

Winding Trails: by Al Hobart

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Redwoods

Have you ever seen a rhododendron tree? These fantastically beautiful shrubs, seen in various locations in the hills surrounding the Valley; do occasionally become small trees. Usually the shrub is rather sprawling and much branched, the branches being mostly hidden by the whorls of large glossy leaves at the branch-ends. But when conditions are such that the plant is destined to become tree-size, the trunk may be tall and, straight like in other trees.

A few days ago when I was saprophyte hunting down in the redwoods west of Jedediah State Park, west and south of Hiouchi Bridge on Smith River, in the dark shadows beneath the big trees I suddenly came upon a momentarily startling and rather eerie sight, one that I was to witness several times on my

seven and a half hours tramp through the redwoods that day. Spaced at irregular intervals in the dark-brown duff, like great jewels set in the forest floor, were a dozen or more of what appeared to be shining light-rose-colored roses. The effect was almost breathtaking, like stepping suddenly into a scene right out of Fairyland. Then I discovered that I was standing underneath a giant rhododendron whose trunk was 7 inches through and about 40 feet high; and even as I watched, another rose-like blossom settled to earth from the branches high above, to join its fallen fellows – for another moment of hidden beauty in the secluded shadows, then to return to the elements and be reconstituted, probably, into other fantastic natural forms. For the first time I really understood the remarkable wild plant's name: Rhododendron's literal meaning is rose-tree.

That day in the redwoods was a day of thrills for me, and was the result of a trip I made into the same locality a week earlier, a trip that had

its thrills too, but also a disappointing aftermath. On the first exploration I had found a small colony of rather rare saprophytes called Hypopitys, or American pinesap. These were bright red, a few inches high, with bowed flower-heads like the much commoner waxy-white Indian pipe. These two are the only ones of our saprophytes that have this nodding characteristic.

I was so elated over my saprophyte find that I took flash pictures of them from all angles. A few days later when my color slides came back, all my hypopity's pictures were total blanks – my camera had been knocked out of adjustment somehow. It took the camera man, Dean Doty about ten seconds to spot the trouble. That same evening I got all my camp gear together and at 4:30 next morning I made ready to return to the same redwood grove to try to find my elusive red saprophytes again.

In the course of my 72 hours hunt I found not only that same group but

four other colonies as well. Besides, I ran onto a large colony of 200 or more Indian pipes; and, most gratifying of all, I found Pityopus, another one of those oddly-beautiful forest scavengers that I was particularly anxious to find. The pityopus is so seldom seen and, consequently, so little known that it seems never to have acquired a common or folk name. Both the botanical names, hypopitys and pityopus mean literally "under the pines."

In all of that day-long excursion, circling and zig-zagging for miles in the redwoods, I saw only one lonely phantom orchid. This pure-white specter of the shadows, along with the waxy-red snow-plant, is the commonest of the saprophytes in our near mountains.

One other interesting phenomenon capped my big day in the redwoods. In a dark, brushless glade between the giant trees I came across a fairyring, a circular band of toadstools – such as is sometimes seen in meadows. Only this one must

have been the granddaddy of them all. The yellowish toadstools averaged about two inches across. The band was six inches wide and formed a near-perfect circle over 15 feet in diameter. Not a toadstool grew within the circle, and none was to be seen in the vicinity outside. I can understand how the fairyring expands, but why is the theater within the ring completely unpopulated? Guess I'll have to add fungi to my wildplant studies.

There's one other saprophyte that I have to find, the rarest of them all – the Hemitomes or cone plant. The only one I've seen was given to me for identification some years ago. It was found in Broken Kettle Canyon, in the south end of the Valley, but I've never been able to find one. It, too, grows among the redwoods, as well as in the coastal mountains of the Siskiyou; and in a few days, as soon as I can catch my breath, I'll be baying on its trail – to the west and south.

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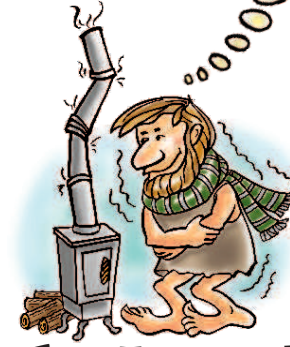
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Not sure if you want to vote for either Simon Hare or Mark Gatlin for County Commissioner?

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FOR JOSEPHINE COUNTY COMMISSIONER!

Please join me at the Candidates Forum, sponsored by the Illinois Valley News
Thursday, October 16, 2014 6pm Cave Junction Community Building



- ▶ **Native of Josephine County, non-partisan**, representing all Josephine County residents. Earned Bachelors and Masters Degree in Business. Worked for large corporations and owned small businesses.
 - ▶ After receiving 46% of your vote in 2012, I continued to attend city, county, and State meetings to stay informed. I have not waited to become Commissioner and then learn the job. I am ready to work on Day One.
 - ▶ Co-chaired a Drug Task Force; developed a community awareness brochure, worked on a drug treatment program. Josephine County is #1 in Oregon for prescription drug abuse.
- ▶ Co-sponsored the successful levy which will allow the County Animal Shelter to stay open and fully-funded, freeing up General Funds for Public Safety.
 - ▶ Managed a renovation of the Animal Shelter, with donations.
 - ▶ Authored an Economic Development Proposal; Josephine County is the only county in Oregon without an economic development strategic plan and leadership to improve our economy. We need jobs here!
 - ▶ Since 1999, Josephine County has received at least \$4.5million dollars from the Lottery to be used specifically for economic development—**Where has the money gone?** Let's have an audit.

Yes, running a write-in campaign is gutsy—but that's what our County needs!
We are past the point of playing it safe and hoping the State or Federal Government will bail us out
Stop wishing that the Commissioners will work on economic development!
Write-In the Candidate who has proven she can get things done!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR WRITE-IN VOTE! TONI WEBB
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