

NATIVE FLORA & FAUNA WITH SFC

A Colorful Farewell



Clarkia growing on Fine Gold Preserve on Fine Gold Creek near where it flows into Millerton Lake. The preserve is administered by Sierra Foothill Conservancy. BROOKS PHOTO

By **MICHAEL ELSOHN ROSS**
Sierra Foothill Conservancy docent

In spring, hillsides in the Sierra foothills can be colored orange with poppies and violet blue with lupines. There may be swaths of yellow goldfields or white popcorn blossoms. As spring ends and grasses turn from green to gold, a wildflower called “farewell to spring” can add splashes of pink.

While exploring in what is known as Idaho today, the Lewis and Clark expedition collected a pink flower unknown to botanists. It was named Clarkia in honor of Captain William Clark. The species they collected, *Clarkia pulchella*, has the common name “pink fairies.” It’s also found in the states of Montana, Washington, Oregon, South Dakota, Wyoming, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, as well as British Columbia, Canada.

All species of Clarkia are annuals, meaning that they only live one year. This is a successful survival strategy for small plants in climates with prolonged seasonal drought conditions. For annuals, the entire life from the seed sprouting to becoming a mature seed-producing plant happens in a matter of months. All Clarkias have only four petals, but among the different species these



The petals of Mariposa Clarkia are two-lobed at the tips.

vary in size and shape.

Almost all of 42 Clarkia species are found in western North America, with the exception of one: sangre de toro (*Clarkia tenella*), native to central Chile in South America. California has the greatest variety with 39 species.

Fifteen of these occur in the foothills of the Yosemite region. Most are found throughout the region, but there are four that grow in a limited area. The rarest of these, the Merced Clarkia (*Clarkia lingulata*), is known from only five locations in the Merced River Canyon. Its light-pink, teardrop-shaped petals are distinctive. Mariposa Clarkia (*Clarkia biloba* ssp. *australis*) is most abundant in Mariposa County where its greatest numbers are in the Merced River

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‘Evening out’ cheers local residents

By **PAT GALLEGOS**
Mountain Press contributing writer

For the past two months, since meetinghouses of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have been closed due to the novel coronavirus along with other places of worship, members of the local Auberry Ward congregation have missed worshipping and meeting with friends in the gospel. Since the shelter-at-home order was put in place by the Governor Gavin Newsom, members had become a little anxious for company and small talk.

To the rescue came the Marty and Michelle Page family, with a great idea for a drive-through barbecue dinner pick-up. Ward members would drive around the Pages’ circle drive and pick up a meal of barbecue tri-tip or chicken, accompanied by beans and pasta. An RSVP email invitation went out so enough food could be prepared. According to Michelle Page, a total of 125 people responded to the invitation.

As the cars drove in, they were met by a member of the bishopric, along with recently (albeit temporarily) returned missionary Karen Rehak, who greeted each arrival and took their order.

The meals were packaged for travel home, or the recipient could park in a large grassy area on the Page property to enjoy the great meal. On the way out, folks stopped and got a brownie for dessert, and had their picture taken by Steve McLelland for the ward history.

People were excited to be out and seeing friends. One comment was, “It was wonderful to get out and see people from the ward, to see



Vicki Clason (waving), Mike Clason and Judy Leavitt at the dessert table. Brownies were served. GALLEGOS PHOTO

their twinkling eyes above their masks and say ‘hello’ without bumping elbows.” Another person remarked, “The drive-through was fun and it was so nice to see friends,” while another enthused, “The food was outstanding—we should do this more often!”

Helping Michelle Page prepare the food were Katherine Van Wagenen, Leah

Moore and Vicki Clason. The brownie-makers were Judy Leavitt, Gail McLelland and Vicki Clason. A drone was airlifted by Brad Fowler. Bishopric members Jonathan Holbrook, Scott Van Wagenen and Mike Little were the greeters, along with helping out in other areas as needed. The food was generously provided by Michelle and Marty Page.



Bishop Jonathan Holbrook and Karen Rehak greeted friends as they drove in. GALLEGOS PHOTO

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“I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the water to create many ripples.”

— Mother Teresa