



THE DESERT SAGE

THE DESERT PEAKS SECTION | SIERRA CLUB | OUR 80TH SEASON | APR-JUN 2022, ISSUE 395



From Mat Kelliher, DPS Outings Chair



You may have noticed that for the past several months, an increasing number of Outings have been conducted by a few of the Sections, Groups, and Committees (SGCs) of the Angeles Chapter. And noticing that, you might have wondered what has changed since the last article I wrote for the Sage (Issue No. 393) that would lead to this new resurgence in Angeles Chapter Outings.

It was true at the time I wrote that article, that many Outings Leaders were very concerned about the potential legal implications for themselves and/or our various Club Sections that their review of a participant's "Local Outings - Medical Questionnaire" (MQ) might expose them to if they used that review as a qualifier or disqualifier to participate on an Outing. This concern originated in the interpretation of a document published by

National SC known as the "FAQ". A strict interpretation of the FAQ as if it outlined specific policy was generally assumed, and the intrusive nature of its content led to a reluctance, if not complete refusal, by most Outings Leaders to conduct Outings under its terms. On reflection and over time however, it began to be realized by a growing number of Outings Leaders that the FAQ was not a point-by-point statement meant to obtain personal and sensitive information from a participant but was rather a series of questions meant to help guide a leader through the process of her or his query of a participant's MQ for the purpose of ensuring that the participant would be safe on the Outing.

The change in perspective of considering the FAQ as a Guidance Document to help review the MQ resolved the fears of many Outings Leaders, myself included, and as this awareness has spread among the Outings Leaders of the more active SGCs, the number of Outings being conducted by them

has steadily increased. Most Outings Leaders and many trip participants, wish that the MQ was not required, and they look forward to the day when it will be discarded by National SC. But until then they've found a way to incorporate it into the regular workload to setup and conduct an outing. So that's what's been happening with our Chapter's outings programs. I've done this myself a few times now for hikes I've led for the Hundred Peaks Section (HPS), and I will continue to lead hikes for that Section. I'm hoping to clear some time on my schedule in late-spring or early summer this year so I can lead a trip or two for the DPS too.

Spring is a fantastic time to get out into the desert. If you're an Outings Leader, please consider leading a trip to a DPS Peak or two this season—our Section really needs it. I'll be happy to help guide you through how to deal with the MQ and other requirements.

If you're not an Outings Leader, please try to convince one of your Outings Leader friends to lead a trip out into one of our beautiful deserts this spring!

The DPS needs a new Webmaster

The DPS is looking for a volunteer webmaster to handle interface and design of the website. The webmaster works with all sorts of desert folks.

Contact William Chen:

William101.chen@gmail.com

Donate \$25 to the DPS section and get a FREE T-SHIRT!

[Click here to Donate!](#)

On the Cover



Cover photo:
Cairn on the top of
Mt. Jefferson, North Summit
Photo: Greg Gerlach

Special Offer #1

For New DPS Members and Subscribers: The DPS would like to welcome new members and subscribers (who don't yet meet the criteria for membership) with a one year free subscription to The Desert Sage. New members as well as new subscribers should email their completed membership application form to DPS Membership Chair, Ron Bartell at desertpeakssection@gmail.com. The form can also be downloaded in Adobe Acrobat format or Word at: desertpeaks.org/aboutus.htm and mailed via USPS.

Special Offer #2

Donate \$25 to the DPS using the yellow 'donate button' at desertpeaks.org and get a free shirt with the new design. Just add the T-shirt size and color in the notes and we'll mail it to you.

[Donate!](#)

2021-2022 SEASON

Desert Peaks Section Leadership

THE DESERT PEAKS SECTION

Explores the desert mountain ranges of California and the Southwest to inspire interest in Sierra Club membership and climbing these ranges, while supporting conservation and preservation of desert wilderness areas.

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You can do everything online at DesertPeaks.org

Welcome to our newest DPS members!



JOEL BREWSTER

My name is Joel Brewster, and I have been working on the DPS list for many years. As both president, and a trip organizer, of the Las Vegas Mountaineers Club, it was easy to do most of the peaks within a couple of hours of Las Vegas. After that my progress slowed to a snail's pace, as my remaining peaks are far from home. I recently got

Pico Risco with the Laras, Greg Gerlach, and Laura Newman on a great trip!

I still need Jacumba, Indianhead, and Little Picacho on the current list. I am planning Indianhead in February, and maybe the other two the following winter? Often, my problem is I get distracted by other lists on peakbagger.com (Zdon list, CA county highpoints, Ultras, etc). Too many peaks, not enough time! :)



CHRISTOPHER HU

I just recently moved to Los Angeles from Massachusetts, but I have visited Southern California many times in the past. In 2015 I did a road trip around the western United States and fell in love with the vastness and isolation of desert landscapes. I'm still getting to know the area more and would love to meet others who are interested in bagging some peaks!

DPS MEMBERSHIP REPORT | RON BARTELL



Type	Regular	Sustaining
Member	74	47
Household	28	
Subscriber	21	7
Totals	123	54

New Members	
Christopher Hu	Tin Mountain
Coby King	Rabbit Peak

Sustaining Renewals	Duration
Henry A. Arnebold	1 year
Megan Birdsill	1 year
Richard L. Carey	1 year
Mark Conover	1 year
Ron Eckelmann	1 year
Burton Falk	1 year
Jim Fujimoto	3 years
Bruno Geiger	1 year
Gregory Gerlach & Kelley Laxamana	1 year
Yvonne & Scot Jamison	1 year
Jerry & Nancy Keating	1 year
Brian (Wolf) Leverich & Karen Isaacson	3 years

Sustaining Renewals continued	Duration
Robert Michael	1 year
Carl Nelson, Jr.	1 year
Ken D. Olson	1 year
Martha Piepgras	10 years
Shelley Rogers	1 year
Ed & Joan Steiner	1 year

Donations	
Anonymous	\$10
Henry A. Arnebold	\$20
Sharon Boothman	\$20
Fred & Marianna Camphausen	\$15
David Comerzan	\$10
Yvonne Galvez	\$15
Chris Gilbert	\$5
Scot & Yvonne Jamison	\$5
Linda M. McDermott	\$10
Gloria Miladin	\$20
Sharon Moore	\$5

DPS MEMBERSHIP REPORT, CONTINUED

Donations, continued from previous page	
Bill Oliver	\$5
Jan Brahms & David Reneric	\$40
John Ripley	\$10
Tom Sumner	\$5

Renewals	Duration
Lisa Barboza	2 years
Doug Bear	1 year
Sharon Boothman	1 year
Stephan Bork	2 years
Jan Brahms & David Reneric	1 year
Jeff Buchholz	2 years
Tom Budlong	2 years
Debbie Bulger	1 year
Fred & Marianna Camphausen	1 year
David Comerzan	1 year
Guy Dahms	1 year
Beth Davis	1 year
Yvonne Galvez	1 year
Chris Gilbert	3 years
Mihai Giurgulescu	1 year
Marc Gollob	1 year
Ellen & Ron Grau	1 year
Jerry Grenard	2 years
Rich Henke & Rena Tishman	1 year
Bob Hoeven	2 years
Gerry & Pat Holleman	1 year

Renewals, continued	Duration
Gary Hughes	1 year
Patty Kline	1 year
Lawrence Lee	2 years
Barbara Lilley	1 year
Mike Manchester	1 year
Doug Mantle & Marcelo Altamirano	1 year
Garrett Marcotte	1 year
John Mayo	2 years
Linda M. McDermott	2 years
Tom McDonnell	2 years
Mary McMannes	1 year
Gloria Miladin	3 years
Sharon L. Moore	1 year
Wayne Norman	1 year
Bill Oliver	1 year
Chuck Pospishil	1 year
George Quinn	1 year
Maura Raffensperger & Dave Beymer	1 year
Barbara Reber	2 years
John Ripley	1 year
Mirna & Gregory Roach	3 years
Le Roy Russ	1 year
Jason Seieroe	1 year
Elena Sherman & Scott Sullivan	1 year
Eric Sieke	2 years
Tom Sumner	2 years
Jack Wickel	1 year



Top: Richard Stover before the image is lightened.
 Bottom: after Photoshop, image courtesy Debbie Bulger.

Helpful hints for submitting trip reports and images to the Sage editor

The Desert Sage is created using Adobe InDesign and Photoshop Creative Suite 2022. The editor creates two Sage versions. The first version for the DPS website, is a low resolution 72 dpi RGB (Red, Green, and Blue—the three colors of light generated by a monitor or TV screen). The second version is a high resolution 300 dpi black & white file for the printed newsletter.

When sending in a trip report, it is best to send a separate Microsoft Word file (or any text edit app like BBEdit or TextEdit) for each trip report. Photo images should be separate from the text file (not inline), and are best sent as: 1). An included link to your Google photos page where you've uploaded your photos; 2). Email one or two images max per email with the caption(s) in the text of the email. Include a simple description (such as Rabbit Peak-1) in the email subject heading. This lets the editor select photos without having to use precious disk space.

—The Editor

MOUNTAIN RECORDS

Mark Butski



The Desert Peaks Section maintains registers for climbers to sign on each of the peaks on the DPS list. Registers are normally placed on the summit in metal ammo boxes or a similar container. I am tasked with maintaining a list of the status of these registers/containers and coordinating their maintenance.

We rely on members to assist us with this effort. To facilitate this, please see the table on the opposite page listing the DPS peaks I am aware of that require either a new register, container or both. Also listed are the peaks for which I currently do not have any information on the status of the peak register or container.

It would be helpful if any member climbing one of the peaks listed below would assist us by replacing the register and/or container as required. I have an inventory of new DPS register books for this purpose.

You may reach me at hbmark58@yahoo.com to request a new book and/or container to take to a summit. Also submit any updated status reports. Even reports for peaks with a good register and container are important since that allows us to update the latest status date in our records. Please note in these reports how full a register book is so we can assess when the peak may require a new one. These status reports should also be sent to me at the email address noted above. Thanks in advance for your help!

Peak	Status/Deficiency
Big Maria Mountains	Requires new register and container
Chemehuevi Peak	Requires new register and container
Mount Stirling	Requires new register
South Guardian Angel	Requires new register and container
Spirit Mountain	Requires new register
Stewart Point	Requires new register and container



Scenes from Death Valley Road. Right: a classic desert wash in Eureka Valley; Left: the sign at Crankshaft Crossing
Photos: Wynne Benti

TREASURER'S REPORT

Laura Newman

Money In	\$1,260.00
Donation	\$ 200.00
Donation (Other)	\$ 175.00
T-Shirt	\$ 25.00
Membership	\$1,060.00

Money Out	-\$ 70.51
PayPal Fees	-\$ 15.04
Sage Expense	-\$ 49.55
Sales Tax	-\$ 5.92

Money In:	\$ 1,260.00
Money Out:	-\$ 70.51
Net Total:	\$ 1,189.49



TRIP REPORTS



Mount Jefferson-North Summit 11,814' Mount Jefferson-Middle Summit 11,686' Mount Jefferson-East Peak 11,372'

September 16-17, 2021 | Greg Gerlach

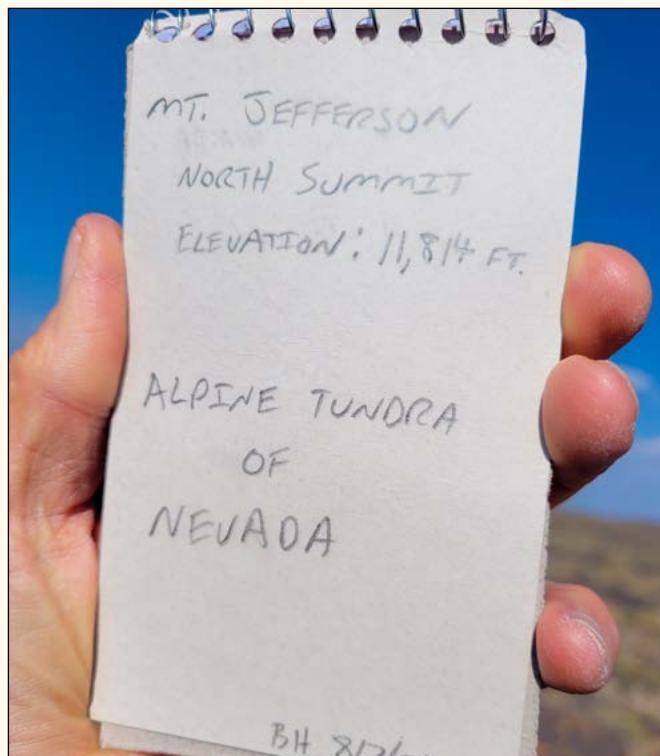
All national forests in California were closed about a month before our trip. Our permit to the Big Arroyo in Sequoia National Park was cancelled by the park service due to the KNP Complex fire. I was looking for something to do, and settled on Mount Jefferson-North Summit, which is on the Great Basin Peaks list, plus some nearby peaks. DPS listed Mount Jefferson is only about 3.5 miles south of the north peak, which I wasn't interested in this trip because I've already climbed it by two different routes.

It took me seven hours to drive from southern California to Tonopah, Nevada. From there, I used Google Maps to navigate to Pine Creek Campground; Google tried to take me onto a non-existent dirt road about ten or so miles from the campground, but I just stayed on the main road and Google eventually corrected itself and got me to the campground. It took closed to two hours to make the drive from Tonopah to the campground; the first thirty-eight or so miles are paved, the next twenty-four or so miles are well maintained, graded dirt, and the last three or so miles are poorly maintained dirt with numerous small rocks on the road, but nonetheless, the last part of the road should be passable in a vehicle with decent ground clearance. That night, I spent a pleasant evening at the campground right next to the Pine Creek Trailhead, which is free, has ten spaces, and only about four sites were being used when I was there.

I didn't think that I could day hike Mount Jefferson-North Summit, Mount Jefferson-Middle Summit, and Mount Jefferson-East Peak, at least day hike the three peaks in the available day light. Therefore, I decided to climb the peaks as an overnight backpack. For the backpack, I hiked up the trail, passing a pretty nice camp site at about 9400' in elevation just before the stream petered out. The trail becomes intermittent and then disappears altogether starting at about 11,000-ft. in elevation. However, the terrain is generally open with fairly easy walking. I set up my tent at 11,500-ft. in elevation on the south side of the middle summit, then day-hiked to the north summit, climbing the bump to the east of the high point because it looked just as high. The summit register on the north summit was placed this year in August, and only has four signatures, including mine. Afterwards, I returned to my camp, climbing the middle summit along the way. The summit register on the middle summit was placed by DPS members Daryn

Dodge and Kathy Rich on June 27, 2021, and now has eight people who have signed-in. The next day, I packed up my gear, then backpacked down to the turn off for the east peak, dropped most of my gear, then did an out and back hike to the east peak, climbing another bump that appears just as high on the way back to where I stashed my gear. The east peak also has a summit register, one sheet of paper left by Bob Sumner in 2010, that now has six signatures. Next, I made a leisurely hike out to the campground and my car.

I carried in all of my water, 5.5 liters, but only used 4.5. Also, my actual hiking time to climb all three peaks was fourteen hours, which I probably could have done in about twelve hours if I had day hiked the peaks. Trip stats: 21.2 round-trip miles and 6,335-ft. of elevation gain.



Previous page: view of Mt. Jefferson's North Summit from the south;
Above: the author's camp on the south side of Mt. Jefferson's Middle Summit;
Below: Mt. Jefferson, North Summit register. Photos by Greg Gerlach

Silver Peak 6,370-ft.

February 19, 2021 | Debbie Bulger

Over the years, I've climbed four other peaks named Silver: in 1984, near Ebbetts Pass—10,774-ft.; in 2012, just north of the Palisades Tahoe ski resort (climbed on skis)—8424-ft.; in 2015, Desolation Wilderness—8,930-ft.; and in 2018, the Ansel Adams Wilderness, at 11,878-ft.

This Silver Peak, a desert peak in the Mojave National Preserve, is a botanist's dream. The trailhead is adjacent to the Sweeney Granite Mountains Desert Research Center managed by UC Riverside, and originally founded by Ken Norris of UC Santa Cruz. The area includes many plant communities including succulent scrub, creosote scrub and pinyon/juniper woodland at upper elevations.

Richard Stover and I left camp at 7 a.m. and returned in time for supper at 5 p.m. after hiking about eight miles, climbing fifteen-hundred feet. and spending forty-five minutes on the summit. The route mostly follows a former mining road which is slowly being reclaimed by nature as plants emerge in what used to be tire ruts. Hooray for Mother Nature! Surrounded by a garden of yucca, catclaw and several species of cholla, we started up a sandy wash leading west from our camp. Just before the ruins of an old corral, we diverted to the old jeep road and hiked up the drainage.

As the path turned north, the terrain steepened. At one point, we passed a seep where a thicket of willows and Canyon Live Oak totally obscured the trail. We observed a narrow band of Pancake-pear cactus (*opuntia chlorotica*) growing at about 5000-ft above the cholla and below the pinyon/juniper growing at a higher elevation. Our way wound around to the north side of the peak. As we neared the end of the road, there were outcroppings of white marble and patches of snow turning this ramble into an official snow climb.

The summit offered wonderful views of Kelso Peak and the Kelso Dunes to the north and to the south Granite Mountain which we had climbed in 1993. On the way down Richard picked up a dark rock about the size of a softball with patches of green. It was very heavy for its size. "I wonder if it is iron?" he mused. He tested it next to my compass which confirmed the hypothesis. Later, I looked up the mine. Indeed, it was an iron mine.

The next morning in camp we photographed some of the plant life framing the beautiful Providence Mountains to the east.



Top to bottom: Backlit by the morning sun, Staghorn cholla and other plants near the trailhead; Debbie and Richard on the summit; Kelso Peak and the Kelso Dunes to the north from the summit of Silver.



Alvord Peak 8,071-ft.

February 17, 2022 | Debbie Bulger

Alvord Peak is located in “balloon alley” just east of Barstow. The prevailing winds from Barstow and points west carry these diaphanous orbs upward to ultimate explosion or slow leak after which they float gently downward to despoil the desert. We picked up eighteen on this minor mountain.

We camped the night before at Alvord Well at the mouth of the wash leading to the Alvord Mine. From the dry well it is a bit more than a mile to the old gold mine. We decided to explore the ruins the evening before our climb in order to save time the next day. We like to take our time poking around historic sites. The mine operated mostly from the 1880s through 1920 then intermittently until 1952. Highlights of the site were a roofless stone building and the ruins of what I believe were cyanide leaching tanks used to extract gold from the crushed ore.

Early the next morning we headed up the canyon past the mine to a hilly mesa. Once out of the canyon our objective beckoned from more than two miles away to the northeast. We walked along crossing through the belt of light-colored sand that could be seen from the road approaching the peak. At first, on the mesa, we were not quite sure which bump on the horizon was Alvord in the up and down terrain. We passed through a band of geologic interest with a variety of beautiful igneous rocks. In *Desert Summits*, author Andy Zdon suggests watching for “rare blue chalcedony float.” We watched, and we found some! We made slow progress checking out all those rocks and expansive views. Then Richard trudged up a slope ahead of me. Unexpectedly he was on top. I soon joined him and enjoyed the sights all around: Cave Mountain which we had climbed in 2018 to the east, Fort Irwin to the north, and Coyote Dry Lake to the west. The summit register re-



Top left, clockwise: The stone building was perched on the edge of a steep drainage; hiking towards Alvord Peak; a sample of blue chalcedony float.

vealed that we were the first to climb in 2022. Only three or fewer folks climb this peak each year.

We decided to descend to the east, first on a ball bearing-steep slippery slope, then following Spanish Canyon (where we picked up more balloons,) down and through a short narrows where a few Brittlebush were beginning to bloom, and ultimately to a dirt road which led back to camp. The climb took all day: ten hours, eight miles round-trip with 1500-feet of elevation gain.



-253-ft. to 11,331-ft.

Telescope Peak from Badwater Basin

November, 2021 | Jason Seieroe

Following a successful trip to Sequoia where we drove out through smoke as the park closed due to a new fire, I penciled in a trip for November 2021 to hike Death Valley's Telescope Peak from Badwater Basin. Due to some last-minute work issues, two of the four hikers had to cancel and I drove up to meet John Evans at the Charcoal Kilns to set up our car shuttle. I had never met John before, but he had done a lot of big hikes with the original planner of the trip. The road up to Mahogany Flats looked doable in my Prius and was much better than when I drove it a couple years ago. However, some warning lights came on during the drive up we left my Prius at Charcoal Kilns. We took John's SUV to a spot near Shorty's Well on the west side of Badwater Basin where we could sleep for the night before

our planned 2am start. We tried to hike out to the low point when we arrived, but soon encountered impassable terrain with salty cracked mud sticking up several feet in all directions. Back to the car just before sunset and early to sleep (or at least lay down and try to sleep).

Just after 2am, we left Shorty's Well at -253' elevation and started hiking up the 9.5 miles of Hanaupah Canyon Road by the light of our headlamps. The road climbed over 400-ft./mile. It felt like a rocky treadmill as it seemed to go on forever when all one could see was the light of a headlamp. Luckily, as the road disappeared towards the end of the canyon, the sun started to come up and we stopped for our first break next to the creek. We had seen the signs and talked with the park rangers, so we knew



the water there had been contaminated by recent illegal grow operations. Good thing we carried in all our water needs for the whole day. After a quick snack stop, we made our way to the ridge on the right, which would take us out of the canyon and up to the ridge line we would follow for the next five miles and 6300-ft. of gain.

Even once we gained the ridge that would eventually end at the trail to the summit, it felt like we had so far to go even though we had climbed roughly half of the planned gain for the day. We continued plugging away, taking a quick snack break every 1000-ft. of gain, which ended up being roughly a break an hour. It was really cool to leave behind the low desert creosote and cactus and climb up through the pinyon and juniper forest.

Just before noon we finally reached the trail from Mahogany Flat to Telescope, meaning things would get “easy” from here.... or at least there was a regular trail to follow and we only had about 1000-ft. of gain to go. We finally started seeing a bunch of other hikers, since we had seen nobody on our way up from Badwater all day. At 12:50pm we reached the summit, over 11,300-ft. above the car we left behind eleven hours ago. We really lucked out with totally clear skies, almost no wind, and temps that felt like the mid 60s. This was by far the largest single day climb I had ever done, but I was still feeling good. It had been a long day so far, but we still had about nine miles down to my waiting car and then the two-hour drive back to Badwater and a long drive home, so we limited our summit time and started a much faster pace finally hiking some downhill. The hike down to Charcoal Kilns was uneventful as we flew down past other hikers, looking forward to getting to the food and drinks stashed in my car. The food and drinks tasted great after trail snacks all day, giving us another boost to start the drive back to Badwater and then the long drive back to LA just after sunset. It was a quick trip and maybe more time spent driving than hiking, but it was a great adventure.



From top left, clockwise: after four hours of hiking in the dark the morning light illuminates our path out of the canyon and up to the ridge that will lead us to Telescope Peak.

Top right: our route up the ridge from Badwater.

Bottom right: Jason Seieroe (left) and John Evans (right) on the summit of Telescope Peak.



Twenty-three Years of Desert Fiction:

A Retrospective

By Burton Falk

Of the three hundred and thirty-four desert themed volumes I have reviewed in Desert Sage during the twenty-three-year period (1999-2022), sixty-four were works of fiction. Below, in chronological order, are, in my opinion, the most noteworthy of the lot.

The most venerable work, *McTeague* (1899), by Frank Norris (1870-1902) follows its namesake, an unlicensed San Franciscan dentist, who, after murdering his wife, flees to the Panamint Mountains, where “many characters found it healthy, for reasons often associated with homicide, to retire temporarily from the legal entanglements of society.” Still later, obeying some sixth sense regarding his imminent capture, McTeague strikes out across Death Valley with his burro, \$5,000 in gold coins, and a pet canary in cage, a lone bounty hunter in pursuit. The story, which was later fashioned into the epic 1922 film *Greed*, does not end well for either McTeague or his pursuer.

Mary Austin (1868-1834), the brilliant, fiercely independent author of the classic non-fictional *The Land of Little Rain* (1903), published *Lost Borders* in 1909, a collection of fourteen short stories, most of which had been previously published in magazine format.

Austin biographer, Esther F. Lanigan notes, the volume “contains many of (Austin’s) best tales, several of which took up themes of the desert that she had introduced in *The Land of Little Rain*.” Instead of focusing on the physical aspects of the desert, however, the stories in *Lost Borders* tended to humanize the region—or perhaps ‘feminize the region’ would be a more apt term, as most of these tales regard a woman, as told by another woman (Austin), who overheard the story but was usually not involved. Lanigan continues, “many of these stories (relate) incidents of the cruelty of men to women,” even while these same tales and others often include “the strong woman who guides a weak man...”

Harold Bell Wright (1872-1944), author of *The Winning of Barbara Worth* (1911), was the first American author to earn over a million dollars in royalties—big money in the early twentieth century. At his peak he was as

well-known as Jack London, Zane Grey, Sinclair Lewis, or Edgar Rice Burroughs, and it was estimated that one out of ten Americans had read a Wright novel. *The Winning of Barbara Worth*’s plot begins several years prior to the onset of the massive irrigation project that turned the arid King’s Basin (think Imperial Valley) into the fertile agricultural area it is today. It was then that Barbara, a two-year old waif, whose mother had just died of thirst, was found wandering in the sand dunes (Algodones), later to be adopted by Jefferson Worth, a banker from Rubio City (Yuma).

Fifteen years later, as Worth risks his fortune in a battle with an unethical east coast financier to develop the basin, the Colorado River floods over to form an inland sea (Salton). Meanwhile, Barbara is being courted by two suitors, the foreman of her father’s ranch, born and raised in the desert, and an engineer from a “good” family in the east. So, guess who “wins” her heart? Well, you’ll have to either read the book or rent the 1926 silent movie of the same name—with Gary Cooper, in his first starring role as Barbara’s western devotee—to find out.

During the nineteen-teens, Zane Grey (1872-1939) almost single-handedly created the “The Code of the West,” glorifying the character and values of the men and women of the American frontier. One aficionado noted, “his respectful treatment of Indians was ahead of its time and his word paintings of some of the world’s most spectacular country may never be equaled.”

Grey was prolific, turning out almost 90 books, and selling more than 100 million copies worldwide during his lifetime. Two of his best sellers, both set along the Utah/Arizona border, were *The Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912), the ending of which, as western bibliographer, Lawrence Clark Powell, noted, “There is no finer moment in all of western fiction...,” and *The Rainbow Trail* (1915), which, in spite of Grey’s contention that this book was not a sequel to *The Riders of the Purple Sage*, answers so many of the questions left unanswered in *Riders* that it is impossible to give Grey’s claim much credence.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, the screenwriter Edwin Corle (1906-1956) jumped on the then current short story bandwagon by publishing *Mojave: A Book of Stories* (1934), thus becoming the writer to best describe the Mojave area since Mary Austin took up the pen thirty years earlier. Desert bibliographer, E.I. Edwards considered Mojave a “masterpiece of desert literature.”

In 1935 Corle published *Fig Tree John*, a work of fiction built on the true life of a familiar, although somewhat disreputable, character in the southern Coachella Valley area. In 1906, *Fig Tree John*, a White River Apache, and his wife, Kai-a, emigrated from their reservation in Central Arizona to the shores of the newly formed Salton Sea. Settling in a clearing along the northwestern side of the inland sea, the couple built a shelter out of mesquite and greasewood branches where they raised a boy, Johnny, and nurtured a fig grove. Tragically, when Johnny was three, his mother was raped and murdered by a pair of passing white thugs.

As *Fig Tree* ages, he develops increasing resentment toward his white neighbors (mostly date and citrus ranchers), steals everything he can lay his hands on, and becomes more and more disgusted with his son for associating with the alien culture. The crux of the story occurs after Johnny, age seventeen, falls in love and marries Maria, a neighboring Mexican girl, and brings her back to the shack in the squalid family clearing where his father still lives. I won't give away the end of the story; I'll just tell you it's powerful and worth the read.

In the 1940's serious desert fiction was best represented by Walter Van Tilberg Clark, author of *The Ox-Bow Incident* (1940), set in Nevada, and *The Track of the Cat* (1949), set along the base of the Sierra Nevada, haunting stories that will remain with you long after you finish the reads.

The Ox-Bow Incident takes place in the spring of 1885 when two cowboys, Gil Carter and Art Croft, ride into the small Nevada town of Bridger's Wells. After long months on the winter range, they have pay in their pockets and they're looking for whiskey, a good barroom brawl, and a few days of relaxation. Instead, they're in for an unpleasant surprise.

The same afternoon, after Art and Gil have settled into the local saloon and downed a drink or two, a rider rushes in to report that rustlers have shot and killed a well-respected local rancher and driven off several of his cattle. Because the sheriff is out of town, a group of twenty-some citizens,

led by Major Tetley, an ex-Confederate officer—despite a plea by Davies, the owner of the general store, to wait for the sheriff to return and properly deputize a posse—sets off to find the and lynch the offenders.

What happens next is not pretty, certainly nothing akin to the popular Westerns of the day. Of *The Ox-Bow Incident*, Clark later wrote, “I had become irked at the way the West was treated in popular fiction and the moving pictures, with two-gun cowboys stuffed with Sunday-school virtues, and heroines who could go through a knock-down without getting a curl misplaced...I decided to write a Quixotesque ‘western’ that I hoped in my youthful enthusiasm would make the whole thing look so silly that people would stop writing or reading such junk.”

The characters of *The Track of the Cat*, include a father who spends his waking hours drinking, playing cards and complaining; a mother, bitter and narrowly religious; a daughter, Grace, unmarried and likely to remain so; and three brothers, Arthur, the oldest—a dreamer and a reader; Curt, second oldest—strong, tough, his father's favorite; and Hal, the youngest, a combination of his two older brothers who is engaged to Gwen, a woman also marooned at the Bridges ranch house during an early October snowstorm. By the end of the story, one brother's blood has been shed, while another brother has spent three days in the storm tracking his prey (or is his prey tracking him?). How he survives during the icy hunt is worth the price of admission.

By the mid-Twentieth Century, the deserts of the west—held in bondage by a network of highways, aqueducts, and high-voltage transmission lines; besmirched with growing subdivisions; and slowly disappearing under a carpet of solar and wind power farms--had lost much of their majesty and mystery. Furthermore, several new environmental and societal problems had appeared on the scene.

Edward Abbey (1927-1989) became one of the first and foremost voices in the fight to conserve whatever was left of the arid regions. Although primarily the author of non-fiction, e.g., *Desert Solitaire* (1968), Abbey also published several works of fiction including *The Brave Cowboy* (1956), set in New Mexico, the villain being all forms of government, a novel later made into a film starring Kirk Douglas, *Lonely Are the Brave* (1962). In 1975, Abbey's book *The Monkey Wrench Gang* was published.

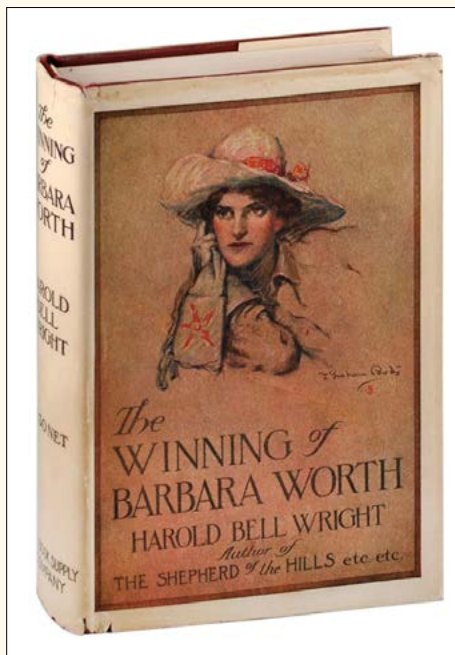


Image: ABE Books, [Captain Ahab's Rare Books](#)

While lauding malicious property damage done by a gang of eco-terrorists, he questioned why, if Federal agencies can ruin magnificent canyons with marginally-necessary dams such as the one at Glen Canyon, and if giant utility consortiums can pollute the air of the entire Four Corners area with coal-burning power plants, and if huge corporations can despoil our precious wilderness with gigantic strip mines, can't we daydream about seeking a bit of revenge?

More recent notable works of desert fiction, all written by women, include:

Highwire Moon (2001) by Susan Straight

A finalist for the National Book Award for Fiction, *Highwire Moon* is a powerful story involving illegal immigrants, farm workers, foster homes, drugs and teen-age pregnancy, the very essence of life in so much of today's California desert area.

Serafina, an illegal migrant from the Mexican State of Oaxaca, a woman who speaks only the Indian language, Mixtec, is the mother of Elvia, a bright 3-year-old girl. Elvia's father, Larry, is a white, imperfect but oddly caring ne'er-do-well. Attempting to escape from a strained relationship with Larry, Serafina is involved in a car crash, and, deported to Mexico, forced to leave Elvia behind. Twelve years later, with a pair of silver barrettes as her only solid link to Elvia, Serafina begins a dangerous journey across the border to find her daughter. Meanwhile, Elvia, now fifteen and pregnant, decides to track down Serafina.

With the action spread across a wide geographic area, including Oaxaca, Tijuana, Cabazon, Mecca, and the fictitious towns of Tourmaline (Desert Hot Springs?) and Rio Seco (Riverside?), Straight has crafted a moving story populated with desperately poor migrants, drug-addicts living hand-to-mouth existences in seedy motels, and lost children in foster homes. In total, it is a redemptive tale reminding the reader of the true meaning of home and family.

The Book of Dead Birds (2003) by Gayle Brandeis

Winner of the Barbara Kingsolver Bellweather Prize, awarded in support of literature for social responsibility, *The Book of Dead Birds* is primarily a coming of age, mother-daughter relationship story. Set mainly along the eastern shore of the Salton Sea, we follow the adventures of Ava Sing Lo, the twenty-something, recent post-graduate from UC San Diego, the daughter of a Korean prostitute and a black GI, as she volunteers to help save pelicans stricken with botulism and dying by the scores. The book's title is derived from a scrapbook in which Ava's mother, Helen, has recorded a series of accidental killings of her beloved pet birds by her daughter.

The story Brandeis weaves, including Helen's tragic

background, Ava's unusual childhood and present-day events, including a murder, a rave and nascent love, is well told, compelling, and often verges on the lyrical.

The God of War (2008) by Marisa Silver

Formerly a film director and now a writer, Marisa Silver's short stories have appeared in *The New Yorker* and have been included in *The Best American Short Stories* and the *O. Henry Prize Stories*.

In *The God of War*, the hero, Ares Ramirez, age 12, named after the Greek God of War, lives with his younger brother, Malcolm, age 6, and their mother, Laurel, in a beat-up trailer in Bombay Beach, at the southeast corner of the Salton Sea. Ares is the bright one in the family, responsible, compassionate, but also possessing a 12-year-old boy's normal sense of curiosity; Malcolm is autistic to such a degree that he needs constant attention; and Laurel is a free-spirited, overwhelmed, loving, and protective mother. When Malcolm was a baby, Ares accidentally dropped him on his head, and he now feels responsible for his brother's mental disability.

The crux of Silver's story involves Ares, Malcolm, and Kevin, the latter a troubled older boy, recently released from juvenile detention and now living with a Bombay Beach foster-care family. A gun is involved. One Amazon reviewer wrote, "The conclusion of this novel...will touch even the hardest of hearts."

The Other Americans (2019) by Laila Lalami

The primary character of Lalami's excellent novel is Nora Guerraoui, a Stanford alumna living in the Bay Area. One night she learns that her father, Driss, had been killed earlier that evening in a hit-run accident in front of his restaurant, located on Highway 62 in Yucca Valley, CA. Nora, who works a substitute teacher and writes original jazz compositions, immediately leaves for her old hometown, "hoping that the sheriff's department had misidentified the body, or that the hospital had swapped my father's records with someone else's."

Family saga, murder mystery, and love story rolled in one, *The Other Americans*, touches on many of the desert area concerns, including racism, illegal immigrants, and psychological problems affecting many Iraqi War veterans.

Nora's parents, Mohammed Driss and Maryam Guerraoui, Muslim immigrants from Morocco, had been living on the Mojave Desert for 35 years. And because Driss (Nora's father goes by his middle name) owned a previous business, Aladdin Donuts, which was torched in a hate crime after 9/11, Nora arrives in her old hometown convinced that his death was a murder, not an accident. Other main characters include, Efrain, an undocumented

immigrant with a wife and two children, who witnessed the accident but is reluctant to come forward despite a substantial reward offered for doing so; Jeremy, an elementary and high school classmate of Nora's, who, after serving five years in Iraq, is now a sheriff's deputy suffering from post-traumatic stress and insomnia; and Erica Coleman, an African American detective, originally from Washington, D.C., who never gives up on a case

Laila Lalami was born in Rabat and educated in Morocco, Great Britain, and the United States. *The Other Americans* was a finalist for the Kirkus Prize and the National Book Award in Fiction.

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DAVE PERKINS

Permafrost

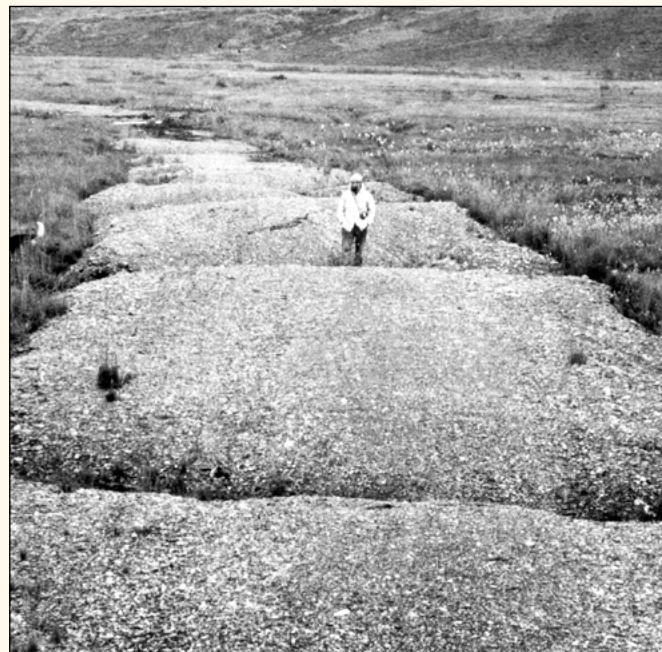


Roadhouse, mile 278.5, Richardson Highway. The structure is distorted because of thawing of the underlying ice-rich permafrost in fine-grained silts and sands. Gulkana district. Copper River region, Alaska, May 29, 1962. (Photograph by T.L. Pewe) Published as figure 33 in U.S. Geological Survey Professional Paper 678, 1969. Reprinted with permission.

According to Wikipedia, Permafrost is ground that continuously remains below 0 °C (32 °F) for two or more years, located either on land or under the ocean. Around 15% of the Northern Hemisphere or 11% of the global surface covers a huge amount of permafrost, including substantial areas of Alaska, Greenland, Canada, and Siberia. Permafrost is also found in the mountains of the Southern Hemisphere and beneath ice-free areas in the Antarctic.

The problem with permafrost is that it is not as permanent as its name implies. It is melting at disturbing and increasing rates, and there is a huge amount of it: 24 percent of the land in the Northern Hemisphere has permafrost underneath it. There are nine million square miles of permafrost (about twice the area of Canada).

“Scientific models suggest that the permafrost contains one and a half trillion tons of carbon, twice as much as is



Gravel road showing severe differential subsidence caused by thawing of ice-wedge polygons in permafrost, near Umiat, Alaska. August 1958. Figure 25, U.S. Geological Survey Professional paper 678. Reprinted with permission.

currently held in Earth's atmosphere,” wrote Joshua Yaffa, in “Letter from Siberia, The Great Thaw,” *New Yorker* January 17, 2022. As permafrost thaws, microbes in the soil go to work on the melting biomass which releases methane and carbon dioxide into the atmosphere where it contributes to global warming. As the earth's climate continues to warm, we can expect more and more carbon and methane to be released from permafrost. At this point there is little doubt about warming. The careful scientific language of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reveals or halfway reveals this. In their 2019 report they said, “The last decade was more likely than not warmer than any multi-centennial period after the Last Interglacial, roughly 125,000 years ago.” Their 2014 report found that the preceding three decades had warmed more than any other period in the previous 1,400 years. This change is dramatic in that it pushes back the beginning of our heat spree by more than two orders of magnitude larger than previously thought.

The city of Fairbanks is experiencing thaw problems such as broken buildings and infrastructure. Permafrost thaw caused the Pretty Rocks Landslide which closed the Denali Highway. The National Parks Service is in the planning process to address the road closure and has examined a variety of engineering solutions. They seem to have settled on bridging the slide area. The Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) which goes from Prudhoe Bay to Valdez has proposed installing a passive cooling system intended to protect the integrity of TAPS from permafrost degradation on part of the pipeline route.

Nevada's big GREENLINK transmission lines, West and North, will bring hundreds of solar projects, including 60,000 acres of solar fields to the edge of Death Valley National Park

- Greenlink West would be a 525 kV line that spans approximately 350 miles from Las Vegas, NV to Yerington, NV. Greenlink West is a top priority for Nevada.
- Greenlink North would be a 525 kV line that spans approximately 235 miles from Ely, NV to Yerington, NV

By 2030, Nevada has mandated that utility companies must buy fifty-percent of their energy from renewable sources. In less than five years, miles of Nevada's unimpeded desert habitat and wildlife corridors, areas we've come to love for their beautiful vistas, will be obstructed by chain link fences, transmission lines and thousands of acres of solar panels.

The BLM is currently preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for two Greenlink projects (North and West) submitted by NV Energy. The Greenlink West Project will establish a major transmission line corridor along US 95 from Reno to Las Vegas. Hundreds of applications have been submitted to build industrial scale solar installations along a combined six hundred miles of transmission lines.

The BLM estimates the publication of a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS for Greenlink West by the end of April 2022. This will start the 30-day public scoping process. Greg Helseth is the BLM project manager, ghelseth@blm.gov.

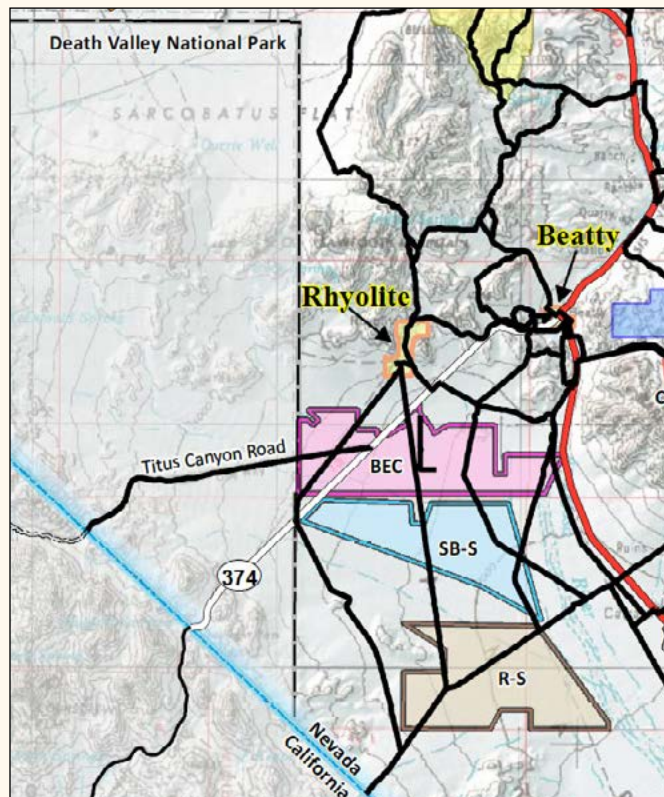
The Greenlink West Project is a system of new 525-kilovolt (kV), 345-kV, 230-kV, and 120-kV electric transmission facilities on private, state, and federal lands between northern and southern Nevada, from Reno along the US95 corridor to Las Vegas, through Clark, Nye, Esmeralda, Mineral, Lyon, Storey and Washoe Counties.

Three of the solar projects proposed along the Greenlink West corridor, will cover nearly 15,000 acres of public lands along Highway 374 (Daylight Pass), from Beatty to Death Valley, near the turn off for Titus Canyon and Rhyolite.

Another 44,000 acres of solar applications are proposed for lands in Sarcobatus Flat, en route to the traditional trailheads for Grapevine and Palmer.

The proposed Greenlink North Project would span approximately 235 miles from Ely, Nevada to Yerington, Nevada through White Pine, Eureka, Lander, Churchill, Lyon, Storey, and Washoe Counties and would involve construction of the following components:

- Robinson Summit 525/345-kV Substation Expansion
- New Lander 525/230-kV Collector Station
- New Fort Churchill-Robinson Summit 525-kV Transmission Line
- Fort Churchill 525/345-kV Substation Expansion



Map shows location of proposed solar industrial parks south of Rhyolite, Titus Canyon and NV SR 374. Image courtesy of [Basin and Range Watch](https://www.basinandrangewatch.org/).

While Greenlink is being evaluated in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the project is in the preliminary NEPA phase. The BLM is collecting data and soliciting public input and expects to publish a Notice of Intent to prepare the EIS in May 2023, officially kicking off the NEPA process.

For up-to-date information on the construction of solar industrial parks in the Amargosa Desert, Sarcobatus Flat, adjacent to Death Valley, consult these links — Wynne Benti <https://www.basinandrangewatch.org/> <https://www.blm.gov/greenlink-west-and-greenlink-north>

More than 150 eagles killed by wind turbines

NextEra Energy subsidiary ESI Energy pleaded guilty to three counts of violating the Migratory Bird Treaty Act during a Tuesday court appearance in Cheyenne, Wyoming. It was charged in the deaths of eagles at three of its wind farms in Wyoming and New Mexico.

NextEra was sentenced to probation and ordered to pay more than \$8 million in fines and restitution after at least 150 eagles were killed over the past decade at its wind farms in eight states, federal prosecutors said Wednesday.

According to the scientific journal, Science, more than 2.9 billion breeding adult birds have been lost from the United States and Canada, since 1970. Read more here: <https://abcbirds.org/3-billion-birds/>

Numu Newe National Monument

Nevada tribes propose new three million acre Numu Newe National Monument to protect ancestral lands and wildlife corridors near Fallon Range and Training Complex near Reno

In 2016, the US Navy announced plans to expand the Fallon Range and Training Complex, which would require the acquisition of about three-quarter of a million acres of public and private lands east and south of Reno. At stake, are hundreds of thousands of acres of public lands that include ancestral lands sacred to Nevada tribes, large parcels of wildlife habitat and road-free wildlife corridors.

As reported in the Huffington Post, a coalition of four Nevada Native nations, which includes the Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe, Lovelock Paiute Tribe, Walker River Paiute

Tribe and the Yomba Shoshone Tribe, have proposed a new national monument which would consist of public lands east of Fallon, Nevada, and adjacent to the four tribes' reservations. The three million acre Numu Newe Monument would encompass the Stillwater, Clan Alpine, Augusta and Desatoya mountain ranges, as well as Job Peak, all currently threatened by the proposed expansion of the Navy's Fallon Range and Training Complex which will require the permanent withdrawal of over 600,000 acres of public lands. "Numu" and "Newe" are the Paiute and Shoshone words for "the people."

The proposed area would be the largest national monument on land, dwarfing Utah's 1.87 million-acre Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Read more:

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/numu-newe-national-monument-nevada-proposal-trib_n_623c6f8fe4b009ab9302f6cd



On the horizon is the pointed summit of Mount Augusta, the high point of the Augusta Mountains as seen from Desatoya Peak. Photo: Bob Sumner, from his book, *Hiking Nevada's County High Points*.

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Emblem status is awarded to DPS members who have been a member for one year, who have climbed fifteen peaks on the DPS Peak list, including five of the seven emblem peaks, and who send a list of peaks and dates climbed to Membership Records Chair:

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Recognition is also given for completion of the DPS list by notifying Ron of peaks with dates climbed. Please see the DPS website for additional emblem recognition categories.

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DPS T-shirts, DPS Emblem pins, DPS Explorer Award pins, DPS List Finish pins, and other merchandise is available for purchase from the DPS Merchandiser. Please see the Merchandise page in this issue of the Sage for more information. Please note that the DPS Peak List and the DPS Road and Peak Guide are available as a free download on the DPS website at:

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Sage Submissions

The Sage editor welcomes all articles, trip reports and photographs pertaining to outdoor activities of interest to DPS members. Trip participants are encouraged to submit a trip report if the participant knows that the trip leaders are not going to submit a trip write-up. The editor may modify submittals in an attempt to increase clarity, decrease length, or correct typos, but hopefully will not modify meaning.

Digital documents and photographs are preferred, but paper is also welcome with a SASE should you want your material returned. Trip reports should include trip dates, identify trip participants and photos should indicate when and where the photo was taken, what it is of, who is in it, and who took it.

The Next Sage Deadline is: 06/5/2022

Please send your submissions for the next Sage to the editor by Sunday, June 5, 2022. The deadline for submissions is the first Sunday of the following months: March, June, September and December.

Advertisements

You can advertise private trips that are of interest to DPS members in the Sage for free. Other announcements/ads are \$1 per line or \$25 for a half-page space.

Sage Editor

Email or mail submissions to:
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wbenti@spotteddogpress.com