



NEWSLETTER

Issue # 8 November, 2002



NATIONAL NOTE *from Ray Kresek*

This has to do with after the fire. And rebirth. And inspiration. And one of our "brothers" at the conference George and Pam attended in Winthrop. **Barry George** has worked for the Forest Service in the Methow most of his life. After learning of and being inspired by our loss, Barry walked the 9+ miles uphill 5000' to Mebee Pass, the site of an old L-5 10x10 lookout cab believed to have fallen down decades ago. He said Mebee Pass was the most beautiful place he'd ever seen and was astounded to find the Lookout still standing – barely – on 3 corners – the 4th corner post having long ago rotted and fallen away, leaving the Lookout with a teetering roof and no windows or shutters. Barry hiked back up there again a week later and every weekend since and has taken a few mules up loaded with lumber to keep it from falling down this winter and get it ready for restoration next summer. This is due to our loss of So. Mt. Hawkins and the response he saw from everyone at the conference. So, from the ashes, more than one Phoenix has risen.

INSIDE STORIES

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What To Look For After the Fires.

Jane Strong



Great Horned Owls

Source: CalPhotos

<http://elib.cs.berkeley.edu/photos/>

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Fire & Rain.

Bob Gregg.

IMPORTANT DATE

Mark your calendars -Sat, Feb. 5, '03.

Get together and get reacquainted party.

Chuck - special instructions from Pam - NO surprises!!!

If you have a change of address over the winter let Pam know so she can keep you on our mailing list and e-mail list.

Please Remember: A special account has been set up for the re-building of the **South Mount Hawkins Lookout**. It is called **South Mount Hawkins Lookout Building Fund** and checks for the rebuilding effort should be made out to that name and can be mailed to: **ANFFLA P.O. Box 1409 Arcadia, Cal. 921077-1409. Our non-profit # is 91-2157824.**

Happy Holidays and stay safe. This will be the season's last regular newsletter. See you on the FIRST Saturday in February.

!!!GET YOUR CAPS HERE!!! We are selling special caps for \$15.00 as part of our South Mt Hawkins fundraising effort. They are black caps with **ANGELES NATIONAL FOREST** (in gold letters) in an arch under which appear the words (in red lettering) **FIRE LOOKOUT**. They are so nice that we will let you use them as part of your uniform next spring. They also make great gifts. Contact Pam by e-mail or phone call and she'll get a dozen (*give or take*) to you right away.

We are establishing a Fund Raising Committee. If you can participate please let Pam know so we can stay in touch with you. Your help is needed and appreciated.

Now More Than Ever We need your help.

Enclosed please find my check for \$_____ made payable to
South Mount Hawkins Lookout Building Fund.

Keep up to date: www.anffla.org



Name: _____ Address: _____
Phone: _____ FAX: _____ email: _____

The Angeles National Forest Fire Lookout Association (ANFFLA) is a 501c(3) corporation and your contribution is tax-deductible. Your employer may match your donation. Please check with your personnel office.

Please mail contribution with this sheet to: **ANFFLA, POB 1409, Arcadia, CA 91077**

What to look out for after the fires. Jane Strong, Copyright, October 2002

(Photographs in this article, unless otherwise noted, are from CalPhotos <http://elib.cs.berkeley.edu/photos/>)

☑ **Spectacular displays of wildflowers** Wildflowers thrive on disturbance. One group of wildflowers called fire followers bloom immediately after a fire and then aren't seen again till the next fire. Some of these need smoke or heat for their seeds to germinate. Others need the chemical changes in the soil such as ash deposits. Another group of wildflowers has been there all along but have been covered up by the bushes. These need light and space that had been gradually taken over by the slower growing shrubs or pushed out by the grasses and other fast growing plants brought in by reseeding.

Some of the more memorable shows:



giant-flowered phacelia

- ✓ Purple spires of **showy penstemon** on Chantry Flat Road
- ✓ Intense yellow fire poppy on Aliso Canyon Road
- ✓ Fiery scarlet larkspur amidst blackened chamise branches on Hwy 39
- ✓ Shaggy carpets of blue poodle dog bush and delicate pink Fremont's bush mallow on Blue Ridge
- ✓ Blue saucers of **giant-flowered phacelia**, brilliant orange California poppy, and indigo lupines on SDEF, Glendora Ridge Road
- ✓ Sparkling winecup clarkia in San Gabriel Canyon

All of these are possibilities. Many gorgeous surprises await the observant spectator come spring.



showy penstemon

☑ **Green growth at the base of blackened stems** About half of shrubs possess a root-crown or burl containing many dormant buds. After a fire, these buds draw up water supplied by the roots that can grow more than 15 to 25 feet deep. This deep root structure brings moisture up to the surface after a fire.

Already, only five months after the Louisiana Fire in the eastern San Gabriels, frothy green sprouts have appeared at the bases of many blackened stems even without a drop of rain at all!

Chamise, mountain lilac, mountain mahogany and Eastwood manzanita all crown sprout at the base of their blackened branches. Fire topkills rabbitbrush, poison oak and yerba santa but they will sprout vigorously from the root crown and underground stems after the first postfire growing season.

☑ **Scorched trees with new green growth at the tips** The ability of a tree to withstand fire damage is based in part on needle length, bud size, and degree of scorch. The buds are located at the tips of the branches. Longer needles provide more protection from fire to these buds than shorter ones. Coulter pines with its very long needles are resistant to all but severe surface fires. Jeffrey pine also has long needles and has adapted to withstand low-severity fires in well-spaced stands but may be susceptible to insect damage later.

☑ **Rock peeling like an onion** Granitic boulders can exfoliate [peel like layers of an onion] after the intense heat of a fire. You may be able to see only the chips scattered about or you may get lucky and see one that has bounced to road and cracked with all the layers still intact revealing a smooth round ball in the center.

☑ **Soil with a waxy covering** Soil can become water repellent [hygroscopic] when the heat of the fire closes the little pores that allow for water absorption. The water then runs off faster and finds any crack in the ground it can thereby increasing erosion at that spot.

☑ **Muddy water** Where there is steep terrain and the fire has burned hot, erosion causes ashy soil to flow into streams with the first rain after a fire. This sedimentation is not good for fish because it reduces the size of spawning beds, harms any existing eggs and decreases available oxygen.

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What to look out for after the fires. *Jane Strong, Copyright, October 2002 (cont from p. 2)*
(Photographs in this article, unless otherwise noted, are from CalPhotos <http://elib.cs.berkeley.edu/photos/>)

☑ **Red-tailed hawks perching on snags** Raptors are more abundant in recently burned areas than in unburned areas due to greater visibility and less cover for prey. **Great horned owls** are minimally affected by even large fires because this owl has nonspecific habitat requirements and moves to unaffected sites.



western bluebird

Most small birds such as **western bluebirds** are left vulnerable to raptors, especially in large, severe fires which leave few unburned places for them to hide and less available food like berries.

☑ **Coyotes, bobcats, and mountain lions, oh, my!** The large mammals are very mobile and escape most fires. Plus, periodic fire helps to maintain habitat for many prey species of coyote, bobcats and mountain lions. Deep, dark, shady forests provide little food for prey animals like deer, rabbits and ground squirrels. These browsers and grazers prefer new growth of brush and grasses in the openings of the forest like the edges of burns.



Great horned owl



Mountain lion cub.

Source: www.turtletrack.org

☑ **Outlook for bighorns.** **Bighorn sheep** are stressed and already greatly diminished in herd size because of mountain lion predation, habitat degradation and fragmentation. A report says burning is an essential component to sheep recovery and that on the critical winter-spring ranges of the sheep 40 to 65 percent of the habitat is unusable because the vegetation is too old. [Gloomy picture for bighorns, Jim Murray, ONS 22 Sept 2002, <http://www.jesseshuntingpage.com/calsheep.html#news>]



Bighorn sheep. Photo by Bob Gregg.

Sources:

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, Fire Sciences Laboratory. September, 2002.
Fire Effects Information System, <http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/>

Wayne P. Armstrong, Wayne's Word, Volume 6 (Number 4) Winter 1998, Ashes To Wildflowers, <http://waynesword.palomar.edu/ww0604.htm>

SEPTEMBER WEATHER FACTS

Vetter Mtn. Lookout;

maximum temp 92 on 2nd
minimum temp 42 on 29th
peak wind gust-30 mph on 15th

Chilao Ranger Station;

maximum temp 91 on 1st and 2nd
minimum temp 41 on 30th
peak wind gust-38 mph on 15th
total precipitation-0.01" fell on 29th

CONTACT SHEET

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Vetter Mtn: Leader: George Morey
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angelesfirelookout@juno.com or 818-951-0230.

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Learn more about it: www.anffla.org

FIRE & RAIN. *Bob Gregg & Ric Opalka.* **There have been** many floods in the Angeles Forest; but only one immediately followed a fire that denuded a large area. On November 21, 1933 a fire broke out in the evening north of Montrose and burned 5,000 acres on the south slope of Mt. Lukens before it was controlled on November 24th. The lookout on Mt. Lukens was threatened and the lookout person was evacuated. Only a few homes were lost. A rainstorm occurred over the area on December 14th and 15th and totals were about 4" over the fire area. On December 29th another storm began increasing in intensity toward New Years Eve before ending about 5am on January 1, 1934. The saturated soil over the burned area caused sheet erosion with mud flows 20 feet high coming out of the canyon mouths. (remember there were no debris basins then) These flows carried boulders of 5 tons in size and a few to 10 tons. Montrose and La Crescenta experienced severe damage with some flows cutting channels 12 feet deep thru the populated areas. A total of 198 homes were lost and 401 were damaged beyond repair. A total of 38 people lost their lives including 16 in La Crescenta and 12 in Glendale. An estimated 50,000 cubic yards of material came out of the southfacing canyons along the Mt. Lukens slopes. The flows extended down the Verdugo River into Glendale with many of the bridges spanning the Verdugo washed away. Bodies from the Montrose area were found in Glendale. Rainfall totals were not extreme for this 56 hour storm but 90% of the total fell in the last 24 hours on already saturated ground. With a few raingages near the burn area the totals averaged 12 inches. Mt. Lukens summit had 11.04" and Flintridge recorded 14.03"

On July 12, 1968, the Easley Fire burned 600 acres in San Gabriel Canyon above Azusa, Severe rains followed during January and February of the following year and a massive flow of mud and boulders gushed out of the mountains all the way to Foothill Boulevard. Although it was untouched by the fire, the venerable El Encanto Restaurant was not spared by the floods. The El Encanto, which is situated to the right of Highway 39 just before the first crossing of the San Gabriel River was built in the 1920s as home and "Camp One" for Mr. and Mrs. Miller Newman. He was a Forest Ranger for the San Gabriel Canyon. It became a restaurant in the 1930's and was acquired by the Hinkleys after 1964. The Easley Fire burned off all the hillsides above El Encanto but the buildings were saved. Along came the rains and at 2:30am on January 19, 1969 the hillside let loose and the mud came through the restaurant and out the front windows. The San Gabriel River was also flooding and took out the parking lot and was running right by the front windows of El Encanto. The Hinkley's had to be removed by helicopter. By the time the five day storm ended on January 22nd rainfall totals included; Azusa-8.05", Morris Dam (first dam)-13.04", San Gabriel Dam-16.10", Coldbrook-14.11" and Crystal Lake-15.20" with the wettest spot at Cogswell Dam on the West Fork with 22.25". It took 21 months to dig out, clean up and rebuild the restaurant. It reopened on October 1, 1970.



Since 1969, an estimated 200 stream bed stabilizers (to slow water flow) and 115 debris basins have been built, some of which are as big as stadiums; but in the late 1980s it was concluded that about half of the basins were undersized, based on what was expected in a 50-year flood. Many have since been enlarged or upgraded but several remain to be fixed, and, while mitigation efforts prevent year-to-year disasters, one can only guess at what nature might hurl out of the mountains in epochal events. The San Gabriels, after all, are the battleground of a geological war, where two migrating tectonic plates snag, lifting up granite fractured by faults. It is one of the world's steepest and fastest-growing ranges, and is deteriorating almost as rapidly. Combine that with tinder-dry chaparral and thrust faults, and any possible result is foreseeable.

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