

Super Bloom 2019: A Photo Journal – Part 3
by Nancy Nies

IN FOLLOWING CALIFORNIA’S 2019 “SUPER BLOOM” FROM THE coast to the mountains last summer, I realized that adding a third installment to my wildflower photo journal was in order.

June 1 — Lewisia redivida (bitterroot). Botanist Pam DeVries led a Kern CNPS field trip to Lockwood Valley (Mt. Pinos area), where we saw lots of bitterroot, most with a single delicate flower — pale pink or white — and several buds. Also plentiful was Allium howellii var. clokeyi (Mt. Pinos onion) with its cream-colored flower heads. Among other finds that day were the purple Phacelia davidsonii (Davidson’s phacelia), the pink Sidalcea sparsifolia (California checker mallow), and the pale-lavender Phacelia exilia (Transverse Range phacelia).

July 5 — Clarkia rubicunda (ruby chalice clarkia). When I visited my cousin in Marin County over the Fourth of July, we took a favorite walk on nearby Ring Mountain. Blooming in early July were Lupinus microcarpus (chick lupine), Microsteris gracilis (slender phlox), Erythranthe guttata (seep monkeyflower), and Toxicoscordion fremontii (Fremont’s star lily). The most eye-catching flower, however, was Clarkia rubicunda.

July 27 — Iris missouriensis (western blue flag). Diane Mitchell, Paul and I made the trip up to the Chula Vista parking area on Mt. Pinos to see how the irises in the adjoining meadow were doing. They were past their peak, but there

Clarkia rubicunda (ruby chalice clarkia), Ring Mountain – July 5

Photos by Nancy Nies

The California Native Plant Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of California native plants and their natural habitats, and to increasing the understanding, appreciation, and horticultural use of native plants.
we hiked up to Heart Lake. Catching our eye along the trail were the vibrant reds of *Castilleja sp.* (paintbrush) and *Ipomopsis aggregata* subsp. *aggregata* (scarlet gilia), the bright yellow of *Wyethia mollis* (woolly mule ears), and the showy white of *Calochortus leichtlinii* (Leichtlin’s mariposa lily). *Monardella odoratissima* subsp. *pallida* (pennyroyal) was also a common sight. At one point, it created an irresistible photo op, the lavender of its flower heads complementing the soft yellow of the *Castilleja* sp. growing with it, against a backdrop of snow-capped Sierra peaks.

August 6 — *Pedicularis attollens* (little elephant’s head). The hike to Gardisky Lake near Tioga Pass is one of our favorites, the steep trail offering both spectacular views and a profusion of wildflowers. Besides the expected paintbrush, pennyroyal, mariposa lilies and sulfur buckwheat, we saw something...
new on our 2019 ascent — *Triteleia ixioides* subsp. *ani-lina* (mountain pretty face). When the trail leveled out, we strolled through a wild garden of *Iris missouriensis*, *Allium validum* (swamp onion), and *Dasiphora fruticosa* (shrubby cinquefoil). Among the colorful flowers awaiting us at the lake were the bright-pink *Kalmia polifolia* (bog laurel) and — a first sighting for us there — an abundance of the red-purple *Pedicularis attollens*.

**August 7** — *Aquilegia pubescens* (Sierra columbine). Somewhere, I read that botany professor and long-time Yosemite ranger-naturalist Carl Sharsmith’s favorite place to take his students was the Dana Plateau trail which begins at Tioga Lake. The masses of flowers — paintbrush, mountain heather, swamp onion, several species of lupine, at least two each of aster and larkspur, and more — make up for the strenuous climb. The highlight of our 2019 hike, however, was to be found among the boulders in a wash above tree-line — *Aquilegia pubescens* (Sierra columbine) at peak bloom. Where previously we had seen only one or two plants, in 2019 we saw dozens, each bearing many white flowers.

**August 18** — *Gentiana calycosa* (Rainier pleated gentian). On our annual Kern CNPS camp-out at Horse Meadow, sightings included *Penstemon rostriflorus* (Bridge’s penstemon), *Eriogonum umbellatum var. nevadensis* (sulfur buckwheat), *Geranium californicum* (California geranium), *Solidago* sp. (goldenrod), *Castilleja* sp. (paintbrush) and *Helenium bigelovii* (Bigelow’s sneezeweed). The camp-out’s star attraction, though, was *Gentiana calycosa* — a beautiful blue gentian.

California’s “super bloom” of 2019 lasted from early spring to late summer, extended from sea level to 11,000 feet, and gave us fortunate Californians the opportunity to see many of our state’s wildflowers at their best. 🌻