

CONTRA COSTA HILLS CLUB'S OUTING TO THE PINECREST REGION

JUNE 1-5, 2025

This outing was focused on trails in the Stanislaus National Forest. Our shared cabin-style accommodations were located in the very small town of Strawberry (3-4 hours drive from the Bay Area) which offered easy access to our hikes. Trailheads and destinations' altitudes vary from about 4000 ft to 7160 ft.

Many thanks to the CCHC Outings Committee members who did an outstanding job in the meticulous planning of this trip. We missed Bill and Yvonne Chen who were traveling internationally as well as Steve Chun due to a last-minute family emergency.

Each day the various hike leaders (Ed Osada, Lorena Kai, Helen Johe, Angie Toy, Lynne Vogensen) took turns in leading or sweeping the various hikes with or without optional extensions. A special shout-out to Robin Dean, our CCHC hiker who was with the scouting team as a consultant and a hike leader. Her sister Meredith, who lives in Strawberry, joined us on occasion.

Thank you to Noël Siver for proofreading, Jo Anne Schultz for creating this beautiful flyer, writers who contributed write-ups (LiHui, Steve, Jan and Robin) and photos (Sylvia Kwan, Steve and Marian Zalewski).

We all met at Eproson Park, Twain Harte for lunch and to start our adventure.

Day 01— Sunday, June 1, 2025 LYONS RESERVOIR

Write-up by LiHui Tsai

This was our warm-up and acclimatization hike for the multi-day trip around Pinecrest, California. 21 hikers gathered at the dusty parking lot for the Lyons Reservoir in the afternoon. It was a warm day. We hiked on the south side of the reservoir for three miles. The trails were mostly shady. We saw many yellow irises, Indian paintbrushes, bearclovers, blooming ceanothus, and a cardinal catchfly on the side of the trails. The trail was mostly flat with a beautiful view of the reservoir. The water was not cold. There were several joggers and bikers on the trail. We then hiked back through the parking lot to the dam. The misty splash close to the water is particularly refreshing in the afternoon. The concrete



Hikers along the river

single-arch dam was constructed in 1930 by Pacific Gas and Electric Company, with a height of 132 feet (40 m) and a length of 535 feet (163 m) at its crest. It impounds the South Fork Stanislaus River for the municipal water supply of the Twain Harte, California area. Owned and operated by Pacific Gas and Electric Company, the largest private owner of hydroelectric facilities in the United States, it is one of the company's 174 dams. The Sugar Pine Railroad Trail is 5 miles, out and back with 200 ft elevation gain.

Day 02 Monday—June 2, 2025 PINECREST LAKE AND OPTIONAL HIKE TO FRASER FLAT

Write-up by Steve Zalewski

The multi-night trip to Pinecrest had many highlights including our hike around Pinecrest Lake at elevation 5600 feet. This morning hike hugged the shoreline with its ups and downs over granite rocks. For a relatively pristine and flat lake, we were surprised at the number of waterfalls that were fed from higher elevation snow melt. As you can see from the pictures, we had opportunities to cross over bridges and view the high-water flow as it passed underneath. We caught Ed (not the fish) casting on the shore as we walked by. Ed must have insider information on the best spots since he was far afield away from the crowds near the beach. Later he



Lyons Reservoir



Lunch view on Pinecrest Trail

shared about his joy of fishing outdoors though no fish were caught.

The day started cool and warmed up and would have been a perfect outing except for an unfortunate accident. One of our club members was stepping onto granite rocks and did not get her foot fully anchored and fell back on her right side. She fortunately did not hit her head but her right shoulder and hip directly pounded the unforgiving rock. With an abundance of caution, fortunately, Lynne, our leader, called 911 and with Ed attempted to reach the Forest Service. Lynne did an outstanding job marshalling fellow members to watch over our hurt member until a rescue boat arrived. It turned out that stopping the hike at that point was the wise thing to do. The accidental fall resulted in a broken clavicle and a hairline fracture of her pelvis.



Pinecrest Lake

The fall was not through negligence or a particularly dangerous point on the trail. Sometimes things just happen and it points out to all of us to always be extra careful. The trail around Pinecrest Lake was 4 miles with an elevation gain of 400 ft.

Option to Fraser Flat

Write-up by Jan Proudfoot

Five hikers, led by Ed Osada, did a two-mile out-and-back gentle walk along a lovely forested stretch. The Fraser Flat Trail was 3 miles, out and back, with 200 ft. elevation gain.

Day 03—Tuesday, June 3, 2025 CAMP LAKE, BEAR LAKE

Write-up by Jan Proudfoot

Twenty-one of us hiked in Emigrant Wilderness, subdividing into three groups. We soon encountered two stream crossings and a rapid ascent. The physical challenges were ameliorated by viewing the spectacular scenery of granite boulders and wildflowers, many unfamiliar to us, though Marsha Maslan was able to identify several. We stopped to apply mosquito repellent as they were out to get us! We arrived at Camp Lake where everyone reconnoitered for lunch, and then some swam. Four of us continued onward on an unsanctioned section to Bear Lake. Thanks to AllTrails, we were able to pick our way when the path wasn't certain and, upon arriving at our destination, soaked our tired feet, having the lake all to ourselves. Refreshed, we returned to Camp Lake for a quick swim and then followed the trail down, basking in the afternoon glow. The Crabtree Trailhead to Camp Lake 6 miles with an elevation gain of 600 ft. Camp Lake to Bear Lake Extension was an additional 2 miles with 900 ft elevation gain.



Bear Lake



Camp Lake

Day 04 Wednesday, June 4, 2025 KENNEDY MEADOWS, RELIEF MEADOWS AND DINNER

Write-up by Steve Zalewski

Our Pinecrest Outing group had the final hike of our trip with a fabulous hike across Kennedy Meadows. Our group of 21 was supplemented by Meredith, sister of Robin Dean and a local resident of the Pinecrest area. She showed through her spirited pace that living at altitude does make a difference. You may ask if we had a group photo. Well sort of. Our group divided into two groups called the challenged and unchallenged. The challenged were going a few extra miles to a reservoir and about 600 additional vertical feet. We prefer to call them the “overachievers” and the “wanderers.” Hiking from the parking lot we went by the campgrounds and the Kennedy Meadows store and restaurant; important stops on our return to our cars for ice cream and snacks. The overachievers were far gone ahead. The trail was very rocky which surprised us since horses travel



Kennedy Meadows



Kennedy Meadow Trail

it as well. We figured out the easiest route through the rock labyrinth was to follow the road apples left generously by previous horses. The views as we ascended took us higher above the fast-moving river. It was stunning how much water was flowing down the mountain river to waiting reservoirs. The force of Mother Nature was evident and humbling. Kennedy Meadows was a fitting capstone to our Pinecrest trip. The views of the mountains and the roaring

ivers were unique and had all the essence of nearby Yosemite without the crowds. On the return trip back to our cabins, we stopped at Columns of the Giants, showing vertical carvings of glacier activities of 150,000 years earlier. As a group, we have to give great thanks to the leaders and all of the organizers whose efforts make this trip go so smoothly. Five hikers continued on from the Second Bridge to the Relief Reservoir. There were more waterfalls from the Summit Creek. We reached the ridge above the reservoir with panoramic views. As the rain clouds were gathering on top of the summit, we started our descent after lunch and reached our car right before the rain. Kennedy Meadows Trailhead to the bridge was 6 miles out and back and about 1000 feet elevation gain.



Columns of the Giants

KENNEDY MEADOWS TRAILHEAD TO SECOND BRIDGE: OPTION SECOND BRIDGE TO RELIEF RESERVOIR

Write-up by Robin Dean

Led by Robin Dean, four Kennedy Meadows hikers continued on past the second bridge to Relief Reservoir Dam. Along the route we encountered cascading rivers and trail sections cut out from the edges of granite cliffs. We passed by juniper pines, snow flowers, and three historic “steam donkeys” left over from the construction of the dam between 1906 and 1910. Steam donkeys are steam-powered winches that were widely used in logging, mining, and maritime industries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. We climbed 1190 feet during our 7-mile, round-trip route, which brought us to sweeping views of the dam at 7160 feet. Darkening skies and distant thunder claps dissuaded us from any thoughts of taking a dip in the reservoir. The possibility of being overtaken by thunderstorms hastened our return to Kennedy Meadows. But the return trip was just as delightful, with views of towering mountain peaks in the distance. We managed to stay dry during the hike, and only felt a few drops while indulging in soft-serve ice cream at the Kennedy Meadows general store. Everyone returned from the hike with a great sense of accomplishment.



Relief Reservoir

We all had a wonderful dinner as a group at Mia’s restaurant that evening.

Day 05 Thursday, June 5, 2025 HOME

Most of us started for home today after this wonderful trip.

