



United States Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service

PACIFIC SOUTHWEST REGION

*Restoring, Enhancing and Sustaining Forests in California, Hawaii and the Pacific Islands*

Sierra National Forest

# JACKASS MEADOW TRAIL

## High Sierra Ranger District

**THE TRAIL**

The Jackass Meadow Handicap Access Nature Trial is located within the meadow-side loop of Jackass Meadow Campground at Florence Lake. Look for the trailhead between campsites #31 and #34. Parking is available for vehicles displaying the handicap parking placard at the trailhead, and there is a handicap-access latrine within 100 feet of the trail.

**MEADOWS**

Meadows are scattered throughout the Sierra Nevada near lakes and streams, in forest openings, and on moist slopes. They generally occur where moisture is abundant in the upper few inches of soil, during at least part of the growing season. They are commonly bordered by Lodgepole Pines. Stands of Quaking Aspens and willows are often present. Each meadow is a unique, serene open place where evening coolness bring out deer, owls, and insect-hunting nighthawks and bats.

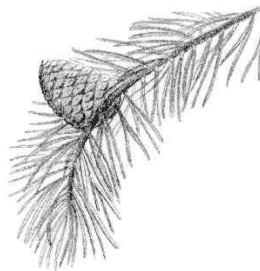
Meadows are composed of numerous species of sedges, grasses and forbs. Sedges are short tufted wetland plants that can be differentiated from grasses by the edges on the stems. Grass stems, in contrast, are round. Forbs are all the other leafy plants growing in the midst of the grasses and sedges.

**JACKASS MEADOW**

The open glade adjacent to the trail is only a small segment of the 116 acres Jackass Meadow riparian wetland complex that extends north to the Hooper Diversion Dam. Some areas are water covered long enough to provide nesting

opportunities for waterfowl.

The Lodgepole Pine (*Pinus contorta, var murrayana*) is the dominant tree species bordering Jackass

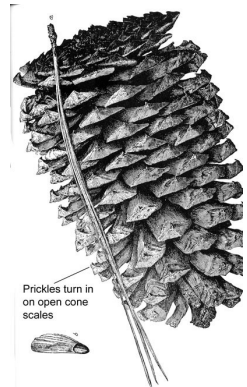


Meadow. Lodgepoles sometimes play a role by pioneering into meadows where their roots are more water tolerant than other tree species. Lodgepole also form extensive full forests, separate from meadows, throughout the west. Quaking Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) with

their smooth almost white bark and leaves that tremble in the slightest breeze provide splashes of gold color by late September. Jeffrey Pines can be seen along with sagebrush, on drier soils, just beyond the end of the trail boardwalk.

**JEFFREY PINE**

Jeffreys have long “bottle-brush” looking needle bundles and produce pineapple shaped cones. Look for western junipers (*Juniperus occidentalis*) along the trail. Junipers are distinct with their grey-green scale-like needles and bear blue-black berry like “cones” with the whitish bloom.



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## THE ROCKY OUTCROPS

The most common rock of the Sierra Nevada is granite and is exposed throughout high elevations. This beautiful light gray rock is visible at the south end of the meadow and campground. This particular smooth slope was carved by the action of ice during the last glacial period which ended 10,000 years ago. Glaciers are also responsible for the stunning scenery of high country in the John Muir and Ansel Adams Wilderness areas.

Moving glaciers strip soil from bedrock. Ice movement and rock particles carried by the ice then polish the scoured surface creating a smooth shiny surface called glacial polish. When the glacier melts, it leaves in place boulders which were carried down slope by the river of ice. These stranded boulders, named glacial erratic, can be found on the rock slope between the campground and the dam.

Granite domes occur on the west slope of the range, particularly in the Tuolumne, Merced, and San Joaquin river watersheds. These are not produced by glacial action, but are formed by the peeling away, or "exfoliation" of round sheets of rock. Bear Dome and Infant Buttes, prominent landmarks north of Florence Lake, are beautiful sunset sights and visible from Jackass Meadow and the Florence Lake Road.



## WINTER AT JACKASS MEADOW

By late fall, the aspen trees have dropped their leaves, meadow vegetation has turned dun and dry, and deer have migrated down slope. Mice, ground squirrels, snakes, frogs, and bears, settle into winter quarters to sleep. Storms sweep through the region, covering Jackass Meadow with deep layers of snow. Sometimes the only sounds other than the wind whispering through pine needles is the cheery "chick-a-dee-dee" call of the tiny Mountain Chickadees hunting for insects hidden in tree bark. The only tracks found in the meadow snow surface may be the prints of the Douglas Squirrel, who emerges briefly during sunny periods, then returns to their tree cavity nests to sleep until the spring thaw.

## DOUGLAS SQUIRREL



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

High Sierra Ranger District  
P.O. Box 559  
Prather, CA 93651  
559-855-5355  
(TDD) 559-855-5367

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