



Wildflower Hikes in the Eastern Sierra

Fish Slough Area of Critical Environmental Concern - Bishop Field Office

Location:

From U.S. Hwy. 395 north of Bishop, take State Hwy. 6 1 mile to the Five Bridges Road. Follow Five Bridges Road north and northwest for approximately 2 miles. The Fish Slough Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) begins at the junction of Five Bridges and Chalk Bluff Roads.

Fish Slough's location within specific physiographic regions such as the Great Basin plays a critical role in driving the level of species richness within both the wetlands and other diverse plant communities within the ACEC. Fish Slough is located at the very southwestern edge of the Great Basin where it meets both the northern mojave and sierran regions. Because Fish Slough is literally at the cusp of these three biologically diverse regions a certain level of isolation exists. This isolation in turn has driven and still drives speciation within certain life forms including plants.

Fish Slough contains 11 plant species of special concern and is home to the rare Fish Slough milk vetch which occurs nowhere else in the world and the alkali mariposa lily that is specific to the alkali meadows that are scattered throughout the Owens Valley. Thirteen different plants also reach their limits of distribution in Fish Slough making these species potential storehouses of important genetic information about how these outliers can tolerate the environmental variation here in Fish Slough. See Wildflower Hotspots #1.

Fish Slough as you are finding out is a veritable refuge of biological diversity. A place where geographic isolation, geology, climate, and hydrology continue to drive a rare and irreplaceable ecosystem.

Lower Rock Creek - Bishop Field Office

Location:

From U.S. Hwy. 395 7 miles north of Bishop, take the Paradise/Lower Rock Creek exit. Drive approximately 2 miles to the Paradise Lodge. The trail begins behind the lodge.

Lower Rock Creek originates from the high peaks of the Sierra Nevada where it cuts a dramatic chasm through the flows of volcanic Bishop Tuff formed from the eruption of the Long Valley Caldera 700,000 years ago. The creek winds through forests of water birch, cottonwood and old-growth Jeffrey and ponderosa pine. Along the banks grow bursts of orange tiger lily, and yellow monkey flower. On the steep flanks of volcanic tuff are mounds of yellow buckwheat, many varieties of penstemon, and purple sage. The hike takes one through four distinct plant communities including pinyon/juniper, Jeffrey pine/Ponderosa pine, wetland and desert scrub.

Alabama Hills Special Recreation Management Area - Bishop Field Office

Location: From U.S. Hwy. 395 in Lone Pine, take the Mt. Whitney Portal Road west approximately 1 mile until you begin entering the dramatic granitic outcrops that characterize the Alabama Hills. You can stop anywhere you find an appropriate pull-out.

The Alabama Hills, famous for its backdrop in Hollywood films of the "old west" is also a great place to find many hidden wonders. Starting in May the granite towers are interspersed with level sandy benches that can be resplendent with desert annuals, such as the china blue sand linanthus, yellow easter bonnets, and brilliant venus blazing star. Perched on the rocky ledges are splashes of crimson paintbrush, and along the washes bands of giant bush lupine which can tower 4 feet in height. The Alabama Hills contain an array of different plant communities from wetland to desert scrub all at the base of the spectacular Sierra Nevada Range. See Wildflower Hotspots #2.

For more information on wildflowers in the Eastern Sierra contact the BLM Botanist at: (760) 872-5035.