



# The Shooting Star

SIERRA FOOTHILLS CHAPTER

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

JULY 2020

## *A new thought with every petal*

[The following is an excerpt from a remarkable speech that Rachel Carson gave to the Sorority of Women Journalists in 1954. -Editor]

“Years ago I discovered in the writings of the British naturalist Richard Jeffries a few lines that so impressed themselves upon my mind that I have never forgotten them. May I quote them for you now?

*The exceeding beauty of the earth, in her splendor of life, yields a new thought with every petal. The hours when the mind is absorbed by beauty are the only hours when we really live. All else is illusion, or mere endurance.*

“Those lines are, in a way, a statement of the creed I have lived by, for, as you have seen tonight, a preoccupation with the wonder and beauty of the earth has strongly influenced the course of my life.

“Since *The Sea Around Us* was published, I have had the privilege of receiving many letters from people who, like myself, have been steadied and reassured by contemplating the long history of the earth and sea, and the deeper meanings of the world of nature... In contemplating ‘the exceeding beauty of the earth’ these people have found calmness and courage. For there is symbolic as well as actual beauty in the migration of birds; in the ebb and flow of the tides; in the folded bud ready for the spring. There is something infinitely healing in these repeated refrains of nature – the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter.

“Mankind has gone very far into an artificial world of his own creation. He has sought to insulate himself, with steel and concrete, from the realities of earth and water. Perhaps he is intoxicated with his own power, as he goes farther and farther into experiments for the destruction of himself and his world. For this unhappy trend there is no single remedy – no panacea. But I believe that the more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we will have for destruction.”

## **Inside this issue...**

- Shelly Davis-King shares some beautiful native plants from her yard in Tuolumne County.
- Frank Rauchschalbe reports on a mid-June walk to Boulder Lake.
- Your editor shares four *very red* wildflowers from his long-awaited Return to Yosemite, and calls your attention to a wonderful (old) nature anthology that he discovered only recently.

## **Accompanying this issue...**

David Campbell has prepared a 10-page article entitled “Growing a Native Plant Garden from Seed in the Sierra Nevada Foothills.” David’s article was e-mailed with the July Shooting Star as a separate PDF file. It will also be archived on our website under the Gardening with Natives tab:

[www.sierrafoothillscnps.org/gardening/](http://www.sierrafoothillscnps.org/gardening/)

The Sierra Foothills Membership Coordinator position is currently vacant. If you change your mailing or e-mail address, please inform the CNPS state organization in Sacramento so that the change(s) are recorded.

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*Dedicated to the Preservation of  
California Native Flora.*

## Shelly Davis-King (Tuolumne County)

TOP LEFT: “We have Deergrass (*Muhlenbergia rigens*) all over. I bought the ones in the front from CNPS; the ones in the back from the Tuolumne Me-Wuk native plant nursery. These beauties have been in for 10 years. Surrounding it are the dregs of a lupine that I think is *Lupinus microcarpus* ssp. *densiflorus*. (I bought the seeds before I knew how many lupines there are.) There would be an absolute sea of yellow if we didn’t pull them by the hundreds every spring. TOP RIGHT: I planted Purple Milkweed (*Asclepias cordifolia*) from seed that I obtained from a CNPS member. We have about 20 plants in our yard now. They support the Monarch! BOTTOM LEFT: I planted the Bush Anemone (*Carpenteria californica*) in 2010. I thought it would be a little bush. Now we have to redesign our deck stairs. It is glorious every year.” Photos © Shelly Davis-King

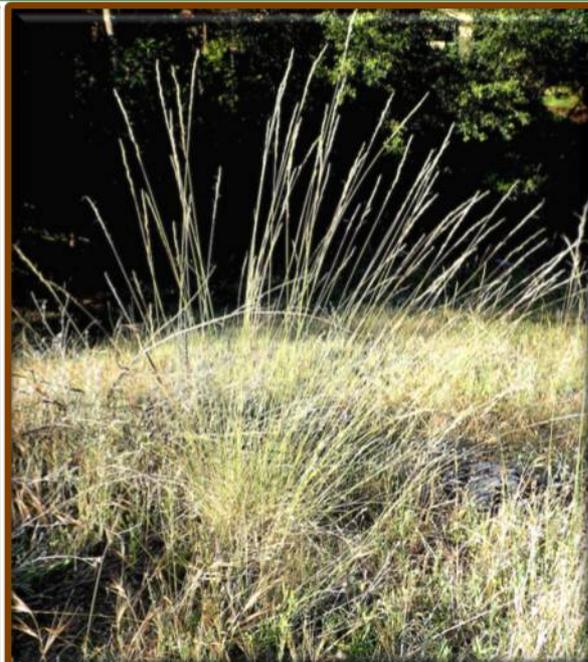
Editor’s note: *Carpenteria californica* is listed by the State of California as Threatened. It has California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2. The Calfora map at lower right shows its native range.



## Frank Rauchschalbe (Tuolumne County)

“My first two plants are from a June 12 walk to Boulder Lake in the Clark Fork watershed off of Rt. 108. TOP: Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) is a circumboreal aquatic species that lines the edges of Boulder Lake at 7,300 ft. It was just starting to bloom on June 12. Two years ago I was treated to the antics of a river otter on a floating log seen from the same vantage point. BOTTOM LEFT: I found Mountain Tansy Mustard (*Descurainia incana*), a native mustard, growing in the understory of Jeffery pines in sandy granitic soils at around 6,500 ft. It looked like it might be an invasive, so I brought a sample home for keying. BOTTOM RIGHT: In an empty lot in my Sonora neighborhood at 2,800 ft., I found *Stipa occidentalis*, a lonely native bunchgrass with disarticulating fruits, growing among practically solid invasive annual grasses. Stipas have single flowered spikelets, and are known for their long fragile lemma awns. This species has awns about 3 cm long, but some like *S. comata* can have 20 cm awns.”

Photos © Frank Rauchschalbe



### *Home away from home*

“Your editor, like many people, jumped into action as soon as Yosemite re-opened on a limited basis. I obtained a wilderness permit using the new on-line system since walk-in permits are no longer being issued. I am happy to report that the remote system – including a GoToMeeting with a Ranger to review Wilderness Rules & Regulations – worked without a hiccup. My nephew and I took a trip in mid-June spanning the elevation range 4,000–9,200 ft. Wildflowers were good at the low end of this range; glorious in the middle; just getting started at the high end. Of the many species that were blooming, I chose four *red beauties* to share.”



TOP LEFT: Scarlet or Beaked Penstemon (*P. rostriflorus*) from Plantain family; TOP RIGHT: Crimson Columbine (*Aquilegia formosa*) from Buttercup family; BOTTOM LEFT: Snow Plant (*Sarcodes sanguinea*) from Heath family; BOTTOM RIGHT: Scarlet Monkeyflower (*Erythranthe cardinalis*) from Lopseed family. (Photos © Doug K.)

## *The Book of Naturalists* (a recommendation from your editor)

Recently, while reading up on Rachel Carson, I came across a remarkable natural history anthology entitled *The Book of Naturalists*, edited by William Beebe. This book was originally published by Alfred A. Knopf in 1944. I bought a used copy of the 1988 paperback published by Princeton University Press. If you enjoy good nature writing, I warmly recommend this anthology. Beebe includes selections from forty-five naturalists, beginning with Aristotle and ending with Rachel Carson. (The Carson selection is “Odyssey of the Eel,” from her first and favorite book *Under the Sea-wind*.) In between Aristotle and Carson there are many familiar names – Thoreau, Muir, Burroughs, Humboldt, Darwin, Wallace, Huxley, &c. – but I was surprised to find more than twenty authors whose names I did not recognize. Here is a list of some wonderful pieces by these less familiar names – all of whom knew how to *write* as well as they knew how to *observe*:

<b>Author</b>	<b>Selection</b>	<b>Source</b>
Charles Waterton	“The Sloth”	<i>Wanderings in South America</i> (1825)
Thomas Belt	“Driver Ants”	<i>The Naturalist in Nicaragua</i> (1874)
W. L. Hudson	“Patagonia Memories”	<i>The Naturalist in La Plata</i> (1892) <i>Idle Days in Patagonia</i> (1893)
William Wheeler	“The Termitodoxa”	<i>Foibles of Insects and Men</i> (1928)
John Farrer	“Chagola”	<i>On the Eaves of the World</i> (1917)
Carl Akeley	“Elephant Friends & Foes”	<i>In Brightest Africa</i> (1923)
Gustav Eckstein	“Two Lives”	<i>Lives</i> (1932)
S.A. & M.L. Ionides	“Looking Forward”	<i>Stars and Men</i> (1933)
Donald C. Peattie	“The Seeds of Life”	<i>Flowering Earth</i> (1939)
Gilbert C. Klingel	“In Defense of Octopuses”	<i>Inagua</i> (1940)

Each author describes his subject(s) with scientific rigor, yet inspires in the reader a sense of wonder that rarely surfaces in textbooks. There is probably no living thing that I feel **less** affinity for than an eel, but after reading Rachel Carson’s “Odyssey of the Eel,” I had a tingling respect for these amazing creatures. I harbor less prejudice against octopuses, yet I was deeply affected by Klingel’s passionate defense of these animals:

“I feel about octopuses – as Mark Twain did about the devil – that someone should undertake their rehabilitation... I propose that the octopuses, and their near relatives the squids, are among the most wonderful of all earth’s creatures, and as such are deserving of our respect, if not admiration.”

While most of the selections in this anthology deal with animals, the ones by Farrer and Peattie have botanical themes. Here is an excerpt from Peattie’s description of fertilization in flowering plants:

“From the moment of pollination, when the grain arrives at the stigma, to fertilization, when the tube has reached the ovule, the growth of the pollen tube may be swift, as in our common stone fruits, when the act takes as little as nine hours. In pines and oaks, it is a matter of many months; in some of the cycads, of years.

“Then when the tube has reached and penetrated the ovule, the male pro-embryo and female pro-embryo meet. Their nuclei fuse, their chromosomes combine, mingling the dual heredity of all things born of sex. So the new life is conceived. The seed is set. The ovary grows great with it, the petals and stamens withering away from its crescent new estate.

“So and so only is life created, by some spark from the burning brand of the old generation just touching and quickening the embryonic next. So and so only arises the wonderful, the fearful individuality of life’s children, some forever destined to be less than the blood that made them, some to exceed it, all to struggle with their environment.”

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