AFTER TWO QUIET YEARS WITH ONLY THE OCCASIONAL – though interesting and informative – Zoom presentation, members of Kern CNPS had a variety of opportunities to get “out and about” this spring: a native-plant garden tour in Bakersfield, wildflower walks at the rural homes of members in the Woody and Keene areas; and five field trips, to nearby valley and mountain locations. Each event offered something different for participants to enjoy. Here are a few highlights.

MARCH 3
Sand Ridge Wildflower Preserve, near Bakersfield, with Greg Warrick

Our first in-person chapter activity in two years was a memorable visit to nearby Sand Ridge, where we saw a profusion of poppies, lupine, thistle sage, desert dandelion, suncups, white layia, pincushion, brittlebush, and, with its buds just starting to open, four o’clocks.

The many clumps of Bakersfield cactus, each with numerous buds not yet open, awaited their time to bloom. The vivid colors of the rainbow of species more than compensated for the overcast day. Greg, who manages the preserve, provided us with a tour and much interesting information.

MARCH 22
Lucy Clark & Clyde Golden’s, near Woody

On a sunny afternoon, we headed for the hills to see what was blooming at Lucy and Clyde’s. We were thrilled to see fields turned white and orange with popcorn flower and fiddleneck, a hillside full of spider lupine, large swaths of bird’s eye gilia, and the star of the show – a large colony of the rare and “fairly threatened” Diplacus pictus. This, our chapter’s logo flower, also known as Mimulus pictus and calico monkeyflower, looked hale and hearty in its boulder habitat. Another boulder outcropping was home to
deerweed, with its yellow blooms, and a thicket of gooseberry bushes, laden with fruit.

MARCH 26
Native-Plant Garden Tour, Bakersfield

It was a beautiful morning for the first Kern CNPS garden tour in more than two years. A dozen chapter members visited the Bakersfield gardens of Deborah Osborn and Laura Cattani, both featuring a mix of native and non-native plants. Asked to name the plants she found most memorable, tour organizer Monica Tudor mentioned the senna and penstemon species in Debbie’s garden and the Fremontodendron and manzanita in Laura’s. New chapter member Megan Means, who found the tour inspiring, particularly liked the desert mallow and was impressed by the fact so many plants did so well with so little water.

MARCH 26
Bill Moffat & Deb See’s, Keene

Deb and Bill led us on a lovely walk of discovery, literally in their back yard, on a trail created by Bill himself. It began with a deeply shaded downhill segment through the lush, green foliage of fiesta flower, miner’s lettuce and man-root, the latter two with their white flowers on display. Emerging from the shade, we were treated to the sight of sunny hillsides carpeted in the white of popcorn flower and the orange of fiddleneck. Fewer in number, but nonetheless exciting to find, were a yellow violet (Viola sp.) and a small, deep-pink monkeyflower (Diplacus sp.). At our April 21 meeting, Deb and Bill reported that fiesta flower, Ithuriel’s spear, penstemon, and chinese houses were then blooming.

Above: Kern CNPS group pauses to examine a plant along the Mill Creek trail. Right: Collinsia heterophylla (purple chinese houses)

APRIL 16
Mill Creek Trail, Kern Canyon
with Clyde Golden

The cool, gray day was brightened by the vivid colors of the abundant wildflowers we found along the trail. Catching our eye were the pink of linanthus, the purple of chia, the orange of fiddleneck and poppies, the deep pink of elegant clarkia and owl’s clover, the lavender of Ithuriel’s spear, the cream of caterpillar phacelia, the blue of fiesta flower, the deep orange of Indian pink (Silene californica) and the yellow of pygmy poppy (Eschscholzia covillei) and sylvan scorzonella (Microseris sylvatica). A highlight was the discovery of a hillside covered with purple chinese houses (Collinsia heterophylla).
Above: Libby Vincent walks among the blue dicks at the Nature Conservancy’s Loop Ranch, north of Tehachapi, 23 April. Right: *Dichelostemma capitatum* (blue dicks)

APRIL 23
The Nature Conservancy’s Loop Ranch, near Caliente, with Zach Principe & Rachel Mason

On this newly-acquired addition to TNC’s holdings, in the mountains north of Tehachapi (el. 4200), it was still early spring, and the *Dichelostemma capitatum* (blue dicks) was at its peak. The purple blooms, against a backdrop of snow-covered mountains to the south, were breathtaking. On various stops along the scenic drive through the ranch, we also enjoyed beautiful displays of popcorn flower, globe gilia, goldfields, and caterpillar phacelia – as well as a colony of the rare *Diplacus pictus*. (See March 22, above.)

APRIL 30
Lockwood Creek Trail, Los Padres NF with Pam DeVries

Botanist Pam DeVries, author of *A Field Guide to the Plants of the San Emidio Mountains Region of California*, led us on a walk along the trail, where there was much to see: Mt. Pinos onion, California lomatium, California mugwort, Fremont pincushion, narrowleaf goldenbush, Pringle’s wooly-sunflower, desert dandelion, Davidson’s phacelia, rattlesnake sandmat, bajada lupine, Mojave suncup, California evening primrose, scarlet bugler, San Joaquin blazingstar, California Indian breadroot, evening snow, Wright’s buckwheat, purple violet, and, last but certainly not least, a large colony of the rare *Fritillaria agrestis* (stinkbells).

*Mimulus Memo — June 2022*

Above: Chapter members on the trail at Tomo-Kahni State Historic Park, 7 May. Right: *Layia heterotricha* (paleyellow tidytips).

MAY 7
Tomo-Kahni SHP, near Tehachapi with Ernie Lostaunau & John Hasselbrink

Leading our group on a scenic hiking tour, docent Ernie Lostaunau was a fount of information on the Kawaiisu, the native people who lived in the area for two to three thousand years, and what they left behind – petroglyphs, pictographs and bedrock mortars.

What’s more, nature had provided us with a spectacular show of colorful wildflowers, bringing cheer to the gray day. Both driving to the trailhead and starting up the trail, we were surrounded by masses of *Layia heterotricha* (paleyellow tidytips). This species has a rare-plant ranking of 1B.1, which indicates “seriously threatened” status, but seeing it blooming so prolifically here, you would never know it. Other stand-outs along the trail were the reds and oranges of paintbrush, the lavenders and purples of phacelia, the whites of popcorn flower and whorled lupine, and the yellows of Mojave suncups, goldenbush, desert parsley, coreopsis, goldfields, pebble pincushion, and more. The day’s many “wow moments” included the discovery of a hillside abloom with Coulter’s jewelflower and a sighting of the rare *Allium shevockii* (Spanish needle onion).

Following a two-year hiatus, Kern CNPS was able to return to its usual lineup of spring activities, giving members the chance once again to witness the wonderful variety of native wildflowers in our area — the simple and the showy, the rare and the abundant — both in gardens and in the wild. We had hoped for that chance, and the spring of 2022 did not disappoint! ✿