

Wildflowers in full bloom in Sierra



Wildflowers are peaking in the High Sierra.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

CARSON PASS – Wildflowers as far as the eye could see. Some are more than 5-feet-tall, others look like ground cover. The kaleidoscope of color is mesmerizing.

Even in the parking lot at the Woods Lake trailhead the water is rushing and the flowers are blooming. While the lot was full, as was the Carson Pass area, the number of people on the trail was not overwhelming. Getting a late start meant we passed more people on their way out.



We started the loop by going toward Winnemucca Lake. This is the route where the bulk of the flowers are.

The open terrain was glorious. It was as though the hillside had been painted green and then dollops were splattered about to provide a rainbow of color. Granite boulders provided a steel grey contrast.

It didn't take long before columbine, then Indian paint brush and a variety of daisies, joined lupine. Soon it was a cornucopia of wildflowers. It was like a painter's palette.



This was appropriate considering David Yapp of San Francisco was with his palette and easel at Round Top Lake capturing the Sierra's summer beauty.

It was one of those magical days where clouds danced in the sky, providing shade when needed, but enough sun to necessitate a good dose of sunscreen. At Winnemucca it was as though the sky had been splashed with grey paint.

Here people were fishing, sitting on the shore having lunch and swimming. We hopped out to the boulders to have a bite to eat.





Round Top peak in the background.

The smell of rain was still in the air Friday afternoon as we took our time on this six-mile round trip trek in the Carson Pass area. The amount of water and dampness brought out the skeeters as well as other biting bugs – at least along the first part of the trail.

Round Top peak towers above Winnemucca Lake at 10,381 feet. Our top elevation of the day was 9,400 feet, having gained about 1,200 feet.

The steepest section seemed to be the one mile trek between Winnemucca Lake and Round Top Lake. The decent from Round Top seemed steeper than the ascent on the other side. Few wildflowers were on this side. The conifers, especially at the



base, were denser. From the trail down we could see Woods Lake, but never came close enough for AJ to take a swim. There is plenty of water on this hike, though, for the dog to stay hydrated and cooled off.



Pollen on the rocks at Winnemucca Lake.

Wildflowers weren't the only reason people were out on July 3. The dichotomy of interests of the trail users was interesting. Several had fishing poles, with a few saying they caught some brook trout. Two others had their skis on their backs. They had taken a few turns on Round Top. This was hard to believe based on how little snow is still there.



David Yapp paints Round Top Lake.

Originally our destination was Fourth of July Lake, which is another $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles past Round Top Lake. My cold had me at times wondering if I was going to be spending the night in the wilderness, so we stuck to the loop. Not one step were we

disappointed. It is near peak wildflower season in the High Sierra.

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Red Lake Peak

Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe, go west on Highway 50. Turn left onto Highway 89 in Meyers.

At Picketts Junction, go right on Highway 88.

Go beyond the Carson Pass parking area. Woods Lake turn off is on the left. Trailhead parking is clearly marked on the right. It costs \$5 to park.