

**CALIFORNIA
JEWELS OF THE
WILD WEST TRIP
REPORT
2022**

Day 1 **Arrival in San Francisco**

Eventually, we all convened at the airport hotel and had a first meal together in a nearby hotel.

Day 2 **To Fort Bragg**

Leaving early enough, we avoided any heavy 4th July traffic and made our way out of the city, with Hoy pointing out the delights of San Quentin prison as we crossed one of the last bridges with the city sky-lined behind us. The landscape was golden with a blanket of dried European grasses studded with oaks, but became greener once we had hit the summer fog belt closer to the coast. The trees were immediately draped with Spanish moss and the roadside packed with non-native radish (*Raphanus raphinistrum*). A bit further along and a rocky bank held a selection of native flora including the pretty pink *Clarkia amoena* along with an *Eriogonum cinereum* and the ashen rosettes of *Dudleya farinosa* with scapes of pale yellow bells.

We reached the Pacific coast and slowly made our way along the scenic route with many rock islets and today at least, very calm waters, which rather dampened the day for those that had come out for some surfing. And damp it was with mists drifting in and cloaking the landscape. Our next stop in an area of Bishop pine (*Pinus muricata*) and tan oak (*Notholithocarpus densifolius*) was to look for *Lilium maritimum* and it seemed as though the verge had been recently strimmed, so no lilies. There were a couple of tall ones in seed along a side path, as well as flowering spikes of *Toxicoscordum fremontii*. Then, as we drove on there was one pristine lily standing tall of the bracken. All of the three flowers were in perfect condition with one plump bud still to open.

Lunch was taken near the coast and then we eventually found our next location, a damp area with lots of handsome deep pink *Stachys chamissonis*, but alas the only *Lilium pardalinum* we saw were still in bud. The mists were heavy at times as we drove on stopping for big domes of *Lupinus arboreus* smothered in pale yellow flowers. Reaching Fort Bragg there was time to drop our luggage and head of for a pre-dinner walk along the coast when we found an array of cliff top and littoral specialists including tight mats of *Polygonum paronychia*,



Angelica hendersonii

sprawling *Ambrosia chamissonis*, yellow *Grindelia stricta*, plentiful tufts of *Erigeron glaucus*, striking white rounded umbels of *Angelica hendersonii* and the handsome off-white thistle *Cirsium quercetorum*. *Erysimum franciscanum* grew here and there and there were mats of woolly-leaved, golden *Eriophyllum lanatum* var. *arachnoideum*, but perhaps best of all was the clump of intense scarlet *Castilleja mendocinensis*.

Dinner was Mayan cuisine with strong margaritas!

Day 3 **To Arcata**

After a filling breakfast at a local café we set off, but didn't get far, stopping by a beach with fringing cliffs and a prominent rock emerging from the sands. The upper parts of the rocks were plastered with some fine native plants including amethyst *Triteleia laxa*, wonderful clusters of *Dudleya farinosa*, mats of *Eriophyllum staechadifolium* and tumbling *Eriogonum latifolium*. Brown pelicans flew lazily along the coast. Not much further on and we stopped for another (rather risky) roadside cliff with lots more *Triteleia laxa* together with *Dudleya caespitosa*, California golden fern (*Pentagramma triangularis*) and at the base of the rocks *Aquilegia formosa* and *Diplacus aurantiacus*. Bright red *Silene laciniata* could be seen out of reach on the rocks above.

The road twisted and turned, passing along the rocky indented coast and through sections of lichen-clad redwood forest where we found a few beautiful tall and fragrant *Lilium rubescens*. This is one of finest species in California, each flower opening white, often lightly speckled and then aging through pink to deep purple-pink, creating a delightful combination on the whole inflorescence. The spicy scent was lovely too. We drove for quite a while, stopping only for fuel, until we reached the low dunes at Table Bluff and had lunch. Exploring the sands afterwards there was some fine beach flora including dense tufts of *Castilleja exserta* subsp. *latifolia*, mounds of *Eriogonum latifolium*, filigree-



Lilium kelloggii

leaved *Tanacetum bipinnatum* and sprawling masses of *Calystegia soldanella* with attractive round foliage and big pink-and-white striped trumpet flowers.

Now it was time for the grand finale and we drove inland and climbed into a verdant tract of redwood forest. Here the roadside was lined with many lovely pink *Lilium kelloggii*, the flowers with elegantly reflexed tepals, some of which were well-marked with orangey stripes. The intensity of pink varied as did the size with some whoppers six feet tall with twelve flowers. This species is also pleasantly fragrant.

After an hour spent enjoying these beauties we drove the short distance to our hotel on the plaza in Arcata.

Day 4 Onion Mountain

Inland from Arcata the fog slipped away and we could better see the many forested ridges and complex of hills and mountains that comprise this section of the Trinity Alps. Turning off the main road it was instantly calm and lush with stands of *Aralia californica* and myriad ferns. We saw virtually no traffic all day and were able to wander relaxed in diverse sweet smelling forests of various coniferous trees; *Abies procera*, *Picea breweriana*, *Pinus lambertiana*, white pine, *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* and the deeply riven bark of incense cedar – *Calocedrus decurrens*. It was near a fine specimen of the latter that we stopped first. I had expected there to be lots of *Lilium rubescens* in flower and indeed there were many plants in bud, but this year was clearly a late one and few were in bloom. On the plus side there was a fine patch of *Triteleia bridgesii*, delightful dainty drifts of *Linnaea borealis*, *Aquilegia formosa*, *Silene laciniata*, *Polygala californica* and a few pink *Phlox adsurgens*. We did find a few smaller lilies in bloom a little further up one growing amongst a patch of fiery *Castilleja applegatei* for good effect. The tall languid spikes of yellow *Thermopsis macrophylla* draped across the track as we drove.

Moving on up there was a good clumps of *Penstemon azureus* and then we struck gold with the first (of many) *Lilium bolanderi*. This is a gorgeous species with cherry-red flowers, spotted inside and they stood proud of the chaparral. Quite why this species was in full bloom at higher altitude and *Lilium rubescens* not is



Xerophyllum tenax

a mystery. However, it clearly had been a cooler spring as various other plants were plentiful whereas they would not normally be so. Chief among these were the frothy spires of bear grass *Xerophyllum tenax* which dotted the scrub and became increasingly common as we gained height. Our lunch spot was near the 'top' with many bear grass in flower and just down the road we found patches of lovely filigree-leaved *Dicentra formosa* subsp. *oregana* with, it has to be said, rather muddy flowers. A few *Iris purdyi* were still in flower, ranging from pale pink-lilac to yellowish with brown veins. Hoy then aced the first *Calochortus tolmiei*, tiny little beauties with 'furry' tepals nestled among the pine leaves. Continuing onto the lake there were large tufts of *Silene campanulata* and then around the lake the marshes were brimming with the peculiar *Lilium pardalinum* hybrids this area is known for, except they were all still in bud (and ten days away) bar one early one we got to look at. This had a rather reddish suffusion to the tepals. *Allium validum* was abundant (and probably the reason for the name; onion lake) and among the dense swathes of these was a fine bush of *Rhododendron occidentale* in flower. Plenty of others were around the edge and its cousin *R. macrophyllum* had been plentiful all day, but was especially good in this elevated area.

On the way down we stopped in an area with several paler, peachy forms of *Lilium bolanderi*, with lots of marbled leaves of *Erythronium californicum* underfoot. And then to round things off there were a couple of stops for more and better *Lilium rubescens* with some variation in their speckling and intensity of pink. They all smelt wonderful.

We got back in time for a filling Mexican dinner.

Day 5 Redwoods I

After a good breakfast of tasty crepes we set off for the renowned redwood forests. Arriving at the fine tract at Prairie Creek, Hoy spotted our first *Lilium columbianum*, a golden-orange speck beneath the immense trees. It is hard to adequately describe the visual impact of the forest here, incredible die-straight colossal trunks soaring upwards from a bed of dense ferns (*Polystichum munitum*), the bark of each tree deeply riven. Thrushes gave melodic calls as we wandered through a small part of them, gapping in awe at not just the sight in front of us but at how anyone could conceive to cut them down! So much redwood forests has



Lilium columbianum

been cleared and these are tiny fragments of what must have been the most remarkable forest on Earth.

Driving through what must be one of the most scenic sections of forests imaginable we came across more *Lilium columbianum* and stopped beside an absolute beauty with no fewer than twenty-seven flowers. This giant specimen was two metres tall and we spent quite a while photographing and filming it. There were a great many more lilies as we drove on, passing roadside gilded with a citrus veneer of thousands. Sadly, it was impossible to stop, but perhaps that is why there are so many.

Lunch was on a fine overlook of the Pacific coast, with mists hovering over the forests and dark sands lapped with foamy breakers. From here we drove the short distance to the hotel and then went out for the afternoon to another attractive area of coast, passing fields full of cultivated Easter lily; *Lilium longiflorum*.

Day 6 Redwoods II & Bear Basin

The morning was spent walking around another jaw-dropping area of redwood forest. As we left the cool confines of the forest we found a few reddish-orange *Lilium pardalinum* subsp. *vollmeri* growing beside a serpentine seep alongside the extraordinary cobra-like pitchers of *Darlingtonia californica*. The latter varied in size from tall bright green specimens to compact red-suffused clumps clinging to the stony serpentine slope. There were also many *Cypripedium californica*, though these had finished flowering, as well as one *Epipactis gigantea* that was in bloom.

After lunch we climbed into the foothills to where we found the white form of *Lilium kelloggii* in reasonable quantity along shady roadsides among the coniferous woods.

Our final stop was the floriferous Bear Basin, reached by climbing steeply through the woods to around 1500 metres. Backed by



Sequoia sempervirens

flower-laden shrubs of *Ceanothus velutinus*, the open serpentine slopes had superb patches of *Penstemon davidsonii* smothered in mauve flowers. There were complimented by the fiery flashes of plentiful *Castilleja applegatei* and frothy white *Eriogonum compositum* var. *compositum* and stands of golden *Eriophyllum lanatum*, whilst on the cliffs grew stunning specimens of *Lewisia cotyledon* with peachy-pink flowers. In places it was a beautiful alpine garden with the aforementioned growing with sulphurous *Sedum spathulifolium* on the steep slopes. At the base were fine clumps of *Dicentra formosa* too. We did find a number of *Lilium washingtonianum* along an adjacent track, but these were still in (advanced) bud this year. Apparently there was late snow in April which seems to have rather set these back. However, the other alpine bounty more than made up for this.

Day 7 Oregon Loop

Today was to be a long (but rewarding) day, so we set off early and drove directly to a small botanical reserve where we found fine specimens of *Lilium pardalinum* subsp. *vollmeri* growing in a bog with large pitchers of *Darlingtonia californica* and the impressive tall daisy *Rudbeckia californica*. The mosquitoes were quite keen so we didn't stay too long. Our next site was for the same collection if species, but this time in a mosquito-free roadside marsh in full sun. There was a superb colony of lilies, all in perfect bloom with attractively suffused with red. Many other plants were in the marsh including abundant stands of suckering *Spiraea douglasii* with foamy pink flowers, *Camassia leichtlinii*, white *Hastingsia alba*, yellow spikes of *Narthecium californicum* and the pink *Castilleja elata*.

A roadside stand of the attractive *Asclepias speciosa* followed and then moving on we climbed into the hills where it was quickly obvious there had been a huge fire (two years ago). This meant some excellent flowering of herbs and bulbs and we stopped next for hundreds of blue *Brodiaea elegans* growing on a slope with sulphurous *Eriophyllum lanatum*. Higher still and we



Castilleja elata with *Darlingtonia californica* and *Narthecium californicum*

saw the first of many *Lilium washingtonianum*, though this was an especially vigorous and tall specimen, albeit hard to reach high on a bank. More of these followed, some with the pure white flowers ageing flowers suffusing to purple-pink. On a bare bank there were some nice clumps of pink *Silene hookeri* and clumps of blue-violet *Penstemon laetum* with a delicate *Collinsia* sp along the road edge. The roadsides and slopes were full of colour as we drove onto our lunch stop vowing to return afterwards. There was plenty around our picnic site too with meadows of *Erigeron glacialis* and a supporting cast of *Sidalcea asperula*, mauve coyote mint *Monardella odoratissima*, *Dicentra formosa*, stands of blue *Penstemon anguineus*, tall *Agastache urticifolia* and *Aquilegia formosa*. We did backtrack a short distance afterwards to where there were lovely patches of *Phlox adsurgens* growing amongst stands of fiery *Castilleja applegatei*. On the other side of the pass we saw more *Lilium washingtonianum* and then a jaw-dropping display of *L. pardalinum* subsp. *wigginsii* crowding a bog. It really was one of the most outrageous and vivid displays of lilies one could imagine with thousands of perfect soft orange flowers blazing across the bog. There was no way my planned location could match this, indeed there were at least three other bogs with comparable mind-blowing colonies in full and perfect flower along the road. So, instead we drove back to some more excellent *L. washingtonianum* accompanied by masses of floriferous *Eriodictyon californica* and spent some time with these.

From here we drove down and wound our way along river valleys lined with oaks, past dry banks with (closed) *Mentzelia laetevirens* and the white-woolly heads of *Cirsium occidentale*. A welcome ice cream stop gave us a break and then we continued onto Mount Shasta.

Dinner was in a rather novel open air pizza restaurant set in a garden centre.

Lilium pardalinum subsp. *wigginsii*



Day 8

Scott Mountains

First thing we drove out into the sagebrush country below Mount Shasta, with clear views of the glacier-encrusted peak. Walking up a rocky track we soon came upon the first of many lovely *Calochortus macrocarpus*, the flowers like big lilac-pink stars. *Eriogonum nudum* was also very common with little pom-poms of pale yellow as we walked up to a viewpoint across to the huge mountain, framed by pines. The temperature was pleasant, but clearly things were going to warm up fast so best to head for the hills. We drove into the Scott Mountains, climbing high into the coniferous woodlands and turning off onto a side track. Along this rocky track we found some fine buckwheats with low tufts or mats of *Eriogonum siskyouensis* and the taller clumps of the rather impressive *E. compositum*. There were fine riven-barked incense cedars and plate-barked ponderosa pines and a smattering of *Lilium pardalinum* subsp. *shastense* along streamsides and bog fringes with *Aquilegia formosa* and *Darlingtonia californica*. However, the latter were incredibly abundant at the large bog where rivers of pitchers snaked through the wetland, the edge with plentiful *Platanthera dilitata*, *Sidalcea oregana* and Hoy found a delightful patch of pretty pink *Calchortus nudus* too.

We had lunch here and then rumbled back to the main road and then down and up again to a different valley where various stream sides and bogs had a fascinating array of things including *Lilium pardalinum* subsp. *shastense*, *Primula jeffreyi*, masses of *Darlingtonia californica* with many in bloom, holding their peculiar lampshade flowers well above their cobra-like pitchers. Along the roadside was plentiful scarlet *Ipomopsis aggregata* and *Penstemon laetum*, whilst open areas among the conifers had fine stands of bear grass glowing in the sun too. Descending a little way on the other side of the pass we spent time in a deliciously fragrant area of *Rhododendron occidentale* with many shrubs in perfect flower. Among these, where streams flowed, grew quite a few *Lilium pardalinum* subsp. *shastense* too to complete our lily marathon.

Rhododendron occidentale



Day 9**Lassen National Park**

We dropped our bags off at the hotel in Redding and drove straight up to Lassen, slowly but surely gaining height until we entered the park. These upper areas are dominated by white fir forest (*Abies concolor*) and we took a walk into one of them finding both creamy-white *Lupinus angustiflorus* and soft-lilac *L. grayi*. Fiery *Ipomopsis aggregata* was common as was the rather leggy *Penstemon rydbergii*. Pretty little *Calchortus minimus* was found too, but sadly *Erythronium purpurascens* had all finished! Higher up we found *Aconitum columbianum* in both white and blue colour forms, but the extensive population of *Veratrum californicum* was having a complete off year and not a single plant was flowering (unlike last year when all of them were!).

Driving on there were tall *Lilium pardalinum* subsp. *pardalinum* in a marshy patch but frustratingly still in bud. Reaching the high point at 2500 metres (8500 feet) we parked and ate lunch near a lake nestled below Lassen Peak, with views across the Sierra Nevada, the harsh rocky terrain peppered with stands of firs. Our second walk was to the geothermal area, passing a small population of *Penstemon newberryi* with carmine flowers and plenty of deep pink red heath *Phyllodoce breweri*. The geothermal area had various boiling mud, blue pools and sulphurous steam drifting across the ochre and alabaster slopes. However, it was not devoid of plant life and as we ascended there were superb drifts of *Kalmia polifolia* on the green banks alongside *Phyllodoce breweri*.

Our tour of California was complete and we drove back in the afternoon sun to the decidedly warmer climes of Redding and enjoyed a fine meal in a roadhouse style restaurant with more country music than any of us could really bear.

Day 10**To San Francisco**

All went smoothly with the drive to the airport and we dispersed to various corners of Canada, San Jose, Yorkshire and for Pontus and I three more days hunting for lilies near Lake Tahoe. Unfortunately, the car rental desks were bursting at the seams and by the time the car arrived it was straight into rush hour traffic. Luckily, Google maps got us a quicker route and we arrived in Grass Valley just in time to get some dinner.

*Abies concolor* around Lassen Lake**Day 11****Grass Valley to Sugar Bowl ski area**

A day of mixed success and failure! Things started fairly well with finding a good flower on a *Lilium humboldtii*, a species that flowers earlier than most (in June). We found many more non-flowering and finished flowering plants in another area of black oak (*Quercus kelloggii*) and ponderosa pine woodland, but little else of interest. Moving on we tried to find *Lilium parvum* but a combination of traffic delays and road closures plus difficult access meant the only ones we saw were inaccessible beside the fast highway.

Later in the afternoon we resorted to sites I had found previously (last year), the first for a fine specimen of *Lilium parvum* var. *crocatum* growing beside a stream and then a truly superb stand of very large *Lilium pardalinum* subsp. *pardalinum* in a seep beside the road. The latter were magnificent with hundreds of flowers in a colony that stretched up the bank and along the road, the flowers varying from orange to heavily suffused red. Pontus tried to convince me there were three subspecies here, but I was having none of it. It was just a healthy variable population.

Day 12**Lyons Creek trail**

Today proved a blazing success. Driving directly to the trailhead there was a short stop shortly before we arrived for a few *Lilium parvum* just in case we found no others. We need not have worried. The walk was through an area that had burned in a fire last year and was wall to wall flowers from start to finish, with an abundance of a frothy *Gilia* sp. filling the landscape of burnt trees, punctuated by pretty *Pedicularis atollens* and *Lupinus lepidus*. The display gained in impact as we progressed, finding a loose drift of *Calochortus minimus* close to a colony of stunning *C. leichtlinii*, then wonderful stands of *Castilleja applegatei* amidst *Lupinus polyphyllus* subsp. *burkei* and more flowery drifts. There were no fewer than six species of *Mimulus*-relatives on the walk including hairy leaved yellow

*Lilium pardalinum*

Erythranthe primuloides, taller yellow *E. moschata*, even larger *E. guttata*, the handsome pink trumpets of *E. erubescens*, small pink flowered *Diplacus breweri* and drifts of *D. torreyi*. There was the first dark-striped yellow *Triteleia ixioides*, which we later found in wonderful displays mixed with *Gilia* sp., *Allium campanulatum* and the lovely five-spot; *Nemophila maculata*. The latter got better and better the farther we walked, forming lovely patches on the ground. Big stands of *Epilobium angustifolium* were everywhere too and big stands of fuzzy *Agastache urticifolia* stood proud of the surrounding vegetation.

One of the main plants we sought was also encountered several times with groups of *Lilium parvum* appearing along streamsides and moist banks. The last specimens we found we particularly robust with over twenty flowers, their glowing scarlet flowers superb against a backdrop of blue and yellow meadow flowers. Wandering back there were delightful backlit images and other flowers we had missed on the way in.

A wonderful day in the Sierra Nevada.

Day 12 Flights home

An early morning run back to the *Lilium pardalinum* colony did not quite produce the results we hoped for, with early sun already on the plants and the flat light we desired impossible. They were still a splendid site and there was much less traffic to disturb the air. *L. washingtonianum* was found on the way back in woods that contained giant-coned *Pinus lambertianus* and *Viola lobata*.

The run to the airport was trouble free and flights to Europe likewise.

Castilleja applegatei et al



For information on our tours
please contact

info@viranatura.com



Lewisia cotyledon