

Rare Baker's cypress trees in the Applegate

BY SUZIE SAVOIE

The Applegate is home to one of Oregon's rarest trees, an enigmatic conifer called Baker's cypress. Found in only 11 widely scattered locations in northern California and southwest Oregon, Baker's cypress has a very restricted range. The only two populations in Oregon consist of four groves along Steve Peak ridge (on Rogue-River Siskiyou National Forest land in the vicinity of Miller Lake in the Applegate watershed in Josephine County) and the most northern Baker's cypress grove at Flounce Rock (northeast of Medford in Jackson County on Medford District Bureau of Land Management land).

Cypress trees generally don't grow in cold or wet climates; however, Baker's cypress is tolerant of cold and snow and grows farther north than any other cypress in North America. Near Miller Lake, Baker's cypress trees grow at 5,000- to 6,000-foot elevations in a mountainous cirque where persistent winter snow is the norm.

Botanist-explorer Milo Baker, who found the species in northern California in 1898, first described Baker's cypress within the home range of the Modoc Indians. This is the reason Baker's cypress is also referred to as Modoc cypress. It is also sometimes called Siskiyou cypress.

The botanical name for Baker's cypress is *Hesperocyparis bakeri*. The genus, "Hesperocyparis," translates to "western cypress," and the species name, bakeri, honors Milo Baker.

In the Applegate watershed, Baker's cypress trees grow in four distinct groves along Steve Peak ridge: (1) just northwest of Fish Lake, (2) on the northeast slope of Miller Peak at an off-trail location east of Miller Lake, (3) at a saddle between Steve Peak and Miller Lake, and (4) on Iron Mountain. In 1914 US Forest Service ranger Bill Fruit discovered Baker's cypress in Oregon near Steve Peak while clearing a path for a phone line to the old lookout.

The Miller Peak grove has the largest Baker's cypress trees in the world. Growing to heights up to 130 feet, with a trunk diameter from 20 to 40 inches, these cypresses are located within the Oliver Matthews Research Natural Area. Oliver Matthews (1892 - 1979), a self-described "botanical tramp," drove around Oregon in his Model A Ford studying the state's rare and large conifers. Although he lived in Salem, Matthews became enthralled with the Siskiyou Mountains and campaigned hard for the designation of a US Forest Service botanical area near Miller Lake within an area he called the "Miller Lake Magic Circle." Within his magic circle, Matthews had found at least half of the 35 conifer species native to Oregon, including Baker's cypress.

Miller Lake can be accessed from the Miller Lake Trail off Sturgis Creek, a tributary of Carberry Creek; however, a creek crossing requires high-clearance vehicles to access the trailhead.

Getting to Baker's cypress trees in the Applegate is rugged and difficult. If you are not an off-trail hiker but would like to see Baker's cypress from a well-maintained trail, the best option is to check out the



A Baker's cypress tree (top photo) near Miller Lake in the Applegate, and a close-up of Baker's cypress foliage (bottom photo).

nearby population growing on serpentine soil below the Red Buttes along West Fork Seiad Creek, a tributary of the Klamath River. A drive up and over Cook and Green Pass above Applegate Reservoir will take you to the West Fork Seiad Creek Trail and the Seiad Baker's Cypress Botanical Area. The trail is currently not signed, but it is shown on maps.

The West Fork Seiad Creek Trail used to extend all the way up to Lily Pad Lake, just below the summit of Red Butte and the Red Buttes Wilderness, but the upper portion of the trail is currently impassable. The lower portion of the trail, recently maintained by the Siskiyou Mountain Club, provides great access into the heart of the Seiad Baker's Cypress Botanical Area.

Seiad Creek has seen numerous recent wildfires, including this summer's Abney Fire. Baker's cypress is highly adapted to wildfire, especially high-severity fire. Like knobcone pine, Baker's cypress cones can grow on the trunk and limbs of the tree; with the heat of wildfire, the seeds are released from the cone, aiding in reproduction. Baker's cypress is doing really well in Seiad Creek because of the occurrence of recent wildfires that have created bare soil and direct sunlight, which are ideal post-fire conditions for Baker's cypress seedlings to germinate. Because of the recent wildfires, Baker's cypress actually appears to be expanding its range in Seiad Creek.

The Applegate is lucky to have enchanting Baker's cypress trees inhabiting our Siskiyou Mountains!

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■ PHILANTHROPISTS

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and the room overflowing with boxes, JCF is overflowing with energy for such projects.

For instance, one program awards grants (generally \$1,000 to \$1,500) to K-12 teachers in Josephine County for student enrichment programs. These grants have funded art projects, provided Chromebooks and calculators, sponsored a problem-solving team in national competition, and helped start a self-defense class. With \$70,000 in grants already awarded, JCF is hoping this program will help raise Josephine County's graduation rates, which are currently among the state's lowest.

Senior and JCF president, Devin Pine, measures the success of the program by what he witnesses in the classroom. "You can see the excitement on the children's faces," he says.

Good clothes, incongruously enough, might also help raise graduation rates.

"The Campus Closet allows students to wear clothes that make them feel like they belong with others," says Aria Back, a junior and JCF co-treasurer and volunteer coordinator.

The Campus Closet contains clothes donated by the community, with unsuitable clothes culled out by JCF student volunteers. Students identified as at-risk are invited by the appropriate adults into the Campus Closet, anonymously and at times when other students aren't around. The room looks like a boutique, with prom dresses hanging from one rack, jackets on another, blue jeans on shelves. Students walk out with clothes they feel good about wearing. When they feel like they "fit in," they are less likely to drop out of school.

If these two programs answer to JCF's "education" goal, others aim towards community health. The annual vision clinic provides community members full eye exams, eyeglasses (if needed), and screening for preexisting conditions and diseases, while Project Float establishes life-jacket loaner stations on the rivers. Program leader Milo Dolantree, a senior and JCF's executive vice president of fundraising, says, "It answers to our goals of health and vibrancy."

For a student organization, JCF spends large figures: \$182,515 for scholarships, \$77,370 for grants to county fire departments and search-and-rescue operations, \$12,551 to help high school juniors attend a leadership academy in New York. To meet such figures, students write grants and hold fundraisers. JCF



Dale Fisher (left), HVHS graduation coach, receives a student enrichment grant from 2017 JCF project coordinator, Jasmine Pinkerton.

member Kippy Easley, also a senior, was in charge of Pink Week (sales of pink shirts, backpacks, etc.), dedicated to patients and survivors of breast cancer. She also helped run the golf tournament, which last year raised \$5,000.

Milo, who is "looking towards a people-oriented career," says, "JCF taught me grant-writing and other skills and has given me contacts that will help me through college and career paths."

Aria says that JCF has given her a passion for working with nonprofits. Kippy says that JCF helped her overcome shyness and to "get out of her shell." JCF helped Devin choose a teaching career so he can "have an impact on the world." He says that JCF "teaches the next generation of philanthropists."

The enthusiasm of the JCF members for the work they are doing is a good mark of the success of this unusual nonprofit organization. You can see the excitement in their faces as they feel their impact on the health, vibrancy, education, and social life of their community.

Alison Cavaner, program manager, is one of the best indicators of JCF's success. While a student at Hidden Valley she was active in service-oriented clubs, with Chris Pendleton as advisor. She graduated from Southern Oregon University in 2013 with a business degree and headed straight for the Josephine County Foundation at her old high school.

"I was eager to get back to community involvement," she says. "JCF gave me a heart for service."

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■ AVFD AWARDS

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Here are more awards presented by AVFD.

EMS of the Year: William Schmidt

Officer of the Year: Daniel Boyajian

Activity Awards

Alarms "Century Club" (100+):

Dick Rogers (195 alarms)

George Butcher (151 alarms)

Jeff Hoxsey (109 alarms)

Drills:

High Drill Award: Jack Lynch (89%)

Mary Ziegler Spouse of the Year:

Summer Underwood

Safety Award: Noa Widoff

Spirit Award: Jasmine Serabia

Rookie of the Year: Darin Kamealoha

Length of Service Awards

5 Years: Noah Widoff,

Austin Locklear, and

Brian Baird

10 Years: Dick Rodgers, Mike Kuntz (not recognized last year)



Rookie of the Year Darin Kamealoha (center) with Operations Chief Chris Wolfard (left) and Captain Greg Gilbert (right).

15 Years: Jeff Hoxsey

20 Years: Tailese Roeloffs,

Tim VanLeeuwen

25 Years: Rob Underwood,

Gary Sciocchetti

30 Years: Brad Barnes

Chief's Award: Chris Wolfard

Hall of Flame: Tim VanLeeuwen, Chris Wolfard

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Next deadline:
May 1