

The Pacific Crest Trail by Bill Gray [photos by Sam Abell] (1975)

Extending 2400-miles from Mexico to Canada along the Sierra Nevada & Cascade ranges.

1930's the 442-mile Oregon Skyline Trail & the 185-mile John Muir Trail were completed.

1935-38 YMCA groups relayed a log book more than 2000 miles of the trails.

1941 445-mile Cascades Crest Trail was done

WWII reduced progress on the trail system

1964 Wilderness Act preserved 11 million acres

1968 President Johnson signed the national Trail System Act & named PCT & Appalachian the first National Trails.

1975 800 miles of trails are yet to be built (north & south ends of CA)

1975 less than 40 hikers have gone non-stop end to end.

He & his photographer hiked most of the PCT over two summers, starting from Mexico. They hiked with their 55# packs in the mornings, relaxed in the heat of the day (desert) & again later in the evening. Warner Springs is a nice oasis in the desert. They saw their first snow-capped mountain (Mt. Jacinto = 10,800').

San Bernardino National Forest is the most visited since it is within 2 hours of San Diego & Los Angeles (10 million people (1/2 CA population at the time)). They ran into a spring snowstorm at Isabella Lake & Kern River. I friend brought them supplies. They were soon in the shadow of Mt. Whitney (14,500'). It was not too far out of their way to climb to the summit. They kept their water bottles in the sleeping bags to keep from freezing at night.

Their feet got wet from crossing melting snow patches & creeks. Crossing snowfields is exhausting (sinking up to your knees or waist). Forester Pass at 13,200' is the highest point on the PCT. At high altitude, the body gets exposed to twice the ultraviolet radiation as at sea level. The palisade range is near the south fork of the Kings River.

John Muir called the Sierras the "Range of Light". He saw the Muir hut (stone shelter) built in 1931 at the top of Muir Pass & visited the Muir Trail Ranch (1 mile off the PCT, 50-miles south of Devil's Postpile National Monument. There were lots of mosquitoes near the middle fork of the San Joaquin River, Benson Lake & Grace Meadow.

Donahue Pass (11,056') is the south boundary of Yosemite National Park. He crossed the following passes over the Sierras: Tioga, Sonora, Ebbetts, Carson & Donner. 1856-76 John Thompson cross-country skied the mail over the sierras. Lake Tahoe was beautiful & he passed Squaw Valley (1960 winter Olympics).

Mt. Lassen is the only active volcano in the 48 states. Boiling Springs & Burney falls were interesting. As the Sierras transitioned in into the Cascades (near the Sacramento River) there was a dramatic contrast in the surrounding countryside. Mt. Shasta can be seen from 350 miles along the PCT.

In northern CA, the PCT gets within 50 miles of the ocean, but it doesn't seem to go near the great redwood groves. There's a logbook in the general store at Seiad Valley (before the state

line). Southern OR was hot, dry & dusty (water was hard to come by). From Devil's Peak (7582') you can see Shasta to the south & Crater Lake to the north. Steep cliffs surround the rim of the old volcano that makes Crater Lake with Wizard Island inside. Mt Thielsen (9182') is just north of that. Later you can see the Willamette Valley (OR Trail settlers) heading west to Eugene. Mesa Creek was beautiful with its waterfalls & moss-covered stones (it was cold).

From McKenzie Pass you can see Mt. Washington, Mt. Jefferson & far off Mt. Hood. Near Mt. Hood, Eagle Creek Trail was off PCT, but worth it as it goes behind a waterfall. Crossing the Columbia River into WA he found Indians harvesting huckleberries. From Mt. Adams (12,307') you can see Mt. St. Helens to the west, Mt. Hood to the south & Mt. Rainer (14,410') to the north. Killian Creek waterfall was nice & it snowed in Aug.

Old Snowy Mtn. (7620') is the highest point in WA along the PCT. The trail passes Glacier Peak (10,568') & Kennedy Hot Springs & rain. And finally, they arrived at the Canadian border.

Quotes: "Walking is the best possible exercise." (Thomas Jefferson)
"Whenever we go to the mountains, we find more than we seek." John Muir
"A fire funnels your thought into it."