Names on the Range: Scientists and Science in the Naming of Sierra Nevada Features

Kenneth L. Taylor, Department of the History of Science, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK 73019, USA. ktaylor@ou.edu

Abstract: The Sierra Nevada, the highest mountain range in the western United States, is an inspiration for naturalists and scientists alike. The history of naming Sierra Nevada features reveals insights into the scientific, cultural, and personal motivations that inform our places. The first map of the Sierra Nevada was published in 1848, with names on the map selected as scientific eponyms for mountains, passes, ridges, streams, lakes, or meadows. S. P. Langley's expedition to the Sierra in 1881 drew national attention to the mountain range, which was subsequently named after the scientist. This paper highlights the names given to Sierra Nevada features by scientists and the science behind naming them.

Keywords: Sierra Nevada, naming, scientific eponyms, scientific names, place names, geomorphology, science and society.