

California Pika Consortium
Mono Basin- Bodie Hills Field Trip
Sunday, July 31, 2011 – Monday, August 1, 2011

Amended with comments and observations in red font after the Field Trip: 13 August 2011 (cim)

Field Trip Objectives: Provide a forum for California Pika Consortium (CPC) participants to observe and discuss topics of current interest at key and relevant field sites. In particular, to observe and contrast pika habitat abundance, quality, and connectivity in the Sierra Nevada and Bodie Hills; to visit low-elevation and high-elevation sites typical of the central-eastern Sierra Nevada; to observe and compare anthropogenic habitat (ore dumps) and native talus sites in the Bodie Hills; to discuss the relevance of these observations to climate relationships, talus thermal regimes, dispersal and connectivity (source/sink), population dynamics, and population processes in California and elsewhere in American pika's range.

Agenda

Sunday, July 31 (see accompanying Road Log and Maps for specifics)

8:00 am Convene at USFS Mono Basin Scenic Area Visitor Center, consolidate vehicles (don't forget lunch, snacks, water)

8:15 am Depart Visitor Center for Stops 1-7

Stop 1: Lundy Cyn (short walk)

Stop 2: Virginia Lks Cyn Trailhead (short walk)

Stop 3: Conway Highlands Overview **instead we made a brief stop to "Benjamin Buttes"**

Stop 4: Bodie Pass – LUNCH (bring your own)

Stop 5: Syndicate Mine, Bodie (short walk)

Stop 6: Chemung Mine **weather did not allow us to visit this site**

Stop 7: Serrita Mine, New York Hill, Masonic District (short walk) **weather did not allow us to visit this site**

Note: If time gets short, we might forego one or more of the final stops

~ **7pm?** Dinner (no host) at Tioga Gas Mart, Tioga Toomey's Café, **0.25 miles** west on SR 120 of junction with US 395. Jct SR 120 and US 395 is **0.4 miles** south of Mono Market in Lee Vining.

Monday, August 1

Convene at time & location to be determined. Open day to explore sites as desired and agreed by those who can stay. Possibilities include:

Obsidian Dome/Glass Flow (visited)

Mono Craters (Pumice Mine) (visited)

Re-visit Virginia Lakes Cyn for more extended hike up-canyon along abundant pika sites

Benjamin Buttes (Conway Highlands); connector between SN and Bodie Hills
Explore other Bodie Hills sites for pika status

Happy Hour: Home of Andrew and Harriet Smith, June Lake, CA.

Andrew Smith: local phone in June Lake 760-648-7486

Directions to cabin for Happy Hour: Drive into June Lake on the south June Lake Loop from 395. Go about 2 miles (mile 1 = Oh! Ridge), around the south shore of June Lake, into town, and turn right (N) at the Tiger Bar (Knoll Avenue). Follow road into June Lake Tract cabins, with the lake on your right, to near the NW corner; Cabin 30 (cabins are numbered consecutively).

Dinner: Tiger Bar (no host), on Main Street in June Lk, CA

Logistics and Useful Information

Lodging:

Lee Vining Motels: <http://www.leevining.com/motels.htm>

Bridgeport Motels: <http://www.bridgeportcalifornia.com/lodging.php>

June Lake Motels: http://junelakeloop.org/lodging_and_camping

Mammoth Lakes Motels: <http://www.bridgeportcalifornia.com/lodging.php>

Camping:

<http://www.forestcamping.com/dow/pacficsw/invoinfo.htm>

<http://leevining.com/>

http://junelakeloop.org/lodging_and_camping

To Bring List:

We (hosts) will supply coordination and materials relevant to the stops. We plan to consolidate vehicles (leaving the spare ones at the Visitor Center), and thus hope to use some of your cars -- 4WD are best, but all roads are 2WD passable as long as it doesn't rain too much. Please fill your gas tank if you can offer to drive.

Please bring all your own food (bag lunches, snacks for the daytime; we'll have dinner at restaurants), water (conditions are very dry in the region), and, as you need:

sunscreen, sunglasses, bug spray, hat, regional maps, binoculars, field guides, extra clothing (\ thunderstorms and rain are possible/likely in the afternoons), first-aid kits, sample bags, flashlights (for looking into talus matrix), notebooks/paper/pens...

Cell-phone reception is spotty in the Bodie Hills and some parts of the Sierra, and varies by company. I carry a satellite phone (see below).

Emergency Info and Other Contacts:**Dial 911 for all emergencies in the area****Mono County Sheriff, Bridgeport: 760-932-7549****Hospital (emergency room services):** Mammoth Hospital, 85 Sierra Park Rd, Mammoth Lakes, CA; 760-934-3311**Forest Service, Inyo National Forest, Mono Basin Scenic Area Visitor Center:** 760-647-3044
Bodie State Historic Park: 760-647-6445**Auto Towing and Repair:** Shelley's Automotive Services (Shell Gas Station), Lee Vining: 760-647-6444, 6303**Tioga Toomey's Café, Lee Vining:** 760-647-1088**Tiger Bar, June Lake, 760-648-7551****Connie Millar:** Mono City home landline 760-647-6136; cell 510-292-6236; satellite 8816-3161-9420 (no voice mail service, but I'll keep it on during the tour days).**Andrew Smith:** June Lake home landline 760.648.7486**Lyle Nichols:** 310-439-8023, email: nichols_lyle@smc.edu

Road Log
California Pika Consortium
Mono Basin-Bodie Hills Field Trip
Sunday, July 31, 2011

Reminders: Bring your own copy of this road log, map and other tour-materials we sent, lunch, snacks, water, sunscreen, hat, binocs, maps, extra clothing, bug spray. We will provide additional hand-outs at the stops, as appropriate.

We had a total of 22 participants for the Sunday trip and 11 participants on Monday.

8:00 am Meet in parking lot of US Forest Service Mono Basin Scenic Area Visitor Center, ca ¼ mi north of Lee Vining on US 395. Consolidate vehicles (4WDs preferred but not essential). **Depart ~8:15am**

Drive north on US 395 **6.6 miles** to intersection of SR 167 (east) and Lundy Cyn road (west). Turn left (west) on paved Lundy Cyn Rd, and drive **3.4 miles**. Park on paved road margins opposite a small, unsigned dirt road that leads right (north). This is before (east) an open gate on the paved road and immediately after a dirt road that leads left to the Lundy Lake dam. Walk out dirt road on right (north) ~ 300' to talus on S-facing slope.

Stop 1. Lundy Canyon. Low elevation, active pika sites, use of habitat, talus types, pika capture experiments (health/iButs), and overview of Sierran low-elevation habitat (Millar, Westfall, Morelli).

We observed pika haying and vocalizing, found many green haypiles and other signs of ongoing and current occupancy. Woodrats and other small rodents are also active in this talus, as evidenced by fresh indirect sign and direct observations of chipmunks and ground squirrels. This site is ~7700' and exhibited an example of pika occupancy and use of low-elevation taluses in this part of the Sierra. It also offered a vantage of the nature of continuous habitat that the glaciated canyons of the eastern escarpment provide.

Retrace drive back down (east) Lundy Canyon paved road to junction of US 395 and SR 167. Turn left (north) onto US 395 and drive **5.1 miles** to Conway Summit. At Conway Summit turn left (west) on paved Virginia Lks Rd. Continue **6.1 miles** and park at Virginia Lks Trailhead parking lot (at 5.8 miles the pavement ends; continue straight on the dirt road, and do not turn left into Virginia Lakes Resort).

Stop 2. Virginia Lakes. High elevation, active pika sites, talus thermal regimes, graph-theoretic dispersal analyses, overview of Sierran high-elevation habitat (Millar, Westfall, Smith).

Our destination up the Virginia Lks trail about 0.2 mi was a large green pika haypile. We also heard pikas vocalizing in the vicinity. Although this canyon is just north of Lundy Cyn, it is much higher (our stop was ~9900'), and at the elevation of the zone of prime pika habitat in this part of the Sierra (which extends from ~9500' to ~10.500') From this vantage, we were able to see more of

the continuous nature of pika habitat in the Sierra, extending not along along the canyon walls, but across the canyon bases and over the tops of adjoining canyons.

Retrace drive back down (east) Virginia Lakes paved road **4.3 miles** to dirt road pullout (right, southeast) onto bench overlooking Mono Basin, Bodie Hills, and Bridgeport Basin.

Stop 3. Conway Highlands Overlook. View mountain/talus connectivity of Sierra Nevada ‘mainland’ to Bodie Hills; views to Bodie St Historic Park region, mining districts to the north (Masonic), and native talus areas. Views also to other pika regions (Sweetwater Mtns, Wassuk Range, White Mtns), and borderlands (Millar, Nichols, Smith, Westfall).

We made instead a brief (and very rainy) stop overlooking “Benjamin Buttes”, which is a pair of small buttes supporting occupied pika habitat. This site is accessed by driving ~ 2 miles north on the Virginia Lks/Sinnamon Mdw dirt road, which turns off the paved Virginia Lks rd about 1.5 mile east of the trailhead parking lot. This pika site is isolated from the Sierra continuous habitat by about 2 kms, with intervening habitat being sage shrubland and coniferous forests. The overlook provides a view of the Conway uplands, which appear to be the most obvious (only) dispersal route for pika to occupy the Bodie Hills, Anchorite Hills and Wassuk Range, which are continuous uplands to the east and much more isolated on all other directions.

Continue down (east) Virginia Lakes paved road **1.5 miles** to junction of US 395. Turn right (south) onto US 395 and continue **5.1 miles** to junction of US 395 with SR 167 and Lundy Lk Rd. Turn left (east) onto SR 167 toward Hawthorne, NV. Continue **6.8 miles** to Cottonwood Cyn/Bodie Historic State Park junction. Turn left onto dirt road toward Bodie. Continue on the Cottonwood Cyn road for **9.7 miles** (at 1.6 miles the road bears hard right [east]; at 3.3 miles the paved road becomes dirt; at 9.3 miles, note Sugarloaf Butte historic native pika talus) to the Pass at crest of the Bodie Hills.

Stop 4. Bodie Town- and Minesite Overlook. LUNCH (bring your own). View environmental context for Bodie town- and minesites. Discuss long-term studies, role of ore dumps, mainland-island context, population fluctuations and growth/extirpation trends; Sugarloaf Butte and other native taluses. Role/value of Bodie habitat and studies to understanding of pika population behavior, climate, relations, and long-term viability. Overview to Aurora mine-sites and their role in legacy research (Smith, Nichols).

Andrew Smith and Lyle Nichols gave an overview of the historic and current distributions and behaviors of pikas in the mine site region of Bodie State Park (BSP). Andrew and Bob Westfall discussed correlations with annual weather and climatic trends (see hand-outs). Mainland and island habitats were observed, and discussion of extirpations in the southern islands of BSP. We walked up to Sugarloaf Butte, just east of BSP where native habitat (rather poor quality) exists and an historic population of pikas was present (extirpated in ~late 1980s).

Continue on dirt Cottonwood Cyn road **1.1 miles** to the entrance station for Bodie State Historic Park. Lyle Nichols will clear our cars – if asked, indicate that you are with the Pika Group passing through the park. Continue past the large Bodie parking lot and Bodie main town site **2.0 miles** from the Entrance Station to a pullout on left (north).

Stop 5. Syndicate Mine. Observe close-up the use of ore dump habitat by pika (active site). Role of anthropogenic site viz native talus, dispersal distances, habitat size, forage vegetation. (Smith, Nichols).

At the Syndicate Mine we could observe active pika habitat, with current year haypiles in development. This site has been occupied continuously for many years, despite that it is a rather small island ore dump at the north end of BSP.

Retrace drive back (west) to Bodie town site and continue through Entrance Station. From Entrance Station, drive ~**13 miles** west on the main road SR 270 (which is not the Cottonwood Cyn Rd on which we drove up). This road is dirt for several miles, then paved.

We completed our field trip for Sunday with a brief stop at a pika talus about 1 mile before the jct of SR 270 and US 395 (low elevation site: 7226 ft). This native habitat was occupied 3 years ago but no active sign has been observed since. Connie has a pair of iButtons at this site, and the records for the last two years have not shown significant differences from other low elevation sites in the Sierra that remain occupied.

At the junction of US 395, turn right (north) and continue **6.4 miles** to the junction of SR 182 at Bridgeport. Turn right (northeast) on SR 182 and continue **3.8 miles** to the junction of the road to Masonic, FR 046 (dirt). Turn right (east) and continue **5.2 miles** on FR 046 to Chemung Mine.

Stop 6. Chemung Mine and Masonic Mtn. Short stop for overview of one of several mines in the Masonic District that supported (still support?) pika – discussion of role in pika population dynamics. Role of ore dumps viz native talus. Talus on Masonic Mtn above the mines has active pika sites. (Millar, Nichols, Smith).

Continue on FR 046 **1.9 miles** to unmarked 2-track dirt road on left. Turn left (north) and go straight through a 4-way jct, taking the road that traverses north below the ridge crest. Continue **0.2 miles** and park near ore dumps (2WD cars might opt to park and walk the 0.2 miles).

Stop 7. Serrita Mine. Compare this mine site to Bodie State Historic Park – no restrictions on access and inspection of ore dumps, so we can wander freely. Pikas were observed here last year – are they here this year? Important location for persistence of pika in Bodie Hills. (Millar, Westfall, Nichols, Smith).

Retrace drive on 2-track road back to FR 046 and turn right (west). Continue **7.1 miles** back down FR 046 to junction with SR 182. Turn left (west) and continue **3.8 miles** to junction with US 395. Turn left (south) and continue over Conway Summit and past Mono Lake ~**24 miles** to Lee Vining. Pick up cars left at Mono Basin Scenic Area Visitor Center. From Mono Market on Main Street (US 395) in Lee Vining drive **0.4 miles** from to junction of SR 120. Turn right (west) and continue **0.25 miles** to Tioga Gas Mart on left (south). Dinner (no host) at Tioga Toomey's Café!

August 1, 2011 Field Trip as planned by remaining participants

We visited two relatively low-elevation and warm-dry sites on Monday (with about 11 participants): Mono Craters (south end of the Craters, west of Pumice Mine Gate, ~ 8440') and Obsidian Dome, (east of Deadman Summit off US 395, ~8240'). At both sites we found signs of

continuing current occupation – at Mono Craters, we found perched pellets, a large green haypile, heard pika call on several occasions, and also watched two long-tailed weasels in the talus. At Obsidian Dome, a haypile that was active for the last 2 years has some green vegetation being added to it. Earlier in the summer, Millar heard pika calling there.