



HERITAGE RESOURCES PROTECTION

and the Forest Visitor – What can you do to help?

LIKE A GREAT HISTORY BOOK, your National Forests in California hold the record of more than 10,000 years of human history. Most of us know about the major historical events related to the settlement of California by early trappers, gold miners, and settlers. But most Americans do not know that over 99% of the record of human life in our National Forests was made by countless numbers of people who did not leave a written history – California Indians.

Without written records we must look for other evidence of the way Man lived in the past. Most of the evidence of how native Californians (and to a great extent, early pioneers) encountered and solved problems of survival exists on the ground in the form of prehistoric and historic archaeological objects and sites – the physical remains of human behavior. To the uninformed, these records of the past may be seen as a few “meaningless” flakes of stone, or an old miner’s medicine bottle, or an arrowhead.

Professional archaeologists can examine these remains and with many new methods and techniques of recovery and analysis, interpret the past with some accuracy. For example, specialists can take a small prehistoric stone tool, and through the use of *X-ray fluorescence spectrometry*, determine where the tool stone was quarried, often a distance of dozens or hundreds of miles from its place of discovery. That same artifact can then be subjected to another technique called *obsidian hydration analysis*. This will reveal the time that has elapsed between the tool’s manufacture and its discovery, often measured in thousands of years. But once a single object is carelessly removed from a prehistoric or early historic site, the record is damaged and incomplete – much as a book would be incomplete if words or pages were erased or torn out.

It is mindful of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended) that states, in part, “...*that the historic and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved as a living part of our community life and development in order to give a sense of orientation to the American people*”. A Nation without a past is like a person without a memory.

Please help us prevent the destruction of our national heritage by remembering that the Federal Antiquities Act of 1906 and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 protect artifacts and sites on public lands. They belong to all the citizens and are not to be removed for personal souvenirs.

Current law states: *No person may excavate, damage, or otherwise alter or deface any historic or prehistoric structure, site, artifact or property; or remove any object of antiquity: arrowheads, worked stone, bone, wood, shell, beads, pottery, bottles, tools, structures or portions of structures situated on lands owned by the United States Government. To do so without permission of the Secretary of the Department, who has jurisdiction over the lands, is punishable by fines or imprisonment, or both, under Public Law 59-209; the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979; and 36 CFR 261.9 (g, h).*

Should you discover an archaeological or historical object or site, please do not disturb anything. Call the Forest Archaeologist with a report of your discovery. **You can help protect a portion of America’s Past!**

HERITAGE RESOURCES on the Modoc National Forest

The Modoc National Forest, as does the general Modoc County area, contains over 10,000 years of human occupation – numerous archaeological sites illustrating the activities and lifeways of its native inhabitants, up to vestiges left behind by Euro-American fur trappers, explorers, emigrants and settlers. All of these places, these “Heritage Resources,” tell the story of those who came before us and how we came to be who we are today.

No one today knows the names of the first Indian groups to enter and settle in the Modoc County area, but over time these early folks became the Native American tribes that still occupy the area today: the Modoc, the Pit River or Achomawi, and the Northern Paiute. All three of these groups led a “hunter & gatherer” lifestyle, that is, they subsisted off of the natural foods available to them – wild game, fish and fowl, and edible plants. All of these food resources they hunted and gathered on an annual cycle from the lakes, rivers, wetlands, mountains, plateaus, and valleys of the area. Winters were spent in main village locations where collected food was stockpiled. During most of the spring, summer, and fall, these people roamed across their territories systematically harvesting wild plant and animal resources as they became available. They used natural “tool stone” such as obsidian to make knives, spear points and arrow points, and basalt to make plant grinding/processing tools such as metates and manos and mortars and pestles. Their winter villages usually had substantial semi-subterranean houses to keep them warm, and used temporary shelters, some with “rock rings” for foundations, for their seasonal round collecting food stuffs. In some places these folks made “rock art” – petroglyphs (rock carvings) or pictographs (rock paintings), and rock stacks or cairns. Some of these locations were special places where they might wish for luck or pray for good hunting, or other things.



A house structure “rock ring” foundation from the Devil’s Garden area.



Rock Art (petroglyphs) in the Devil’s Garden area.

Starting in 1826 Euro-Americans entered the Modoc County area. The first were fur trappers and explorers for the Hudson’s Bay Company and the young United States; these were followed by emigrants – settlers heading to Oregon along the Applegate Trail in 1846, and settlers and gold miners heading to California along the Lassen Trail in 1848-1849. Vestiges of these early emigrant trails are still visible across the area, part of the Emigrant Trails Scenic Byway and marked by the Oregon-California Trails Association. In 1872-1873 the Modoc War took place in the vicinity of Tule Lake and the current Lava Beds National Monument. Here the Modoc leader, Captain Jack, and about 57 warriors, kept the US military at bay for several months in the rough lava country. General E.R.S. Canby was killed during the conflict – the only regular Army general ever killed during the 19th century period of Indian Wars.

The Modoc National Forest was first established as the Modoc Forest Reserve and the Warner Mountain Forest Reserve in 1904 – these were combined in 1908 into the present forest.

Please enjoy, but do not destroy your American heritage!