

Wildflowers blanket Washoe Meadows Park



A variety of wildflowers grow throughout Washoe Meadows State Park. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

WASHOE MEADOWS STATE PARK – Wildflowers, some no bigger than a pinky nail, are bringing a seasonal splash of color to Washoe Meadows State Park.



“It’s a little past peak season. It changes week by week,” Lisa Berry, California Native Plant Society member, tells the group she is leading on a trek through the park. Even so, she manages to point out 34 flowers in a two-hour outing on the last Sunday of June.

This is the Sierra State Park Foundation’s first wildflower hike. The group’s goal is to bring more people into this park in Meyers.



“My favorite time to come here is in early spring. It’s really special,” Berry said.

Even so, those traipsing through the park on this particular day were thrilled to find such an array of flora. Some are obvious – they are right along the trail. Others are also

right on the trail – but not obvious. That was the fascinating thing about the excursion, finding flowers that might otherwise be overlooked.

Berry also used a discovery scope that allowed the group to see the detail of the flowers that isn't possible with the naked eye. She pointed out the particular elements of the flower, including the reproductive parts.



Tidbits of information were imparted – like how white and pink yarrow are the only colors found in the wild, while the other colors are garden variety; that these wildflowers are not bred to be picked, and would wilt quickly if put in a vase at

one's home; that even edible plants can become poisonous if a parasitized plant brushes against it; the basin has paint brush, but no Indian paint brush – that's more common in the Carson Pass area; native Americans used camas in their cooking because the bulb is sweet; the self-heal can be used for medicinal purposes; and the woolly mule ear is OK as a substitute for toilet paper in the woods, but corn ear might send you to the doctor.

Some of the flowers that were found on this walk were: star lily, cinquefoil, meadow penstemon, white brodea, Alpine dandelions, dusty horkelia, gillyflower, Sierra Nevada pea, salsify, torres lupine, and caterpillar phacelia.