GREETINGS EVERYONE
I’ve just recently gotten back from a delightful trip to the “interior” of Alaska. I had fun seeing plants that ordinarily grow at 5000 feet plus elevations in our area growing and blooming at elevations ranging from 500 to 3000 feet.

I want to again remind those interested in our Rare Plant Treasure Hunt outings in July to contact me for further info and details. All of these trips will have a limited number of spaces and are strictly on a first come basis. We will be exploring some high elevation locations near and around the Sonora Pass area. Remember, if you are planning on attending one of our many field trips to contact the leader for any last minute changes or for additional information.

We are approaching the time when we need to start thinking about our officer positions for the next year. If you would like to be on the nominating committee, please let me know if you have a suggestion or wish to volunteer for a particular position. We will be forming the committee in July.

I want to mention a last reminder for our scheduled chapter planning meeting on Thursday, July 5, starting at 6:00 PM in the community room of the library on 480 Greenley Road in Sonora. This meeting is open to all members who would like to contribute to our planned activities for the next 12 months.

I hope you continue to have a great summer filled with lots of outdoor activities and that I’ll see you on one of our field trips!

--Bob Brown, President

SUMMER 2012 MEETING HIATUS
There will be no normal monthly meetings during the months of June, July and August. The “Shooting Star” Newsletter will be mailed as usual. See you at September’s monthly meeting.

We will have a Chapter planning meeting on Thursday, July 5, starting at 6:00pm in the community room of the Tuolumne County library on 480 Greenley Road, Sonora. (See the Presidents message for more information).<<<<<
Flowers Blooming This Month

Graced with marvelous weather, our group of 11 spent a pleasant, sometimes exciting day prowling for plants along Evergreen Road, just west of Yosemite. We spent the morning in the Carlon area, where we found a fine variety of flowering plants. The highlight, Mountain Lady’s Slippers (Cypripedium montanum), were in full bloom. Part of our group had a fine meal at Evergreen Lodge, while others enjoyed a picnic lunch along the flowery Middle Fork of the Tuolumne River, where we regrouped and explored a bit.

The day ended at Ackerson Meadow with little wildflower jewels like darling Sierra Downingia (Downingia montana), aromatic Mountain Bluecurls (Trichostema oblongum), and pretty Pansy Monkeyflowers (Mimulus pulchellus).

--Barry and Judy Breckling

A special thanks to Barry and Judy Breckling for helping with the July Newsletter.

For all field trips: bring lunch, water, sunscreen and appropriate clothing and footwear. Hiking level varies with each trip. Your trip will be enhanced by bringing field guides and magnifying lenses, although these are optional. Carpooling is encouraged. Call ahead if the weather looks iffy. Check http://www.twitter.com/SIE_CNPS for updates. Our field trips are open to everyone. Bring a friend or two. It is Chapter policy that pets are not allowed on our field trips. We would appreciate everyone’s adherence to this policy.

If you would like to be on our field trip alerts e-mail list, send an e-mail with the subject line “Field Trip e-mail List” to Jennie at jhaas953@gmail.com.

Steve Stocking’s June 3rd Calaveras Big Trees field trip was well attended by 10 Park docents and 6 CNPS members. They saw an abundance of wildflowers including Hartweg’s iris (Iris hartwegii), Striped Coral Root (Corallorhiza striata), harlequin lupine (Lupinus stiversii), and the very fragrant western azalea (Rhododendron occidentale). Thank you, Steve for once again providing an excellent excursion.

From Barry and Judy Brecking about their June 9th Evergreen Road Field Trip: (See story and pictures second column in the Flowers Blooming This Month section) >> Thank you Barry and Judy!

June 23 – Trail of the Gargoyles. NOTE: This trip might be cancelled. Call ahead to verify or check Twitter for update. Leader: Jennie Haas. Hiking level: moderate. Meet at 9:00 am at the back of the parking lot between the Sonora McDonalds and the new Kohl’s, in the Junction Shopping Center, in East Sonora. For more information, Contact Jennie at 209-962-4759, jhaas953@gmail.com.

July 7 – Clarks Fork Trail. Leader: Bob Brown. Hiking Level: moderate (elevation). We’ll start at 6,400 ft in Iceberg Meadow and will hike about 2 miles before turning around. We should find more than 60 blooming mid elevation species. Meet at 9:00 am in Twain Harte, at the side of Twain Harte Market Shopping Center’s parking lot closest to Highway 108. For more information, contact Bob at 209-928-9281 or rbrown4674@aol.com.

July 21 – Saint Mary’s Pass. Leader: Bob Brown. Hiking level: strenuous (high elevation, steep trail to top of pass). This is a steady climb with a one way distance of 1-1/2 to 2 miles (for a round trip distance of up to 4 miles). Timed to catch plants on the edge of melting snow patches, we should see a nice variety of alpine and sub-alpine plants ranging from orchids to elephant heads. Meet at 8:30 am in Twain Harte, at the eastern side of the parking lot in the Twain Harte Market Shopping Center. For more information, contact Bob at 209-928-9281 or rbrown4674@aol.com.

July 22 – Tuolumne Meadows. Leader: Alison Colwell. Hiking level: easy. Alison invites you to join her on a Yosemite National Park interpretive program and hike called Tiny Botanical Treasures of Tuolumne Meadows. A good number of our unique Sierran plant species are just knee-high to a grasshopper. Bring a hand lens and something to kneel on to enjoy these ‘belly plants’. The afternoon will begin at Parsons Memorial Lodge at 2:00 pm with a 30-minute presentation on the tiny (and some rare) plants found in and around Tuolumne. This will be followed by a ramble to nearby moist sites where everyone can get down on the ground and experience a safari in miniature. Allow 30 minutes walking time to the lodge from either Lembert Dome parking area or the Tuolumne Meadows Visitor Center. For more information, contact Alison at 240-997-5153.

Evergreen Road Field Trip: Looking at Mountain Lady Slipper.
SONORA PASS AND THE DARDANELLES, TUOLUMNE COUNTY

Join the Sierra Foothills Chapter of CNPS in a search for some very rare plants in the Stanislaus National Forest.

On the first day of this trip, we’ll search the Dardanelles for Jack’s wild buckwheat (Eriogonum luteolum var. saltatarium), which is only known from three populations, and no one has seen the plant since 1979! This first day will involve moderate hiking at around 7,000 ft. elevation. On our second day, we will head higher up the road to Sonora Pass, where we will search for the showy alpine dusty maidens (Chaenactis douglassii var. alpina) and the perennial subalpine cryptantha (Cryptantha crymophila). On this second day, we may split up based on the hiking abilities of participants, but everyone should be prepared to do some hiking around 10,000 ft. elevation.

Meet each day at 8am at the Junction Shopping Center off of Hwy 108, just east of Sonora. We’ll congregate between the Kohl’s and the McDonald’s for carpooling. Participants are welcome to camp at our campsite in the Dardanelles Campground on the nights of July 24th and/or 25th. Or you can just come out for a day trip. To RSVP for this trip or if you have any questions, contact the trip leader, Bob Brown at rbrown4674@aol.com.

A SPOTTY SPRING FOR WILDFLOWERS

Near San Andreas the Canchalagua (Zeltnera venusta) was abundant along West Murray Creek Road last spring. This year I searched the same stretch of road and found only one patch. This was quite typical. Some plants were as common as usual, others were much less common than others and the Chinese Houses (Collinsia heterophylla) were only a few inches tall. The winter was an odd one weather wise with long dry stretches followed by spurts of wet and cold weather.

Back on May 19th we decided to take a short trip up Highway 4 for lunch with a view. We stopped at the Dardanelles Scenic View and wandered off the road in the south-facing Red Fir Forest at about 7,000'. The Spreading Phlox was at its grandest covering large areas in the open between granite boulders. We checked the Bear Valley area but although most of the snow was gone there were no wildflowers. We returned to the same area on June 9th and found that the Phlox had faded but that some Mountain Pride (Penstemon newberryi) was flowering in rocky areas along the highway. When we checked Bear Valley and Lake Alpine we were able to find only one small patch of snow and no spring flowers.

On our field trip to Calaveras Big Trees State Park we found an abundance of flowers on June 4th. The Hartwig's Iris (Iris hartwegii) was in abundance in open forest and the Wild Ginger (Asarum hartwegii) was flowering where it was growing in the humus of the Sequoia grove. The Bride's Bonnet was not yet flowering in the same areas that Star Flower (Trientalis latifolia) was flowering abundantly. We looked for, but couldn't find, the Washington Lily (Lilium washingtonianum). Most of the small flowers of the volcanic soils on the "Scenic Overlook" had either not flowered or had already flowered. Last year there was more flowering in this area later in the month. Here we found a few dried-up flower heads of Red Sierra Onion (Allium obtusum) but not Stebbin's Lomatium (Lomatium stebbinsi). Tiny Madia (Hemizonella minima) was common but the tiny draba (Draba verna) which was so common last year was nowhere to be found. Scattered in patches along the road cut and in many other places were beautiful stands of Harlequin Lupine (Lupinus stiversii). I have wandered around this area for several recent springs and never seen as much. Bicolored Monkey Flower (Mimulus bicolor) and Brewers Lupine (Lupinus breweri) were in several locations on the parkway shoulder.

We didn't have too much time to spend at the end of the road at Beaver Creek but we did note the color and sweet odor of the Western Azalea (Rhododendron occidentale) which was just coming into flower. There were many shoots of the Phantom Orchid (Cephalanthera austinae) in bud but not in flower. A Pale Swallowtail butterfly was visiting a late flowering Snow Plant (Sarcodes sanguinea) Since we noted at least 50 species in flower there were too many to mention even in this "spotty year". I paraphrase; "any day in the field is better than the best day in front of the T.V. or computer screen".

--Steve Stocking: Education Chair

Editor's Note: Want to receive the Shooting Star by e-mail in full color? Send an e-mail to Jennie Haas <jhaas953@gmail.com> with e-mail Shooting Star in the subject line and your name and e-mail address typed out in the message.

--Conny Simonis, Editor
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