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**Subject:** [Troop606] Trip Report - High Sierra Back Packing Trip  
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### **Trip Overview**

Over three days, we backpacked 12 miles in all and twice summited Kearsarge pass at 11,850 feet; an elevation gain from the Onion Valley trail head of 2,600 feet. During our trip, we camped next to two different lakes, Flower and Kearsarge Lakes, and in all caught 37 trout....our champion fisherman, Noah, caught eleven trout!

Wildlife spotted on the trip included, two Mule Deer (doe and its fawn), a number of very curious Chipmunks, and quite a few different species of birds including Mountain Blue Birds. In addition, we saw a Yellow-bellied Marmot, largest member of the squirrel family.

During the trip, we hiked through three different climate zones: Upper Mountain, Subalpine and Alpine (above the tree-line). In the Upper Mountain forest and subalpine forests we saw stands of Lodgepole, White Bark and Jeffery Pine (Jeffery Pine's bark that smells like vanilla). In the Sub Alpine forest, we saw a stand of Fox Tail pines.

See wildlife and tree pictures below.

### **Trip Detail**

The Onion Valley trail head is in the John Muir Wilderness about 15 miles west of Independence, CA off Highway 395 in the Sierra Mountains. We arrived at the trail head at 4pm after spending most of the day in route. From the trail head (elev. 9,200 ft.), we hiked three hours with frequent breaks to our initial destination, Flower Lake (Elev. 10,400). Along the way, we passed by Little Pot Hole Lake and Gilbert Lake.

The weather was warm (mid 70's) and with the elevation change, we working quite hard on our way up the trail. However, all of the scouts acquitted themselves well on the 2.5 mile trek to Flower Lake. At Flower Lake, we quickly set-up for the night and prepared dinner (freeze dried food and/or "MREs").

While eating dinner, we decided not to fish at Flower Lake in the morning as originally planned, but instead to make for our next destination, Kearsarge Lake. Several veteran fishermen met on the trail mentioned that the fishing would be better at the next lake because is more remote and as a result, the lake is not as heavily fished as Flower Lake. This turned out to be very good advice!

The next morning, we woke early, filtered water, stowed our gear and set-off for Kearsarge Lake, a 3.5 mile trip for the day. The first leg of the trip was a two-mile/1,400 ft. elevation gain to Kearsarge Pass. Again it was hard work, as we ascended into the thin dry air to the 11,850 foot summit. In these conditions, the sweat evaporates quickly from your skin, but we focused on staying hydrated – the best defense against the warm dry air, as well as, the high altitude.

At 11,000 feet, we were above the tree line and could clearly see the summit ahead and Big Pothole Lake below us. After two and half hours we made it to the top; the view the top was spectacular!



The picture from the pass is looking west into Kings Canyon National Park (Kearsarge Pass marks the boundary between the John Muir Wilderness and Kings Canyon National Park). Kearsarge Lake, our destination, is on the left and in the distance to the right is Bullfrog Lake. The second leg of the day's trip came as welcome relief and we quickly hiked the remaining 1.5 miles to Kearsarge Lake (elev. 10,800 ft.) – all down-hill.

Once at the lake, the fishing began immediately!

Only minutes passed before the first Brook Trout was caught and everyone caught at least five fish on the trip (note – all fish were released back into the lake). Several scouts had never fished before, but this did not slow anyone down. Most of the fish were taken using 4-6 lbs. test line, and small treble hooks baited with floating Power Bait.



The next morning the weather started terrific and the fishing continued, but about mid-day some dark and rather ominous clouds rolled into the valley. We decided to pack-up a little sooner than planned and begin our return trip.

While hiking up to Kearsarge Pass on the return trip, it started to rain and we did hear a few claps of thunder. Hence, we stopped to put on our rain jackets and cover our packs, but continued to hike up the trail. At the tree-line, we decided to make for the pass as quickly as we could.....it was raining, but we hadn't heard any thunder for a while.

As we ascended, it continued to rain harder and by the time we reached the top we decided to put our rain pants on as well. Ironically, a few hundred yards from the summit on the way down, it stopped raining and sun came out. Once we reached the tree-line, we removed all of our rain gear, and for the rest of the afternoon, it was sunny and warm – perfect!

With the bad weather and summit behind us we quickly made our way back to the trail head about 4.5 miles away only stopping a few times for water and one longer break for a snack at Flower Lake. It was early evening when we arrived back at the trail head and headed for home. Everyone reported to have enjoyed the trip and was looking forward to the next one.



Attendees:

Scouts – Andy, Davey, Will, Noah, Matin

Scouters – Mr. Luoma, Mr. Huang, Mr. Serio



Mountain Bluebird  
Marmot



Yellow-bellied





A Foxtail Pine in an open Subalpine Forest

A Jeffery Pine in Upper Mountain Forest

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