



# INSIGNIS

NEWSLETTER OF THE ALTA PEAK CHAPTER  
CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

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Summer Update

July 2007

## Mid-Summer Field Trip Report

Joan Stewart, President Alta Peak Chapter

Two field trips, to Jordan Peak in June and Slate Mountain Botanic Area in July, provided opportunities to see our high mountain vegetation in a very dry year. From the perspective of abundant flourishing blooming plants, there was definitely less to be seen than in other years.

In June, at the top of Jordan we did actually find some blossoms of the *Erythronium*, that was the primary purpose for the climb, amongst abundant dried up stalks and stunted clumps of leaves. No *Fritillaria*. However. *Penstemon*, *Sambucus*, and many other trail-side plants were enjoyed, and the experience of wandering through the old growth Red Fir forest is always memorable.

For the July hike, Fletcher Linton handed out a page with color photographs and descriptions of the five rare plant species that occur on the Slate Mountain Botanic Area. Three of these were found... dry pale seed heads of Purple Golf Balls, aka Purple Mountain Parsley, a member of the Apiaceae, or umbel family, were scattered along the trail. *Delphinium inopinum* was observed as dried flower stalks, and the very rare Twisselman's Buckwheat was still thriving on a rocky slab above the trail. Golden Aster (formerly *Chrysopsis*, now in the genus *Aster*) was lush and in full bloom about midway up the mountain, allowing several of us to "learn" this as a new favorite.

Fletcher carefully called our attention to the changes in the composition of the forest as we climbed from 7000 to 9000 feet, with Ponderosa giving way to Jeffrey (both yellow, 3-needled pines) and red fir replacing white fir. Near the ridge top Western White Pine became common, while another 'white' pine, sugar pine, had been scattered lower down.

The next Insignis will be mailed in August, your contributions are greatly appreciated.

## FIELD TRIP CANCELLED

Exploring 'Wet Places'

August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2007

If interested in participating in a future 'Wet Places' program please contact Joan, or send an email to

[alta.peak.cnps@gmail.com](mailto:alta.peak.cnps@gmail.com)

As anticipated this was a long strenuous day, but we were grateful to Fletcher for adding comments about soil characteristics as a clue to plant distributions, as well as giving us a sense of why the Botanic Area is designated as a unique spot in the forest.

So indeed, each of these two mountain explorations was rewarding in its own way. Simply being on top, with views out in all directions, was perhaps enough reason to make the climbs, but each also gave samples of high elevation floras that offered insight into the richness of our local watersheds.

However, and with disappointment, Fletcher and I have each, separately, scouted out some of the 'wet places' that we had hoped to visit and compare on the August 11<sup>th</sup> field trip. Fens, bogs, meadows, marshes, and streamsides. All of these are different in terms of hydrology, and the resultant vegetation in each type is distinctive. But most of the sites we have checked out are already too dry to support the variety of species we had hoped to see. Orchids, saxifrage, gentians, plus of course many others less well known, are scarce or were not observed, and we have agreed to cancel this trip for this summer.

This is not to say mountain meadows are not always rewarding, and often in very unexpected ways. I will continue to visit these high 'wet' places, and always will welcome a hiking companion. These will not be formally announced CNPS Field trips, but rather personal pleasures. Call me, Join me, and we'll see what we can find. ❖

**INSIGNIS**

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**CNPS Membership Application**

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Check here if you would like to affiliate with the Alta Peak Chapter (Tulare County) of CNPS

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Please make checks payable to CNPS.

**California Native Plant Society**  
 2707 K Street Suite 1  
 Sacramento, CA, 95816

For more information on membership, contact Janet Fanning. You can also apply or renew online at \_\_\_\_\_

The California Native Plant Society is a statewide, non-profit organization of amateurs and professionals with a common interest in California's native plants. The Society, working through its local chapters, seeks to increase the understanding of California's native flora and to preserve this rich resource for future generations. Membership is open to all, and includes informative publications, free field trips, programs, and discounts on books and posters. Also included are the *Fremontia* and *Bulletin*, a quarterly magazine and report of activities, and this chapter newsletter.

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