

Manzanita

Newsletter of the Kane County Chapter
of the Utah Native Plant Society

January 2007 News



Phlox austromontana by W. Fertig April 2004

January Meeting: Monday, 8 January - Monitoring Rare Plant Populations – Rebecca Mann of the USGS-Biological Resources Division in Kanab (protégé of our Dec 06 speaker, Mark Miller) will discuss techniques and opportunities for monitoring rare plant populations in southern Utah. Monitoring is the process by which researchers measure changes in the abundance or condition of individual plants in a population over time. Big changes in monitoring data can serve as an early warning system for managers responsible for the health and welfare of rare plant populations. Becky will describe some monitoring methods and case studies from the local area. The meeting will conclude with our customary dessert potluck social and mixer. The meeting will be held at the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument visitor center (located between Walkers and Holiday Inn on Hwy 89 east of downtown Kanab) at 7 PM. As always, admission is free and open to the public.

Is Spring Here Already? Don't look now, but I found Desert phlox (*Phlox austromontana*) in bloom on January 1 along the Vermilion Cliffs in the Kanab Ranchos. Actually, it was just one flower on one plant, but it was fresh and ready to entice an insect pollinator (none of which were readily apparent). The hearty fellow was growing on a south-facing midslope (above the cold air drainage of the canyon bottom, but below the windy ridgecrest) and sheltered on one side by a bitterbrush and was in flower on a relatively mild day. Normally, this plant is in full bloom in April (see photo above).

Upcoming: Our February meeting will feature a workshop on propagating native plants by Holly Beck, botanist with the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, and Cheryl Decker from Zion National Park. This will be a hands-on event (expect to get your hands dirty with various potting soil ingredients). Look for more details in the Feb 2007 newsletter.

December Meeting: Dr. Mark Miller of the USGS-Biological Resources Division in Kanab gave a colorful and thought-provoking account of his research on the Endangered Shivwits milkvetch (*Astragalus ampullarioides*) for our Holiday-themed December meeting. Through careful observation and monitoring, Mark and his crack team have been able to describe the exact soil and terrain features used by this rare plant, which should help land managers better plan recovery strategies. The USGS team is also hot on the trail of assessing impacts from herbivory and competition from weeds on the milkvetch. After a lively question and answer period, those assembled enjoyed a bounty of Christmas desserts, topped off by gifts of Larry Baer's state fair winning preserves. Thanks to Larry, Mark, and all those who participated.

This edition of Manzanita was written by Walter Fertig. Reader submissions are always welcome. For more information on upcoming events, contact Walt Fertig at 689-0224 or walt@kanab.net. Chapter events and an archive of past Manzanita newsletters are also posted on the Utah Native Plant Society website at www.unps.org