

GILA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

A CHAPTER OF THE NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF NEW MEXICO

B U L L E T I N

APRIL, MAY, JUNE 2013

Editor: Charles Holmes



PROGRAMS

All programs are free and open to the public. Meetings are usually the third Friday of the month at 7:00 pm at WNMU's Harlan Hall, with refreshments following the program.

Activity updates and further details will be posted on our website www.gilanps.org. You will also receive an email reminder before the date of each program.

Friday, April 19th – Bill Norris will discuss “The Role of Amateur Botanists in Sustaining the Floristic Tradition in Botany.”

He will feature amateur botanists with whom he has worked closely in several states, such as Iowa and New Mexico, including a mailman, a printer, a general surgeon and a high school teacher. These individuals have made outstanding contributions towards knowledge of state flora through their careful plant inventories, web sites and written works. Norris will use their stories as a foundation to suggest projects upon which amateur botanists in New Mexico might embark.

Norris holds a PhD in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology (Botany) from Iowa State U. He is now a Professor of Biology at Western New Mexico U. and the director of the herbarium there.

FIELD TRIPS

Field Trip participants should meet at 8:00 am in the south parking lot of the Western New Mexico University Fine Arts Center Theatre to arrange for carpooling. Those attending must sign a release-of-liability form and will receive a list of native plants likely to be seen in the hiking area.

Field trip participants should bring water, lunch, a hat and sunscreen. Also please wear good hiking shoes. For more information, call Deming Gustafson at 388-5192 or email him at demgus@msn.com

On Sunday, April 21st: the Gila Chapter will sponsor a field trip in the southern Burro Mountains.

In Engineer Canyon expect to see some lowland species of native plants not seen elsewhere in the Silver City area.

On Sunday, May 19th: the Gila Chapter will sponsor a field trip to Railroad Canyon in the Black Range. This is a spectacular area with many "upland" species, some of which you may never have seen before. It always has running water in several streams.

We may also be briefly stopping at several points before the final destination.

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On Sunday, June 16th: We will be heading to the north side of Signal Peak to the little spring in the meadow.

Signal Peak has received lots of snow this past winter, so the moisture for new spring growth should be readily available. It will be especially nice to see the “north side” species in their glory.

A N N O U N C E M E N T S

POTLUCK PICNIC

How about an early summer potluck picnic with the other native plant lovers!

The Gila Native Plant Society is sponsoring such an event on June 23rd at 12 noon at the Gomez Peak Picnic Area on Little Walnut Road.

The GNPS will supply beverages (non-alcoholic) and hotdogs. You should also bring one of your favorite picnic dishes. Also remember to bring your own plates, cups and eating utensils. You can also bring your own alcoholic beverages.

NATIVE PLANT SALE PLANT PICKUP

Don't forget! If you ordered native plants at on line or at our Plant Sale on March 16th, be sure to pick them up on Friday, April 19th, from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm in the parking lot across the street from Gough Park.

REPORTS

On Friday, January 18th, Seth Pilsk, a botanist for the San Carlos Apache Tribe's Forestry Department, gave us a wonderful explanation of the cultural preservation projects of the Western Apache tribes, mostly of eastern Arizona. He has worked on these projects for over 20 years in cooperation with traditional Apache elders.

The emphasis of the projects has been to define the relationship of the people with the natural world. Since the Apache, like many of the Native American people, moved around a great deal as "hunters and gatherers," they constantly sought adequate food resources, especially wild plant food, of which there are over 200 species. There are also over 500 medicinal plants used by the traditional herbalists. Wild meat, especially small animals, accounted for only 10% of their consumption. Eventually they began to depend more on agricultural food.

Central to their beliefs is that Earth is a female womb (literally). All plants are the hair of that woman. All groups of living things are "people." Ultimately, the message is that they respected all aspects of the natural world!

We really loved this presentation. Many of us were captivated by it! Some of us would love to hear much more.

On Friday, February 15th, Jack Carter told us about the "Life and Times of Charles Darwin," giving us a thumbnail sketch of the highlights of the great man's life.

Before Darwin, all species were classified as having medical usage or edible/non-edible. All of the species were considered as unchangeable, "set in stone." They were handiworks of God. The fact that this was likely to be wrong greatly troubled Darwin in his youth. But, during that time (before his journey on the Beagle) he wrestled with the supposition that the study of nature, which greatly appealed to him, was completely controlled by religious theology. Many of the scientists of his time were theologians and preachers first and scientists (continued)

after that. This fact was a great influence on Darwin's move away from university.

His ultimate selection to be the "scientist" that went on the natural history voyage of the Beagle was the prime factor that changed his life so radically. He almost missed this "life changer"; he was only selected because all of the prominent scientists that were preferred turned down the opportunity. It was Darwin's total absorption with the process of species collection that caused the great extension of the journey from 2 to nearly 5 years. This happened in spite of the anger of the Beagle's captain and that man's strong religious attitude. During this period, Darwin established in his mind the concept of transmutation of species (evolution) and their adaptive changes to their environment.

He returned to England with masses of scientific evidence, but he was afraid to forge ahead with his theories because of the suspected negative impact in the scientific community his theories would have. It was nearly 20 years before he published "Origin of Species...." This only happened because of the strong support he had from a coterie of forward-looking scientists. They were the ones who kept him forging ahead; he likely could not have done it on his own.

Jack tells us he doesn't have to remind us what a tremendous impact Darwin has had on the scientific and social world!

On Friday, March 15th, Frank Keim, a long-time Alaskan resident, spoke to us extensively about the "Importance of Wild Rivers and Wilderness" everywhere, not just Alaska.

Much of the talk focused on his expeditions, often with his sons and close friends, on the many Alaskan rivers he has navigated for decades. He showed us a great array of spectacular photos of those journeys.

We were particularly interested in the photos of the plants and wildlife. He emphasized that even though there are not a great number of species of trees in that area, there are vast forests of those species. Especially noteworthy are the Dwarf Dogwood, the birches, white spruce (mostly on south slopes) and black spruce (found on northern slopes). On the other hand, there are over 40 species of willows. Would you expect to find orchids in that area? There are 13 species, some even above the Arctic Circle where you will also discover delicate Arctic Poppies, Siberian Phlox, Fire Saxifrage and the state flower, a species of Forget-Me-Not. Add to this marvelous list many species of Cinquefoil.

What a wonderful collection!