

## A Unique and Sensitive Place

The 2,077 acre Soldier Meadows Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) was designated to protect rare wildlife, plants and cultural resources. The popularity of the hot springs for recreation use caused impacts to these special resources. Camping and vehicle use combined with bathing and the introduction of chemicals into the springs took its toll on this sensitive ecosystem.

## Aquatic Life Abounds

Soldier Meadows is a spring fed wetland inhabited by fish and springsnails that do not live anywhere else. These animals were isolated from their ancestors when warming climates caused Lake Lahontan to dry up about 9,000 years ago.



*Desert Dace close up*

**Desert Dace** is a threatened fish species found only in the hot springs at Soldier Meadows. The fish live to be 1-3 years old and grow to approximately 2 inches. They prefer warmer waters of the large springs, but can also be seen alongside the common Speckled Dace in the cooler downstream waters.

The **Soldier Meadows Springsnails** were recently discovered and are among approximately 100 aquatic mollusks known only to exist in the Great Basin. There are several species of snails living in the springs at Soldier Meadows. The construction of rock dams to make hot pools for bathing destroys springsnail habitat.



*Hand covered with hundreds of tiny springsnails*

## Rare Wildflowers in a Desert Refuge

**Basalt Cinquefoil** is a low growing wildflower living on the gentle slopes and alkaline soils that surround the springs. The small yellow flowers bloom in abundance during May and June. Many of the existing roads and campsites caused negative impacts in Cinquefoil habitat.



*Basalt Cinquefoil in bloom (yellow flowers)*

## Reminders of the Past

The first people to use these springs have occupied the Great Basin for over 10,000 years. The Northern Paiute band in this region is called Aga'ipanadokado or "fish lake eaters."



*Examples of prehistoric projectile point*

The Native people used the plants, animals and rocks that you might see near these springs for food, fiber and tools. Stone artifacts are the reminders of their ancient culture and traditions. **Please respect their heritage and leave artifacts in place.**



*Northern Paiute Chief Ochoo in front of Paiute tule mat house*



*Wagon train family*

In the mid-nineteenth century, emigrant wagon trains also camped in great numbers around these springs allowing animals to graze after the arduous crossing of the Black Rock Desert. The springs must have been a welcome retreat from the harsh and monotonous dry lake bed.



*U.S. Cavalry ca 1865*

The U.S. Army built a cavalry post named Camp McGarry near Summit Lake to protect emigrants as they traveled along the Applegate Lassen Trail. Officer's quarters, mess barracks and a 100-horse stone barn were constructed at the current Soldier Meadows Ranch site around then. After the post was abandoned in 1868, various small ranches were started and operated by individuals who eventually sold out to the cattle barons Miller and Lux. Cattle ranching at Soldier Meadows Ranch continues to this day.