

Newest national park is great - Basin

by Richard Marx
Staff Writer

When people take a summer vacation, they usually go someplace where it's cool, such as the coast or the mountains. Not so with John Snively. He chose our newest national park in the heart of the arid western interior, a region not usually thought of as being comfortable or cool during the summer.

The Great Basin National Park lies in east central Nevada, near the Utah border. It is the only region set aside as a national park in the Great Basin area. Snively, who teaches biology and geology at CCC, has a special love for this part of the country. He has spent much time in research and in conducting field trips there. Thus it would be more natural for him to investigate this latest addition to our national parklands.

What is the Great Basin? It is a region that lies between the Continental Divide and the Sierra-Cascade Ranges and is bordered to the north by the Blue Mountains. It is so called because there is no escape for any accumulated precipitation



uplifting over a period of millions of years, the area has a number of mountain ranges and low regions between these ranges. States that share portions of the Great Basin include southeast Oregon, Nevada, southwest Idaho, and eastern California.

"As national parks go, it is not large, covering only about 120 square miles in area," Snively said. The Great Basin National Park became officially recognized in 1987. Most of it lies within the Snake Mountain Range, ranging

"this is the only area where basin-range topography ecosystems have been set aside for a national park." He feels that this area has been far "too unappreciated and overly exploited" by mining companies and the cattle industry.

Besides his love for the Great Basin and for the fact that this is our newest national park, Snively's purpose for this trip was also in his concern for the cattle controversy. One of the stipulations with the cattle industry for setting the area aside was that

said Snively.

"The park system authorities are well aware of the destruction caused by cattle." They trample fragile alpine meadows where the headwaters of streams lie. The unprotected vegetation of the riparian zones (the ecosystems along the streams' margins) are damaged which destroys wildlife and fish habitat. So far, there has been no effort to fence streams off from the cattle. "The water needs to be sterilized for drinking because of pollution caused by them," added Snively.

"The scenery here is typical of the high desert and arid mountain country of the Great Basin." At the lower elevations is the piñon pine belt—an open forest comprised of piñon pine and Utah juniper. On the forest floor grows sagebrush and other desert shrubs. Between 8,000 and 9,000 feet is a forest of solid mountain mahogany, which is a small and rather gnarled tree somewhat reminiscent of the olive trees of the Mediterranean region. At 10,000 feet, one sees a thinly scattered forest of trees more familiar to Oregonians; douglas fir, ponderosa and limber pines, quaking aspens, and subalpine fir.

Timberline is at the 11,000 foot level. This is formed by stands of "magnificent specimens of bristlecone pines, having buttressed structures with trunks of four or five feet in diameter." "One of the main reasons that I chose this park was because I could walk right up to and hug a bristlecone pine," beamed Snively. "Among animals, the most common are chipmunks, coyotes, and jackrabbits." There is also a small herd of desert bighorn sheep. "The birding here is excellent. You'll see such kinds as Clark's nutcrackers and Dark-eyed Juncoes."

Lehman Caves are here. Originally, this was simply Lehman Caves National Monument.

On the west side of Wheeler Peak is the operation of the Osceola

Mining Company, which dates back to 1885. There is still strip mining although it was originally dry placer mining of old river beds.

"Although it is in the desert interior, the summer temperatures at higher elevations are really very comfortable," said Snively. The temperatures range in the upper 70s to mid 80s by day, dropping down to a low of the mid 60s by night.

People might tend to avoid this area during summer thinking it's too hot, but actually summer and fall are the only practical seasons to visit there. During winter and spring, it is snowed in and only the hardiest should attempt travel at this time.

Snively really enjoyed the park. Other than the concern with cattle, his only dissatisfaction was the size of the park. "It really needs to be larger for the hiking areas are very small which could make human impact just as damaging for the soil and vegetation as that of cattle."

All in all, he highly recommends it as a place to visit. "If you're planning a vacation to the big parks of the Colorado Plateau (such as Zion or the Grand Canyon), Great Basin National Park is on the way and is well worth a look."



and so it collects in various low elevated places (basins) where lakes are formed.

It is characterized by what is referred to as basin and range topography. Due to fault

in elevation from 7,500 feet to over 13,000 feet. The highest point in the park is the summit of Wheeler Peak, Nevada's second highest mountain.

Snively emphasized that

the cattle should never be removed.

"Although the cattle are regarded as a part of the ecosystem, they were not originally native to the area but were introduced by man and thus not natural there,"

The Meanest 32 Miles in History.

A slide show will be presented by John Snively tomorrow at 12:30 p.m. in Pauling 101. It will cover the Chilkoot Trail International Park. Located between Alaska and Canada, it is dedicated to the 1897-98 Klondike gold rush.

Pardon me, does "Norm's" have any Grey Poupon?

But of course!

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inches

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11(A)	12	13	14	15
L*	39.12	65.43	49.87	44.26	55.56	70.82	63.51	39.92	52.24	97.06	92.02	87.34	82.14	72.06	62.15
a*	13.24	18.11	-4.34	-13.80	9.82	-33.43	34.26	11.81	48.55	-0.40	-0.60	-0.75	-1.06	-1.19	-1.07
b*	15.07	18.72	-22.29	22.85	-24.49	-0.35	59.60	-46.07	18.51	1.13	0.23	0.21	0.43	0.28	0.19
Density										0.04	0.09	0.15	0.22	0.36	0.51

D50 Illuminant, 2 degree observer