

MANZANITA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF KANE COUNTY

A CHAPTER OF THE UTAH NATIVE
PLANT SOCIETY

February 2005 News

News

Name the Chapter Contest At our January meeting, the assembled crowd voted to select the name and mascot for the Kane County Chapter. Among a pool of 16 entries, the choice was narrowed down to *Artemisia* and Manzanita. After a tense round of balloting (including one confused vote for Pat Buchanon), Manzanita was selected. Due to a desire to keep some mention of Kane County in the name, the group settled on “Manzanita Native Plant Society of Kane County” for our title. Those wishing for an acronym may use “MANAPSOKACO”, which loosely translates from the Latin as “Manzanita Native Plant Society of Kane County”. Anne Mejia submitted the winning name and thus won the door prize, a copy of *Plants of the Rocky Mountains* by Kershaw, MacKinnon, and Pojar.

Upcoming Events

February Monthly Meeting: Southern Utah in Your Yard Our next meeting will be held on Monday, February 10 at 7 PM in the public meeting room of the Grand Staircase-Escalante NM Visitor Center (next to Holiday Inn). Dr. Susan Meyer, of the USDA Forest Service Shrub Sciences Laboratory and Intermountain Research Station in Provo will speak about using native plant species from southern Utah in home gardening and landscaping. Susan is a long-time officer and supporter of the Utah Native Plant Society and has been active in promoting native plant use through the Utah’s Choice program. Dr. Meyer is also an expert on the Las Vegas bearclaw poppy (*Arctomecon californica*), a rare plant of [continued next page]



Above: Thompson’s milkvetch (*Astragalus mollissimus* var. *thompsoniae*) is already in bloom in the Vermilion Cliffs of Kanab on 20 January 2005. This is one of our earliest blooming milkvetches, and can be recognized by its leaves with 15-35 pairs of round leaflets covered with tangled woolly hairs, and its stalk of large, purple, pea-like flowers. The fruits are distinctive in being coated with dense white wool. Other early plants already out in late January include Desert phlox (*Phlox austromontana*), Twinpod (*Physaria* sp.), and the dreaded Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*). Photo by W. Fertig.

Thompson’s milkvetch commemorates Ellen Powell Thompson, one of the pioneer botanists of Kane County, who made the first collection of this and many other plants in the Kanab area in 1872. Thompson was in Kane County with her husband, Almon Thompson, as members of the geologic survey of her brother, John Wesley Powell. Ellen’s specimens ended up at Harvard University where a dozen or so were named as new species by Sereno Watson in 1873, including four named in Ellen’s honor: *Eriogonum thompsoniae*, *Peteria thompsoniae*, *Penstemon thompsoniae*, and *Astragalus thompsoniae*. Milkvetch expert Rupert Barneby later recognized the similarity between *A. thompsoniae* and *Astragalus mollissimus* of the Great Plains and renamed Thompson’s milkvetch *A. mollissimus* var. *thompsoniae* in 1964.

the Mohave Desert , and other plants restricted to unusual gypsum-rich soils in the Mohave. Come

prepared to ask Susan about growing native plants in your yard. As usual, our dessert pot luck will follow. The meeting is free and open to the public.

Botany 101: To dedicate more time to our speaker, we will take a month off from Botany 101. Not to fear – I will return in March with another lesson, finishing up the Linnaean taxonomic hierarchy. But still be prepared to discuss the interesting anagrams you derived from the word “*Krascheninnikovia*” as part of last month’s homework assignment.

7 March 2005 meeting Our next meeting will be held on Monday, 7 March 2005. At press time, we are still determining who the speaker will be (we mistakenly asked 2 speakers, both of whom accepted). We’ll have this figured out by the next newsletter.

Mark your Calendar Some upcoming field tips for this spring include a visit to the Virgin River Gorge west of St. George with BLM Ecologist Lee Hughes on Saturday, April 16 and a field trip to Glen Canyon National Recreation Area with GCNRA Ecologist John Spence on Saturday, May 14. Look for more details in future newsletters.

Recap

January Meeting Laura Fertig, botanist with the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, entertained the group with a slide show describing efforts to collect and store seeds from native shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers growing in the Monument and surrounding areas. Much of the seed collection work has been in conjunction with the Royal Botanic Garden (Kew) in England’s Millennium seedbank project, an effort to collect and store seeds from 10% of the desert flora from around the world. Working with the Student Conservation Association, the monument sponsored teams of college students each of the past three summers to explore the Colorado Plateau in search of seeds from selected desert plant species. Laura described their adventures and how the seed collection program is helping conservation efforts for these species and restoration efforts on BLM lands.

Officers: Now that the group is officially sanctioned, we will need to formally select officers. In particular, we will need a chapter president, vice-president (to fill in should the president be unable to fulfill his or her constitutional duties), a treasurer, and a note-taker (secretary) for meetings, and a small group of board members to coordinate and plan events. To date, these tasks have been done by a steering committee consisting of Jana de Peyer, Anne Mejia, Jan Gisler, Carolyn Shelton, and Walter Fertig. If anyone is interested in being an officer or otherwise participating in the board, please contact one of the members of the steering group. We will hold a formal election at the March meeting.

Miscellaneous

Website of the Month For those interested in the distribution of plant species in Utah, check out (and bookmark) the Atlas of the Flora of Utah at www.gis.usu.edu/Geography-Department/utgeog/utvatlas/. This site contains state distribution maps for most of the vascular plant species of the state. The base map is a black and white shaded relief map that depicts the major topographic features of Utah (mountains, valleys, and major lakes and rivers), as well as county lines. These maps can be a useful tool for selecting areas to botanize or to determine what plants grow in your area.

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This edition of the Kane County Native Plant Society news was written by Walter Fertig. Reader submissions are more than welcome! For more information about upcoming events, contact me at 644-8129 or walt@kanab.net.

Chapter Business