In this issue…

– Karen Orso shares April favorites from two popular Tuolumne County locations: Red Hills ACEC near Chinese Camp, and Table Mountain off of Shell Road in Jamestown. Her photographs were taken between April 5 and 21.

– Your editor supplies an April Hite Cove Wildflower Puzzle, and answers to the March puzzle. All pictures in the April puzzle were taken on April 15.

NOTE: By the time you receive this Newsletter, the situation at all locations will have changed dramatically. Even in wet years, the wildflower assortment changes daily in April and May. Drought shortens the bloom window of many plants (esp. annuals), and convinces others to skip the year entirely. Even when the landscape looks parched, and the grass crackles underfoot, there are interesting plants waiting to greet you, if you have the patience to hunt for them at low abundance. Pay extra attention to seeps and ditches that are still wet (or were recently wet), or move to higher elevation. Use the drought to learn some of the indefatigable, never-say-die species.
April Highlights from Red Hills ACEC
Photos © Karen Orso

CW from upper-left: Spectacular display of Bitterroot (*Lewisia rediviva*) on April 5; close-up of one flower; Crater Onion (*Allium cratericola*) on April 5; Rawhide Onion (*Allium tuolumnense*) [CRPR 1B.2] on April 21; Shaggyhair Lupine (*Lupinus spectabilis*) [also 1B.2] on April 5.
April Highlights from Table Mountain
Photos © Karen Orso

CW from upper-left: (a) Vernal Pool at west end of table; (b) Lupinus stiversii; (c) Triteleia lilacina; (d) Downingia cuspidata; (e) Diplacus tricolor. NOTE: Photos (a) thru (d) were taken on April 8, 2021. (e) is a historical photo from April 5, 2017. (Karen Orso did not find this monkeyflower blooming in 2018, 2019, or 2021.)
April Hite Cove Wildflowers – 
presented in the form of a puzzle, for children and adults
Prepared by Doug Krajnovich

31. I don’t always have the maroon bull’s-eye; but when I do, you can’t miss!

32. I grow in masses in damp, shady places. My foliage may stick to your clothes.

33. I’ll climb up anything I can get my tendrils on. Come to think of it, I don’t have tendrils. How do I do it?

34. I’m the only Hite Cove lupine that is a woody shrub. I do well in drought years thanks to my deep roots.

35. Even though I’m crimson red, they put me in the “Pink” family. Go figure.

36. I can out-climb #33. You’ll find me popping up in all kinds of places.

37. My orange flowers and deep green leaves bring out the pea-shooting paparazzi… but I don’t mind.

38. Usually a major April wildflower, I am struggling this year on account of the drought, along with other annuals.

39. You won’t have to work hard to find me – my bright flowers are as big as a quarter.

All of the flowers in this puzzle were photographed on April 15, 2021. Numbering picks up where the March 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.
April Hite Cove Wildflowers (cont’d.)

40. I bloom every year at an exposed location on the red trail – roughly half a mile from the trailhead. Mr. K tells me that I’m his favorite HC wildflower.

41. All flowers in my family have 4 petals. My petals form a tube. You can follow me from HC to the Sierra Crest! (I grow as high as 14 kft.)

42. Please don’t pull me up by the roots. I’m not invasive! I’m a native plant that many insects depend on.

43. My flowers don’t last forever, but my leaves almost do. You will find my succulent leaves clinging to rocks even in winter.

44. My flowers are only 1 cm dia., but my leaves are as big as salad plates. I mainly grow in the orange trail section.

45. Fairies turn to us for help when their flashlight batteries die. Look for us in the red and orange trail sections.

46. To find me you will have to examine the damp north-facing cliffs along Hwy. 140. (Blue trail section on map.)

47. I grow mainly in the orange trail section. My leaves have teeth only on the upper half margin. My eccentric fruit belie my modest flowers.

48. I am in the same family as 41. I grow in modest numbers in the red trail section. My flowers are orange at HC, but they can be yellow elsewhere.
49. In wet years, my pagoda-style flowers cover hillsides. I am struggling this year for lack of rain.

50. Like dandelions, my flower heads consist only of ray flowers. We both produce fluffy spherical seed heads, but mine are much larger.

51. My lavender rays, yellow disk flowers, and narrow leaves make me one of the easier daisies to identify.

52. Thoreau referred to a member of my genus a “flaming leaf.” Like Bougainvillea and Dogwood, most of my color comes from bracts (modified leaves) that surround my small flowers. Inset shows the corolla of one of my flowers (with bracts and calyx removed). A sister plant looks almost identical, except that the corolla is densely hairy.

53. As a conspicuously flowering tree, I win the hearts of many wildflower lovers. My specific epithet derives from the fact that my cream-colored flowers have two petals each. I am abundant in the orange trail section and occasional in the red section. My bloom window is short; you need to time it just right.
Answers to March Puzzle

NOTE: All except #26 and #29 are included in Yosemite Wildflowers by Judy & Barry Breckling.

14. Western Redbud (Cercis occidentalis) in the Legume family (Fabaceae). These grow all along Hwy. 140 in the Merced River Canyon, and along the south fork.

15. Buckbrush (Ceanothus cuneatus) in the Buckthorn family (Rhamnaceae).

16. Tree Poppy (Dendromecon rigida) in the Poppy family (Papaveraceae). These usually don’t bloom until April, but a few were starting March 20. These grow on both sides of the ridge but not along the south fork.

17. Sierra Manroot (Marah horrida) in the Cucumber family (Cucurbitaceae). Watch for the spiky, cucumber-like fruits in May.

18. True Babystars (Leptosiphon bicolor) in the Phlox family (Polemoniaceae). The flowers can be magenta or white, hence the specific name bicolor. Extremely abundant in season.

19. Popcornflowers are difficult to ID to species without seeds and a microscope. This one is Rusty-haired Popcornflower (Plagiobothrys nothofulvus) in the Borage family (Boraginaceae). A second HC Popcornflower, P. tenellus, has much smaller flowers. If you see “big” ones and “small” ones, you are probably seeing these two species.

20. Climbing Bedstraw (Galium porrigens ssp. tenue) in the Madder family (Rubiaceae). The 4-petaled flowers are only ~5 mm across, but the plant can be a tangled mass as big as a tumbleweed. A tidier sister species, G. aparine, has white flowers and leaves in whorls of 7 instead of 4.

21. Varied-Leaf Nemophila (Nemophila heterophylla) in the Borage family (Boraginaceae). This is a case where the common name is merely a rearrangement of the Latin name. (hetero = varied) + (phylla = leaf). You might as well learn the Latin name. If you mispronounce it like I do, it rhymes.

22. Red Maids (Calandrinia menziesii) in the Miner’s Lettuce family (Montiaceae). These stand out even at low abundance.

23. The featured species is Bolander's Woodland Star (Lithophragma bolanderi) in the Saxifrage family (Saxifragaceae). The less abundant HC species with acute hypanthium is L. affine. affine always has 3-lobed petals, the lobes being of comparable size. bolanderi can have entire petals or petals with 5-7 unequal lobes. Hypanthium angle is the easiest way to keep these two species straight.

24. California Bee-Plant (Scrophularia californica) in the Snapdragon family (Scrophulariaceae). Not abundant, but tall and striking when encountered.

25. Long-spurred Plectritis (Plectritis ciliosa) in the Valerian family (Valerianacea). You may be surprised at how abundant this is once you learn to recognize it. A sister species, White Plectritis (P. macrocera), also occurs at HC, but I did not see it on March 20.

26. Spider Lupine (Lupinus benthamii) in the Legume family (Fabaceae). The palmate leaves have linear-shaped leaflets that resemble spider’s legs – hence the common name and puzzle clue. Most lupines have leaflets that are wider in the middle and taper at both ends.

27. Congdon's Milkvetch (Astragalus congdonii) in the Legume family (Fabaceae). The population of this plant exploded after the Ferguson Fire. The seeds were lying dormant in the soil for years until the fire or smoke signaled that it was time to germinate.


29. Hartweg's Tauschia (Tauschia hartwegii) in the Carrot family (Apiaceae). Not abundant, but striking when encountered because of the leaves.

30. Fragrant Sumac (Rhus aromatic) in the Sumac family (Anacardiaceae).
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