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Perityle cernua, scale 1:1

Proposed for Federal Register of
endangered plants (see article below)
Drawing by Niki Threlkeld

New Mexico to Name Seven Plants to Endangered List

The New Mexico Native Plant Preservation Advisory Committee, the U.S. Forest Service, the New Mexico Heritage Program and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have combined to produce a report dealing with a number of plant taxa from New Mexico. This report, which is not yet released, will recommend seven taxa for addition to the Federal Register plant endangered list. These plants include: Perityle cernua, (Daisy Family), Eriogonum gypsophilum (Knotweed Family) and the cacti Echinocereus kuenzleri, Pediocactus knowltonii, Sclerocactus mesae verdae, Coryphantha sneedii, var. sneedii and Coryphantha sneedii var. leei.

Extensive studies of these plants have been carried out by New Mexico botanists over the last few years. The cacti are being heavily exploited by plant collectors and the above listed taxa are rapidly disappearing. Echinocereus kuenzleri may have become extinct,

Endangered Plants

at least in the wild. Several of the cacti are in further jeopardy due to increased energy development in northwestern New Mexico.

Perityle cernua and Eriogonum gypsophilum have very narrow distributions in New Mexico and are found only here (endemic). The principal danger to Perityle cernua is avaricious plant collectors or natural catastrophes such as insect infestation. This plant grows in a virtually inaccessible location. Eriogonum gypsophilum occurs in the Seven Hills area of southeastern New Mexico. Its greatest threat may be from activities resulting from the construction of the proposed Brantly Dam. The dam itself will not inundate the population, but construction and recreational activities could be a problem. Dr. Richard Spellenberg has developed a report and recommendations on management of this species and the Federal authorities are aware of the problem.

Additionally, some fifteen plant taxa that had previously been recommended for endangered or threatened status, have been recommended for deletion from the Federal Register. These plants were recommended by the Smithsonian Institution and the suggestions were based upon the best data available at the time. Further investigation, stimulated, in part, by the listing process, has shown that these plants are either more common than suspected or at least not endangered. The plants under discussion are: Aletes fififolius (Parsley Family), Perityle lemmonii, and Haplopappus spinulosus ssp. laevis, Perityle staurophylla, (Daisy Family), Draba mongollonica, Lesquerella gooddingii, Lesquerella lata and Lesquerella valida (Mustard Family), Atriplex griffithsii (Goosefoot Family), Astragalus castetteri and Dalea scariosa (Pea Family), Nama xylopodum (Waterleaf Family), Limonium limbatum (Plumbago Family), Rosa stellata var. stellata (Rose Family), and Arceuthobium apacheum (Dwarf Mistletoe Family).

A considerable number of plant taxa remain to be studied and a second generation of recommendations will be developed in the near future. It will be some time before we have a clear picture of how many endangered, threatened and rare plants New Mexico has, but the number is certainly higher than the Federal Register list would indicate. Very careful studies are necessary before any representations about endangerment can be made for new plant listings. This is especially true now for there is extensive environmental backlash occurring in the U.S. and great fear at the state and federal level of adding names to an already controvertial list.

— Bill Isaacs

Native Basketmaking

Sandra Newman (author of Indian Basket Weaving) will speak on the use of native plant materials in basket weaving and dyeing. She will have plant materials, baskets and slides to show. Wednesday, October 18th, 7:30 pm at St. John's College, Room 116 Lab Bldg. A collection of some of the autumn composites will be brought so we can see who is who — Aster bigelovii, A. commutatis, Helianthus petiolaris, H. nuttalii.



More News

Missy Deardorff and her family are moving to Cerrillos. Because she will have no phone and is twenty miles from our wonderful printer, Lino Garcia, she will be sharing the editorship of the newsletter with Carol Dimeff, who has until her recent move to Santa Fe, headed the Las Cruces chapter. Many thanks to Missy for her lone editorship til now; in particular the quality of the botanical contributions to the newsletter have been so improved under her direction.

David Deardorff's critique of the RARE II process written on behalf of the NPS was sent to John McGuire, Chief of the Forest Service and to the Governor and our representatives.

Letters were sent on behalf of the NPS to the New Mexican and The Reporter newspapers about the use of salt on roads. It is hoped that at this time when the aspens are so beautiful with autumn color that the damage to them, the conifers, and the whole ecosystem on the downhill side of the Ski Basin Road will impress people enough to write agencies in charge of roads and elected officials about the problem.

Copies of these letters will be sent to anyone interested. Requests should be made to the editors (please enclose a stamp).

Las Cruces

Bob Reeves who has lead field trips for the NPS in the past, and is, with all his plant enthusiasms a cactus expert, is the new head of the Las Cruces chapter.

Silver City

Ralph Fisher wrote us a wonderful letter about mushrooms, his thoughts on the article we reprinted last month, "The Decline of the Grass Lawn Tradition in Tucson" (M. Hecht) and what's now blooming in the Silver City area. Portions of that letter...

"I read the article about the Tucson grassless lawns and the one important thing that he failed to mention, to me anyway, was how the switch to desert type landscaping over the last twenty years has virtually stripped vast acerages of Arizona's once beautiful deserts. This also brought about that state's strict laws about digging up desert plants without permission of the land owner, regardless of who the owner was. I can remember going from Wickenburg to Congress Junction in the early fifties in the spring just to see and photograph the vast masses of beavertail and hedgehog cactus. Now you can make the drive and there are none left at all. About 5 years ago my Dad and I went up there to shoot some cactus pictures and we had to drive on the back roads a half to three-quarters a mile to find

'More letter'

any at all, and then they were very scattered.

"The past couple of weeks we have gotten a very good display of flowers, finally. I did not think that we would get any at all after receiving only 3-4 inches of rain through all of July and August. I found one plant of Orobanche ludoviciana down in the Burro Mts. the first that I have found in New Mexico. Also several plants of Stachys coccinea. We got several good species up in the Luna-Alpine area last Saturday including Cirsium wheeleri, 3 or 4 Erigonums, Verbena macdougalii, and Monarda citriodora. And as you said, the Asters were thick in places..."

Booklets

A supplement to Native Plants for Landscaping in Northern New Mexico is being printed. If you own this booklet and would like the supplement please write the editor and please enclose a stamp. The booklet with the supplement will remain at the old price of \$.50. Native Plants for Landscaping in Southern New Mexico is \$.75. If you want either of these sent to you postage is \$.40 on each booklet.



Silver City's Sunken Street to Become a River Walk Park

Silver City's main street was a principal artery of commerce, the destination of visitors, the fashionable promenade of gentlemen and ladies, and the cultural mecca for lonely and thirsty drovers and freighters. All that was changed on July 21, 1895. An immense wall of rolling water twelve feet high and three hundred feet across roared through the heart of town. At first light the next day the local residents (all alive but some homeless) saw a monstrous ditch where the elegant boulevard had been. A subsequent flood in 1903 scrapped the ditch down to bedrock. Erosion began to tell its tale on the banks. In 1935-36 the C.C.C. built two miles of heavy rock walls. The Soil Conservation Service followed up by planting upwards of 50,000 trees and shrubs including Arizona Cypress, Cliffrose, Siberian Pea Tree, poplar, locust, wild plum, Osage Orange, Siberian Elm, Mulberry, Wild Grape, and a variety of small shrubs. Only a few survivors exist now, Jack Cottonwoods predominantly.

Today Silver City's sunken main street is a wild natural oasis that runs through the historic business district approximately 35 feet below street level. It runs with year-round spring water, over a million gallons a month, gurgling and splashing over granite boulders. For more than 40 years it has been a recurrent theme to make a park along the neglected banks of "The Big Ditch". Finally in 1977 the idea came into its own. Over \$15,000 cash was raised in a little over a

The Big Ditch

month, a park proposal was presented in Santa Fe for Bureau of Outdoor Recreation funding, and the park was finally approved August 1st of this year. On August 14th the first construction began. It is expected that the two block long park on both sides of the arroyo will be completed by the fall of 1979 and the oasis become a significant tourism attraction and add immeasurably to the quality of life in Silver City.

An irrigation system will help establish native plants, and this riparian habitat, home for over a hundred species of birds, will hopefully become a botanical showplace. Local clubs have expressed interest in establishing and maintaining native gardens. Evergreen groundcover will help hold the soil on the banks and provide winter green, and wildflowers will be given a much needed sanctuary.

The Big Ditch Park is expected to result in an about-face of the oft-decried "dying of downtown" and, although it is a unique natural landmark, should provide a model to other communities in the southwest of what the focused energy of public support can accomplish.

David and Susan Nelson
The Big Ditch Park Committee
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Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501
983-1978



Actaea rubra,
Red Baneberry

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GRASSLAND RESOURCES

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The Native Plant Society of New Mexico
Route 4, Puesta del Sol
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501



Chrysothamnus nauseosus
Rabbitbrush, Chamisa
Asteraceae (Sunflower family)
Flowers yellow