

Hike Report for Thursday, 17 April 2025

This is not your typical Thursday hike report. Seven local hikers did hike on Thursday, doing excellent trail work on the Ida Peak Trail. But this was a small piece of what has been going on for the last 10 days. In the 1990's John Sumner began leading Sierra Club work trips in the Chiricahuas. Folks could spend a hefty sum to come here and do hard trail work for a week. Eventually John decided that he could do these trips without the Sierra Club. No one would have to pay a fee and folks could bring their own food. Several trail workers from these early Sierra Club trips have stuck with John and return to the Chiricahua Mountains with him year after year to do trail work. John himself lives in Houston and you might question why he shows up here twice a year with a trail crew. He simply loves the Chiricahuas because he grew up here and was the best friend of Ted Troller's brother. John graduated from Douglas High School and is retired as a geologist for a Houston oil company.

During the past 10 days, John's team consisted of 11 individuals, including Nizhoni Baldwin from Wild Arizona and Zac Ribbing from the U.S. Forest Service. But the story doesn't end here. Our local hikers added nine more trail workers. We were never all together at the same time, but people came and went, following their own schedule. John Sumner, and some of his crew, were the constants, remaining in the field for all 10 days!

I apologize if I missed anyone or didn't get all the details quite right. This was a massive undertaking, both the doing and the summarizing!

People

John's Crew: John Sumner (Houston), Jody (NY), Rachel and Moses (LA), Jane and Bill (Tucson), Jean (Berkeley), Steve (Tucson), John #2 (Houston), Nizhoni (Phoenix) and Zac (Sierra Vista). Local Hikers: Dirk, Peter, Eskild, Carol, Elaine, Al, Sheila, Elly, and William (Richmond, VA).



Six local hikers plus the two Johns, taken at Barfoot Park. John, William, Elly, Carol, John S., Peter, Sheila and Al.



John, in blue, with one local hiker and three members of his trail crew, taken at Rustler Park. Jody, Nizhoni, Eskild, John and Jean.



Zac, a Sierra Vista U.S. Forest Service employee who is as knowledgeable about trail work as anyone. Doesn't he look like he belongs right where he is?

Places and Celebrations

April 7 - 10: West Turkey Creek camp, Saulsbury and Rattlesnake Trails

April 11- 15: Price Canyon camp, Price Canyon Trail. Price Canyon stew prepared by John

April 16: Rustler Park camp, Crest, Greenhouse and Centella/Bear Wallow Trails. Three Sister Stew, fry bread and Navajo tea, prepared by Nizhoni, sharing her heritage

April 17: Ida Peak trail, dinner for 15 at the Portal Store



Camp at Rustler Park. Nizhoni and Jody



An improved Price Canyon Trail. What a mess it was/is. One day 12 people worked all day and managed to clear .4 mile.

But overall more than two miles got cleared. At times Elaine and Al acted as scouts to flag the sometimes difficult to find trail so that the sawyers knew where to work.



Not all our efforts were successful. In Price Canyon John decided that with 12 people we could move a MASSIVE log that was about 18 feet long. We could not. My very favorite part of trail work is moving huge sections of logs off the trail with leg strength, as indicated above.





A mess of a spot along the Ida Peak Trail. Here you see hikers in March crossing a blown out ravine with considerable difficulty, and sawyers on Thursday trying to get that big tree out of there. They did. They improved the trail too. Note the wedges used. Saws get stuck in logs and need WD-40 (or equivalent) plus the wedges and sometimes some lifting. There is much strategizing at times.

Tools

All professionals have their lingo and trail workers are no exception. Most of the work here is in the wilderness area and hand saws must be used. There are a variety of tools that are used almost daily. Our very talented sawyer and artist, Jody, produces a new piece of art for us each year. Two are below; one shows some common tools.





The tools, starting at the left and rotating clockwise, are asymmetric crosscut saw, Pulaski, axe, symmetric crosscut saw, Corona pruning saw, lopping shears. Also used are shovels, McLeods (look it up) and more.



These mountain trails are much loved — and in need of tremendous amounts of work. We thank all, from far and near, who contributed their exemplary efforts during the last 10 days. Sometimes it is very good to be very tired.

For next week, April 24, meet at 8:00 a.m. AZ and 9:00 a.m. NM at the Silver Peak Trailhead and we'll head up high, where it will be cooler.

Happy trails!

Report by Carol

Photos by Carol, Eskild and Peter