Connecting with Nature: The Saving Grace of Spring & Summer 2020
by Nancy Nies

A YEAR AGO, WE COULD NOT have imagined the changes that 2020 would bring to our lives. There have been some constants, however. In March, just as the coronavirus struck us here, we received our usual, wonderful spring gift from nature, thanks in part to late-spring rains. It was as if nature wanted to reassure us that although our world was going through an unprecedented crisis, all was not lost. We could count on our native wildflowers to bloom once again — here in Kern County and beyond — and to help us weather the instability and uncertainty of the months to come.

This spring many Kern CNPS members, who had in the fall and winter tended native plants in their own gardens, enjoyed a changing display of beautiful blooms in exchange for their efforts. Other members ventured out to nearby — but remote and unpopulated — areas, where they could hike among the wildflowers, or simply stop the car occasionally to take a closer look. This was a spring to commune with wildflowers, rather than people...

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Poet Eloise Bruce, in her article entitled “The Power of Poetry” (Brain & Life magazine, June-July 2020), says that writing poetry, for her and her husband, David Keller, has always been a...
way to understand their world — a way “to celebrate the joys and process the sorrows.” During their first months of living in a coronavirus-altered world, she writes, they found solace in nature and subject matter for their poems in the spring “exploding” around them. Kern CNPS member Suzanne Weller, whose poetry has appeared in the *Mimulus Memo*, can surely identify with them.

Another friend and Kern CNPS member, Georgette Theotig, has long found inspiration in nature for her art, which for her is a means of observing and appreciating the natural world. She always takes a sketchbook along on hikes and backpacking trips, to capture the beauty of California’s mountains and meadows, lakes and rivers, trees and flowers. This spring, she said that seeing the wildflowers in bloom brought her joy, as well as hope for the future. Anything that can do that is always welcome, especially in the era of Covid-19.

For amateur photographers like me, spring wildflowers provide the incentive for a hobby that helps me connect with nature and really focus on it — pun intended! Wildflowers also inspire me, with the assistance of Shutterfly, to make photo books and calendars — and, this year, even jigsaw puzzles. These projects let me experience the spring several times as I take the pictures, do the lay-out, and enjoy and share the finished product, while anticipating the flowers’ return the following spring. This is all valuable at any time, but particularly so during a global pandemic. For me, this year, it has made all the difference.

Paul and I were among the Kern CNPS members who found joy and comfort in the beauty, variety and color of this year’s display of spring and summer wildflowers at our doorstep — either literally, in our own gardens, or figuratively, within an hour or two of home. Accompanying this article are photos of a few of the many wildflower sightings that have been, for us, the highlights of the year.

In his last book, *My Twenty-Five Years in Provence* (2018), Peter Mayle includes a number of photos taken by his wife Jennie, and describes one of them this way: “Throughout Provence, sometimes in the most unlikely spots, you will come across magnificent displays that have not been planted, watered, arranged or primped into perfection. This huge field of poppies is a spectacular example. All too soon, the poppies will be gone. But they’ll be back, to remind us of what nature can do if she’s left alone to do it.”
Chapter ZOOM Meetings
upcoming TOPICS

(All in-person chapter meetings have been suspended until further notice.)

Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2020 - Noon-1 pm
Kern CNPS Special ZOOM Program
Presenter: Maria Jesus
California Botanic Garden
Topic: Plants & Conservation of Conglomerate Mesa
REGISTER for this event; e-mail Paul Gipe (pgipe@igc.org)

Thank You to:
... Denis Kearns for sharing his garden and home nursery with us via Zoom.
... Monica Tudor and Rich Spjut for digging through years of stored material to find chapter records so it all can be placed in one repository.
... Dorie Giragosian for keeping Kern CNPS records safe for many years.

CNPS is the leader for providing reliable information on California native plants and plant conservation. Comprehensive information about California’s flora and vegetation communities is available throughout the state for conservation and educational purposes. CNPS’s leadership influences personal ethics and actions, as well as public policy for native plant protection.