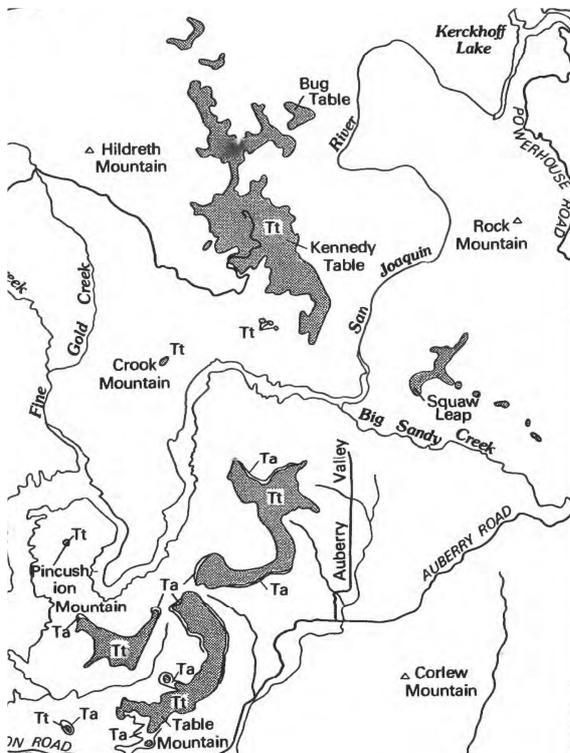


## MESAS IN CALIFORNIA?

By Larry Schemel, retired USGS scientist

### Chapter 4: Kennedy Table Mtn Complex

You can see the flat tops of mountains in the Kennedy Table complex a few miles to the east when you drive HWY41 towards Yosemite near the turnoff to North Fork. The complex comprises several lavaflow-topped mountains, both large and small.



This complex is different in many ways from both the Lovejoy Basalt flow and the flow that created Tuolumne Table. 10MY ago, a section of the lower San Joaquin River was flooded by a local eruption that was most likely centered somewhere among the remaining lava tables shown in the figure. Since the eruption, the area has been tilted by the rise of the Sierra Nevada block and the flow of San Joaquin River has broken and eroded through the lava flow. The river bed is now about 1800' below the top of the most northern Kennedy and Bug Tables. We will examine this in later chapters along with details of the unique trachyandesite lava that caps these table mountains.



In spring, the volcanic rubble of the table tops are covered with wildflowers, and a few vernal pools are welcoming to many bird species. There is public access to the area from the east side of the San Joaquin River. Search the internet for Big Table Mtn Ecological Reserve, McKenzie Table Mtn Preserve and the San Joaquin River Gorge BLM recreation area. Best hiking is in spring when temperatures are pleasant and there are fewer rattle "bugs". The next chapters will investigate the distinctive topography, geology and mineralogy of this area. The Kennedy Table Mtn Complex is south of the Mother Lode, yet it has a rich mining history for gold and other valuable minerals.