

Slate Mountain Botanical Area

Sequoia National Forest

Giant Sequoia National Monument

An unusually large variety of very rare wild plants are concentrated on the rocky outcrops and crevices along the 9000 foot high ridge of Slate Mountain. Most of the plants shown here are found only in a few high alpine meadows in Tulare County. Typically these plants appear briefly after the snow melts flowering for a couple of months in the Spring or Summer.



Unexpected Larkspur Rare
Delphinium inopinum Light blue or lavender flowers on 2 to 3 foot high stalks blossoming in June and July. Found in rocky habitats above 8000 feet in Kern and Tulare Counties.



Purple Mountain Parsley

Rare *Oreonana purpurascens*
Greenish gray hairy plant with purple stems and anthers. 4 1/2" to 7" diameter plants blossoming May-June. Found on rocky ridge tops at 8000 to 9000 feet. Found only in Tulare County.



Fawn Lily Rare *Erythronium pusaterii* Flowers with bright yellow centers and white tips on 4" to 14" stalks with 4" to 12" wavy green leaves. Blossoming in June. Found on rocky crevices at 8000 to 9000 feet. Found only in Tulare County.



Twisselmann's Buckwheat
Rare *Eriogonum twisselmannii*
Prostrate shrub 7" high 16" diameter. With small pale yellow hairy flowers. Flowers in July and August. Found at 8000 to 9000 feet. Found only at Needles and Slate Mountain.



Pinewoods Missionbells

Uncommon *Fritillaria pinetorum*
Purplish and mottled greenish yellow flowers on 2" to 6" stalks blossom May through July. Found on shaded granite slopes from 7000 to 12000 feet.



The hike up Slate Mountain is about 5 miles one-way or 10 miles round-trip. There is 2,000 feet of elevation gain; it starts at about 7,000 feet and ends at 9,000 feet. The trailhead is near site 23 in Quaking Aspen Campground where you will see signs for Trail 31E14. Ask the campground host about parking or park on the road across from the campground entrance making sure not to block traffic. Remember, motorized bikes or ATVs are not allowed on trails in Giant Sequoia National Monument.

At about ¼ mile the trail intersects a paved road and you must turn right and walk about 300 yards along the road. You will then see the trail marker on the left and can resume walking on the trail.

The trail climbs gradually at first and there are several meadows in its lower section. During July these meadows are covered with all sorts of flowers including corn lilies, sneezeweed, columbine, rein orchids, leopard lilies, and geraniums. You then pass through a couple of pine plantations whose trees are about 30 years old. The trail then begins to switchback up and you can see great views of the Needles and the Kern River Canyon and the McNally Fire area. In about 2 miles you reach a saddle with a few downed logs that make a great spot to rest. Here you are at the border of the Botanical Area.

After the saddle the trail contours up the south-facing ridge. Soon it becomes quite rocky and here is where several of the rare flowers described above can be found. You'll notice the rocks are quite colorful up here. There is indeed a lot of slate on Slate Mountain as well as other types of metamorphic rock. You might recall that most of the High Sierra is composed of granitic rock. Slate Mountain is unique and the metamorphic rocks and their associated minerals create unique soil types. That is the main reason why we find these rare plants here.

After the rocky ridge the trail becomes quite steep for a short period of time and soon you find yourself in a dense red fir and western white pine forest. After about ½ mile the forest clears a bit and you find yourself at another saddle. Here is the junction of this trail with the Bear Creek Trail, 31E31.

Here you can continue on the Bear Creek Trail which heads downhill for about 8 miles finally ending at Coy Flat. If one has the forethought to do a car shuttle, leaving one car at Coy Flat and driving the other up to Quaking Aspen, this would make a great all-day hike. You can also head due east and scramble the last 1/4 mile or so to the summit of Slate Mountain, but this is not an easy task and should not be attempted if you are not comfortable hiking off trail or if there are thunderstorms in the area. You can also continue south to Freezout Meadow and eventually cross Forest Service Road 21S94 at Windy Gap. But keep in mind it will probably take you about 2-3 hours to get back to Quaking Aspen so most people will simply retrace their steps back.



**United States
Department of
Agriculture**



**Forest Service
Pacific Southwest
Region**

**Western Divide Ranger District
Sequoia National Forest**

“The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.” wd:ns:08/08:white