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## FROM THE EDITOR

This is my first issue of PLTA News, and it represents the organization's decision to distribute it electronically instead of by mail. Although I hate to contribute to the demise of the U.S. postal system, this will save us a significant amount of money by avoiding printing and postage costs.



With this issue I wanted to introduce the members of the PLTA board. Last spring Mark Pommier and Lisa Wolf joined the board. Nancy Hester replaced Viv Fulton as president when Viv decided to end her long and productive participation on the board. Viv has agreed to continue to manage our trial database, a much-appreciated service.

As the new editor, I encourage our members to send in stories about their pack trial experiences as well as articles that offer information about llama packing in general. Keep in mind that we do not want to duplicate or compete with *Backcountry Llama*. PLTA is part of a newsletter network, so you may occasionally see relevant non-copyrighted

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## PLTA BOARD

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### *From the Editor, continued*

articles that first appeared in the newsletters of other llama organizations.

The *PLTA News* will also be the formal means of communicating Board decisions and rule changes (or clarifications) to our members until a new edition of the handbook can be published.

Membership renewals are also due—please continue to support PLTA even if you are not sure you will be attending a pack trial this year. Packing is the traditional use of these amazing animals, and PLTA is the voice that represents our interests. By renewing you also ensure that you will receive the quarterly *PLTA News*. A renewal form is found at [www.packllama.org](http://www.packllama.org) and you can pay at the site with Pay Pal.

Please send feedback! I need to know what you as members want to read about.

Still humming along...  
Susan Gawarecki, Editor

## PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

The PLTA Board had our first meeting of the New Year on Jan. 12th and some changes to the fee structure were approved. I'm happy to report that membership now includes entry fees to all trials attended during the year. There will no longer be a \$5.00 per llama per trial fee charged. We have also revised the Sanctioning fee to be a yearly fee instead of the prior policy of requiring per event sanctioning fees. Additionally, the Mileage Club has been reinstated and will be a membership perk without added fees being accrued. We hope that these fee reductions will make at least a slight economic difference—perhaps a tank of gas so you can attend a trial?

PLTA is constantly evolving as we focus on ways to enhance membership benefits and streamline

*Continued on page 3*

## ***President's Update, continued***

paperwork while still maintaining the written standards and recorded achievements that are the core of our organization. We are required to walk that line between maintaining the integrity of past trials and incorporating changes aimed at improving future trials as well as inspiring members to stay involved by creating new offerings.

It is my personal belief that we will see a continued widening in the gap between Basic/Advanced trials and Master/Extreme trials as the two factions seem to be segregating. The lower levels afford an opportunity to learn how to safely take to the trails, gain confidence in both the llamas' and handlers' abilities, and start to evaluate packing ability. Many simply enjoy these trials as venues to get out and enjoy a non-competitive hike with others. Few members east of the Rockies seem to aspire to certify their llamas at the Master level. Certainly lack of elevation plays a part in this but even in areas where there are plenty of hills to climb there isn't the desire to tackle the course.

That is not to say that everyone out West is scrambling to enter Master and Extreme trials. Many view pack trials with a mindset akin to their Eastern compatriots. However, there is a growing number, especially among breeders, who see the advantages of field testing their llamas' packing abilities. This is certainly nothing new—it is what PLTA was founded on. It is also why the Extreme level was added as a means of further evaluating a pack llama's potential.

As Board members our challenge is how to best accommodate both groups. We've heard you and we are trying. At the higher end, we've been told that, while they are happy we added Extreme, it needs to be more challenging—different obstacles than Master, handler changes, and possible overnight trials have all

been brought up. For those who like pack trials but their llamas are already certified at the highest level they wish to have it obtain, we are working on a program that would offer further recognition should they like to continue entering at that same trial level. One point that often needs clarification is that all levels are open to any qualified llamas. A llama can be entered in Basic, Advanced, or Master as long as it is old enough and has the necessary training and conditioning to do so. There is no need to go through all the trial levels unless the person desires to do so. The exception is Extreme, which requires that the llama be certified at Master first.

Making changes is time consuming. After the concept has been developed we must then dissect it with an eye towards safety and standardization vs. regional concerns, database entry and compatibility, etc. Then the PLTA Handbook must be updated to reflect any policy and rule changes made. Certifiers must be made aware of the changes and trial paperwork rewritten. There is no guarantee that we'll get it right on the first go either. Towards that end, we want to improve communication with our certifiers—and solicit their input—by establishing a blog where questions, issues, and suggestions can be viewed and discussed. Carolyn Mathews, along with BOD member Lisa Wolf, is soliciting ideas to make the newly reinstated (albeit still in the concept stage) Mileage Club better and more user friendly. PLTA has a Facebook page to share your thoughts, brag, and post pictures and soon so will the Mileage Club. In the meantime contact Carolyn at [mushbronco@yahoo.com](mailto:mushbronco@yahoo.com) with your thoughts and play a part in the development of this program. This is your organization—if you don't tell us what you want, you get what we think you want.

Happy Trekking,  
Nancy Hester, PLTA President

# MEET THE PLTA BOARD

## **Nancy Hester, President**

My husband and I live in Northern California. I grew up backpacking and riding the Sierras but now llamas help us explore the backcountry and living here allows us easy access to many great hiking areas, including the Trinities, Marbles, and Warner Mountains. We purchased our first pack llamas in 1992, have been active in PLTA since 1998; and now have a breeding herd of around 40 focused on producing llamas with athletic conformation, intelligence, and a willingness to work. In addition to packing with our llamas, both my husband and I try to stay active in the llama community. We host pack trials and teach clinics, and are often called upon to rescue llamas in need. I am on the BOD of the North America Ccara Association, the registry devoted to preserving and promoting working llamas. Being a PLTA Trial Certifier as well as a NACA Screener allows me to evaluate many great working llamas first hand and to join with like minded folks in an effort to save the classic Ccara llama.

## **Joyce Johnson, Treasurer**

I have been on the BOD since April '11. I have had llamas since 1997 and started doing the PLTA pack trials in 2005. My husband and I work with the 4-H llama project in our county here in Kansas and have been having shows since 1997 at our county fair. We feel it is vital to teach our youth about the fun of packing and educate them and their llamas toward this purpose as well as performance classes and showmanship. I have been married to the love of my life for 40 years. We have 2 grown children and their spouses and 3 adorable grandchildren and the oldest one just got her very own llama and pack saddle and can't wait to go hiking!

## **Lisa Wolf**

I have been training llamas for nearly thirty years. I participated in my first pack trial eleven years ago and have been engaged in them every year since. My extensive backpacking experience made it easy to develop a deep appreciation for what a pack llama goes through. I currently am a partner in Burns Llama Trailblazers with my primary duty to train and manage the pack llamas. To my great good fortune the llama ranch opens out onto miles of public land providing easy access to "real time" packing scenarios. Since walking is my favorite thing to do, we get lots of miles covered. I generally work with a string of six when conditioning my boys, but especially love working with llamas one on one. There is nothing else like it.

## **Susan Gawarecki**

The original reason I wanted llamas was to pack with them. I enjoyed hiking and camping, but not with a 60-lb pack on my back! So in 1995 I bought two weanling males (go figure!). Even though they were too young to pack, I walked them on trails, through the woods, and all over my neighborhood, and dove into the llama community in a big way, joining many state, regional and national associations. Eventually I was able to pack with my llamas, starting in 1997. I have participated the growing pack trial movement in the southeast since its inception and have been a participant in about 17 pack trials. I currently own 9 llamas and 2 alpacas. Aside from packing, I've shown my animals in halter and performance classes, trained two cart llamas, and spun a few miles of yarn.

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## ***Meet the PLTA Board, continued***

### **Laura Higgins, Vice President**

I have been an avid backpacker since the early 1980's, discovered llamas in 1997 and have not carried a backpack since! I owned and operated English Mountain Llama Treks in the Blue Ridge and Smoky Mountains of western North Carolina from 2002 until my husband David Bray and I relocated to Colorado in 2009 where we currently operate San Juan Mountains Llama Treks. I am active in numerous regional and national llama organizations, and have served on the board since 2008. My passion is exploring the great outdoors and sharing her knowledge of wildflowers and nature photography with others. When I'm not packing with llamas, I work as a general surgeon for the Indian Health Service.

### **Mark Pommier**

Mark Pommier has been involved with endurance sports and athletics for more than three decades. He moved to the Zuni Mountains of Thoreau, New Mexico from the family farm in 1985 to pursue an adventure lifestyle of professional mountain bike racing and teaching in the wilderness of the Navajo Nation. With his wife Angie, and new born daughter, Amber, Mark taught at St. Bonaventure Mission school and raced for Fisher Mountain Bikes. In 1989 the family moved to the San Juan Mountains near Durango, Colorado. That is where he met Bob Harms of Buckhorn Llamas. Bob had been Stan Ebel's head guide for Buckhorn for a number of years. Mark was fascinated with llamas and wanted to learn as much as he could about their packing abilities in order to haul him and his young family into the rugged mountains. Harms taught Pommier some good lessons about llamas and life. Soon Mark began working for Ebel as a guide and llama trainer. At the same time (1990) Bill Redwood

was using creative ways to learn about performance capabilities of llamas. In order to entice the top breeders in the country to bring their best animals to a common place, Redwood offered a \$5000 purse to any llama owner whose llama could beat Clancy, Redwood's "go to" boy, on the extreme Indian Ridge Trail, an 18-mile course, starting at 13,000 feet above Durango, Colorado. That is where Mark met Bill. After that race, Pommier started a relationship that lasts to this day. Bill would "pay" Mark with Clancy sons for training and racing llamas throughout the West. From 1991-1994 Clancy and Mark were unstoppable on the new and highly popular llama racing circuit. Some of the highlights were four consecutive wins at FairPlay, a 4th place at the Mosquito Pass 30-mile burro race, two first place finishes at the California Llamathon, and three National Championships. In November 1994 Pommier and Clancy were featured in Sports Illustrated, in addition to more than a dozen cover photos of various other magazines and newspapers. Later in '94, Pommier founded the successful llama leasing and training business Walk On the Wild Side Llama Company. After ten years primarily on his own, Pommier combined forces with Redwood in Silverton, Colorado, in 2004. Since then, Mark and Bill have been developing packers for Redwood Llamas and testing gear for Sopris Packs that have served people from all over the planet as lease and full-service custom trips throughout the immense San Juan Mountains. In 2011 Mark, along with Charlie Hackbarth and Bill Redwood, hosted one of the largest pack fests in recent history in Silverton. At that event more than fifty of the world's top llama experts met for more than four days of activities. Currently Mark is continuing to work with Bill to train and develop the highest performing work llamas available.

## NEWLY CERTIFIED LLAMAS

### **Extreme String Pack Llama – BLT Obsidian Edition #1061 Handled by Lisa Wolf, Burns Llama Trailblazers, Burns, OR**

He was just a weanling newly arrived at the Burns Llama Trailblazers' "big boys ranch" when he saw it, that magnificent creature leaping through the air to the barn roof, then floating back down again. To the peacock it was nothing, but BLT Obsidian Edition was agog and knew right then what he wanted in life: to fly. Son of The Special Edition (a Master Pack Llama, ALSA Halter Champion who nearly earned his ALSA Performance Champion status before the ranch took a hiatus from showing) and Hyder Llamas' Jemimah and grandson of Hyder Llamas' Applejack, he had the body for it; perfect working conformation on a short back and medium tall, light frame, he was built to move and move he did. Racing the rimrock canyon, tussling with his sibs, leaping as high as he could get, he set about building his flight muscles. His agility and determination were truly amazing and watching him change leads on the run was a thing of beauty.

As he grew stronger he indulged his physical prowess in a rascally sense of humor. One day, seeing his year-mate and half brother BLT The Editor, sitting alone contemplating deep subjects, "Sid" came running out of the far pasture at full speed. Racing through three corrals he sped past "Tory" biting him on the rump as he went. Without a pause he wheeled around, reversing course at top speed and regaining the pasture before Tory had a chance to even get up. Such antics and his love of marching around on his hind legs wowing the neighbors quickly earned him the monikers "Sid the Kid" and "Prince Sidling the Magnificent."

Now eleven years old and having clearly inherited his dam's longevity, Sid has lost none of his speed or endurance. Jemimah stayed sound and fit her entire 25 years while throwing numerous offspring. Sid is making tremendous use of his inheritance. His rugged high desert training ground, an ancient lava-land of rock, cliffs, dust, deep brush and forever vistas, has given him the place to hone his endurance and agility. Even on the toughest pack trips Sid has never tired.

Often working in strings of six to eight llamas, Sid has learned to manage any position. He is especially capable in the tough tail-llama space where he has to compensate for any errors made by llamas further up the line. This is a tremendous boon when working a string in country without trails. Sid also works well alone. On a recent two week pack trip supporting the Burns Paiute Tribe fisheries crew working on a project in the



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### ***Newly Certified Llamas, continued***

Strawberry Mtn. Wilderness, I had the chance to work Sid alone for a few days. Living so remotely we have little opportunity for public contact, but here we were at the height of the season surrounded by hikers. And there was rough, tough Sid kissing the babies and posing for pictures like the best PR llamas.

A sad thing about llamas is their short lifespan compared to humans. While Sid is at his prime now, someday he will want to retire, so it is a great pleasure to see that he is passing his speed, agility, endurance and spunk to his offspring. BLT Obsidian Edition has never been given the opportunity to wow them at the shows like his father and grandfather, and he may never sprout wings and take to the air like that peacock, but he surely is doing the next best thing, proving himself to be an absolutely superb pack llama.

### **Basic Pack Llama – Barack O’Llama #1327 Handled by Susan Gawarecki, Pathfinder Farm, Andersonville, TN**

Barack O’Llama was born shortly after the 2008 Presidential election on my friend’s dairy goat farm. His too-young mother had been left in with her sire, and his arrival was a surprise to my friend. Barack grew up guarding goats and became overly enthusiastic about the task, occasionally challenging people who entered the pasture. When his owner died from ovarian cancer in April 2012, Barack and his dam came to live at my farm.



During the summer I sent him to work with a pack string supporting a children’s camp in the North Carolina mountains, where he became a favorite with the kids and discovered his inner llama as he interacted with the other packers.

After he returned to my farm in the fall, I began hiking with him and exposing him to new experiences, including group hikes, pack trials, and a Christmas parade.

Now certified as a Basic Pack Llama, he has a new home with two young boys who adore him and a flock of Shetland Sheep that he is in charge of.

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***Newly Certified Llamas, continued***

**Basic Pack Llama – BB Trev #1294  
Owned by Vicki Sundberg,  
Sundmist Pastures, Bolivia, NC**

Trev is a spunky, very tall, very lean, strong, curious, trouble-maker. If there is something going on in the pasture, I can pretty much bet Trev is making Trouble—again. Except for the color, he looks exactly like his 21-year old mother. Strong top line, long skinny legs and neck. Did I mention he is three years old? That amazing old lady had him when she was 18 years old! Now before anyone gets mad at me—Trev's mother was a surrender llama through Southeast Llama



Rescue (SELR). That herd consisted of pasture ornaments—not trained, not handled. They came to me to get a little handling training so they could be adopted. And, ta-da. one day we found another llama out there—little Trev. I just couldn't have that fine old lady be sent to yet another farm, so she stays here with me and her baby boy Trev does, too. (Thank you SELR.) Not only does Trev pack, but he is being trained to pull a cart. He's extremely unflappable and fun. Trev totally captured my husband's heart and we three have a great time together. I just know he has a goofy but fun sense of humor—if I only spoke and heard llama.

**Basic Pack Llama – Pearl Emily #1263  
Owned by Tori Howk, Furnace Creek Farm, Cumberland Furnace, TN**

Pearl is one of the true farm favorites, not only for us but for countless visitors. Pearl's talents were recognized early as a potential Delta Society/Pet Partner therapy llama, for



which she attained her certification and delights numerous residents and individuals each year through her visits. Since she is such an easy-going and steady girl, we thought she might be a great pack animal, as she routinely packs lunches for children when they come to spend a day on the farm. Pearl navigates the trails easily, and is a joy to work with. We are excited that she has attained her pack certification.

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**Newly Certified Llamas, continued**

**Other llamas receiving their certifications in 2013:**

- Advanced Pack Llama - HI TRL  
Toni Snow #1325
- Advanced Pack Llama - HI TRL  
Christine Chapel #1324
- Advanced Pack Llama -  
Cautley Fair O'Joy #1335
- Advanced Pack Llama -  
Lovelady's Chicken Hawk  
#1131
- Extreme Pack Llama - BLT  
Snowy Owl #1133

If you would like to tell the story about your newly certified pack llama, be sure to send Nancy Hester a write up with your photo for the certificate, and it will be published in the *PLTA News*.

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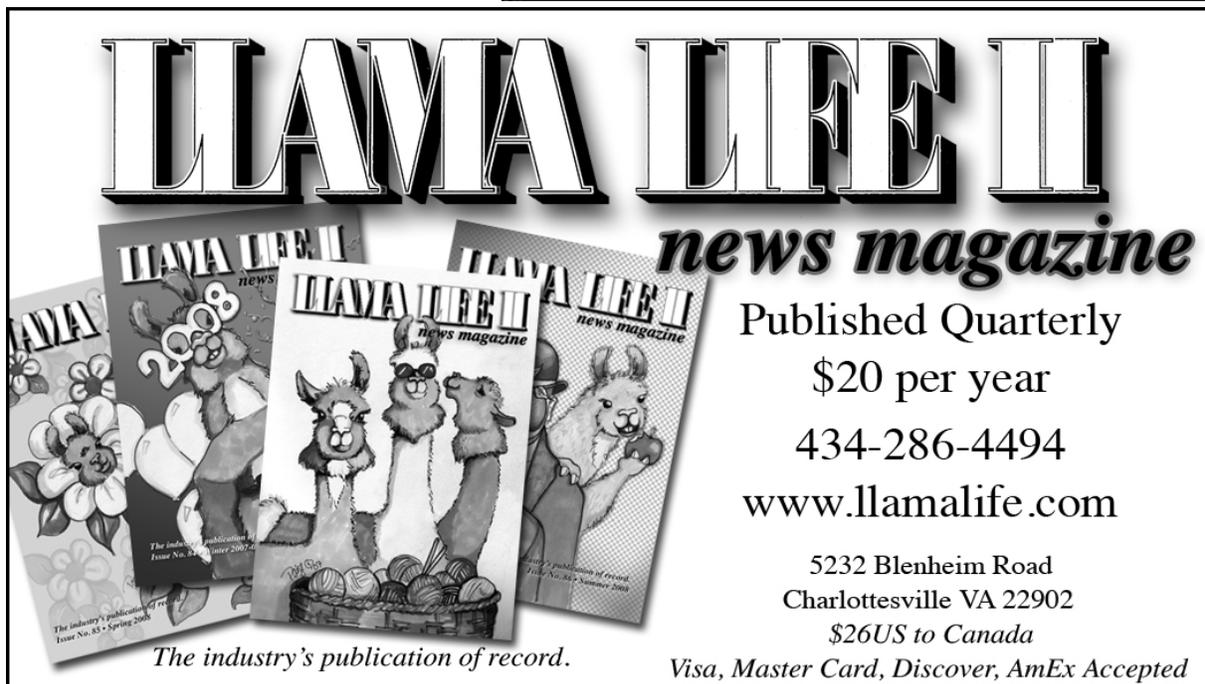
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## PLTA BOARD DECISIONS DURING 2013

1. Viv Fulton's resignation was accepted; effective 1-30-2013. Until a replacement is found, Viv has agreed to remain Database manager.
2. Officers and duties:
  - Nancy Hester - President and General Office; Web Site
  - Laura Higgins - Vice President
  - Joyce Johnson - Treasurer and Membership duties
  - Susan Gawarecki - Newsletter
3. Mileage Club was suspended due to lack of participation. At a member's request this is being reevaluated and a committee headed by said member is evaluating options and interest.
4. Sanctioning requests no longer need a full BOD vote for approval unless there are issues/deviations.
5. Adopted Yahoo! groups as our main BOD e-mail communication to facilitate filtering of emails.
6. Procured new insurance carrier after prior carrier raised proposed renewal premium from \$1441.00 to over \$2300.00. Very few insurance providers are willing to insure animal groups, and even fewer understand llamas so most either wouldn't quote PLTA or wanted to group us with rodeos.
7. Finally secured a new policy with same coverage at a much better rate of \$889.00.
7. Pack Trial substitution/deviation requests:
  - Request for one time deviation from the 2 year age requirement to allow a 23 month old llama's participation in a Basic pack trial allowed. Requirement that 2nd Basic be after 30 months of age and while carrying 10% stands.
  - Request for a short notice (2 weeks) pack trial approved.
  - Request for water obstacle substitution for 1 day of 2 day trials due to lack of water approved.
8. Forms were revised/simplified once again and tested at Fall pack trials. Consensus was that only a few minor tweaks are needed.
9. BOD was notified that double Advanced trials—2 back to back trials—one in the morning and one after lunch each day over 2 days for a total of 4 Advanced trials were a possibility at an upcoming trial. BOD was not in approval of such an idea but no specific rule disallowed it. Recommended changing handbook to address this for future trials.
3. Several policy and rule violations occurred at a pack trial and are under review. PLTA does not want to penalize innocent participants by discrediting the trial results so they will be allowed to stand but future trials by the host/certifiers will not be sanctioned until final decision is made.



**Left: Camp in the Wind River Range.**  
Photo submitted by Nancy Hester

# REDWOOD LLAMA RANCH 2013 PACK TRIALS, DOVE CREEK, COLORADO

By Doug and Michelle Bearmar, Black Mountain Pack Llamas, Ramona, CA

Black Mountain Pack Llamas out of San Diego, California, traveled to Dove Creek, Colorado, for the 2013 Redwood Llama Ranch Pack Trials and put to the test two of our strong female llamas (Chrissi and Toni). Traveling from San Diego to Dove Creek took 17 hours of drive time, and I was worried the llamas would never speak to me again after being bounced around all night and most of the next day, but they handled the trip just fine. They even took a detour and walked the famed Eagles corner in Winslow Arizona. Not many folks in Winslow were expecting llamas so they were very curious and had to hear our story. We arrived at Dove Creek just as the sun set to the welcome smile of Bill Redwood. He set us up in his camping area (we pitched a tent in the hay barn which was nice and cozy). Adjoining the barn was the pen where our two females stayed.

Our goal for this trip was to successfully complete four Advanced Pack Trials and receive an Advanced certification for both our females. This meant we had to perform two advanced trials Saturday and finish up with two more Advanced trials on Sunday. We thought it a challenging goal but with all the packing preparation we had done in advance of the pack trial, it was achievable.

Friday we awoke late as usual (we are from San Diego) and made our way to the house and Bill's espresso coffee maker. After a few cups of java we went out to hike the path and help set the course with Laura Higgins (the trial certifier) and Bill. We brought along our trailer-weary llamas to work the course unloaded. It gave us a chance to see just how hard the obstacles were going to be for a llama. Much of the course traversed and descended into a canyon

with the stream crossing at the bottom. The route was mapped into global positioning device that ensured the course length and elevation gain met the trial certifier's requirements. The course wound its way thru areas formerly inhabited by Native American cliff dwellers hundreds of years ago. It was so rugged that Laura reduced the overall length of the course calling the trail an obstacle in itself that easily met the standards published by the PLTA for advanced and master trials (the master course would be two laps and the advanced would be one).

Both Redwood llamas and Black Mountain llamas weighed in and completed the handling including pack weight checkouts on Friday, allowing Saturday morning for all the other arriving pack trial entrants to do the same so all could hit the trail early.

The first trial began at exactly 10 a.m. Saturday morning with eager animals and handlers (including one yearling along for the social scene). The course was challenging but the entrants were experienced and the animals were strong. Round one was complete in 3 hours without incident. I was happy there were only 12 other llamas and not 30. As it was, obstacles, steep slopes and loose footing caused llama log jams and it's always awkward to stop on loose scree on a steep uphill. If the llama line stops and you're in the back, you're not going anywhere. As we had the only female llamas in the pack trial we saw a lot of llama butts. I guess this worked out better than having all of those rowdy boy llamas look at our (girls') rears. As it turned out, once we all began working the trail, issues between female and male llamas seemed to dissipate.

With so many animals and people completing the first advanced trial the tram-

*Continued on page 12*

## **Redwood Llama Ranch 2013 Pack Trials, *continued***

pled course was now firmly entrenched making it much easier to follow during the remaining trials. Obstacles were natural and not at all contrived. One didn't need to go out of the way to make this course challenging. While there were many branches to duck under and lots of steep loose rock to scramble up, in my opinion the two most challenging obstacles included a drop at the top of the canyon and a water trap at the bottom. Entry into the canyon entailed a 6-ft drop, which required the llamas to slide or hop to an intermediate ledge and then jump to the base. At this point there was an immediate turn left as the hill dropped off again. The water trap occurred at the point where the trail entered the canyon bottom at a very steep angle and then dropped about a foot-and-a-half into the creek, which of course was surrounded by tall grass and boulders. This course was much more technical and interesting than one would encounter on a traditional well maintained trail trek.

With round one out of the way, lunch and a break for the animals followed. The afternoon saw four of Bill's llamas (working on the Master certification) and our two girls traversing the course in reverse, which seemed to be the more difficult direction. With fewer llamas on the trail, the afternoon section was completed almost a full hour faster.

Saturday evening Bill fired up the barbeque and we enjoyed a pot luck extravaganza with good food, conversation and stunning views from the canyon rim. Laura's apple pie was a favorite alongside Bill's BBQ ribs. Almost everyone stayed and swapped stories or lies about former adventures.

The trials continued on Sunday and by evening our girls had successfully completed all four Advanced Trials and earned their Advanced Packer Certifica-

tions! The trip was a great success for Black Mountain Pack Llamas and well worth the travel out to Colorado. We really enjoyed the hospitality of Bill Redwood (and his wonderful coffee!). Before departing for SoCal on Monday morning Bill toured us around his amazing his ranch and showed us his different llama herds. We had our eye on some of his females and actually brought home three yearling girls. In the coming years they will be a pack force to behold.

### **Our Mission**

Black Mountain Pack Llamas packs solely with females. It is our intent to establish a breeding program using proven female packers thereby bringing athleticism to the offspring through both parents. We believe this completes the other half of the genetics equation for proven packers to buyers that insist on both parents being proven packers when evaluating the offspring.

## **ADVERTISING IN PLTA NEWS IS VERY REASONABLE!**

**PLTA Members** may place one FREE classified ad per newsletter limited to 30 words plus contact info. Additional words are \$0.10 each. Please limit it to items pertaining to llamas or packing such as pack gear, camping stuff, certified pack llamas, etc.

### **Other ad sizes and cost per issue**

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Quarter page—\$10  
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Full page—\$25

*25% discount if the ad is run in four issues (or buy three, get one free).*

\*Get a **free business card ad** with each article submitted for publication!

## PLTA SANCTIONED PACK TRIALS

HAPPY HUMMERS/BURNS LLAMA TRAILBLAZERS on May 3-4, 2014, Burns, OR  
All levels offered on both days  
Contact Becky Cunningham at 541-573-5123 or [sheete@hotmai.com](mailto:sheete@hotmai.com)

BCL PNW RENDEZVOUS on June 28, 2014, McIver Park, Estacada, OR  
Packer's Primer and Basic Trial  
Hosted by Rattlesnake Ridge Llamas  
Contact Scott Noga at 509-430-2198 or [llamas@rattlesnakeridgeranch.com](mailto:llamas@rattlesnakeridgeranch.com)

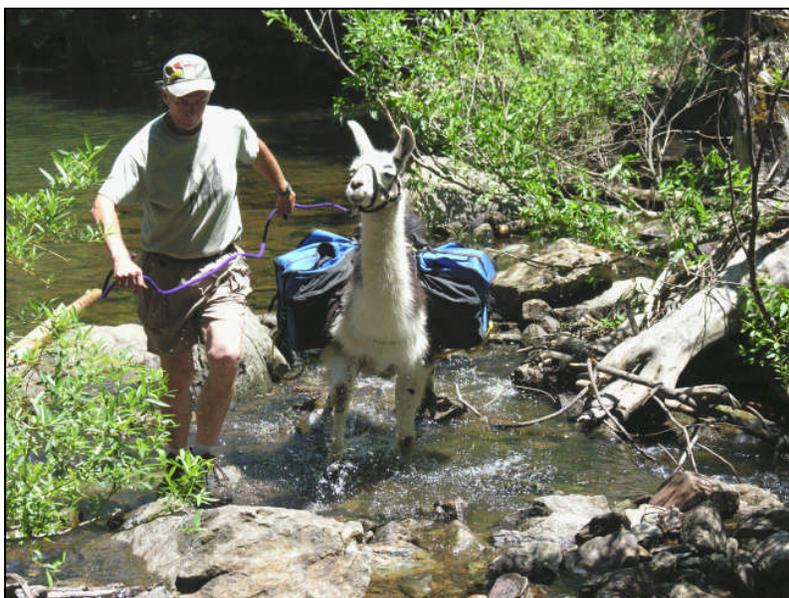
## PENDING EVENTS

BLACK MOUNTAIN PACK TRIALS on MARCH 1-2, 2014, in Southern California  
Basic, Advanced, and Master offered both days  
Contact Doug or Michelle Bearmar at 760-789-6329 or [the\\_bearmars@yahoo.com](mailto:the_bearmars@yahoo.com)

SSLA SPRING PACK TRIAL on April 12, 2014, Dupont State Forest, Cedar Mountain, NC  
Basic, Advanced and String trials  
Contact Carol Creech at 864-834-0888 or [packtrial@charter.net](mailto:packtrial@charter.net)

NACA PACK FESTIVAL on May 17-18, 2014, Boise, ID, Fairgrounds  
Ccara llama viewing and screening, plus presentations on a variety of subjects  
related to packing and breeding working llamas  
Contact Wes Holmquist at [wesway@llamaconnection.com](mailto:wesway@llamaconnection.com)

REDWOOD RANCH PACK TRIALS  
May 24-26, 2014, Redwood Llama Ranch, Dove Creek, CO  
Aug. 30- SEPT. 1, 2014, Silverton, CO  
Contact Bill Redwood at 970-560-2926 or [redwoodllamas@frontier.net](mailto:redwoodllamas@frontier.net)  
or Laura Higgins at 865-368-7513 or [hikingmd@aol.com](mailto:hikingmd@aol.com)



**Left: Water crossing at  
LANA pack Trial**  
*Photo submitted by Nancy  
Hester*

## **ANNOUNCING SSLA 2014 SPRING PACK LLAMA TRIALS & RENDEZVOUS**

April 11-13, 2014 at Dupont State Forest, near Hendersonville, NC. Basic, Advanced, Basic String, and Advanced String Trials will be offered on Saturday. Civilized camping is available for people, and fenced paddocks or stalls are available for llamas. Delicious potluck, friendly llama lovers, mountain views, picturesque covered bridge, fishing lake, waterfalls, fun hikes, campfires, s'mores, and *much more*.

*Y'all come!* You'll have a wonderful time camping even if you don't bring llamas for the weekend. Day campers, kids, teens, and volunteer stewards are welcome too.

*Not a PLTA member?* You can join the Pack Llama Trial Association (PLTA) as a \$5 associate member to do the course as a fun hike, although we recommend that you join as a full \$30 member in order for your llama to get credit for his/her performance on the course. We'll have all paperwork available and will be happy to send in your membership fee.

*Llama Trek program* Pack Trials and fun hikes this weekend will count as mileage for this SSLA program. Come add to your llama's trek mileage for 2014 and get a patch at the next SSLA conference.

*Camping fee is \$9 per person per night & \$10 per llama per night.* If you come just for the day Saturday, it's \$9 per person and \$10 per llama. It's another \$5 per llama if you're having trial results sent in to PLTA. Entry forms will be available at the trial. Just let us know you're coming, bring the llama's birth date, ILR & PLTA numbers (if any), and your checkbook.

For all the information you need and driving directions, click <http://webpages.charter.net/packtrial>, e-mail [packtrial@charter.net](mailto:packtrial@charter.net), or call Carol Creech, 864/834-0888. The pack trial site is a long walk in from a locked gate in a spotty cell phone coverage area. You *must* contact me by *April 8* to say for sure you're coming, so I can send you the gate code. Don't be left outside the gate and out of the fun!

### **DO YOU WANT TO HOST A PACK TRIAL?**

If you'd like to host a trial in your area but aren't sure how to proceed, let us know. We can answer your questions and provide the necessary information and support to help make your event a successful one.

### **FREE PUBLICITY FOR MEMBERS' EVENTS**

Please contact us if you are planning a Packing Event and would like to post the information in the *PLTA News* and on our website.

# SSLA 2013 SPRING PACK LLAMA TRIALS & RENDEZVOUS, APRIL 9-21, 2013

By Carol Creech

At Dupont State Forest this year, we had 20 people attending with 16 llamas. A heavy downpour all day Friday cancelled the afternoon's basic trial, but the sun came out Saturday morning and warmed us up from freezing to the low-60's by afternoon.

Early Saturday morning manageability tasks (5 minute picket, trailer loading and unloading, un-haltering and haltering, saddling and loading panniers) were quickly finished.

The advanced group left on their 5.7 mile course with 850' elevation gain and 10 obstacles. Pass through gate obstacle, put on and remove rain fly, boardwalk, bouncy bridge, deadfall, duck under, log jump, 2 water obstacles, and rock rubble were conquered during the day by all llamas. The Reasonover Creek crossing was much deeper and wider than usual after the previous day's rain, but these llamas were advanced and plunged through. A couple of handlers slipped and got wet, with



**Left: Trailer loading manageability test at the barn**

**Below: Advanced pack trial participants**

*Photos submitted by Carol Creech*



*Continued on page 16*

## SSLA 2013 Spring Pack Trials & Rendezvous, *continued*



**Above: Basic pack trial participants**

*Photo submitted by Susan Gawarecki*

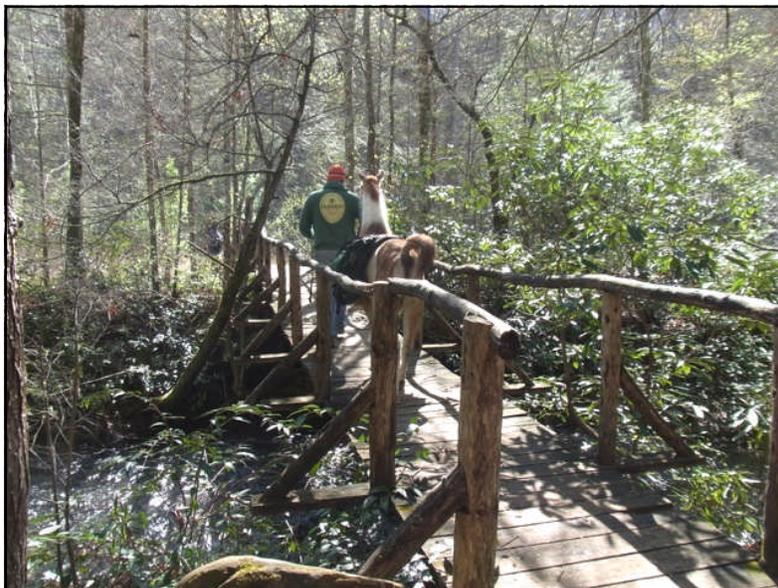
**Below: Bouncy bridge obstacle**

*Photo submitted by Carol Creech*

no serious injuries. We had an unplanned bicycle and photo obstacle at the stream crossing when a group of six or so cyclists had to pass the llamas. Also a half marathon was running concurrently on part of our course, with runners snapping pictures as they passed. No problem for these experienced and photogenic boys.

ALCL Black Jack (already a BPL), owed by Debbie and Ulin Andrews and led by Amanda Brantley, completed one of his three required Advanced trials. Lovelady's Chicken Hawk (BPL), led by Kurt Pihera, completed his third trial and is now a PLTA certified Advanced Pack Llama. Rainbow's Pot-O-Gold, aka Echo, led by Liam Munroe, completed his third advanced course. Shay Stratford and Carol Creech were course stewards. The following llamas went on the advanced course as a "fun" hike: Guinness led by Danny Logan, Diego led by Alison Kogler, and Paissano led by Tracy Snell.

The Basic group was comprised of steward Rebecca Alexander, fun hikers Spats, led by Debbie Andrews, Spice, led by Hank Balch, X-Man, led by Karen Pihera, Ni-arada, led by Deb Logan, and Joker, Hank



and Vickie Balch's llama, led by Allie Taylor. Susan Gawarecki led Susan Sterling's Twist of Rain in Moses on Basic, followed by Susan S. leading Mt. Side Jett Racer (completing his first Basic), and Duane Taylor leading BB Trev, Vicki Sundberg's llama. Trev completed his second basic trial and is now a PLTA Basic Pack Llama.

*Continued on page 17*

## SSLA 2013 Spring Pack Trials & Rendezvous, *continued*

Don De's Pilgrim and Don De's John, Carol and Rebecca's certified Advanced String llamas, led by Vicki Sundberg, were the rear guard. The Basic course was 3.1 miles, with 400' elevation and five obstacles: fly spray, log jump, deadfall, duck under, and water crossing. We had a short lunch break with a cold north wind sweeping off the 100 acre Lake Julia and also dealt with the half marathon on part of our course. For excitement, course



**Above right: Basic pack trial participants on the trail**

*Photo submitted by Susan Gawarecki*



**Left: Step-over obstacle**

**Below right: Rendezvous and potluck around the fire pit**

*Photos submitted by Carol Creech*

certifier Karen Pihera had to find a substitute water obstacle, since the planned creek crossing was blocked by a huge hemlock that had come down in Friday's storm. This was a real challenge to the young llamas, but most were successful.

As usual, the llamas enjoyed lounging in their green paddocks and the people enjoyed the delicious Saturday continental breakfast, potluck dinner, and Sunday omelets.



# DOG HOBBLE – A POISONOUS PLANT

By Susan Gawarecki

Portions of this article originally appeared in the Summer 2006 TLC News

Llama packers in the Southern Appalachians have learned to recognize the highly poisonous rhododendron and mountain laurel, but many are unaware of the potentially deadly dog hobble, a related member of the toxic Heath family native to this region. Llamas have died from eating this plant!

Also called drooping leucothoe or fetterbush with the scientific name *Leucothoe fontanesiana*, dog hobble is an "evergreen shrub with green and broadly arching stems; leaves alternate, simple, taper-pointed; flowers on all sides of elongated, axillary clusters, each white, inverted urn-shaped with 5 small lobes; fruit a globular, 5-lobed capsule more or less depressed at the apex," according to *Poisonous Plants of North Carolina* by Alice B. Russell, James W. Hardin, Larry Grand, and Angela Fraser; North Carolina State University. A recognizable feature



when the plant is not in bloom is the slight zigzag nature of the stem segments between leaves. The plant may form large clusters and prefers moist woodlands and areas near streams.



The accompanying photos were taken by Susan Gawarecki in the Dupont State Forest during the 2013 spring pack trial. Dog hobble is found in the mountainous areas of east Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Its range extends east into the piedmont and west into portions of the eastern Cumberland Plateau. Dog hobble may also be found in gardens as a native ornamental.



**Left and below: Happy packers in a beautiful setting at the 2011 Silverton Rendezvous and Pack Trial**

**Cover: How not to cross a creek!**

*Submitted by Nancy Hester*



## PLTA MEDIA INFORMATION



For the latest updates and trial information or to renew your membership, go to [www.packllama.org](http://www.packllama.org). Members are welcome to post free classified ads (for items related to packing) online and to link web sites. Do we have your current email address so that we can alert you when important issues arise and new events are posted? For all web-related benefits, contact our webmaster Nancy Hester at [latitudellamas@aol.com](mailto:latitudellamas@aol.com) or (530) 223-4569 or mail to 7295 Churn Creek Road, Redding, CA 96002.

Interested in advertising in the *PLTA News*? (See page 11 for details.) Have a great packing article that you'd like to share, or a trail tip or famous recipe, or a picture that says a thousand words? Contact our editor Susan Gawarecki at [llamaladyg@yahoo.com](mailto:llamaladyg@yahoo.com) or (865) 494-0102 or mail to 114 Pathfinder Lane, Andersonville, TN 37705.