



4-Victor

*The Newsletter of the
San Gorgonio Wilderness Association
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President's Message

Jarome Wilson

Dear Volunteers, Members, and Friends of SGWA

The mountains are bursting with beautiful autumn foliage. Or so it appears until you realize it is still the middle of summer. It isn't early autumn you see, but rather an alarming number of dead or dying trees.

Thousands of acres of trees in the San Bernardino National Forest, including parts of the San Gorgonio Wilderness, contain wide swaths of dead trees, most of which are still standing upright.

Forest visitors who remember the dry conditions of 2002, and who cheered the somewhat normal snowfall this winter, are often stunned to see the sheer numbers of dead trees. Those who have not seen this sight first hand probably cannot truly comprehend the magnitude. People who

see photographs ask if the photographer messed up the exposure.

What is causing this condition? Fingers have been pointed in many directions: four years of drought, a bark beetle infestation, air pollution, and too many trees.

The cause is a combination of problems.

For most of the past 100 years, man has viewed all forest fires as equally destructive and has waged an aggressive fire suppression policy. We are now beginning to understand that fire was a natural event in the forest and helped to keep forests healthy.

Leading experts now claim that a healthy forest in the San Bernardino ecosystem consists of about 20 trees per acre. We currently have about 200 trees per acre competing for the same limited resources. While many see a forest thick with trees as "good", a closer look shows that these trees are living in cramped conditions.

Trees weakened by lack of resources are quick to feel the effects of drought and air pollution.

In this condition, the trees are unable to withstand the attacks of the bark beetle. When healthy trees are attacked by bark beetles, they release sap as a defense forcing the beetles to find a less sticky food source. Weakened trees are unable to mount a defense and quickly succumb to the ravages of the beetle.

As a result, the beetles are thriving. And with more beetles, even the healthy trees have difficulty withstanding an attack.

The Forest Service is aggressively trying to remove as many dead trees as possible,

with much attention to making sure mountain communities have escape routes in the event of catastrophic wild fire.

Forest visitors and volunteers need to be especially vigilant and careful this summer. Obtaining Wilderness Permits will be more important than ever, as the Forest Service will need to know who is in the back country (and where). When driving up from the valley, all drivers should make sure they have a full tank of gas in the event they may need to leave the mountains by a different route from which they came.

Conditions this summer (and likely beyond) are cause for concern. Be safe, alert, and aware.

Jarome Wilson

An Invitation!!

**Sheila McMahon,
SGWA Board Member**

SGWA members and friends are invited to join us on Sunday, August 24, at 3:30 p.m. for a wonderful opportunity to learn about the flora of the Barton Flats area. On that day at the Barton Flats Visitor Center members of the California Native Plant Society will lead us on a short walk in the area and help us to identify any puzzling plants we find. They are also good about suggesting native plants for home landscaping. I hope many of you will take advantage of this opportunity to



broaden your knowledge of the local flora. If you have any questions, please call **Sheila McMahon**, 909-683-8850.

Volunteers Take Care of Business **John Flippin, Volunteer Coordinator**

Well, I've been coordinating the SGWA volunteers for 11 years now and every year is still fresh and new. Great new volunteer faces every year and fresh challenges to keep this old brain from getting too rusty. The drought and bark beetles have made the past year extra challenging for the trees and those of us serving in the forest. But of course everything is relative, and ten years from now new visitors to the forest won't notice any difference and the forest will go on for another thousand years wondering what all the fuss was about.

In the mean time, the SGWA volunteers are continuing their outstanding service to the public and helping the SGWA get very successfully through a year when we've just lost the donation of significant resources from an anonymous donor who very regretfully could no longer help us out to the same extent as in past years. This temporary setback while we look for new funds has resulted in a reduction of paid administrative staff time, but has also highlighted the great skill and dedication of several volunteers.

There is a lot of desk work, paper work, computer work, phone work, general administrative work, maintenance work, and other not so fun stuff that is necessary to recruit and keep a group of 130 volunteers busy, happy, properly supported, and well-connected with the public and the Forest Service. We have many volunteers who are "taking care of business" for us and I've publicly thanked some of them before. But especially in this very challenging year I'd like to thank very much **Pam Bierce**, Uniform Manager, who keeps us well clothed; **Teri Cappuccio** and **Ann Robinson**, Newsletter Editors, who keep this newsletter going; **John Dombrowski**, Interpretive Sites Manager, who gets paid a little (very little) and volunteers a lot of time to take care of everything going on at our Barton Flats Visitor Center, the Horse Meadows Interpretive Site, and the Big Falls Information Station; **Michael**

Gordon, Web Site Manager, who keeps all friends of the Wilderness well informed and helps our web site store bring in extra funds; **Karen Saffle**, SGWA Secretary, who also pulls together our wonderful Forest Festival; **Ted Schofield**, SGWA Vice President, who is doing even more this year in our funds development program as well as serving as an assistant coordinator on some weekends; **Val Silva**, Equestrian Coordinator, who takes care of our valuable equestrian team week after week all summer long; **Danny Silva**, Tulake Camp Manager, who not only cooks some fantastic meals for us but also gives our volunteers a very enjoyable place to relax and refresh after working hard in the forest; and **Jarome Wilson**, SGWA President, who is donating several hours every week planning and communicating assignments for all of our foot patrols and acting as assistant coordinator on most weekends.

We all like to get out there in the forest greeting visitors at the visitor centers, maintaining trails, and patrolling the forest – that is all very valuable and rewarding service, and usually very enjoyable. But believe me, none of that would be possible unless the volunteers I just mentioned above were taking care of business. We owe them all a lot of thanks.

Big Falls Station Needs YOU!

John Dombrowski
Interpretive Sites Manager

Several years ago, a new interpretive site was opened inside the picnic area east of Forest Falls. We called it "Big Falls Station" in light of its close proximity to the "Falls" commemorated in the community's name. Serving daytime picnickers, Big Falls visitors, and users of the Vivian Creek and Momyer trail heads, this site provides an outstanding opportunity for SGWA volunteers to bring our motto (Serve-Protect-Educate) to life for hundreds of visitors who flock to this scenic area each weekend.

Big Falls volunteers assist these visitors by giving map and trail information, discussing points of interest, providing adventure passes to those who did not obtain them prior to entering the National Forest, and directing hikers to the famous Falls, only a quarter mile from their picnic

tables, nestled among the giant pines. Many come seeking the limpid pools and bubbling, melodious ripples in shady glens. Others simply wish to gaze at the plunging waterfall: itself a gleaming, vertical thread of shifting, ever-moving light. For many, this experience is the first "forest" contact they have ever had and our assistance truly enhances that experience to the point of them wanting to return.

However, in order to provide assistance to the throngs who pass through this mountainside retreat, we must have volunteers to supply the necessary mix of service, education, and protection—and this is where you come in. Your presence is needed to make this concept work. Your knowledge, understanding, and assistance enhance the visitors' experiences. It makes it pleasant and enjoyable when you are there... something a lot less when you are not.

So, I hope every volunteer will actively consider supporting the Big Falls program by becoming involved with its operation. Experience the feeling of accomplishment and knowing you have played an important part in providing assistance where it really makes a difference.

Thank You for Your Support!!

Many who know the great value of our forest and wilderness areas may not have the time but have the monetary resources to help the SGWA continue to "Serve, Protect, and Educate." Recent contributing members to whom we and forest visitors owe many thanks are:

Trail Blazers

(\$50 or more annually)

Marie Kupez

President's Summit Team

(\$100 or more annually)

Harry Krueper

Richard Nyerges

Bill and Anneli Ostic

New Barton Flats Host Housing

John Dombrowski
Interpretive Sites Manager

For the past many years we have been privileged to have outstanding summer season hosts at the Barton Flats Visitor Center. Time and again they come with

their motor homes/campers to stay for varying periods of time or all season. Several, like **Glen and Marcia Riddle** have come back year after year, enhancing the service and assistance provided to thousands of visitors to the San Geronio mountains.

But it has not been an easy task for the SGWA to locate and persuade qualified individuals to volunteer. Often, the search has gone nationwide. Personal schedules and requirements usually generate conflicts with SGWA needs.

Flyers have been circulated among valley communities, enticing them with visions of cool, fresh air and scenic mountain vistas, while their neighbors swelter in the summer heat. However, the biggest obstacle has been to find willing and able recruits with adequate housing that the SGWA couldn't afford to purchase.

Well, that was a problem until recently. In April, an article was published by **Brian Dye**, freelance writer for the Hemet News edition of the Press-Enterprise. The need for hosts at the Barton Flats Visitor Center was discussed, focusing on the service to the public and the wonderful summer living conditions found in the San Bernardino National Forest. It was mentioned that unfortunately many who would like to try this lifestyle can't because of the lack of adequate mobile housing and the SGWA couldn't afford to purchase such a facility.

Talk about miracles!!! Not two days after the article was published, a call came to my home in Hemet, asking "Could you use a 25-foot, fully furnished trailer? If so, we'd like to donate one to you." After picking up the phone off the floor, I said "you bet we would!" So now, thanks to the generosity and thoughtfulness of **Lynette and Jack Simonson** of Idyllwild, the SGWA is the proud owner of a beautiful 5th wheel trailer, fully equipped with everything (cooking utensils, silverware, coffee pot, china, linens for the bedroom and bathroom, etc.) necessary for anyone to enjoy all the comforts of home. The Simonsons even delivered it to Barton Flats and helped us set it up.

Now we can accommodate new volunteer hosts who otherwise would not have been able to serve. I hope you will

take the opportunity to stop by and view this newest addition to the SGWA inventory of useful support items that will help us provide the very best service to our National Forest visitors. A very big, heartfelt thank you goes from SGWA to the Simonson's.

Name the Newsletter Contest! Karen Saffle, SGWA Board Secretary

We need your help! The SGWA Board of Directors has decided to hold a contest to determine a new name for the San Geronio Wilderness newsletter (currently named 4-Victor). All SGWA members and volunteers are eligible to send in names. The Board will select the winner at the September meeting. Entries are to be sent to Karen Saffle by email kmsaffle@earthlink.net or mailed to 19103 Westlawn, Hesperia, CA 92345. The deadline for entries is September 26.

The new name (for example, Wild News or River Dispatch) will be accompanied on the newsletter by the words "Newsletter of the San Geronio Wilderness Association." The name should be short while still clearly conveying our mission and/or the environment in which the SGWA works.

The winner will receive both name recognition and a \$20 gift certificate to the SGWA Backcountry Store.

So, put on your thinking caps. This is your chance for fame and fortune; don't miss out!

Thank you, Ideal Graphics!

Printing of the 4-Victor Newsletter is contributed in part by **Scott Watson, Ideal Graphics**, Ontario, CA. A big thanks goes to Scott and his staff for their service and consideration.

SGWA Wish List

To enable us to better serve the public we wish we had the following items. If you know of someone who would like to donate these items, new or used, please let us know. Tax deductions are applicable.

- High density molded plastic folding tables for Forest Festivals, volunteer

training, Fish Festival, and other activities

- Security screen for volunteer work camp kitchen door
- Propane stove/oven for Barton Flats Visitor Center

Wishes Come True

We thank the following very much for their donations. Their generosity will benefit the public greatly.

Lynette and Jack Simonson
5th Wheel trailer for Barton Flats Visitor Center

PINE - Partners in Nature Education

UC Riverside Extension with whom the SGWA is a PINE member is offering a very interesting lineup of short natural science courses during August through November with great discounts for SGWA members. Check out some of these fun classes covering everything from birds to pines to spiders at www.ucrextension.net/ns/fns under "Future Classes."

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The use of trade, firm, product, or corporation names in this newsletter is for the information and convenience of the reader. Such use does not constitute an official endorsement or approval by the San Geronio Wilderness Association concerning the quality of any product or service or to the exclusion of others that may be suitable.

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One Environment... One Simple Way to Care for it

How can you choose between the eagle and the buffalo? Between the elephants and the whales? Between drinking clean water and breathing clean air? Between forests and beaches? Would there be a right choice?

Now there's a way to help not just one, but all these things. It's called Earth Share of California – the world's leading environmental and conservation charities working together.

Through Earth Share you can make a payroll deduction donation that helps to preserve and protect the environment – locally, regionally, nationally, and globally. Or you can choose to help specific organizations such as the San Gorgonio Wilderness Association through your payroll deduction.

Earth Share not part of your employer's workplace giving campaign? The SGWA would like to help you with that. Call **Ted Schofield** at 909-862-1089 or send an e-mail to him at flyer1955@aol.com.