

AMERICAN PENSTEMON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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MEXICO LOOKS FINE FOR 2009

By Bob McFarlane



Basaseachic Falls in Sierra Madre

A group of APS members and Texas and New Mexico botanists traveled to the Sierra Madre in Chihuahua for a week this past August to see if the area would make a good location for our societies' 2009 Annual Meeting. Making the trip were APS members, Rosalie and David Bentzin, Dale Lindgren, Phoebe and Bob McFarlane along with botanists Wynn Anderson, Richard Spellenberg, Tim Lowery and Bob Sivinki.

Our leader was Wynn Anderson, curator of the Chihuahuan Desert Garden at UTEP in El Paso, Texas who, along with Richard Spellenberg, has been botanizing the Sierra Madre in Mexico for many years and both are real experts in the flora and customs of this area.

We all met in El Paso and after a great tour of the Chihuahuan Desert Gardens at UTEP and dinner at the Andersons we headed out the next day for Mexico. After an easy border crossing we headed south on highways 2 and 10 through the Chihuahuan Desert, through Nuevo Casas Grandes and other farming towns along the eastern edge of the Sierra Madre. At Ignacio Zaragoza we headed west into the mountains

toward the town of Madera where we spent the first night in a fine motel.

The country after leaving the farming areas was beautiful - forested with open meadows, some farms and few people. Aside from ranching and farming the major economic activity in this area seems to be lumbering. The roads were all highly maintained two lane and traffic was light.

The Sierra Madre flowering season is regulated by rainfall during what they call the monsoon season. The spring is normally quite dry and the rains usually don't begin until late June or July. For this reason the major blooming doesn't start until late August and we were right on time. This is also probably the main reason that most of the Mexico species of penstemon bloom later in our gardens.

We saw a total of eight species of penstemon during the trip - out of a total number of about 20 species which are native to Chihuahua. The first day out we saw *P. stenophyllus*, *ambiguus* and *campanulatus* and *miniatus*.



P. miniatus in Sierra Madre

The next day we left early and botanized our way south on highways 23 and 16 and stopped for lunch at the Basaseachic Falls National Park to

view one of the highest falls in North America. It was spectacular. The flowers were also in full bloom and we saw many species including the rare yellow phlox and many varieties of Morning Glories.

From the falls we worked our way back to the town of Creel and then down to Cusarare where we spent the next two nights in a rustic motel with great food run by the Tumaramara Indians who are native to the area. *Penstemon campanulatus* and *miniatus* were common in this area.

The next day we drove further down highway 23 towards the edge of the Copper Canyon which is larger and deeper than our Grand Canyon. The road was fine and the scenery spectacular. It is wooded barranca country with many canyons leading down towards the big canyon. Some of the group took a dirt road which led down into the canyon but the rest of us turned back to take more time viewing and photographing the penstemons and other plants.



P. faciculatus south of Cusarare.

The next morning we visited a park-like area called Valley of the Monks and hiked a short way up to the top of the ridge to view many flower species in full bloom. We stayed that evening at a first class motel in Creel and left the next morning for the return drive stopping for the night in Nuevo Casas Grande.



Dale Lindgren in the Valley of Monks

In the morning we visited the Anasazi ruins and museum nearby. These ruins were built by the same general group of Native Americans who built the pueblos at Chaco Canyon in central New Mexico. We also drove to a nearby village of potters to view and purchase some first class "Pueblo" type pottery at very economic prices before leaving for the three hour drive back to El Paso.

In summary, we were very pleasantly surprised at both the facilities and the type of country that we visited. The elevation in the Sierra Madre was between 5000' and 8000' and the temperatures were comfortable. The roads were good as were the food and accommodations. We all agreed that it was entirely feasible to hold an annual meeting in this area.

The trip was subsequently recommended and recently approved by the Board for August 2009. It will of necessity be a little longer than the normal one because of the distances involved and will require travel by bus from El Paso since getting into any kind of an auto accident in Mexico could ruin an entire trip. There will also be the opportunity for a trip extension to ride the Copper Canyon Railroad - a world class tourist attraction. More on the trip in a later newsletter.

ELY WILL BE GREAT IN 2008

By Bob Pennington

White Pine County, Nevada, may well have more wild/native species of Penstemons than any other county in the country. And that is where the APS is heading next June, 13, 14, and 15. Ely is the largest city, nearly the only town in the county, and will serve as our headquarters. We will be assisted in our search for Penstemons by at least one expert in the native plants of the more xeric part of the county, and are hoping for expert help within Great Basin National Park (GBNP) as well. GBNP alone is home to some 20 species of Penstemons; at least 4 of those are threatened, rare or endangered. If one gets tired of Penstemoning, there are other exciting belly plants to look for, and in a site of such renowned mineral wealth, there's always other treasures to seek as well. Please save the space on your calendar for Ely next year. Full details will be forthcoming in January.

2007 SEED EXCHANGE

The 2007 Seed Exchange is enclosed with this newsletter. Thanks to all the members who donated seed and especially to Ginny Maffitt and Louise Parsons for intake and dispersal.

INTERMOUNTAIN BASIN PENSTEMONS

By Ginny Maffitt, Sherwood, Oregon

Excerpts from a speech by Noel Holmgren, Oct. 21, 2007 at the Denver Botanic Garden on the occasion of the North American Rock Garden Society, Rocky Mountain Chapter's annual Quintuple Day of meetings and talks.

At the conclusion of Noel's speech, he was given the Myrtle Herbert Award from the American Penstemon Society. Presented by its president, Bob McFarlane, the award honors Dr. Holmgren's years of discovery, research and authorship in the huge and diverse Genus penstemon.



Dr. Noel Holmgren

Dr. Noel Holmgren, a PhD in Botany, long-time member of the American Penstemon Society, and recently retired from the New York Botanic Garden, has for many years been collaborating in the writing of the soon-to-be 8 volume "Intermountain Flora". The first volume was published in 1972 by Noel's father, Dr. Arthur Holmgren, plus Dr. Arthur Cronquist, Dr. James L. Reveal and Noel's wife, Dr. Patricia K. Holmgren. It was conceived to cover the flora of lands roughly between the western Sierras and the Rocky Mountains. Noel has been the principal author of the huge section on the Genus Penstemon that fills 85 pages of Volume IV, plus other genera.

Noel's talk was highlighted with a showing of his plant photographs, maps and graphs, interspersed with pictures of hardy, gear-laden botanists whose names are attached to some of the flora they were finding. Remarking that while penstemons comprise the third largest genus of the intermountain basin, they are the largest genus in North America. Noel listed species growing in each state with Utah at 78, California at 53, Nevada at 50, Idaho at 43, Wyoming with 40, Colorado with 59, Arizona with 39, New Mexico with 35 and Oregon with 35. Not all of these grow within the geographic boundaries covered by this flora. Using a quotient of the number of species per 10,000 square miles of the intermountain region, Utah is still highest with 9.19 then Idaho with 5.15. The boundaries of this region for the project were established by Art Cronquist in 1959 and haven't been changed since. The western boundary is the base of Sierra Nevada-southern Cascade Range; on the east it is the Utah-Colorado border with a sliver of Wyoming. On the north are

included the Oregon deserts and the Snake River Plain up to the edge of the mountains. On the southwest, a line is drawn where the sagebrush deserts give way to creosote bush of the Mojave Desert. On the southeast edge is the rim of the Grand Canyon Plateaus and the Utah-Arizona border.

Other penstemon facts: species are found from the southern parts of Alaska and the Yukon (*P. gormanii*) and south to the mountains of Guatemala (*P. skutchii*). Noel mentioned 66 species in his talk, although Volume IV covers 104 species. Amazingly, 14 more have been added since the third printing in 2006, bringing the known penstemon total in the Basin area to 118 (see list at end of article). “Seven are discoveries new to science, two are range extensions into northeastern Utah from Colorado, one is a Pacific Northwest species that has escaped from cultivation, and four are former varieties, that after second thoughts about their distinctness, have been raised to species.” These 66 were discussed by Noel according to grouping within their Subgenus divisions: **Dasanthera, Penstemon, Habroanthus and Saccanthera.**

Subgenus Dasanthera is the oldest, most primitive of the genus. It contains only Section Erianthera that has 9 members. Three of these exist in the intermountain basin: *P. montanus* Greene, (cordroot pent.), *P. fruticosus* (Pursh) Greene (shrubby pent) and *P. davidsonii* var. *praeteritis* Cronquist (creeping pent.). *P. newberryi* A. Gray enters the region in northern California adjacent to the Sierra Nevada. “Besides having woody stems, they all have densely long-woolly anthers, and the inflorescences of most are essentially simple racemes, with only one flower in each axil of a bract. Most grow in the Pacific Northwest, and the few that we have in the Intermountain Region enter from the north, some just barely.”

Subgenus Penstemon is the largest of the Subgenera and also has members in eastern states. It's members' anthers open across the connective at the bottom of the two anther sacs, across the full length from tip to tip. They lack the hairiness characteristic of the Dasantheras. In this region are included Section (a further sub-grouping of the many species) *Penstemon*, *Caespitosi*, *Ambigui*, *Cristati*, *Coerulei*, and *Petiolati*. In Section *Cristati* is one of the most-recently discovered species, *P. franklinii*, named

for Ben Franklin from the Utah Natural Heritage Program and found in sagebrush desert in the north end of Cedar Valley. It is taller than *P. nanus* with toothed margined leaves. New ones are *P. pinorum*, west of Cedar City and taller than the former with glabrous, toothed leaves. Noel recently named *P. distans*, discovered by Duane Atwood at the rim of the Shivwitz Plateau, overlooking the Colorado River.

P. holmgrenii S.Clark, from **Subgenus Habroanthus**, Section *Glabri*, was named by Steve Clark to honor Noel's father Arthur, who was his plant taxonomy professor.

P. patricus, from **Subgenus Saccanthera**, Section *Saccanthera*, also named *P. patricus* N.H.Holmgren for his father, who was the first to collect it in the early 1940's in w. Utah. Its common name is “Dad's penstemon” in further honor. *P. rostriflorus* Kellogg (Bridges' penstemon), the only species from Section *Bridgesiani* is a brilliant orange-red, which attracts hummingbirds from southwest CO to northwest NM. “It was the last species of *Penstemon* treated in the Intermountain Flora and when the volume was published in 1984, it was species number 104. *Penstemon* is either the second or third largest genus in the region with *Astragalus* taking first-place honors, and second place depends upon how many species Jim Reveal ends up with in *Eriogonum*. Right now it looks like a dead heat, but watch out Jim, there are **two more new discoveries** waiting on further study.”

Addendum from Dr. Holmgren:

Penstemon Species New to Science
Penstemon floribunda Danley
Penstemon flowersii Neese
Penstemon franklinii S. L. Welsh
Penstemon higginsii (Neese) N. H. Holmgren & N. D. Atwood
Penstemon idahoensis N. D. Atwood & S. L. Welsh
Penstemon pinorum L. M. Schulz & J. Schulz
Penstemon rhizomatosus N. H. Holmgren
Penstemon teihmii N. H. Holmgren

New Range extensions into the region:
Penstemon gibbensii Dorn
Penstemon yampaensis Penland

Escaped from cultivation:

Penstemon duchesnensis (N. H. Holmgren) Neese
Penstemon roezlii Regel
Penstemon holmgrenii S. Clark [syn: P cyananthus var. subglaber (A. Gray) N. H. Holmgren]

BOARD MEETING SUMMARY

By Bob McFarlane

The board met on October 20 in Denver during the weekend that Noel Holmgren was giving talks on Intermountain Flora and Penstemons to a meeting of the local NARGS group. Present were Julie McIntosh Shipiro, Ginny Maffitt, Val Myrick, Dwayne Dickerson, David Bentzin, Hugh MacMillan, Bob McFarlane, and a visitor Ellen Wilde.

Bob McFarlane started off by reviewing a little of the recent membership survey and indicated that the board should focus on the items in the survey that were considered important by the membership. Ginny Maffitt took the minutes and the full text of these will be posted on our website. There was a lot accomplished and a summary of this is as follows.

Julie McIntosh Shipiro gave a report on a survey she was doing in the area of Rare and Endangered Species of Penstemon. She has been studying what other organizations are doing in this area in an effort to determine how the APS might help. She expects to have recommendations for Board consideration at our next meeting.

Ginny Maffitt reported on the status of Annual Meeting Planning. She said that plans were well underway for the 2008 meeting in Eastern Nevada to be led by Bob Pennington. After hearing a report on the Mexican reconnaissance trip the Board approved the Sierra Madre in Chihuahua as the site for the 2009 meeting to be held in August. It will be led by Dale Lindgren and David Bentzin. A number of locations for 2010 were discussed including Glacier Park, Siskiyou Mountains and Colorado. The Board approved Colorado for the 2010 meeting. It was

also suggested that there be two leaders chosen for each meeting - one to plan the botanic part and the other the accommodations.

Hugh MacMillan reported on the status, planning and maintenance cost of our new website. He stated that the data based version of the website would be up and running by December 31 and that there had been quite a bit of logging into the site over the past two months. Costs for maintaining the site were estimated at less than \$600 per year. After considerable discussion the Board approved a resolution to not limit access to any part of the website by non-members. Due to the importance of the position, the Website Manager, Hugh MacMillan was elected to the Board.

Bob McFarlane reviewed the membership conclusions regarding communications from the membership survey. The board approved reducing the Bulletin to one issue per year in the format of a yearbook with more photos and the best articles available.

The newsletter was approved as an official communications vehicle of the society and Val Myrick was appointed as Editor. Four to six issues per year are to be prepared and the total cost is estimated at \$5 per year per member.

A discussion of the Round Robins determined that they had been very useful in disseminating information between members in the past. However, it was felt that at the present time this could best be done through the Message Boards on the website and not through the Bulletin.

Dave Bentzin gave a Treasurers Report which showed a balance of over \$18,000 in our accounts. The board approved the addition of a financial auditor position to audit our financials on an annual basis. After discussion both domestic and overseas dues were increased by \$5 to cover additional expenses of the newsletter, postage and the website.

Dwayne Dickerson discussed the current state of our membership activities and reported that current membership was just over 300. The board agreed that the duties of the Membership Secretary should be expanded to include planning for projects aimed at increasing membership. Dwayne showed a new two-fold brochure with a membership application as well as a very inexpensive and colorful 2' x 3' poster

that can be reproduced locally for use at meetings where we are soliciting new members.

Ginny Maffitt reported on the seed exchange and said that donations were coming in very slowly and that she had extended the deadline to early November and would be calling potential donors to try and improve things.

The Board approved the preparation of an annual budget to be prepared in November and approved by the board in December of each year. Every officer with revenue or expense responsibility will prepare and send their budget to the President during November. The President will review and prepare a final budget for board approval in December. Expenditures within budget approval would not require further board approval. Those above that level will.

Membership Application

Sign me up-
Name-

Address-

Phone #

E-mail

We do not sell, share or distribute member data in any manner.

US and Canadian dues \$15 US
Elsewhere \$20 US, no cash please.
Make check payable to the
American Penstemon Society. Mail to:

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