

# Land of Ishi

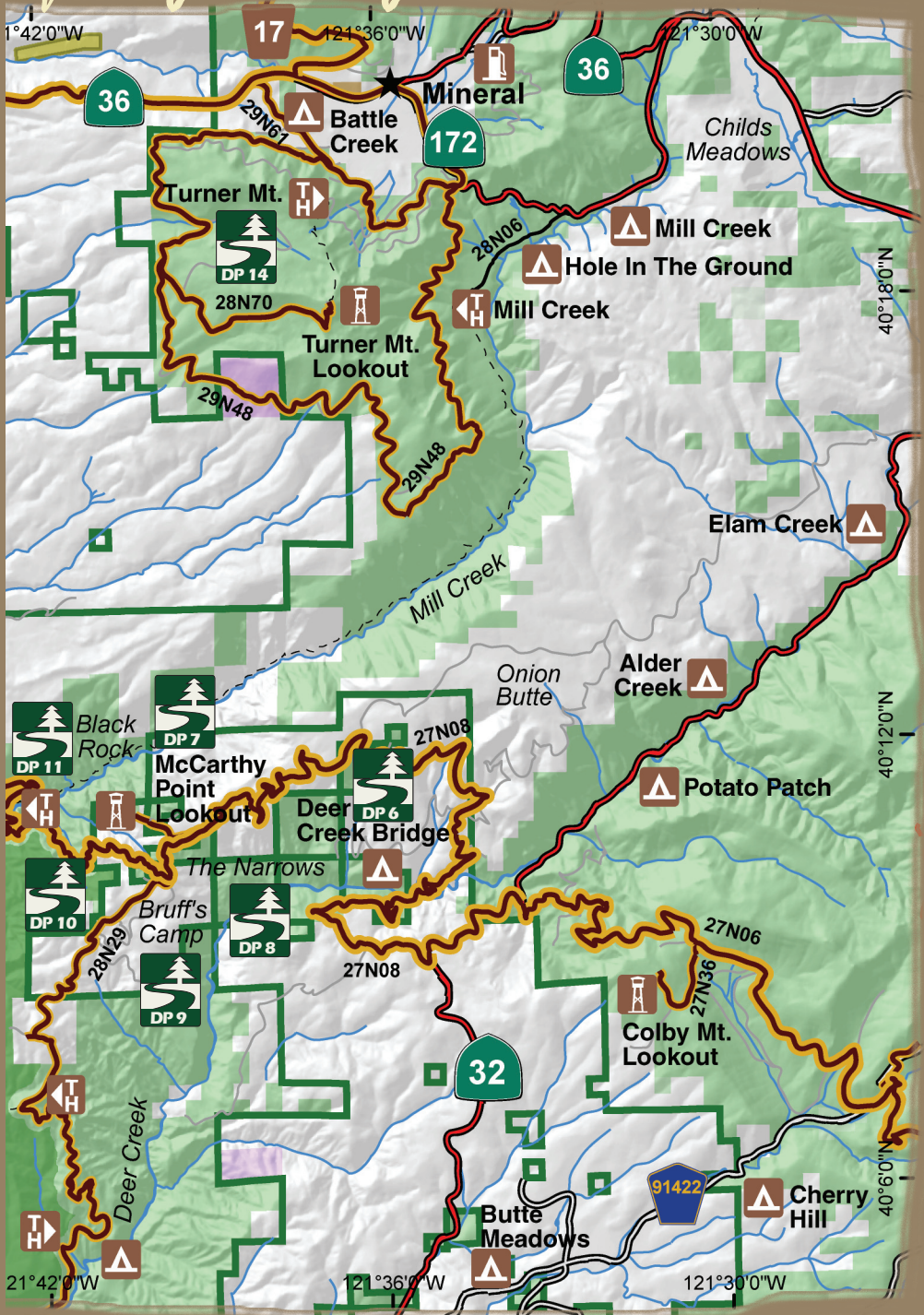


**Lassen Backcountry Byway**

	Primary Route		National Forest
	Side Trip to Discovery Point		Wilderness
	Discovery Point		State
			BLM



# Guide of the Yahi Yana Indians





# Land of Ishi

Guide of the Yahi Yana Indians

Section 2

Discovery Points 6 ~ 14

Distance ~ 59.4 miles

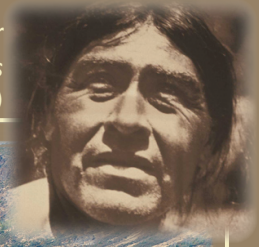
*It is a land at times excessive with luxuriant wildflowers; in places it displays fantastically bizarre remnants of a volcanic past. Salmon paint a rainbow in the creeks and deer trace a migration pattern over 2,500 years old. For longer than human memory, people have coaxed a life out of this landscape. **This is the Land of Ishi.***

*(Ishi photos courtesy of the Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology)*

## People in the Wilderness

Today, the Ishi Wilderness is a Congressionally designated portion of this region, set aside to preserve its primitive character and provide opportunities for solitude. But in ancient times, people used this area in more utilitarian ways. Aboriginal peoples lived here for over 10,000

*Ishi, last survivor of the Yahi Yana Indians*



*The Land of Ishi*

years, pounding stone tools out of obsidian and shaping the forest through the daily requirements of making a living. The Yahí Yana Indians called it home for a short 2,000 years; they were followed by emigrants on their way to the promise of gold in the Sacramento Valley. The 1930s saw the Civilian Conservation Corps build a 700-mile fuel break to thwart wildfires from racing across the mountains. Then the military arrived in the 1940s with the intent of using this fire suppression tool as a supply line, should the Japanese invade.

Think about what brought you to this country today. Is it the chance to wind through 65 million year old volcanic monuments framed by rugged canyons? Are you hoping to unwind under the cool shade of a high elevation cedar or red fir, with hopes of spotting a quail or a long tailed weasel? Maybe you will search for deer or black bear in the blue oak and foothill pine of the mid elevation woodlands, or gaze over the lower grasslands where rising heat warps the air.

Your travels along the Lassen Backcountry Byway will continue the history of people in this land.



**Caution! Rattlesnakes and poison oak are common in this area.**



### Mile 0.0

**At the intersection SR 32 and FS 27N08, you are 36 miles east of Chico and 29 miles west of Chester. Follow the Lassen Backcountry Byway signs on the gravel road.**



*Deer Creek  
Bridge*



### Mile 5.5

**Lat/Long 40° 09' 51"N,  
121° 35' 45"W**



*Deer Creek*



This perennial stream provides one of the major salmon and steelhead spawning habitats in the Sacramento River drainage system.



At certain times of the year, migrating fish can be spotted from the bridge. If you fish, check with the Department of Fish and Game for the special regulations at Deer Creek. There is an unimproved campground across the bridge, but no potable water.



### Mile 9.4

You are at the Panther Creek Crossing.



### Mile 13.1

At the junction with FS 28N20, continue to the left on FS 27N08.



### Mile 16.4

Access McCarthy Point Lookout from the junction of FS 27N08 and FS 27N21. Turn right and go 1.1 miles. Park at the gate for a short walk to the Lookout.

To continue on the primary route, go straight on FS 27N08.



### Side trip - Driving

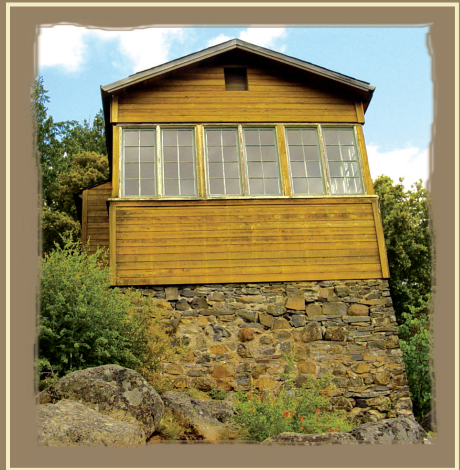
Elevation 3,800 feet

Lat/Long 40° 10' 49"N,

121° 39' 27"W

The Civilian Conservation Corps constructed this “room with a view” in 1936, and the Forest Service used it for fire observation until the mid 1960s. In 1994, the Forest Service and volunteers from Passports In Time (PIT) restored the structure to its original condition.

Interested in spending the night? Visit [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) for reservations, or contact the Almanor Ranger District in Chester (530-258-2141) for more information. **Please respect the privacy of those who are renting the cabin.**



McCarthy Point Lookout

Between the McCarthy Point Lookout to approximately mile 35.0, you'll pass the remains of the Gun II wildfire. Although this fire occurred recently (1999), the effects of fire on landscapes are as old as time. Centuries of

prehistoric and historic human caused fires and harvesting have shaped the composition of the forest. Today, land managers focus on returning forests to historic conditions using a combination of tree thinning and prescribed fire.



*The Narrows*



**Mile 17.2**

**Lat/Long 40° 10' 26"N,  
121° 40' 01"W**

You have been traveling the “Lassen Trail” for the last seven miles. Peter Lassen pioneered this route in 1848 and led several wagon trains along it the following summer. More than 6,000 emigrants followed his trail to reach the Sacramento Valley gold fields. Eventually, shorter routes were established across the Sierra Nevada and the Lassen Trail was abandoned after 1850.

From this narrow ridge, you can see north into Mill Creek Canyon and south over Deer Creek Canyon. In 1848-50, wagons had to negotiate this ridge on a trail barely 30 feet wide. The experience of negotiating this fine line between canyons must have caused stomachs to roil and heads to spin - almost every diary written along this route tells of this spot. In “*Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*” (1880), Peter H. Burnett remembers:

*View from the Narrows  
looking into Mill Creek*



“Old Peter Lassen insisted that our wagons should keep on the top of the ridges, and not go down to the water ... Our pilots ... discovered a strip of ground, about thirty feet wide, between the heads of two immense and impassable ravines, and connecting the ridge we were compelled to leave with another. It was like an isthmus connecting two continents.”

For more information on the Lassen Trail, visit Trails West at [www.emigranttrailswest.org](http://www.emigranttrailswest.org).



### Mile 17.6

Lat/Long 40° 09' 55"N,  
121° 40' 33"W

You are now at the end of FS 27N08. Turn right onto FS 28N29 to follow the primary route, or go straight for 0.7 miles to Bruff's Camp.



### Bruff's Camp

⚡ Side trip - Hiking  
Lat/Long 40° 9' 57"N,  
121° 40' 24"W

Look closely to find a small sign on the south side of the road showing the location of Bruff's Camp. A short hike will bring you to several monuments marking the camp of J. Goldsborough Bruff who led a company of emigrants to this spot in October 1849.

By this time in their journey, the company lacked the draft mules needed to continue to the gold mines of the Sacramento Valley. Bruff decided to send the rest




of the group on foot while he remained at the camp to guard their wagons. Bruff reported:

*“Our mules are so reduced ... I shall direct the wagons left here with all their contents, except actual necessities the men can conveniently take in with them ... But who would remain here? there was the rub! ... I would not only volunteer to remain here and take charge of the company and private property they should leave in the wagons, Until they could send out for them, but that I would also lend them my fine strong horse ...”*  
(Gold Rush: The Journals, Drawings, and Other Papers of J. Goldsborough Bruff, April 2, 1849 - July 20, 1851).

Bruff remained at this camp during the winter of 1849-1850, befriending other wagon trains and relief parties that traveled the trail. Tragedy struck one group in the early hours of October 31, 1849 when a large oak tree, “decayed near the ground...and heavy with moisture” fell across a tent sheltering four men. Two were killed instantly. The other two were not as fortunate and died later.

The monuments pay tribute to those who bore the hardship of this passage.

 **Return to the intersection of FS 28N29 and FS 27N08 and continue**

**on the primary route. Alternately, you can continue south along Deer Creek to enjoy scenic vistas and impressive spring wildflowers. There is an unimproved campsite approximately 0.5 miles northeast of the Deer Creek Trailhead.**



**Mile 20.5 – Mile 25.7**



*View of Ishi Wilderness from Deer Creek Trail*

As you descend the ridge, you will enter a rugged area seemingly inhospitable to humans. However, people have occupied this land for more than 10,000 years. Some may have been ancestors of the Yahi Yana who called this home for 2,000 years. The Ishi Wilderness is named for the last survivor of this tribe.







Ishi (meaning “man”) is believed to be the last Native American in North America to have lived the majority of his life outside Euro-American culture.

He emerged from the wild on August 19, 1911 near Oroville, California where a sheriff took him into custody for his own protection.

Ishi later went to live at the Museum of Anthropology at the University of California, San Francisco where he stayed until his death from tuberculosis in 1916. Ishi was studied closely by anthropologists to help them understand Yana culture and language. He even guided them back to his ancestral homeland, at one point, identifying a campsite that nobody had seen in 80 years.

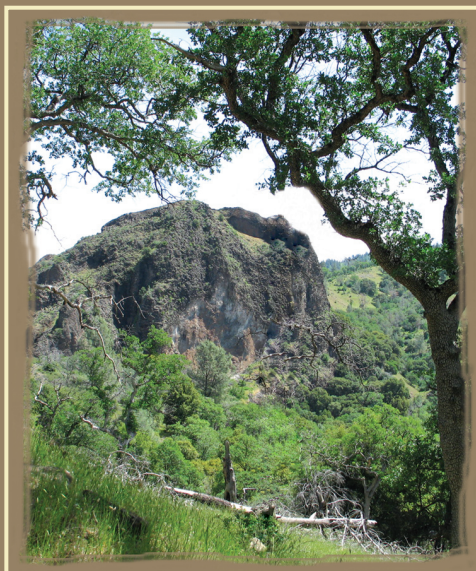
When Ishi died, his real name died with him because in his society it was taboo to say your own name. In 2000, members of local tribes were able to finally return his remains to an undisclosed location in the Ishi Wilderness, completing the circle of his life.



**Mile 21.7**

**Lat/Long 40° 11' 01"N,  
121° 42' 30"W**

Black Rock is the prominent rock near the bottom of the canyon where, for centuries, it served as a hunting camp. The forest understory of Himalayan black berry, box elder, mugwort, and California wild grape were sources of wildlife forage, while the oak and montane chaparral served as a screen for hunters. Valley oak, bay, foothill pine, western sycamore, and Fremont cottonwood provided shelter for many species, and food for both wildlife and humans.



*Black Rock*

Black Rock is volcanic plug dome, similar to Lassen Peak. As the feeding pipe or “throat” of a plug dome volcano cools, it remains under the pressure of the crust above it. This results in denser rock that is more resistant to erosion than the surrounding volcano cone.



*Mill  
Creek  
Trailhead*



**Mile 22.7**  
**Lat/Long 40° 11' 01"N,**  
**121° 42' 41"W**

Mill Creek is the northern trailhead into the Ishi Wilderness (mechanized and motorized equipment is not allowed). Historically, millions of salmon crowded the streams of the western Sierra Nevada each year. Today, dams and stream diversions prevent salmon from reaching their



*Mill Creek*

upstream spawning grounds. Mill, Deer, and Antelope Creeks are among a handful of streams that still support salmon runs for spring and fall-run Chinook and winter-run steelhead trout.

Black Rock Campground has five sites, a vault toilet, and tables overlooking Mill Creek, but no potable water.



*Peligreen OHV  
Trail and Tehama  
Wildlife Area  
Trailhead*



**Side Trip - OHV Trail**  
**Mile 30.3**  
**Lat/Long 40° 14' 04"N**  
**121° 46' 33"W**  
**Turn left at the intersection of FS 28N57 with FS 28N29 to begin the Peligreen Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) Trail. Or, continue straight to stay on the primary route.**

This OHV trail is a challenging driving experience. High clearance street level and non-street legal vehicles are welcome. *Stay on the trail – travel off the designated route is prohibited.*





*Peligreen OHV Trail Area*

The Peligreen OHV Trail follows the Mill Creek Canyon Rim for 10 miles to the Tehama State Wildlife Area. This section borders the Ishi Wilderness boundary and includes several unimproved campsites.

Spend the night at Black Oak Grove and enjoy an easy hike to Table Mountain, overlooking Mill Creek in the Ishi Wilderness.

Further along the OHV trail, you enter the Tehama State Wildlife Area - 46,862 acres of oak woodland, grassland and chaparral with rugged canyons that serve as winter range for black-tailed deer, wild boar, and turkeys. Travel may be restricted and the North Fork of Antelope Creek may be impassable during certain times of the year. Check with the Wildlife Area Office in Paynes Creek at (530) 597-2201 for more information. Camping is also available in the Tehama State Wildlife Area.

The Peligreen OHV Trail turns southwest on TR201, then north on TR107. Follow FS 28N24 north to Tehama County 774A.

***The California Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs recommends the following minimum requirements before you begin your side trip on the Peligreen OHV trail:***

- Roll bar, full cage, or factory installed hard top
- Parking brake or micro lock
- Tow strap or rope (recommend rated at 2 times the vehicle weight)
- Spare tire equal to, or within 3 inches of, existing tires on the vehicle (no temporary spares)
- Seat belts for all passengers
- Antenna(s) must not exceed 4'6" except when longer antennas/whips are required by certain areas
- Adequate attachment points front and rear (tow balls are not generally recommended)
- Jack and lug nut tool
- Battery hold downs (no bungee cords)

There is a low-water ford at the North Fork of Antelope Creek. During very wet winters, the water may be too high and swift for you to safely cross. You rejoin the primary route at mile 46.4, back on FS 28N29.

✦ **Continuing on FS 28N29 from the Peligreen OHV Trail, you will cross the south, middle, and north forks of Antelope Creek and wind your way to SR 36 (along Tehama County 232A). At this point you are 7.6 miles west of Mineral where you will find food, gas, lodging, and a private campground.**

✦ **Lassen Volcanic National Park headquarters is in Mineral, where you will find information on the Park and the Volcanic Legacy Scenic Byway (SR 89).**

### **Ponderosa Way**

For much of your journey through the Land of Ishi, you have been traveling on Ponderosa Way (FS 28N29). Originally called the “Ponderosa Way and Truck Trail,” it was one segment of a 700-mile fuel break that stretched from the Pit River in the north to Kings River in the south. It was built by



*Ponderosa CCC workers relax with their guitars and faithful companions*

the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s to limit the spread of catastrophic wildfire across the Cascade and Sierra Nevada ranges.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, Ponderosa Way was identified as a north-south route to get military personnel, vehicles and supplies through to the western states, should the Japanese invade the coastline. Many of the Sierra Nevada fire lookouts (such as McCarthy Point) were used to detect the approach of enemy planes from the west.

✦ **To continue on the Lassen Backcountry Byway, turn right onto SR 36 and go 6.2 miles to begin Section 3: “The Crossroads - A Land of Transformation.” Turn left onto SR 36 and you are 35.4 miles east of Red Bluff on Interstate 5.**



Or, you can take the Turner Mountain Loop described below.



↙ **Side Trip - Lookout**  
Mile 59.4  
Lat/Long 40° 20' 57"N,  
121° 37' 38"W

✦ **Battle Creek Campground**, just west of Mineral, is a great starting point for travel along the Turner Mountain Loop, including Turner



*On the Turner Mountain Loop*

**Mountain.** The Forest Service campground has 50 campsites, flush restrooms, potable water, and a small picnic area.



To begin the Turner Mountain Loop, go into the community of Mineral; turn right on SR 172 at the gas station and proceed to Mineral Summit, 2.1 miles. Turn right on FS 29N48 (gravel) and circle the mountain - a trip of 25 miles.



*Turner Mountain Lookout, circa 1930*



On the west side of Turner Mountain, you can turn right on FS 28N70 and go up the mountain for 3.8 miles to reach the lookout (6,893'). There are spectacular views of Mill Creek Canyon from the road and of Lassen Volcanic National Park from the top of the mountain.



Proceed toward the community of Mill Creek and follow the signs to Hole-in-the-Ground Campground on FS 28N06. Turn left on FS 28N06B to reach the campground.



The main road continues down the canyon to its end at the Mill Creek Trailhead, 4.8 miles after leaving the paved road.



**Side Trip - Hiking**  
This 13.1 mile non-motorized trail will take you down Mill Creek back to Black Rock DP 11.



Flannel bush



In winter, the Turner Mountain Loop is part of the Morgan Summit snowmobile trail system.

### The Largest Deer Herd in California

The Tehama deer herd is the largest migratory herd in the state, summering in the Lake Almanor area and in Ishi country year-round.

Archaeologists believe that this migratory pattern may have been used for 2,500 years. Using dental increments in deer teeth (much like tree rings), researchers believe the deer were hunted during the early spring and late fall, matching the same migration pattern that exists today.

