

Siskiyou Nature Man Centennial of a wild experiment

By
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A wave of excitement rippled through Southern Oregon in the summer of 1914 when a man from San Francisco announced he was planning to go into the woods completely naked to conduct what was publicized as a man against nature experiment.

The man's name was John Knowles and in mid July he arrived in Grants Pass to spend a week scouting for a remote and wild

region in the Siskiyou Mountains where he could conduct his 60-day experiment without risk of coming into contact with other humans.

Knowles decided on a site in the upper Indian Creek drainage immediately south of Bolan Lake and departed for this site from the town of Holland where a pack trail could be followed for most of the distance.

On June 22, he took off his clothes and disappeared into the wilderness. Newspapers clarified to readers that he was barefoot, had no knife, no matches, or any other item. Knowles planned to make his own

clothes and shoes from the things he found in the forest and use primitive tools and traps to catch food.

Two anthropology professors and a news reporter set up camp in an old mining cabin near Bolan Mountain with the responsibility of observing Knowles to assure his experiment was authentic. However, most of the time they had no idea where Knowles was located, but did receive notes from him that had been written on bark using charcoal from fires that were hidden in pre-designated locations. Reporters then hiked down to Holland to send updates to newspapers. Stories about Knowles' adventures were published as many as three times a week in papers like the Oregonian.

At the beginning of the experiment Knowles suffered a significant injury to his legs and had trouble getting around, but later recovered. He also had a difficult time avoiding people and noted a great deal of annoyance at the many miners and hunters he had to hide from in the lower reaches of the Indian Creek drainage.

Knowles' diet was mostly berries and fish that he caught using

traps, although he did manage to trap a deer near the end of the experiment.

Near the middle of August, the turmoil leading up to the First World War began to fill the front pages of newspapers, and Knowles decided to cut his experiment to 30 days instead of 60. On August 22, he returned to Holland where a crowd of local residents met him. From there, Knowles rode a car back to Grants Pass where he received a hero's welcome.

Winding Trails: by Al Hobart

Thursday, July 16, 1964 – Illinois Valley News, Cave Junction, OR – Winding Trails

Some Orchids and Lilies

One of our native orchids that is somewhat similar to and nearly as beautiful as the ladyslippers is the shy and fascinating stream orchid, or chatterbox. A water lover, sparsely located about the Valley along stream banks, only a fortunate few wildflower admirers have the privilege of encountering and enjoying this trim and lovely orchid. A few may be found along Rough and Ready Creek, in the state park, usually half hidden among the other vegetation in the shade of the small willows at the water's edge.

As in other members of the orchid family, the flowers of stream orchids are very irregular, with six principal parts representing the three sepals and three petals. The lip, or "slipper," is actually a specialized petal, the other two petals being similar to the sepals. The slipper, or chatterbox, unlike that of the ladyslippers, has a pinched section, or constriction, near its middle, with the outer sac-like end hanging down below the rest of the flower parts. The petals and se-

pals are nearly of the same length, about ½ inch, the sepals greenish in color, the petals mostly purple or reddish and prominently veined. The plant is from ten to eighteen inches tall with rather broad clasping leaves up to six inches long, the upper ones being narrower. At the top of the stem are the several flowers, each growing from the axil of a small leaf-like bract.

Chatterbox usually makes its colorful appearance in May, and continues blooming through most of the summer. It is a wildflower lover's delight and one of the floral gems of our area.

An interesting plant that is rather common about the Valley is the amole, or soap-plant. It is a member of the large lily family. The plant has a rather stout stem and may be three or four feet high, or sometimes much taller. The leaves grow mostly from the base of the plant, are long, narrow and wavy, up to two feet long and an inch wide. The upper half of the stem is branched and bears the scattered conspicuous flowers. The six flower parts, about an inch long, representing the sepals and petals, are whitish with a purple or greenish midvein. They are narrow and spreading, or later curling back and under, the six stamens standing prominently erect.

The large bulb, or amole, may be six or seven inches long. It is covered with a thick, tough overcoat of brownish fibers. The Indians used the bulbs, roasted, for food; raw, they produce a lather and were used as soap; crushed and tossed into a fishing stream the bulb had an anesthetizing effect of the fish, thus making their capture simple for the enterprising Indians.

An attractive cousin of amole, the camas lily, is also found in the same area, near the waterway that traverses western Rough and Ready Park. It also has a thick meaty bulb, about two inches long, that was valued by the Indians as food. The stout plant is about two feet high and has a rather long flower cluster that is unbranched (a raceme), differing in this respect from the much-branched flower cluster (panicle) of the amole. The six narrow flower parts are up to two inches long, usually blue but rarely cream-white. There are six stamens.

We have two species of camas lily in our area. They are very much alike, differing mainly in the manner in which the withering flower (perianth) parts position themselves. In one species these parts twist together; in the other they twist individually and separately.

Some of our largest and most elegant

flowers and numbered among the lilies. But for sheer beauty as well as fantastic flower forms the orchids, of which we have quite a number of species, cannot fail to satisfy the most demanding taste in wildflowers.



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