

Volunteer Botanists Create Herbarium For Whiskeytown

By Ray C. Foust

Editor's Note: Ray C. Foust, Superintendent of the Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity NRA in California, sent Park Science the following article, expressing his "extreme pleasure" with the results of the project and suggesting that this kind of cooperation would be of interest to resource managers all over the System. We think it deserves notice on the Regional Highlights page.

The Shasta Chapter of the California Native Plant Society, through a volunteer project for the National Park Service, has provided the Whiskeytown Unit with its first baseline data on the area's plants. A total of 91.5 volunteer hours were spent collecting, pressing, identifying, labeling, mounting, and cataloging approximately 400 species to create an herbarium.

The project was spearheaded by David Biek, head of Technical Services at the Shasta County Library and author of *Mushrooms of Northern California*. An amateur botanist, Biek has put in more than 60 hours of volunteer time. He was attracted because of his strong desire to find new plants. "Most of these are plants I've never seen before. In fact, some of these *families* I've never seen before!" said Biek.

The project's most significant result, aside from creation of the herbarium, is the discovery that Whiskeytown has an unusually rich flora for an area of only 42,500 acres, probably due to the variety of



David Biek, educated amateur.

habitats found in the Unit. An elevation range of 800 feet to 6,209 feet, the number of year-round and intermittent streams, the blending of species from both the Klamath and Sierra Nevada mountain ranges, and human disturbance of the area each plays a role in providing variety. As the project continues, Biek expects to find another 100 to 200 species, particularly grasses, high elevation plants, more orchids, and a variety of oaks.

Some of the surprises from this survey include the discovery of the exotic species tamarisk along Clear Creek, the discovery of *Boykinia major* a saxifrage previously known to grow only in the coastal redwood forest, and a dozen different species of *Cortinarias* mushrooms in one locale.

This project has truly been a success story for the Volunteers in the Parks program. The Whiskeytown Unit has been able to obtain a plant collection for reference by its staff and has established some baseline vegetation data at virtually no cost. At the same time, a local citizen has had an opportunity to use his expertise in a creative, constructive manner, earning him tremendous satisfaction and the support of fellow amateur botanists.