

ENFIA Interpreter

November 3, 2024 Vol. 18

A Message from the President

By Stan Trevena

Wow! What a Busy Year

We just closed our two seasonal stations at the end of September. Carson Pass and Crystal Basin stations have been winterized and will be closed until Spring 2025. Carson Pass has already received its first dusting of snow.



Crystal Basin and Carson Pass are two of the six ENFIA retail locations in the forest that are only open during the summer. Sales from our retail

locations help support the activities and operations of ENFIA throughout the year. Currently, volunteer docents only staff the Carson Pass Information Station.

This past weekend we had our annual **ENFIA Member Appreciation and Fall Business Meeting**. We had 54 members/docents come and participate in the event.



This year we held it at the **Institute of Forest Genetics** in Placerville. The facilities were perfect for our gathering and celebration. We will definitely try to use this facility again,

if available, in future years for this annual gathering.

Kristi Schroeder from the Forest Supervisor's Office in Placerville gave a presentation on the **Sierra Wildlife Rescue** organization that she volunteers with.



She has three raptor ambassadors that live on her property that she brought to share with those at the lunch. She has two owls (*a Screech and a Great Horned owl*) and a Red Shouldered Hawk. They were a big hit with everyone in attendance, including some kids that came just for the presentation. She talked about how the organization rescues, rehabilitates, and releases injured animals back into the Eldorado National Forest. Animals that cannot be released back into the wild are often made ambassadors for the program. It was an engaging presentation that everyone enjoyed. Sierra Wildlife Rescue depends on volunteers and

donations for assisting in these rescues and rehabilitations. More information is available at this link:

Sierra Wildlife Rescue:
(<http://sierrawildliferescue.org>)

Support of ENFIA

ENFIA had a very successful year in 2024. Our visitor counts were back up to pre-pandemic levels. We had a steady flow of volunteers signing up throughout the summer. Sales were strong throughout the season. This was the second in a row since the Pandemic. The last two years have put us back on a solid financial path. Past President Larry Moore was at the recent lunch and business meeting. I specifically recognized Larry to the attendees for securing two Covid relief grants that kept ENFIA afloat during the Pandemic. Carson Pass and the Forest Service stations were closed for the first year of the Pandemic. The Forest Service Stations were closed most of the next year, while Carson Pass had restrictions. The securing of those two grants kept ENFIA from becoming insolvent due to greatly reduced revenues from retail sales during the pandemic.

We were also fortunate enough to receive a grant from the **California Alpine Club Foundation** in the amount of \$3,400. We had been

warned last year by our Internet Provider that we were on the last working copper wires for our service, and that they could not guarantee that we would not experience Internet issues in the future, up to and including losing our connection all together. Our Square retail cash registers require Internet to function. Our grant application was for a Starlink satellite Internet system. We also requested funding for an Internet Gateway Router and network switch to connect the Starlink system to, and a networked video camera for surveillance of the parking lot. This camera should discourage vandalism and crime in the parking lot. We've had a few instances of people camping in the Mokelumne Wilderness Area having their cars broken into or vandalized at night. The new camera is infrared and can see and record video at night in the parking lot. The camera should help to discourage continued vandalism and theft from the Parking Lot Permit system. We also requested funding for some new picnic tables. The picnic tables will be purchased at the start of next season. A huge thank you to the California Alpine Club Foundation for their continued support of our organization.

California Alpine Club Foundation:
(<https://www.californiaalpineclub.org/cac-foundation/>)

Helping Those That Help Others

Many people often wait to make charitable donations until the end of the year (for tax purposes). If you are one of these people and are sometimes in search of new organizations to donate to, please consider one of the above listed organizations this year. Information is at each of their websites on how you can make a donation and how you can volunteer to assist with their causes (*the Sierra Wildlife Rescue has a range of volunteer opportunities*). And don't forget, you can also donate to ENFIA at our website (<https://enfia.org>).

Budget Cuts

It seems that every year has a challenge of some sort for our organization. This next year the challenge is not directly focused on us, but instead on the Forest Service. There have been many reports of this new challenge to the Forest Service in the media this past month. At the end of the season the Forest Service had their budget frozen. This caused some issues with purchasing various supplies that impacted ENFIA. Deeper cuts to staffing have been announced for the Forest Service for their new fiscal year that just started.

Here's a link to an excellent article from **Outside Magazine** that was just published about these cuts:

(<https://www.outsideonline.com/outdoor-adventure/hiking-and-backpacking/us-forest-service-job-eliminations-trail-workers/>)

This next year will be a challenge. One of the first possible casualties of these cuts is going to be Crystal Basin Information Station. They rely on seasonal hires to staff this station. After these cuts there will only be one Forest Service Employee left managing that location. This will very likely mean that Crystal Basin will likely not open next year. This is a huge loss to the area that has many campgrounds that are well visited during the summer. We've been told that they "may" be able to open it one day a week, maybe on Saturdays. This is unfortunate, and if this plays out, we will likely not place retail merchandise at Crystal Basin station this summer.

Interpretive Activities

There is a very strong desire within ENFIA to expand our interpretive activities next year. We are planning some meetings and discussions about this in the coming months. There is even some talk about maybe starting some interpretive activities outside of

Carson Pass, maybe in the form of some lectures or activities at places within the Eldorado National Forest. It's all very preliminary at this point, but we will release information as it becomes available. We are going to be expanding our offerings up at Carson Pass next season. One of our Station Managers has taken on the role of officially coordinating these activities. There will be more information to come later on this topic. We will reach out to members in the off-season for feedback and suggestions on this topic.

Thank You

Thank you for a great 2024 season! I hope everyone had as much fun as I did in the Eldorado National Forest. Maybe I'll see some of you at the Carson Pass Snow Park this winter.



The Crozier Fire - A Disaster Averted

by Lester Lubetkin

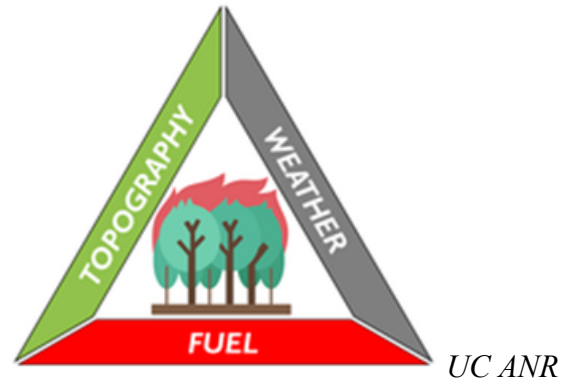
The Crozier Fire started on August 6 about 10 miles southeast of Georgetown near Slate Mountain. The fire started in a remote area with steep slopes and lots of vegetation. Initially, the fire command feared that this fire could reach 50,000 acres or more! So why didn't it become another "mega-fire"? Let's take a look at the fire, fire conditions and the amazing efforts of fire-fighters.

We have all heard about the **Fire** triangle - those elements needed to get a fire started. Oxygen, Fuel and an Ignition Source.



Wikipedia

But once a fire starts, there is another triangle - the **Fire Behavior** triangle, which considers topography (slope and aspect of the ground), weather (wind, temperature, humidity and precipitation) and fuel (amount of vegetation, along with its arrangement and moisture). So with the Crozier Fire, we had all of the elements needed to start a fire - oxygen in the atmosphere, fuel in the form of dense



dry vegetation, and an ignition source.

And there were at least two of the factors for the wildfire to take off - again, dense fuel and steep, remote topography. But one element that wasn't lined up as aggressively was the weather. We didn't have the high sustained winds that often spread the wildfire and push it along. While the weather was warm (in the 80's during the day and 60's at night), the weather the week before had been hot and dry (upper 90's during the day). This led to the Crozier Fire taking off and growing aggressively its first night. One week after the Crozier Fire started, the Incident Commander was reporting that night-time temperatures were cooler than normal with higher than normal humidity, both of which allowed firefighters to gain some additional control.

And then there is one more critical element that isn't included in either of these Fire Triangles - the efforts of firefighters and other emergency resources. Eldorado Forest Fire Management Officer Brad Stewart noted that "even with the Park Fire burning, the requests for **resources** from both the Forest Service and CAL FIRE were met." That meant that

both “on-the-ground” firefighters were sent in as well as aircraft from both agencies. At the Crozier Fire’s peak, there were over 1,000 firefighters engaged in suppressing



CAL Fire

the fire, including 34 fire engines with crews, 24 hand crews, numerous helicopters and air tankers, and 23 dozers. Plus a large contingency of law enforcement assistance, led by the El Dorado Co Sheriff’s Office. These resources came from a broad range of groups including AT&T, UC Berkeley Blodgett Forest, Cal OES, California Conservation Corp., CDCR, California Highway Patrol (CHP), El Dorado County, El Dorado Irrigation District (EID), Georgetown Divide Public Utility District, PG&E, Red Cross (Alpine, Amador, El Dorado, Placer), Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD), Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI), and Siller Brothers.

For those that were following the Crozier Fire, there are a few terms that you may have heard; **Incident Command**, **Unified Command**, **SRA** and **FRA**. The various emergency response agencies, including CAL FIRE, the Forest Service, local fire



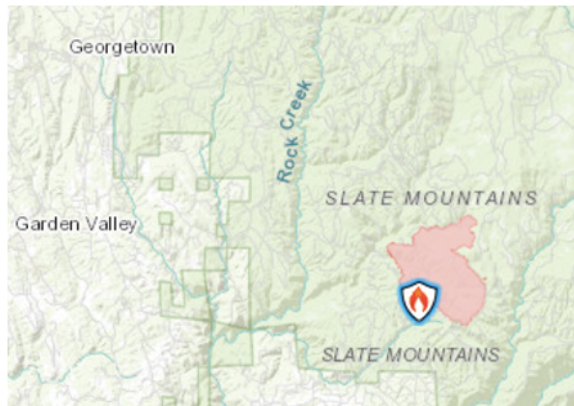
CAL Fire

agencies, the Sheriff’s Office and others, have found that to make sure the response in the event of emergencies is coordinated and efficient, they have all agreed to a common set of terms, hierarchy and organization. There was a time when if a fire commander called for a water tanker they might get a truck with a water tank or an airplane loaded with water. It became clear after some planning failures that a more coordinated system was needed - the **Incident Command System**.

When the Crozier fire started, it began on private land just outside of the Eldorado National Forest. This is an area, for wildfire purposes, known as “**State Responsibility Area**” or **SRA**. In this area, CAL FIRE has primary responsibility, although that doesn’t mean that only CAL FIRE will respond to a wildfire or be the only wildfire suppression planners. Early on, CAL FIRE did take the lead in planning the suppression efforts, although they immediately established a **Unified Command**, whereby other

agencies with responsibilities and a “stake in the outcome” also participated in the collective planning and decision-making of the wildfire suppression efforts. **FRA** stands for **Federal Responsibility Area**, which in this case was the Eldorado National Forest. The Crozier Fire burned in both SRA and FRA.

By August 21, Incident Commander Mark Ellsworth from the Eldorado Forest was reporting that the Crozier Fire was 100% contained and had burned 1,960 acres, a long way short



Inciweb

of the potential 50,000 to 100,000 acres that it could have reached. Thanks again to the fire crews, aircraft assistance, law enforcement and various other agencies, organizations and businesses that worked to protect the forest and its resources.

History of Caples Lake

By Frank Tortorich

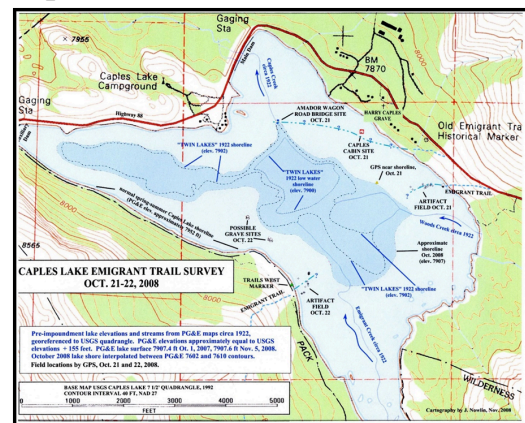
Part One

Caples Lake is a beautiful lake set in a glacial cirque at 7,798 feet above the sea on State Highway 88, just 6 miles west of Carson Pass.



Caples Lake looking up to West Pass, the V notch in the upper left. The Emigrant Trail is on the bench below the ridge line going from right to left to West Pass.

Before the dams were built in 1922, it appeared to be two lakes as you can see on the map. The original lake line is within the darker blue outlined by the dashed line. I will explain the map in detail in another part of this series. The lighter blue is the present day Caples Lake.



As a child growing up in Jackson, California, my dad took me to Twin Lakes to go fishing. Everyone I knew called it Twin Lakes because it looked like two lakes.

When I had my own family, we came to Caples Lake to camp, fish, and hike. I had no idea that Caples Lake has an incredibly rich history that is mentioned in numerous gold rush journals.

Caples Lake, a.k.a. Twin Lakes, has been and is an increasingly popular destination. It is wonderful for camping, fishing, boating, hiking, photography, painting, or just relaxing starting in the late 1800s and continuing today.

When I became interested in the gold rush migration and began doing research about 1978, I came to realize that Caples Lake was an important stopping place for the gold rushers from 1849 onward.

I would like to pause for a bit and journey back before the gold rush. As far back as 10,000 to 12,000 years ago, the Washoe people inhabited this area during the summer.

WASHOE

The Washoe people are the original inhabitants to the Carson Pass area for at least 10,000 years. They are a Hokan speaking people, distinct from the neighboring tribes. Washoe territory extended from Honey Lake, California, to the north, south to Sonora Pass, California, and east from the Pine Nut Range in Nevada to the

west slope of the Sierra Nevada. Lake Tahoe is the center of the Washoe world. Washoe territory has dramatic landscapes and ecological diversity from high alpine forests, lakes, and rivers; meadow systems to pinyon juniper woodlands and semi-arid landscapes; and in the eyes of the Washoe; “*the most beautiful country of all*”.



The Washoe occupied the Carson Pass area during the summer months. Hunting, fishing, and harvesting plants in the local area. Moving to lower elevations during the harsh winter months. It was a seasonal lifestyle moving with the changing seasons.

Because the Washoe are situated between two geographic regions, they are ideally suited to trade between the two regions. For example, obsidian, hides, seeds, salt, acorns, and seashells were common exchange goods.

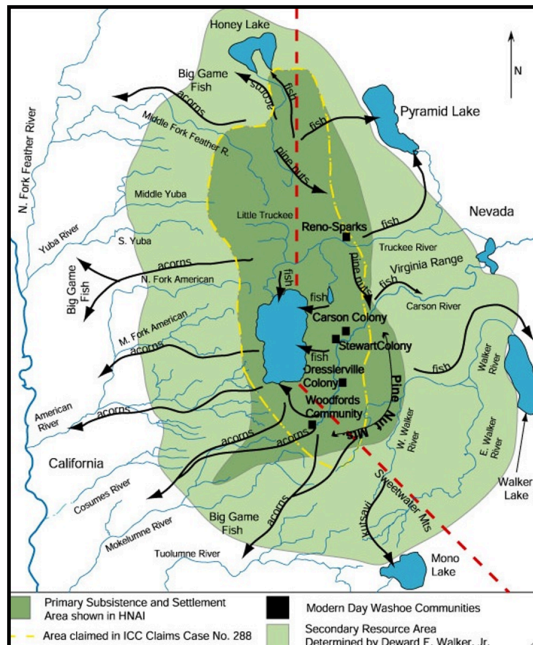
With the sudden influx of hundreds of thousands of Emigrants flocking to the gold and silver mines of California and Nevada all within a span of a decade, the Washo way of life changed forever.

They persevered and continued to thrive in the local area. They still

come to the Carson Pass area for the same reasons they did years ago.

The map below illustrates how extensive the Washoe people traveled. It was common for them to travel west over the Sierra Nevada for trading purposes. It was less common for the west-side Indians to travel east over the mountains.

Washoe traders were often stranded on the west side of the Sierra Nevada in the fall due to snow fall that prevented their return home before the snow melted in the spring. As a result, intertribal marriages between the Washoe and Miwok were the norm.



The Washoe also traded eastward. Trading was so extensive between the Indians that pacific sea shells, traded as money and decoration, have been traced east to the Rocky Mountains.[1]

It was these earlier Indian trade trails that the gold rushers followed as they came over the Sierra Nevada to seek their fortune in California.

Here are a few excerpts from Mary Jane Walker Caples of her journey over Carson Pass and seeing Caples Lake.[2]

After the discovery of gold by Marshall in 1848, my husband and brother, myself and an infant child, joined the mad rush overland to California with an ox team, as it was thought at the time that horses could not stand the trip...

After traveling for about four and half months, Mary Jane continues:

We traveled up the Carson River with its small streams of ice cold water from springs and snow banks; it was a welcome sight to our weary eyes, after seeing nothing but sand and alkali, and the tantalizing mirages. After about 30 miles up the river we came to the Carson Canyon, (Woodfords) one of the worst pieces of road on the whole route; It took us all day, with the hardest work men and animals ever did, to make five miles. No one thought of riding. I carried my baby and walked all the way. The next day we had a beautiful drive through Hope Valley to the foot of the first summit, (Carson Pass) which we ascended with considerable difficulty by double teaming; then down 4 miles to Summit Lake, (Caples Lake) at the foot of the second summit, which we bought later and made it our summer home for 30 years.

The Caples family built a summer home from logs and rocks. The rock foundation was exposed when the lake water level was drawn down to

repair the outlet valve at the dam in 2008.

I will detail this in another part of this series.

The first non- native people to camp at Caples Lake were most likely the remnants of the Mormon Battalion who opened the Carson River Route for wagon travel on their eastward journey to the Salt Lake Valley in 1848.



Here is what Bigler wrote:

July 24, (1848) Moved about six miles and camped just over the summit.[3]

Two wagons broke down and two were upset. Two Indians came in to stay all night.

July 25, Moved to the foot of the mountains and camped near a lake. This we call Lake Valley. (Caples Lake)

July 28. Moved three miles and made an early encampment near or at the summit of the great Sierra Nevada (Carson Pass) ... This afternoon we worked and made a road across the mountain.

July 29. Moved across about what we called Hope Valley, as we have hope.[4]

Bigler is talking about having the hope of making it to the Salt Lake valley, (Utah).

This is how Hope Valley was named.

Many diaries from the gold rush era referred to the Caples Lake area as Lake Valley. Others called it Summit Lake, Meadow Lake, Summit Meadow Lake, and even Red Lake which was confused with the lake at the foot of the Carson Pass climb.

Most travelers camped in the Caples Lake valley. However, some continued for another few miles and camped in a valley at the foot of the second Summit (West Pass). This valley was named Emigrant Valley and still holds that name today. It is now part of the Kirkwood Ski Resort area where chairlifts three and four were built.

It is estimated that in 1849 somewhere between 20,000 and 45,000 people came over Carson Pass. In 1850 it is estimated that from 50,000 to 60,000 Gold seekers came over Carson Pass and the majority would have camped in Lake Valley A.K.A. Caples Lake.

End of Part One.

In Part Two of The History of Caples Lake, I will write about the dam that flooded the valley and the exploring survey that the Oregon-California Trails Association (OCTA) did in 2008.

[1] Darrel Cruz was the director of the Cultural Resources Department and Tribal Historic Preservation Office for the Washoe Tribe. He is now retired.

[2] Document at the California Historical Society, San Francisco.

[3] West Pass.

[4] Gudde, Erwin G. *BIGLERS CHRONICLE of THE WEST*.
University of California press: 1962