Farewell to Spring

When I checked on May 23, central Sierra Nevada (SN) precipitation was at 48% of average (18.3 in.). The southern SN is at 35% (9.6 in.) – even lower than 1976-77, the driest water year on record. Given these facts, I am not surprised that wildflowers are struggling; I am surprised that many are doing as well as they are.

Karen Orso continues her excellent reporting from the northern end of our chapter area, with highlights from two May visits to Big Trees State Park (p. 2) – which straddles Calaveras and Tuolumne Counties – plus two other Calaveras County locations (p. 3). I paid my monthly visit to Hite Cove on May 17 and found 102x species in bloom – almost the same number as on April 15, but with lots of turnover (54x new sp. appeared, 55x old sp. disappeared). A hundred is below average for Hite Cove in May, but enough to keep one busy as a bee from sunrise to sunset. I prepared another Hite Cove puzzle for those who have not lost interest (pp. 4-6). Answers to the April puzzle are given on p. 7. I visited Yosemite on May 18 and saw a nice selection of wildflowers along the Four Mile Trail and at the Fen. Hite Cove becomes somewhat of an endurance test in June because of the heat, but Big Trees and Yosemite are excellent June choices for Do-It-Yourself botanizing expeditions. – Editor
Calaveras Big Trees State Park straddles Calaveras & Tuolumne counties. The park entrance is on Hwy. 4 just east of Arnold. Plants (a), (d), (g) were observed on May 9 on the Lava Bluffs Trail; (b), (c), (e) on May 17 on the South Grove trail; (f) on May 17 at the Beaver Creek Picnic area and other park locations.

(a) *Phacelia vallicola* aka Mariposa Phacelia.
(b) *Corallorhiza striata* aka Striped Coralroot Orchid. This orchid has a symbiotic relationship with mycorrhizae which explains the total absence of green coloration.
(c) *Pterospora andromedea* aka Pinedrops. A mycoheterotroph closely related to Snow Plant.
(d) *Prosartes hookeri* aka Drops of Gold. A perennial with greenish twin flowers hidden under the leaves.
(e) *Pleuricospora fimbriolata* aka Fringed Pinesap. These plants were just emerging and really looked more like fungi than flowering plants.
(f) *Sarcodes sanguinea* aka Snow Plant.
(g) *Asarum hartwegii* aka Wild Ginger. You have to peek under the leaves to find the flowers (inset).

Photos © Karen Orso
More Calaveras County Wildflowers
by Karen Orso

Plants (h), (i) were observed on May 6 on BLM land along the Middle Fork of the Mokelumne River at 2,600' elevation; (j), (k), (l) were observed on May 7 on rhyolite talus near Esperanza Creek at about 2,600' elevation; (m) was observed along Esperanza Creek and tributary on May 7.

(h) *Darmera peltata* aka Umbrella Plant (or Indian Rhubarb). This perennial grows along creeks. The flowers appear before the umbrella-sized leaves.

(i) *Trillium angustipetalum*.

(j) *Diplacus kelloggii* aka Kellogg's Monkeyflower.

(k) *Githopsis pulchella* aka Largeflower Bluecup. I witnessed an amazing mass display of this species.

(l) *Comandra umbellata* aka Bastard Toadflax.

(m) *Limnanthes alba* aka White Meadowfoam.

Photos © Karen Orso
May Hite Cove Wildflowers –
presented in the form of a puzzle, for children and adults
Prepared by Doug Krajnovich

54. Other species use the common name “Farewell to Spring,” but at Hite Cove, I am THE ONE. Note that my ovary has 8 grooves (inset).

55. Monarch butterflies adore me. If you cut me, I bleed (latex). My fruits are pods packed with seeds wrapped in silky parachute filaments.

56. I am a vine. My tiny flowers produce clusters of edible fruit.

57. I am thriving this year, esp. in the yellow trail section. My “flowers” are composite: – disk flowers and rays.

58. I am a small tree with a delightful citrusy scent. Look (or sniff) for me in the red and blue trail sections.

59. I am a relative of #54 and my flowers are roughly the same size. I occur sparingly on the red trail.

60. I am a thriving member of the chaparral community. I got a big boost from the Ferguson Fire.

61. I occur at low abundance along the red trail. My opposite leaves and square stem give you a hint as to which family I belong to.

62. I am a very abundant Hite Cove wildflower. Use my bracts (inset) to rule out a non-native species with similar-looking flowers.

All of the flowers in this puzzle were photographed on May 17, 2021. Numbering picks up where the April puzzle left off. See February puzzle for a map with color codes to red-yellow-orange-blue trail sections. An answer key will accompany the next Newsletter.
63. I’ll add “spice” to your life if you explore the blue and red trail sections.

64. My family fared poorly this year on account of the drought. I did my best to produce a few flowers for you to admire.

65. I am the #1 chaparral shrub at Hite Cove. My cream-colored flowers have five petals and a pleasant scent.

66. Look for my dangling pitcher-shaped flowers in the blue and orange trail sections.

67. I am the only member of my genus that grows at Hite Cove. The square nectary at the bottom of each petal will help you guess the correct species.

68. I am one of five members of my genus in this month’s puzzle. Not the most abundant, but I do think I am the most elegant.

69. I am easy to overlook until May and June, when I am decked out in tall white candles.

70. The Ferguson Fire signaled my seeds to germinate. I live for a few years, then die, while my seeds lie dormant, waiting for the next fire.

71. Most members of my family have yellow or white flowers. I “buck” the trend by dressing in pink. Locally abundant at the top of Pinoche Ridge.
May Hite Cove Wildflowers (cont’d.)

72. I have the largest flowers of all plants in the Jepson Manual. You will find a big patch where the orange trail starts behind Cedar Lodge.

73. I resemble #59 but my flowers are smaller – about the size of a nickel – and the dark spots extend to the edges of my petals.

74. I am a showy non-native with a spike inflorescence. I have established a strong presence along Hwy. 140.

75. I am a relative of #55 with deep red flowers and leaves that are as soft as velvet. You are most likely to encounter me in the yellow trail section.

76. Like #74, I am non-native. My petals have black spots along the edges, and my leaves have tiny “spots” that look like “windows” on the back side.

77. No one calls me “Farewell to Spring,” but I am just as deserving of the name. When I appear, spring is almost done.

78. My cute little flowers are hard to put into words – distinct from all other Hite Cove species.

79. My white flowers have green spots, making me one of the easiest members of my genus to ID to species.

80. I am fairly abundant along the orange trail, but my flowers and fruits are so small that you might overlook me.
Answers to April Puzzle

NOTE: All except 32, 51, 53 are included in *Yosemite Wildflowers* by Judy & Barry Breckling.

31. Common Madia (*Madia elegans*) in the Sunflower family (*Asteraceae*).
32. Blue Fiesta Flower (*Pholistoma auritum*) in the Borage family (*Boraginaceae*).
33. Twining Snake Lily (*Dichelostemma volubile*) in the Brodiaea family (*Themidaceae*).
34. Bush Lupine (*Lupinus albilors ssp. alfifrons*) in the Legume family (*Fabaceae*).
35. Indian Pink (*Silene laciniata ssp. californica*) in the Pink family (*Caryophyllaceae*).
36. Pipestem (*Clematis lasiantha*) in the Buttercup family (*Ranunculaceae*).
37. Sulphur Pea (*Lathyrus sulphureus*) in the Legume family (*Fabaceae*).
38. Mustang Clover (*Leptosiphon montanus*) in the Phlox family (*Polemoniaceae*).
39. Pretty Face (*Triteleia ixioides*) in the Brodiaea family (*Themidaceae*).
40. Blazing Star (*Mentzelia crocea*) in the Stickleaf family (*Loasaceae*).
41. Mountain Jewelflower (*Streptanthus tortuosus*) in the Mustard family (*Brassicaceae*).
42. California Thistle (*Cirsium occidentale var. californicum*) in the Sunflower family (*Asteraceae*).
43. Liveforever (*Dudleya cymosa*) in the Stonecrop family (*Crassulaceae*).
44. Pacific Hound's Tongue (*Cynoglossum grande*) in the Borage family (*Boraginaceae*).
45. Fairy Lantern or White Globe Lily (*Calochortus albus*) in the Lily family (*Liliaceae*).
46. Glassy Onion (*Allium hyalinum*) in the Onion family (*Alliaceae*).
47. Birch-leaf Mountain Mahogany (*Cercocarpus betuloides*) in the Rose family (*Rosaceae*).
48. Western Wallflower (*Erysimum capitatum*) in the Mustard family (*Brassicaceae*).
49. Chinese Houses (*Collinsia heterophylla*) in the Plantain family (*Plantaginaceae*). Tincture Plant (*C. tinctoria*) looks similar except that its “freckles” appear on the lip instead of the banner. At Hite Cove, Tincture Plant appears later than Chinese Houses, although there is some overlap. On my April visit, I only saw Chinese Houses.
50. Spear-leaved Agoseris (*Agoseris retrorsa*), a ligulate member of the Sunflower family (*Asteraceae*). If you only see oversized, dandelion-like seed heads, check the basal leaves to see if they match *retrorsa*.
51. Leafy Daisy (*Erigeron foliosus*) in the Sunflower family (*Asteraceae*).
52. Dense-flower Owl's Clover (*Castilleja densiflora*) in the Broomrape family (*Orobanchaceae*). The sister plant mentioned in the clue is Purple Owl's Clover (*C. exserta*). Both occur at Hite Cove. You need to look closely at the corolla to tell them apart.
53. Two-petaled or California Ash (*Fraxinus dipetala*) in the Olive family (*Oleaceae*).
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<td>(612) 867-8700</td>
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<td>Stephanie Garcia</td>
<td>586-3593</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sjgarcia@mlode.com">sjgarcia@mlode.com</a></td>
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<td>Pat Gogas</td>
<td>586-9043</td>
<td><a href="mailto:pfgogas@yahoo.com">pfgogas@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Bob Dean</td>
<td>754-5887</td>
<td><a href="mailto:goldrushdean@yahoo.com">goldrushdean@yahoo.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>FIELD TRIP COORDINATOR</td>
<td>David Campbell</td>
<td>(612) 867-8700</td>
<td><a href="mailto:moonwort.campbell@gmail.com">moonwort.campbell@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROWING AREA MGR.</td>
<td>Stephanie Garcia</td>
<td>586-3593</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sjgarcia@mlode.com">sjgarcia@mlode.com</a></td>
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<td>Melissa Booher</td>
<td>(918) 285-6544</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ellenbooher@gmail.com">ellenbooher@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEWSLETTER EDITOR</td>
<td>Doug Krajnovich</td>
<td>580-4595</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dkran@comcast.net">dkran@comcast.net</a></td>
</tr>
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<td>Stephanie Garcia</td>
<td>586-3593</td>
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