

FOREST SPOTLIGHT

Modoc NF – Pacific Southwest Region

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Boy Scouts Assist in UNR Education at Dry Valley

Alturas, Calif. – The University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) Student Chapter of the Wildlife Society approached Warner Mountain Wildlife Biologist, Mary Flores at the recent Western Section “The Wildlife Society” meeting with the idea of gaining field experience on the Modoc. Forest personnel decided to set them up with a weekend of hands-on training.



Jason Bunker and the staff from the Crowder Engine had prepped Crowder Guard Station for the event in addition to getting tools for the students to use. They went above and beyond getting the facility ready including having the Wi-Fi turned on. Jeramy Dietz from Engine 3-5 supplied tools and water.

Ten students ventured to Modoc County, driving up after they served at a local sportsmen’s banquet. The last of the three groups arrived at 1:30 Friday night/Saturday morning.

Blurry eyed, but cheerful, the students rolled out of their sleeping bags to begin the long weekend.

First on the schedule early Saturday morning was Dr. Willam Laudenslayer, a retired PSW research scientist and renowned expert on snags and coarse woody debris. He instructed the UNR students on various field techniques as well as the importance of snags and logs in the ecosystem. Meanwhile, Mary Flores worked with the local Boy Scout troop to run a snag transect that Dr. Laudenslayer has established in 1989.



Once the transect and talk were completed, the intrepid group met with Forest Gauna to learn about noxious weeds and treatment options available at Dry Valley Reservoir. The boy scouts then ferried students and forest staff in canoes to a waterfowl nesting



island to begin tarping. This treatment was selected, since chemicals have not currently been permitted by the water boards, due to the potential water quality issues.

After the tarps were situated, John Clark took the UNR students to a timber sale to run a nest occupancy check for osprey, while Flores worked with the scout troop on their bird study merit badge. The merit badge and work at Dry Valley Reservoir helped support this year’s International Migratory Bird Day. This year’s theme is “Restore habitat – Restore birds.”

Once the UNR students completed the stand search, Flores provided a brief overview on NEPA as well as a demonstration on how to run great gray owl surveys. A few of the students ventured out that night to look for owls.

At 4 a.m. Sunday morning, Elias Flores, a wildlife biologist with the Surprise Field Station (BLM), led the UNR students to northwestern Nevada to run two lek surveys to determine sage grouse presence. The group was able to watch the males strut, before heading back to Reno.



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