



The Shooting Star

Publication of the

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY- SIERRA FOOTHILLS CHAPTER
INCLUDING AMADOR, CALAVERAS, TUOLUMNE AND MARIPOSA COUNTIES

Flowers Blooming in July



Elephant's Head (*Pedicularis groenlandica*)
Narrative and Photos: Bob Brown

This month's location is the Saint Mary's Pass trail, an area just to the west of Sonora Pass. The trail elevation starts at over 8000 feet and rises to over 10000 feet with a pretty steady and strenuous climb. The trail itself is relatively easy but the altitude makes it more difficult for those unaccustomed to higher elevations. It is easily accessible from SR 108 with a trailhead parking area.

We are scheduling a field trip there this summer that has had the date changed from July 9th to July 30th because of the excessive snow pack. I would invite you to plan on joining us to hopefully see some of these beautiful flowers in bloom and to help us see how many of the over 100 species on the trail that we can find on our outing.

Our first flower has a most unusual shape and is called Elephant's Head (*Pedicularis groenlandica*) and is a member of the figwort family (*Scrophulariaceae*). It is generally found in wet areas and can be found growing about half way to the top of the trail. The next flower is Eschscholtz's Buttercup (*Ranunculus eschscholtzii*) a member of the buttercup family (*Ranunculaceae*) and provides a striking splash of yellow color to the otherwise rocky area. The Woollypod Milkvetch (*Astragalus purshii*) which is a member of the pea family (*Fabaceae*) is one of two of its genus on this trail with each having a very distinctive seed pod. This one has seed pods that have a white "woolly" covering over their exterior. The bluish flower is shaped similar to other members of the pea family and because of its adaptation to the relatively short and harsh growing season you may be able to see the seed pods as well as fresh blooms on the same plant. Hopefully, this will be another location that you will explore at your own pace.



Eschscholtz's Buttercup (*Ranunculus eschscholtzii*)

You may check out Bob's website (TuolumneWildflowers.com) and the Locations/Blooms tab with maps, location descriptions and lists of what plants you may find at what times of the year.



Woolly-Pod Milkvetch (*Astragalus purshii*)

SUMMER 2011 MEETING HIATUS

We will not have our normal monthly meetings during the months of June, July and August. The Newsletter will be mailed during the summer as usual.
Have a great summer!

Editor's Note

The deadline for newsletter contributions or corrections is the 10th of each month prior to publishing.
Contact Conny Simonis at conny@simonis.org or (209) 588-0484

President's Message

Greetings to all!

A word of caution for all of you who are planning to participate in one of our field trips is that you should check with the contact person and our website or Facebook page to check on whether the date and details are still correct several days prior to the scheduled date. We have had to change a number of our field trips because of the weather conditions and the snow levels at some of the higher elevations that have all combined to make access and blooming periods later than normal.

Remember to reserve Saturday, September 10th for this year's Growing Natives Seminar which has been expanded to an entire day with a lunch. We will have a flyer with more details regarding speakers, topics, and schedule that will be mailed during July. We are still looking for more volunteers to help the day of the event so call me if you are willing to help.

I am still looking for good program ideas so please contact me with any of your thoughts for interesting programs and remember that our next meeting won't be until September.

Hopefully we'll continue to have more typical weather so that you can better enjoy your outdoor summer activities and I hope to see you on one of our field trips!

--Bob Brown, President



Western Dogwoods (*Cornus nuttallii*)

JUNE SHOWERS BRING MAY FLOWERS

Here it is the first week of June and it is raining and snowing again. I just checked out Calaveras Big Trees State Park and the Western Dogwoods (*Cornus nuttallii*) have just started to flower, a few Snow Plants (*Sarcodes sanguinea*) are popping up and the only wildflowers that I could locate were a few on volcanic gravel on an exposed south facing slope! Great stands of red sierra onion (*Allium obtusum* var *obtusum*) in that sunny, but cold area. More rain is scheduled for the upcoming weekend and that may help melt the remaining snowdrifts at 5,000 feet. This is by no means a typical spring. Typical rainfall here in San Andreas is 25 inches but this year we have already had over 40 inches. The distribution of the rainfall has been weird as well with a dry April followed by a wet May. The shrubs and flowering trees of lower elevations are still in bloom. Bush Monkey Flower (*Diplacus aurantiacus*), Bush Mallow (*Malacothamnus fremontii*), Chaparral Currant (*Ribes malvaceum* var *malvaceum*), Chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), Buckeye (*Aesculus californica*) and Mountain Elderberry (*Sambucus caerulea* var *caerulea*) have all been in their glory after most herbaceous plants have ceased to bloom.

It is no wonder that the wildflower year has been unpredictable. Those species which thrive in wet areas such as Monkey Flower (*Mimulus guttatus* var *guttatus* and Meadowfoam (*Limnanthus* spp.) have had a long and often spectacular season. The Western Dogwoods (*Cornus nuttallii*) have been late to start their flowering but are now outdoing themselves. The weedy Rough Cat's Ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*) has had a banner year in mowed and grazed fields. An article from April in the San Francisco Chronicle predicted a poor wildflower year because the rains encouraged the spreading root system of the competing introduced grasses. This was true in some areas but in and around vernal pools and on extreme soils such as serpentine, when those grasses don't do well, the natives had a good year.

Brodiaeas also did not have a big year, possibly again because they often grow with the grasses. This was obvious in my "lawn" which is really just weedy grasses which we mow on occasion. The White Brodiaea (*Triteleia hyacinthina*) and Harvest Brodiaea (*Brodiaea elegans* var *elegans*) were not as common as usual in the grassy areas but were abundant in the garden areas where we remove the weedy grasses.

The Twining Brodiaea (*Dichelostemma volubile*) has not flowered at all this year in our garden although it had been quite common in shady areas in prior years. This seemed to illustrate that the grasses did have an advantage in this very wet year. These observations also illustrate that each species has its own set of characteristics and so reacts differently to environmental change.

--Steve Stocking, Education Chair



Twining Brodiaea (*Dichelostemma volubile*), also called "Twining Snakelily".

Membership: If you change your mailing or e-mail address, be sure to send a notice to: Jennie Haas, 19287 James Circle, Groveland, 95321 or e-mail to jhaas953@gmail.com (209-962-4759); and California Native Plant Society, 2702 K. St., Ste. 1, Sacramento, CA 95816. This will keep your Newsletter on time and save postage. Non-member subscription: \$6.50/year.

Dedicated to the Preservation of California native flora

BOTANIC EXPLORATION AT THE TUOLUMNE COUNTY SCHOOLS

It's good to report that botanic exploration is thriving in Tuolumne County Schools. If this year's County Science Fair at the Tuolumne County Fairgrounds, is any indication. We spent the day judging the projects and it was difficult to choose from among the many excellent entries. Here are our selections for the Sierra-Foothills CNPS winners.

5th grade-Weston Goularte, Columbia Elementary, "Combinations of Dirt=Growth".

6th grade-Emma Williams, Tenaya Elementary, "Sprout Faster Now".

7th grade-Patrick McConnell, Curtis Creek Elementary, Farmer Roy G. Biv, Light & Photosynthesis".

8th grade- Heidi McAdams, Tenaya Elementary, "Healthy Water=Healthy Plants".

Congratulations to the winners!

FIELD TRIPS

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 our website and Facebook pages or 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.

The **May 14** Trumbull Peak field trip was threatened with rain but the rain held off. It was a great day with 13 members and guests visiting this beautiful knife-edge, rocky ridge full of wildflowers, overlooking the Merced River canyon. Among the many plants seen that day were the yellow pincushion (*Chaenactis glabriuscula* var. *glabriuscula*), Pacific sedum (*Sedum spathulifolium*), and the uncommon Mariposa phacelia (*Phacelia vallicola*).

The unusually wet and cold spring slowed down the blooming of plants at the 4,500 feet elevation and above. So little was in bloom in early June at the upper elevations that the June 5th Calaveras Big Trees field trip was cancelled. We've moved around a couple of other trips to try to hit good blooms in light of the weather pattern this year.

We've moved the **Shuteye Peak** field trip date again. We're hoping that a new date in **early July** will prove to be the right one in terms of access and bloom. Contact leader Joanna Clines for the new date and to RSVP, if you haven't already contacted her: jjclines@sti.net or 559-760-3618 (cell) or 559-877-2218, ext. 3150 (office). We'll also post the date on Twitter and Facebook as soon as it is settled.

June 25 - **Long John Meadow**. Leader: Scott Brush. Hiking level: moderate. This meadow near Cherry Lake, Stanislaus National Forest, underwent a gully rehab project two years ago. The meadow has been fenced to allow time to heal with amazing results. If time allows, we'll also visit nearby John's Meadow and Boggy Meadow

for more botanical highlights. From Sonora, meet at 8:30a.m. at the back of the parking lot between the Sonora McDonalds and the new Kohl's, on Mono Way, in the Junction Shopping Center, in East Sonora. From Groveland, meet 8:30a.m. at the Groveland Library parking lot. Both groups will meet at about 9:30 at the intersection of Cottonwood Road and Forest Road 3N01S, just east of Reed Creek. For more information contact Scott at 209-962-7825 ext. 553 (leave message) or 209-962-5291 (evenings).

July 1 - "Dicentra Day" at Sequoia National Forest & Kings Canyon National Park. Leader: Steve Stocking. Hiking Level: Easy. There are six native species in the Genus *Dicentra* in California. Join Steve on this visit of four species of these interesting members of the poppy family, including steer's head (*D. uniflora*), bleeding heart (*D. formosa*), the uncommon Tulare County bleeding heart (*D. nevadensis*), and possibly golden ear-drops (*D. chrysantha*). There is a possibility of seeing the rare purple mountain-parsley (*Oreonana purpurascens*) as well. Contact Steve for directions and to RSVP, before June 29th: 209-754-9029 or snlsox@earthlink.net; after June 29th: 559-335-2464.

July 23-24 - Sweetwater Mountains. Leader: Pat Stone. Hiking level: moderate (high elevation). The Sweetwater Mountains offer an interesting mix of Sierra Nevada and high desert, basin and ranges habitats and plants. This botanical excursion will include an overnight, primitive camping experience with a potluck dinner Saturday night. Bring enough water for drinking, cooking, etc. Don't want to camp? Come for a long day and head home when you want to. Meet at 8:30a.m. at the back of the parking lot between the Sonora McDonalds and the new Kohl's, on Mono Way, in the Junction Shopping Center, in East Sonora. For more information, contact Pat at 209-984-0304, patmstone@gmail.com.

DATE CHANGE: July 30 - 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). We should see a nice variety of alpine and sub-alpine plants ranging from orchids to elephant heads. Meet at 8:30a.m. 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. 209-962-5291 (evenings).



Mariposa phacelia at Trumbull Peak.
Photo: J.Haas



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