



# The Shooting Star

SIERRA FOOTHILLS CHAPTER

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

AUGUST 2018

## Field Trip Reports

We continue to find wildflowers in bloom in our local special places. While the spring flush of flowers is behind us, there are still plenty of summer flowers to be found at the higher elevations. This month's newsletter contains rundowns of recent field trips, including a couple from May and June that did not make it into the July newsletter.

**David Campbell** reports on the May 26 **Volunteer work day** in Yosemite Valley:

"Five CNPS members and local volunteers worked together to restore pollinator habitat at a historically disturbed site dominated by non-native invasive plants in Yosemite National Park. Under black oaks, we worked on the edge of Cook's Meadow next to the historic Ranger Club. We learned about native species for pollinator habitat restoration, non-native plants that threaten them, techniques for restoring habitat, and weeded around young native plants to help them establish. A focal point of the restoration is the showy milkweed, *Asclepias speciosa*, our most abundant milkweed in Yosemite Valley meadows, and a host plant for the imperiled monarch butterfly. The western population of monarch butterflies have experienced a 97% decline in the western population in the last 35 years, and are now under consideration for protection under the Endangered Species Act. Other species used to restore this site that we helped nurture include the gay penstemon (*Penstemon laetus*), a bumble bee favorite, west coast Canada goldenrod (*Solidago elongata*), a late season favorite of many pollinators with a long and prolific bloom, California thistle (*Cirsium occidentale* var. *californicum*), a beautiful thistle and swallowtail delicacy, great for poor soils and exposed sites from the foothills to mixed conifer forest, and many more!"

**David Campbell** reports on the June 10 field trip to the **Tuolumne Grove of Giant Sequoias**:

"Chapter delegates from the state-wide CNPS Chapter Council joined us on a trip to the Tuolumne Grove of Giant Sequoias. The Tuolumne Grove burned in the 2013 Rim Fire, and provides a good juxtaposition with the similarly sized and nearby Merced Grove, which has no recent fire history. Young sequoias which germinated from their serotinous cones following the fire were a treat to see. We saw 68 species along the trail, including blooming Washington lily, California cone flower, white veined wintergreen, Bridge's rose, striped coral root, and the floriferous monkeyflower. While the giants towered above, we made sure to look down low for the blooms at their feet."

*Thank you, David for leading these two activities!*



*Asclepias speciosa* blooming in Cook's Meadow in July 2017. Photo © Editor. (Plant was not blooming on work day.)

If you change your mailing or e-mail address, be sure to send a note to Jennie Haas. This will keep your newsletter on time!

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*Dedicated to the Preservation of  
California Native Flora.*

**Frank Rauchschalbe** reports on the June 23rd RPTH for *Eriogonum luteolum* var. *saltuarium*:

“The Rare Plant Treasure Hunt was successful in finding two small previously unknown populations west of Baker Station. Margaret Willits, Stanislaus National Forest botanist, joined us at the largest known site to check on the plants and tune our eyes to spotting them. This was not a good year for the annual, but the timing was right to see them blooming. Doug K. and Frank R. searched through the afternoon for new occurrences of this very rare plant species. The fact that more plants were quickly found means there are more out there. The mystery remains that there is a much larger specimen in the UC Berkeley / Jepson Herbarium than we are finding today.”

*Thank you, Frank, for leading this important effort to find more of this rare species!*



From left to right: front and side views of an open flower of *E. luteolum* var. *saltuarium*; whole plant view of one the the larger specimens seen on June 23, which received a small ablution from F.'s water bottle. Photos © Editor.

**Jennie Haas** reports on the June 30 field trip to **Bell Meadow**:

“A group of seven eager plant lovers enjoyed a pleasant afternoon of botanizing meadow and forest flowers. We found flowers right where we parked and all the way to the meadow. The big surprise was a patch of silk tassel (*Garrya fremontii*) along the road to the meadow. The meadow was in full bloom with a nice variety of wildflowers including the long-stalked clover (*Trifolium longipes*), Sierra shooting star (*Dodecatheon jeffreyi*), bistort (*Bistorta bistortoides*), and an unusual form of the primrose monkeyflower (*Mimulus primuloides*) which bedeviled several participants as they tried to determine which variety it was. A special thank you goes to Judy Breckling and Doug Krajnovich who worked hard to determine or verify the ID of all of the wildflowers observed. It was a great day!”



Left: Group studying an unusual growth form of *Mimulus primuloides*. Above: Uprooted specimen on 1/4 inch ruled pad. The “typical” form has leaves in a basal rosette. Photos © Jennie Haas & Editor.

## Upcoming Field Trip

We have one field trip scheduled in August. The Gaylor Lakes basin in Yosemite National Park is spectacular and highly recommended, and David Campbell is a very knowledgeable guide. We hope that you make time in your busy schedule to go.

**August 4<sup>th</sup> – Gaylor Lakes, Yosemite National Park.** Leader: David Campbell. Hiking Level: Arduous due to elevation. We got rained out last year, so we'll try again this year. Departing from the Tioga Pass entrance station in Yosemite National Park, this hike is a 3.6 miles round trip with about 800' of elevation gain and descent. The hike begins at around 10,000' elevation, so be prepared to be winded. Acclimating to elevation before the field trip is recommended. Crossing through lodgepole pine forest the trail leads to Gaylor Lakes and lovely meadows filled with many blooms to enjoy throughout. Space is limited, so RSVP is required. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Gaylor Lakes trailhead next to the Tioga Pass entrance station on Highway 120. If arriving from the east, no entrance fee is required if you park outside the gate and walk in. If coming from the west, a \$30 entrance fee is required. Carpooling is encouraged. Let David know if you're interested in carpooling when signing up. To RSVP or for more info, contact David at 612-867-8700, or [moonwort.campbell@gmail.com](mailto:moonwort.campbell@gmail.com).

**NOTE:** It is common for thunderstorms to develop after 11 a.m. in this area. If on the evening of August 2<sup>nd</sup>, the weather.gov forecast calls for a 70% or greater chance of thunderstorms after 11 a.m., we will reschedule the trip. If there is a 40-60% chance of thunderstorms forecasted, we will go ahead with the trip, but plan on getting off the trail by noon. If less than 40% chance, we'll go ahead with the hike and make a decision to turn around if storm clouds are developing. RSVP with David and he will contact you on August 2<sup>nd</sup>.

## What's Blooming?

### Note from the Editor:

With no summer meeting announcements, I knew that the August Shooting Star would need some "filler." I had planned to give a brief report on some late blooming wildflowers from my last visit to Hite Cove on July 7. Six days later, the Ferguson Fire erupted, only ¼ mile from the trailhead. It quickly consumed all of the area that I visited on July 7. As of today (July 19), it has passed 21,000 acres and is only 7% contained.

Wildfires are nothing new, but they are different when they strike close to home. Just within our chapter area, we had the Rim Fire in 2013; the Butte Fire in 2015; the Detwiler Fire in 2017; and now the Ferguson Fire. Each CNPS chapter has its own litany of disaster and recovery.

For me, Hite Cove was a sacred place – a botanical retreat that completely and effortlessly satisfied the stringent conditions laid down by John Muir: *"Everyone needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in where nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike."* For me, the Ferguson Fire is a temporary loss. The Hite Cove wildflowers will rise from the ashes. But for others, the fire is a threat to their actual homes. One firefighter lost his life in the early hours fighting the fire. I decided now is not the time to give a list of "what I saw blooming" on July 7.

I will close with another Muir quote, which may or may not offer consolation to those directly affected by the Ferguson Fire:

*"Nature is ever at work building and pulling down, creating and destroying, keeping everything whirling and flowing, allowing no rest but in rhythmical motion, chasing everything in endless song out of one beautiful form into another."*

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