



# NEVADA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

VOLUME 43 NUMBER 7 - SEPTEMBER 2017

## ***SOCIETY NEWS***

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### **NORTHERN NEVADA EVENTS**

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**September 7 – Plant Colors...Beauty and Science all Around Us** presented by Jim Bishop, a California Native Plant Society Fellow. Here's a taste of what to expect:

Plants offer endless, engaging beauty in their many colors. There are the blooms of spring in our foothills, lovely desert and mountain wildflowers, the glorious leaves of autumn, and even the beauty of the universal greens of leaves before they turn. There are interesting stories in all of that.

Part of the story will be about the science: how do plant colors arise, how do conditions such as acidity change pigment colors, what purpose do they serve? The interesting questions are endless (and not all of the answers are known). You'll gain some background that will enrich your understanding and appreciation of plant colors - the fact that plants provide us a key part of the visual means we use to see their beautiful colors, for instance - and you'll have new questions of your own.

Much of the program will be spent simply enjoying the beauty of the rich and varied colors displayed by plants - flowers, fruits, leaves, and stems - from deserts to mountaintops, from shrublands to fall-color forests and woodlands.

**October 5 – Rare Plants in Real Life: Case studies from a mine, a water pipeline, and a highway** presented by Kris Kuyper, Biology Program Manager for EM Strategies.

**November 2 –** Janel Johnson, NNPS President, will provide us with an overview of [iNaturalist.org](http://iNaturalist.org), a website to share your natural history observations and help others identify their contributions.

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### **SOUTHERN NEVADA EVENTS**

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**September 11 –** Nicole Hupp, ecologist with the National Park Service Inventory & Monitoring Program, 6:30-7:30 PM. Meet at the U.S. Geological Survey office at 160 North Stephanie Street in Henderson. Note that there is no meeting on Labor Day, Monday, September 4.

Our program coordinator is Lesley DeFalco. If you would like email updates for Southern Nevada events, please email her at [defalco@usgs.gov](mailto:defalco@usgs.gov) and ask to be added to the list.

**Events subject to change.  
Visit [nvnp.org](http://nvnp.org) for updates.**

▲ The diversity and beauty of plant colors

*J. Bishop*



▲ Evacuation Canyon, Utah Route 45 (gravel) at Three Mile Canyon turnoff

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## PENSTEMONS OF THE UINTA BASIN OF UTAH

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*Story by Rose Strickland, photos by Dennis Ghiglieri*

In June, over 100 aficionados of penstemons, otherwise known as ***Penstemoniacs***, gathered in Vernal, Utah, for the annual **American Penstemon Society** (APS) meeting led by Noel and Pat Holmgren. Over the course of a long, three day weekend we travelled around the Uinta Basin of northeast Utah locating and admiring over a dozen species of penstemon, many endemic to the area.

Armed with a penstemon key from Noel Holmgren, a colorful lineup of photos of likely penstemons from Ginny Maffitt, and excerpts from an upcoming book, *Penstemon of the Uinta Basin*, by Mikel Stevens and Stephen Love, an impressive group of local experts led us on field trips into spectacular scenery of colorful sedimentary rock layers plunging into deep river canyons.

On Saturday, our first day out, we headed south. Along the slopes, roadsides, and mesas (including Hell's Hole Canyon and Atchee Ridge) we found ***Pentemon albifluvis*** (White River penstemon), ***P. pachyphyllus* var. *mucronatus*** (thickleaf penstemon), ***P. fremontii***, and ***P. grahamii***.

The many plants of ***P. grahamii*** were past blooming with the exception of one gorgeous plant whose large lavender flowers with their upward-facing, gaping, fuzzy-looking mouths thrilled the group. We also were treated to endemics such as ***Aquilegia barnebyi*** (oil shale columbine), ***Castilleja scabrida* var. *scabrida*** (rough paintbrush), ***Chrysothamnus nauseosus* var. *uintahensis*** (Uinta rubber rabbitbrush - aka *Ericameria nauseosa*), ***Gilia stenothyrsa*** (Uinta Basin gilia - aka *Aliciella stenothyrsa*), and ***Mentzelia goodrichii*** (Tavaputs blazingstar).

The following day, while travelling west of Vernal through the towns of Ballard, Roosevelt, and Myton, we searched for ***Penstemon flowersii*** and finally found it on a private ranch where, unfortunately, the numerous specimens were mostly past flowering. Another private site yielded ***P. duchesensis*** (Duchesne penstemon) and we hit pay dirt with good views of both ***P. goodrichii*** and ***P. angustifolius* var. *vernalensis*** (narrow-leaf penstemon) at a spot near Lapoint. Other local plants included





▲ *Penstemon grahamii* at Atchee Ridge

▼ *Penstemon fremonti* at Three Mile Canyon



▲ *Penstemon goodrichii* at Little Mountain Rim Road

▼ *Penstemon cleburnei* in Sweetwater County, Wyoming





***Astragalus hamiltonii*** (Hamilton milkvetch), ***Caulanthus crassicaulis*** (thickstemmed wild cabbage), ***Cymopterus duchesnensis*** (Uinta basin spring parsley), ***Eriogonum brevicaule* var. *viridulum*** (Uinta basin buckwheat), and ***Yucca harrimaniae*** (Spanish bayonet).

Those who stayed for the Monday field trip north of Vernal were treated to striking landscapes of deep canyons, the high Uinta Mountains, and the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area – all with the ever-changing geologic layers neatly labeled on Utah road signs. At the first stop on a steep hillside just breaking into the trees were ***Penstemon caespitosus* var. *caespitosus*** (mat penstemon), ***P. humilis*** (low penstemon), and ***P. scarious* var. *garrettii***. In a high mountain meadow full of songs from nesting birds we found beautifully flowering ***P. scarious* var. *garrettii*** as well as a large population of ***Pediocactus simpsonii***



▲ *Penstemon albifluvis* (White River penstemon)

▼ *Penstemon albifluvis* in Hell's Hole Canyon





(mountain ball cactus). Driving past Manila we crossed into Sweetwater County, Wyoming, and found blooming *P. acaulis* (stemless penstemon), a single blooming plant of *P. cleburnei* (Green River Basin penstemon - aka *Penstemon erianthus* var. *cleburnei*), and more *P. pachyphyllus* var. *mucronatus*.

Next year's get-together, announced at one of the few indoor APS meetings, will be much easier for NNPS members to attend. The 2018 APS conference and field trips will be headquartered in Las Vegas in April, 2018, in order to maximize our chances of seeing the spectacular blooming Mojave Desert penstemons outside the city.

► *Penstemon angustifolius* var. *vernalensis*  
(narrowleaf penstemon)

▼ *Penstemon acaulis* (stemless penstemon) in  
Sweetwater County, Wyoming



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