

ERIOGONUM SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Jim Reveal photographing *Grayia spinosa*, Hop sage, at the Desert Research Institute, Reno, 2010.

First Annual Meeting

Reno, Nevada, June 10-13, 2010

By Beth Corbin

The first meeting of the Eriogonum Society was a resounding success. Thirty-five enthusiastic members of the new organization met in Reno for workshops and field trips. The



Photo by Bob McFarlane

meeting was splendidly organized by Bob McFarlane and Hugh MacMillan, with excellent technical expertise provided by doctor Eriogonum himself, James Reveal. The weekend began with a short social gathering followed by a slide show overview by Dr. Reveal Thursday evening, showing the extensive diversity within the wild buckwheats. We saw images of 111 Eriogonum species or varieties, and heard information on where each grows and its gardening potential. He also explained and showed examples of many of the terms peculiar to Eriogonum morphology, which was helpful for the next day's keying. We learned such factoids as Eriogonum flowers often change color (for example from white to pink or reddish) after pollination.

Friday was an excellent all-day workshop, using Reveal's Identification Manual (hot off the photocopier) to key out specimens. In the morning, we went through the keys for five different Eriogonums as a group, learning the characteristics of the subgenera and species. After lunch, we individually keyed several of the many fresh specimens provided from around the West to practice our newly-honed skills. How nice to be able to key a plant and actually know for sure at the end what it really is! We keyed a number of annual and some perennial species. Dr. Reveal also graciously identified pressed specimens and photos some people had brought. Friday evening was the banquet dinner, with good food (chicken marsala) and good company. A short business meeting was quickly dispatched, with Bob agreeing to continue membership and treasurer duties, Hugh continuing managing the website, and new volunteers of Cecile Shohet to take on the seed exchange this fall, and Cheryl Beyer to take over the on-line newsletter. (Many thanks to those and others for stepping forward!) We also discussed our goals and desires for the Eriogonum Society. There appears to be about equal interest in growing Eriogonums for garden use and seeing (and conserving) buckwheats in their native habitats. Another item of business was future meetings, which all highly recommended. An annual meeting appeared to be in order, and Gary Reese volunteered to organize next year's expedition to the White Mountains Research Station near Bishop in August to catch later blooming and higher elevation taxa.

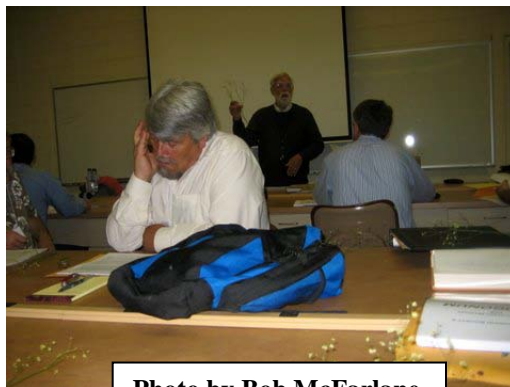


Photo by Bob McFarlane

Saturday's field trip started early, as we had a lot of ground to cover. Our first stop was the day's trip leader Steve Caicco's garden on the east side of Reno. His lovely raised beds rock



Photo by Cheryl Beyer

garden, made of local Lahontan tuffa rock, was a riot of blooming Pentstemons, Eriogonums, and other rock garden plants. Species included *Eriogonum ovalifolium* vars. *nivale* (a very compact form of this familiar plant) and *purpureum*, *E. caespitosum*, several varieties of *E. umbellatum*, *E. compositum*, and *E. jamesii* (not yet flowering). Other showy plants included *Penstemon barrettiae*, *Arenaria rubella*, *Lupinus albifrons*, *Eriophyllum lanatum*, and *Physaria chambersii*. It must be difficult for Steve to leave this garden he's obviously put so much work into and move to

Portland, but surely he'll develop a spectacular garden there too, in time.

Saturday's second stop, at the junction of Highways 50 and 395, was intended only to be a rendezvous location, but was unexpectedly interesting botanically. Along the roadside we found some annual *Eriogonum baileyi* var. *bailey*, along with nicely blooming *Sphaeromeria potentilloides*, *Thelypodium crispum*, *Linanthus (Leptodactylon) pungens*, and *Oenothera caespitosa*. Folks wandered with notebooks at the ready and cameras deployed. Eventually, the cats were herded and the caravan headed east on Highway 50 for a rather long drive into the heart of the Great Basin.



Roadside rendezvous, photo by Cheryl Beyer

At Silver Springs we headed south to the Desert Mountains, and turned west off the pavement into the Churchill Narrows area. Here was an interesting mixed desert shrub community and an unusual diatomaceous earth outcrop. As we walked toward the outcrop, we were enchanted by a showy little annual buckwheat with pink flowers, *Eriogonum lemmonii*, which we learned has a limited distribution (mostly the southwest edge of the Lahontan Basin), and although named by Watson in 1877, has been rarely collected. Once at the diatomaceous earth outcrop, we found the very rare (USFWS candidate for listing) *Eriogonum diatomaceum*, named fairly recently (2002) and threatened by mining of the diatomaceous mineral deposits. This perennial with white to pink flowers was interesting, although not particularly showy. As we wandered around the hillside and environs, a number of other Eriogonums were found: the shrubby perennial *E. heermannii*



Churchill Narrows, Photo by Cheryl Beyer

(not yet flowering) and annuals *E. nidularium*, *E. deflexum* var. *deflexum*, *E. pusillum* (with glandular hairy tepals and yellow/red flowers), and *E. maculatum*. Other interesting plants in nice bloom at this site included *Glyptopleura marginata*, an annual *Lupinus*, *Oxyteca perfoliata*, *Allium atrorubens*, *Stanleya pinnata*, *Chaenactis stevioides*, *Chorizanthe watsonii*, *Hymenoclea salsola*, *Astragalus geyeri*, *Nama aretioides*, and *Psoralea polydenius*. After spending a lovely morning enjoying some of the Great Basin's finest, we drove back to the Fort Churchill State Park for lunch on a shady lawn.

We returned back toward Reno, and the next stop was at Steamboat Springs thermal site, just south of Reno on Highway 395. Most of the thermal area is fenced to protect the rare plants and thermal features, but we were able to visit a similar area east of the highway, and saw the federally listed endangered *Eriogonum ovalifolium* var. *williamsiae*, named for the



Close-up of *E. ovalifolium* var. *williamsiae*, photo by Neal Kramer

according to Steve. The plant is a lovely compact mat with distinctive clustered rosettes of leaves. Also at this site we saw another matted buckwheat, *E. wrightii* var. *subscaposum*, and an interesting yellowish *Orobancha uniflora*.

Although the day was waning, about half the group was up for one more stop, so on we went to the Galena Creek Park, on the Mt. Rose Highway. Here we took a refreshing walk through the shady mixed conifer forest (mostly Jeffery and ponderosa pine, with some white fir and lodgepole pine). There were a few buckwheats spotted: more *Eriogonum wrightii* var. *subscaposum*, *E. nudum* var. *deductum*, and *E. umbellatum* var. *nevadense*. Also of interest was flowering *Ceanothus prostratus*, *Senecio integerrimus*, *Boechera (Arabis) holboellii*, *Phlox diffusum*, *Penstemon speciosus*, *Calyptidium monospermum* (which we learned is frequently found in herbaria folders as an undetermined *Eriogonum*), and a few lovely blood-red snowplants, *Sarcodes sanguina*. On the mountain side we heard fascinating stories of botanical explorations and shenanigans by



Dr. Reveal at Steamboat Hot Springs, photo by Neal Kramer



***E. ovalifolium* var. *williamsiae* at Steamboat Hot Springs. Note it is surrounded by cheatgrass. Photo by Cheryl Beyer**

Nuttall, Pursh, Lewis and Clark, and others from Dr. Reveal. We eventually returned to Reno filled with visions of *Eriogonum* and other plants.

Sunday's trip was led by John Weiser, who promised (and delivered) spectacular *Eriogonums*. Our first stop was a short visit to Evans Canyon County Park, where we saw *Salvia dorrii* var. *dorrii* in full bloom, along with *Castilleja applegatei*, *Calochortus bruneaunis*, and a few *Eriogonum ovalifolium* var. *ovalifolium*. This area had an interesting mix of salt desert shrubs, including *Artemisia arbuscula* ssp. *longiloba*, *Tetradymia glabrata*, *Glossopetalon spinescens*, and *Ephedra viridis*.



E. robustum with Reno in the background, photo by Stephen Love

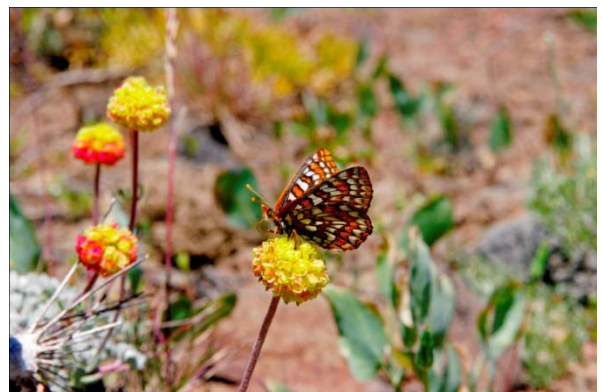
Next we headed off for the main event: the Desert Research Institute on the hills north of Reno off Parr Avenue. This spectacular hillside was all it was cracked up to be: an andesitic soil (probably acidic) thermally altered by hot



E. robustum, Desert Research Institute, photo by Cheryl Beyer

springs that was covered with yellow and white flowers from a variety of interesting buckwheats. *Eriogonum umbellatum* var. *nevadense* provided extensive fields of bright yellow. The rare *E. robustum* was a very showy white-flowered perennial with a compound umbel. *E. ochrocephalum*, *E. strictum* var. *flavissimum* (now in var. *anserinum*?), and *E. sphaerocephalum* provided different shades of yellow flowers, leaf form, and texture to the landscape. Some annual *E. vimineum* was also seen near the road. As we wandered up and down the hill, numerous photographs were shot, as each clump and view appeared even better than the last. Eventually, we had our fill and regrouped to move on.

A number of folks departed at this point (including Dr. Reveal), but about half of the group followed John up past Verdi on a rocky road to Dog Valley on the Toiyabe National Forest. This lovely mountain valley, lush green and surrounded by coniferous forest, is home to two rare *Ivesia* species, one found only in this valley. We saw both: *Ivesia aperta* var. *canina* (named for Dog Valley) was in bud or very early flower and *Ivesia webberi* was mostly past flower, but we found a few late bloomers. *Eriogonum* was represented by *E. douglasii*



E. douglasii at Dog Valley, photo by Stephen Love

var. *meridionale*, in flower. Showy associates in the area included *Camassia quamash* ssp. *breviflora*, *Allium lemmonii*, *Lomatium bicolor* var. *leptocarpum*, *Balsamorhiza macrolepis* var. *platylepis*, *Lomatium nudicaule*, *Orobanche uniflora* var. *purpurea*, *Dodecatheon jeffreyi*, and *Polygonum bistortoides*.

After this site, the herd thinned considerably, but a few hardy souls hit one more stop: the East Keystone Canyon trail northwest of Reno. We hiked up a popular foothill trail to a large



Rock outcrop with *Thelypodium laciniatum*, photo by Stephen Love

rock outcrop. Along the way we saw some cute *Phacelia bicolor*, *Mirabilis alipes*, a *Penstemon roezlii* in nice bloom, and *Sidalcea glaucescens*. At the rock outcrop we found the fern *Cheilanthes gracillima*, some interesting *Scrophularia desertorum*, pretty grasses *Melica stricta* and *Achnatherum speciosum*, and a showy *Thelypodium laciniatum*. It was a great finish to a great trip (marred only by a stolen cell phone at the trailhead).

All in all, it was an excellent weekend, with patient instruction, good company, flowers in perfect bloom,

lovely field weather, and an all-around wonderful time. I, for one, am looking forward to next year's trip. The biggest challenge will be making it available to a larger group of people while keeping the intimate aspect that contributed to the success of the event.

2010-2011 Eriogonum Seed Exchange

Hi! I'm Cecile Shohet, and I'll be organizing the seed exchange this year, taking over from Ginny Maffitt's very wonderful hands. The thought of getting to touch all the seeds that will be coming in compelled me to be involved with the exchange.

Some things I'd like to mention ~

- I will be accepting seed that you've collected to pass on to other Eriogonum lovers at any time, so please send them to pass forward as soon as you can. Each contributor gets 1 free packet of seed for each species donated.
- Please clean your seed before sending them to me!
- The dates of the exchange ~ where I will send seed according to your requests, will take place from January 1, 2011 to February 15th, 2011.
- Each packet will have a minimum of 10 seeds, unless there have been more requests than seed is available for that particular species or variety.
- I will post the seed offerings online on the Eriogonum Society homepage, and in the next newsletter.
- There will be a \$3.00 charge for postage, and a \$0.50 fee per packet of seed.
- We love getting seed from Europe, and encourage Europeans to be involved!
- My address: Cecile Shohet, 1244 Calypso Court, Ashland, OR 97520; phone: 51-604-8201; email: cshohet@gmail.com

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Articles for the Newsletter: If you are interested in writing or submitting an article to future newsletters, please notify one of the above contacts. Thank you!

