The weather has become more cooperative but the flowers are balking . The late storms have kept the ground cooler than usual and thus the flowers will be delayed by a week or two.

Thanks to the revenue generated by the Forest Service User Fees (known to us as a daily parking pass), we have new toilets in the parking lot and a new sign to help direct traffic. Also due to the user fees, we have three wilderness rangers patrolling—we usually only have one.

The station has a new coat of stain on its exterior and it really enhanced the appearance. Dennis Price is continually making subtle, but important, improvements to the station as well as the cabin.

Great news! When Caples Lake was almost completely drained last fall for repair to gate structures, doom and gloom prevailed as to how Caples would recover. To everyone's amazement, it has completely filled.

Starting in mid-June, Pacific Crest hikers began registering at the station. It's estimated that 340 hikers will attempt the 2,600 mile trek from the Mexico border to the Canadian border. Usually, 50% make the total trip.

Six new docents have completed their orientation, joining 32 veterans. We now enjoy a very experienced staff and look forward to serving our visitors with the knowledge, pride and energy we are noted for.

*Bob Youel  
CPIS Manager*

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For "Outdoor Safety" tips, log on to <http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/safety/>, The following is a listing of tips and each has more information under the sub-heading—just click on "more".

Whether you're roughing it in a tent or planning a family outing to a national forest, there are many ways to make sure your experience is fun and safe. Consider the following safety tips when you visit a national forest or national grassland.

**General Safety:** Prevent mishaps by adequately preparing for the trip; **Trail Tips:** Be prepared for you trail travels by considering this advice; **Camping Tips:** Roughing it in a tent or staying in a cabin, these tips will help; **Lightning!:** Don't let lightning ruin your day!; **If You Get Lost...:** these tips will help you get back safely; **Checklist:** Pack the "Essentials" when you visit us.



## BOARD WORKS

### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The summer season got off to a spring like start and has bounded back and forth between 100 degree days here at the 2000 ft elevation to wonderful, cool 70's in the mountains. I love the spring-like weather and wish it could stay this way all year long as far as I am concerned. The hot summer days are not my favorite time of year but I know many of you might not agree with me and actually welcome the hot weather that is more typical in our area during the summer.

This year ENFIA was fortunate enough to obtain a large grant from the National Forest Foundation. These monies were designated for the construction of a new multi-use trail connecting the existing Dangberg Trail to the Thunder Mountain Trail in the Kirkwood area. This new 1 to 1-½ mile trail will be called the Martin Point Trail (recently was named the Sentinal Trail) and will be a great addition to the Highway 88 corridor. Outdoor enthusiasts will really enjoy this new

trail which will hopefully be completed by the end of this summer. Kirkwood folks have been extremely helpful in volunteering hours to help on the trail and put people up who are working there. A big thanks to everyone who has helped.

ENFIA also obtained a nice \$1,000 grant from the California Alpine Club Foundation to be used on water quality and restoration activities in the Desolation Wilderness area. Charis Parker, Resource Officer at the Pacific Ranger District already has a plan formulated as to how this money will be wisely used. A huge "thank you" to the California Alpine Club Foundation for their generous support.

In preparation for winter ENFIA will also be partnering with Snow Lands Network and REI to re-print a Cross-Country Ski and Snowshoe Trail Guide for the Highway 88, West of Carson Pass area. These free maps will be available at the Amador Ranger District

office later in the season.

Keep your eyes open for more grant opportunities, new projects that ENFIA can become involved with and different ways to utilize our volunteer member's efforts. We are always looking to improve ourselves and your comments and recommendations are always appreciated.

*Kathie Piaszk*, President

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**Outdoor  
enthusiasts  
will really  
enjoy this new  
trail...**



## *Travel...(cont.)*

friendly people.” They were closed so we settled for a photograph. From there we were told to take the Cima Road northwest past the Cima Dome. This dome is about one thousand feet high and ten miles in diameter so it is hard to see except from a distance. At a certain altitude on the dome is “the world’s largest Joshua Tree forest.” From there it was not far to our Hotel Nipton. There is only one place to eat in Nipton and while it was closed on the day we visited, they opened it just for us. We were told to order the special pork chop dinner, which we did. It was out of this world. The hotel is a “bed and breakfast” and breakfast was coffee, bottled juice and muffins at the grocery store next door. We ate it standing up.

From Nipton, we took the Ivanpah Road south through the east side of the park. This road was paved in parts and well graded in other parts. This area is the location of several ranches that almost flourished in the early 1900s. Rain was much more plentiful then. Side roads off this road lead to mines. There was active iron ore mining there through WW II. The Ivanpah Road crosses the Mojave Road about half way along. Avid four-wheelers like to follow the Mojave Road as it traverses the park from east to west. The southern terminus of the Ivanpah Road is at the town of Goffs on old route 66. Not much here but it is picturesque.

Heading west on 66 and then I-40 we turned off onto the Essex Road that goes into the Providence Mountains State Recreation Area, a State Park within the Preserve, and to Hole-in-the-Wall. The attraction in the State Park is Mitchell Caverns. They conduct hour-and-a-half tours through the caverns. Hole-in-the-Wall is a strange rock formation that one has to climb down to see. They have imbedded rings into the rocks to help climbers. This seemed to be beyond our capabilities. We did see and photograph many wild flowers but the Joshua Tree blooms were gone when we arrived. As for animals, we saw a jack rabbit and some rodents but nothing exotic like desert tortoises or big horn sheep.

From there we took old 66 down to Amboy, the home of Roy’s Motel and Café. We may have been Roy’s last guests in 2003 but the place is abandoned now. Someone has reopened the gas station there but it doesn’t look good. I bought all the gas I could for old time’s sake. The road south from here leads to Joshua Tree National Park but that is another story. If I haven’t talked you out of going, I suggest you purchase a copy of *Mojave National Preserve, A Visitor’s Guide* by Cheri Rae and John McKinney. It is excellent.





## *News...(cont.)*

The grant money from the National Forest Foundation has been put to great use and the new multi-use trail at Kirkwood has just been completed. The new Sentinels Trail, as it is being called, will connect the Danberg Trail and the Thunder Mountain Trail.

Construction was handled by Don Hayes of Tahoe City, who just completed the work and removed the hauling machine off the trail July 25th. Volunteer work is being completed by Kirkwood homeowner volunteers, bike enthusiasts and the SCA crew. New posts for the upper junction with Thunder Mountain Trail are being made and were installed July 27th. The second post for the lower junction with the Danberg Trail will be made next week and installed shortly thereafter.

A huge thanks for a tremendous job well done by all involved in helping get this project completed so quickly.

Per Marilyn Meyer, Amador RD, FYI...more great news on the Sentinels trail at Kirkwood:

All,

The Sentinels Trail Volunteer Day was a success. The 10 people that volunteered, in addition to the SCA hand crew, had the proud accomplishment of completing the trail by tying into the Thunder Mountain Trail. Working from 11am-2pm the energy level was high as all were very excited about our new trail!

Those involved include:

1. Amy Hodgkins
2. Steve Hodgkins
3. Jim Sacherman
4. Jon Rohrbough
5. Detlef Kutzscher
6. Josh Otto
7. Walter Roosli
8. Derek Duff
9. Patrick Gillick
10. Ricky Newberry

Trevor from the SCA said he and his crew will put up the post and continue finish work through Wednesday. Thanks to everyone involved for making this happen!

Happy trails, Ricky Newberry  
Kirkwood Mountain Resort  
(530) 416-2991 mobile  
fnewberry@kirkwood.com

# ENFIA

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Visit the website at  
[www.enfia.info](http://www.enfia.info) to  
find out more about ENFIA!

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## Why Join the Eldorado National Forest Interpretive Association?

ENFIA is an organization in partnership with the Eldorado National Forest promoting its attributes through its newsletter, *The Interpreter*, field trips, funding forest projects of an interpretive nature and providing programs about the forest. Our purpose is to tell people about the neat things that can be done to enjoy the forest. Would you like to help with that?

Join ENFIA and receive *The Interpreter* three times a year, telling you about the best the Eldorado National Forest has to offer through interesting and informative articles: a little history, some fun, suggestions of where the best places are to enjoy activities, from hiking and camping, to fishing and wildflower photography.

You will be tempted **with opportunities to volunteer** through participating as a docent at the Carson Pass Information Station, described as "the most fun you can have with your shoes on". Well, it is work, but also fun spending a day or two at Carson Pass talking to all sorts of nice people. No special skills are needed. The work parties are as much party as work. You "work" or "party" at your own pace. Breathe the fresh mountain air and use some elbow grease maintaining the cabin at Silver Lake and the Carson Pass Station. If you enjoy site restoration then the work continues on the Traverse Creek stream project.

As a member, you will be notified of field trips that are interesting, fun and seldom strenuous. There are so many wonderful places to visit in our forest, and we always have an expert or two along on field trips to tell about what we are seeing. There are meetings of the membership four times per year, starting with a potluck followed by a great program.

### Join Now!

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Indicate: Individual Member - \$10/year \_\_\_\_ Family Membership - \$15/year\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

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Please mail this form & check to: **ENFIA, c/o Sharon Cook, 1488 Woodman Cr., Placerville, CA 95667 — WELCOME TO ENFIA!**