

Pacific Iris

Almanac of the Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris



www.pacificcoastiris.org

Volume 41 No 1 Fall 2012

Sydney B. Mitchell Medal



This year Californian breeder Joe Ghio scooped the Sydney B. Mitchell Medal, two of his blue cultivars sharing first place, while two of his gold varieties were runners up.

'Blue Plate Special' (left) was released in 2003, and won an Honorable Mention in 2006 and an Award of Merit in 2008.

It is a medium dark blue self with a large dark blue signal.



'Ocean Blue' was registered in 2002, with white ground, heavily washed and lined with medium blue, and a small yellow signal.

It was released by Bay View Nursery in 2003, winning an Honorable Mention in 2007 and an Award of Merit in 2010.

Pacific Iris, Almanac of the Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris

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The Society for Pacific Coast Native Irises (SPCNI) is a section of the American Iris Society (AIS).

Membership in AIS is recommended but not required for membership in SPCNI.

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If you have a question about your membership expiration date, contact the Secretary. Also contact the Secretary if your contact information changes in any way, including phone, e-mail and mailing addresses.

AMERICAN IRIS SOCIETY

Membership in AIS is not required for SPCNI membership, but it is encouraged and may be of considerable benefit to gardeners new to growing iris.

Send membership renewals or inquiries to the AIS Membership Secretary, or enroll on line at: <http://www.irises.org/member.htm>.

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PACIFIC IRIS DEADLINES: March 15 and September 15.

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**PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE
FROM THE SPCNI TREASURER**

Prices listed are for SPCNI members in the US.
For out of US, please add \$3.00.

PRINT ARTICLES

Check List of named PCI species and cultivars, 2005
Lists species and named cultivars and hybrids to 2005. \$9.00
If ordering both print and CD checklist versions together,
\$14.00

A Guide to the Pacific Coast Irises

Victor A. Cohen, 1967

Reprint of British Iris Society 1967 booklet, describing species sub-species and distributions. 40 pages, \$8.00

A Revision of the Pacific Coast Irises Lee W. Lenz,
1958 Reprint of Aliso journal article 5.5x8.5, 72 pages. \$8.00

Hybridization and Speciation in the Pacific Coast Irises
Lee W. Lenz, 1959. Reprint of Aliso article 72 pages, \$8.00

If ordering both of Dr Lenz's reprints, \$14.00

All three volumes, \$20.00

Diseases of the Pacific Coast Iris

Lewis & Adele Lawyer, 1986. Fall 1986 Almanac, 22 pages,
\$4.50

Almanac Index, 2005,

includes the following indices: author, subject, species, hybrids, \$4.00, or download PDF on the SPCNI website for free.

COMPACT DISCS

SPCNI Photo CD, 2009.

Compiled by Ken Walker, this CD includes 423 photos of species and hybrids, neatly labeled. \$9.00.

SPCNI Almanac CD, 2009.

All issues of the Almanac through 2007, with Index, also through 2007, and Checklist of species and hybrids, through 2005. PDF formats. \$15.00

Check List of named PCI species and cultivars CD, 2005.

Lists species and registered cultivars and hybrids of PCI through 2005; CD, \$9.00.

Welcome to the Beauty of Pacific Coast Iris CD, 2009.

A 15-minute presentation with a concise overview of PCN species, early hybridizers, Mitchell Award and Medal winners, gardens landscaped with PCIs, and culture tips.

Ready to play for individuals or groups, \$9.00

USERS GROUP ON YAHOO:

SPCNI has a users group site at

<http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/PacificIris/>.

Members are encouraged to join this group, which provides a simple online way to ask questions about finding and growing PCIs among all members. To join this site, you must register with Yahoo, but do not need a Yahoo e-mail account. You may post photos here, check on scheduled activities, and contact other SPCNI members.

2012-13 Seed Exchange

Last year the SPCNI seed exchange began the transition to the digital era with the seed list published in the Almanac and also posted on the SPCNI website for online sales. Our members gave the online effort an enthusiastic thumbs-up and overall sales doubled in a single year. Very few orders were received by mail.

To complete the transition to digital, this year the seed list will be posted online only. This will remove the challenge to seed exchange volunteers of creating a list in early September before receiving all seed donations and will result in a more complete and detailed list of available seeds.

The 2012-13 online seed list will go live on October 31, 2012. The ordering period will begin on October 31 and end on December 31. Orders will be filled on a first come, first served basis. Seed packets will be mailed in early 2013.

To access the list on the SPCNI website, go to www.pacificcoastiris.org and follow the links to the 2012-13 seed list. Those without Internet access can drop me a note and I will mail a copy of the list to you.

Emma Elliott, Seed Exchange Chairperson



Seedlings at Emma Elliott's Wild Ginger Farm nursery

President's Message

Greetings to you all –

This is the quiet season for Pacific Coast Irises in the Northern Hemisphere as spring is over and the temperatures are falling. The peak activity of spring is several months off. Nevertheless, some cool and exciting things continue. The new and improved Seed Exchange will be up online in a very few weeks. More and more people are discussing Pacific Coast Irises on various online sites at our Society for Pacific Coast Iris page, and also on the Iris Lovers page on Facebook. This allows for discussion among growers, viewing new seedlings, and for having questions answered by experienced hobbyists and growers, almost in real time.

Additionally, one of the more exciting things that seems to be blossoming is seeing new irises flowering in fall but grown by our members and Pacific Coast Iris enthusiasts “down under” in both New Zealand and Australia. This has been a great development! Many of the new iris growers post regularly to some of the internet sites just mentioned above as well as our Yahoo talk group *PacificIris*, so you can see new combinations of both color and form even if you have high temperatures or even snow “up here”.

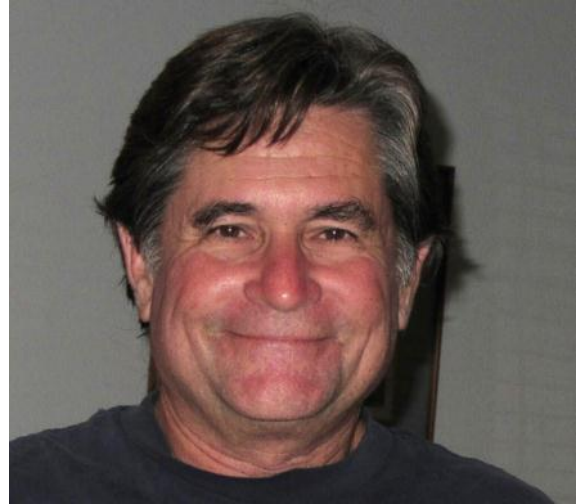
And if anyone would like to get more involved with any of our areas especially the Seed Exchange (you still don't get first pick) or any other area, don't be shy and step forward - it'll be an interesting and rewarding experience for you.

While I'd like to thank all the people that make our organization work so well, I'd like to send a special thank you and encouragement to our new members “down under” who are opening a new chapter for our organization.

All the best,

Bob

Bob Sussman's seedlings growing at Matilija Nursery. The lower iris was bred by Bob's son Dave as part of a senior high school project.



Greetings from springtime down under -

For New Zealanders spring is always an interesting time - we are situated lengthways across the belt of strong westerly winds known as the 'roaring forties' and come springtime the winds start belting through with increasing velocity. As I write Wairarapa is being lashed by 120 km winds - fortunately our garden is sheltered and, although the district is very windy, our garden misses the worst of it. Our national tree the kowhai is in bloom, and tonight the wind is scattering yellow pea-shaped flowers throughout the garden.

Little wonder that I chose to grow PCIs instead of Tall Bearded irises - they basically have to be staked in our garden, so very few get through the garden gate.

from the editor's desk

We have an interesting selection of stories for you this time around, with a concentration on matters botanical. You will recall from our last issue that Ken Hixson has been on the trail of the Noti iris, trying to work out exactly what it is. In this issue he tells us of his journeys over the past bloom season, as he tracked down some colonies of this pretty little naturally occurring hybrid. He also details his explorations in search of a pretty little light yellow flowering plant he has tentatively called Coburg Cream.

Our hardworking and industrious secretary/treasurer Kathleen Sayce has also been on the road in search of irises, with other members of the Society. Her report covers not just the irises she saw but many other spectacular West Coast native plants as well.

In an email message about the Noti irises Ken Hixson touched briefly on the vexing question of species-hood - are all PCIs variants of one species? Are the potentially true-breeding hybrids like the Noti iris actually species? What exactly is a species anyway - scientists are far from decided on the "species question".

As far as gardeners go, these are possibly redundant questions - we grow the plants we like because they have an indefinable appeal to us, and we are mostly not concerned about their botanical designation. But growing seedlings I have learnt one thing - PCIs seem remarkably plastic, able to be moulded with relative ease. With a little bit of selection it is simple to change the shape and size of the flowers within a generation or two.

Think of the wide-petalled, slightly ruffled, multi-coloured blooms of modern PCIs, and then think back to their narrow petalled progenitors which have some tonal variation but nothing like the range we now see.

It makes me wonder where it will all end up - will we finish up with more-or-less agreed criteria for beauty, as has happened with Tall Bearded varieties, or will we still enjoy a wide range of shapes and sizes? I know I have seedlings that look like Intermediate Bearded in terms of flower shape and size, while others look similar to Japanese Iris. Many look like SDBs, and it is easy to breed for flowers

that resemble their Siberian cousins. Are we PCI lovers agreed on what the ideal shape is?

All I know is I am growing PCIs for fun, breeding them for my own enjoyment, and I only cross and keep the plants I like. If I were growing for sale I might have to change the way I did things.

Best wishes from windy Wairarapa,

Gareth



One of Gareth's 2010 seedlings flowering for the first time

Noti Iris: The Sequel

Words and photographs - Ken Hixson

In the last volume I recorded my attempts to come to an understanding of exactly what the Noti irises are. My effort here is to try to describe the plants called Noti iris.

Even the name is confusing - this population has been historically presumed to be a hybrid, but may be as valid as any currently accepted species. In that case *Iris notiensis* would be acceptable as a species name but is unpublished. *Iris x noti* would be proper for an "ancient, introgressed hybrid," but is also not valid, as this name has also not been published. The informal name of Noti iris has persisted for many years; yet even "Noti iris" is inaccurate, as this iris does not presently live in or within a half mile of the town of Noti, Oregon. Most of the present plants are closer to Elmira, Oregon. The proper name for this population is still to be agreed upon.

After spending time looking at Noti iris during this flowering season, there appear to be some discrepancies between existing plants and historical descriptions. I found that once you have seen the Noti iris and know what to look for, the differences between the Noti iris, *Iris tenax*, and *Iris chrysophylla* are obvious and can be seen at a glance.

I took many photographs, with the expectation that they could be used to show the range of variation, and so this plant could be identified and differentiated from other iris. Finding clumps of Noti iris and *Iris tenax* close enough together to show the differences proved to be a challenge. A few flowers were picked, reluctantly, to put on graph paper for pictures.

When this population starts flowering was not specified in older documents. "Earlier than *I. tenax*," the usual description, was not very informative. My first search was on March 28, 2012, when I saw no iris flowers. This becomes more understandable if you know that on March

20-21, 2012 this area had six inches of heavy, wet snow which caused trees to come down, blocking roads and breaking power lines; several thousand people were without electricity, telephones or cable TV for up to a week.

On April 14, 2012 I made a second trip and found what presumably is the colony of Noti iris described by Clarkson. There were at least seventy-five plants in flower on that date. There were also three withered, dead flowers, so flowering started before then. There were also a few plants in flower in a second area to the northeast. In all perhaps a hundred plants were in flower.



Blue form of Noti Iris

This population is not as uniform in flower color as I had assumed from its description as an "ancient, introgressed hybrid," and from the photographs I had previously seen. In fact, the population displayed nearly all the colors also found in *Iris tenax* in this area, from pale blue to a violet-rose tone, with some good blues. Colors tended to pastels, and lacked the deep wine/blue-purple that *I. tenax* can show. There were no white flowers and only a few flowers with yellow midribs on the petals, which could have come from either presumed parent. Perhaps one percent of flowers had a small yellow signal blotch.

Plants were short, as expected, with tops of flowers averaging 4" to 6" tall. Flower size appeared slightly smaller than *I. tenax*, with smaller floral parts.

As calendar dates can be misleading, I looked for other plants in flower at the same time. On March 28, 2012 yellow trumpet daffodils and an old white and yellow tazetta were flowering along the roadsides, and by April 14, were starting to look bedraggled. *Erythronium oregonum* had only a few flowers open on April 14, many more by April 20, and was withered by April 30. In my garden, dwarf bearded iris had not started flowering when the Noti iris was first seen in flower on April 14, but were in full flower by April 20. On April 23 the first PCI in my garden opened its flowers. Other PCI buds showed color and opened within a week. The Noti iris opens its flower earliest in the season by a couple weeks.

On my third trip, April 20, 2012 many more plants were in flower over a wider area, along with a few *Iris tenax*. Unfortunately my camera malfunctioned, so no pictures are available from this trip.

For my fourth trip, April 30, 2012 I was joined by Rita Butler, Debby Cole and Kathleen Sayce. The weather was cool with rain showers and we got wet looking at

plants. At the first location, possibly Clarkson's original site, only a few flowers were left, but there were still many flowers at the second location, which was perhaps at a flowering peak. At a third location, which probably was not known to Clarkson, there was a long bank of plants. I had seen color there on April 20 but had not taken the time to look more closely. Here were found clumps of Noti iris and *I. tenax* flowering side-by-side, with the *Iris tenax* clumps just beginning to flower.

On May 7, 2012 I made my fifth trip, finding lots of *I. tenax* in various areas, and a few plants of Noti iris I had not seen before, perhaps a mile west of the first location. Clumps of *I. tenax* were blooming about one-tenth mile west of these Noti plants.

The weather forecasters predicted high temperatures for the weekend starting May 11; 77F on Friday, 80F on Saturday, 85F on Sunday. I was unsure how long the flowers would last in this heat, so made my sixth trip of the season. The irises at the first location were past flowering, while the second location only had a few, perhaps ten plants, still in flower. I saw one plant with flowers taller than usual, up to 8.5" tall. Then I saw that it had a short stem, about 2" long. I wonder if this is a possible backcross of Noti iris to *I. tenax* or simply an abnormal Noti iris. I saw only this one plant with one flowering stem. At the third location, most Noti iris were done flowering. The tops of some of the clumps of Noti iris were covered with persistent, withered dry flowers. In comparison, *Iris tenax* in this area was at peak flowering, with lots of *I. tenax* flowering in other areas nearby.

The breeze was gusting enough that taking pictures was difficult. I was trying for pictures that would show Noti and *tenax* together to emphasize their



Heart-shaped clump of Noti Iris



A clump of Iris tenax and Noti iris growing together

differences. Doing so involved lying down among the plants and pointing the camera upward at an angle. I did not see flowers resembling the possible hybrid from location two; I looked, and now wish I had conducted a longer search. Not finding hybrids here runs counter to every expectation, and a more detailed search is needed. With the Noti iris and *I. tenax* clumps so intermingled, finding hybrids in this location would have been expected. My assumption is that hybrids of the Noti iris and *I. tenax* would have had longer floral stems and a distinctly shorter flower tube, as seen elsewhere.

I made my seventh trip on June 14, 2012. Since the first Noti iris was found blooming on April 14, it seemed it was about time to check on the progress of seed formation. I went first to the second location, and initially could not find an iris plant, let alone a seedpod as the grass in this area was waist high. It took a little while to adjust but I soon began to identify plants although I still did not see seedpods. Finally I began to look for dried-up spathes; and sure enough, there were seedpods at the base of some of them. The pods were almost buried in

the dirt, moss and dead leaves. Scraping old leaves and moss away was the order of the day. I picked some pods here, and although they were green, they ripened.

I then went to the first location to take some pictures. Three or four pods were already open and one had spilled some seed. Other pods were still green. By the time I had found a seedpod and had taken a picture, the property owner came over on his riding lawnmower. I told him what I was trying to do, and we talked for over an hour. In the end, as he rode the mower away, he told me to go ahead and take pictures and gather seed. At eight weeks after flowering it was a little early to collect seed, but with some pods open and spilling seed, of course I did collect some. Perhaps ten weeks would be better (about June 25), although that would probably mean the loss of seed from the earliest flowers. This was almost certainly a once-only chance to get permission to collect from this particular location.

There were only a few seeds in each pod. After returning home I opened ten of the pods and counted the seeds, which averaged twelve seeds per pod.

I also went to the third location and tried to find plants with flower stems that were intermediate between *I. tenax* and the Noti iris. This is probably easier when the flowers are not a distraction. I did find three or four with a 1" stem, but other pods on the same plants were at the base of the plant, with no stem. These pods were not spindle-shaped, though the top was pointed. Some had bases as broad as the pod, gently rounded. The location of the seedpods on the plants is distinct from that of most other Pacific Coast iris.



Pale blue Noti Iris and Salal foliage and flowers

I had been told that seedpods might be red or wine red stained. "Red" seedpods would be an attractive feature after flowering if they were borne on stems long enough to show up on the plants. In all three locations, only a few pods were wine-colored. Some had wine staining, some pods were yellowish although still unripe, but most were plain green.

In some plants strong color in the seedpods would indicate strong colors in the flowers, but in this case it may simply match the leaf base colors as there did seem to be wine-red leaf bases on the plants with wine-red seed pods; one plant had wine-red one third of the way up the leaves. In all, colored pods constituted less than five percent of the total.

Withered flowers were no longer in evidence, but the long flower tube was still attached, blackened, withered, and persistent; it could be broken off, but not just brushed off. Spathe bracts were also persistent, although straw colored or brown and withered.

My overall impression was that less than a quarter of the flowers resulted in seedpod formation, and the pods are small, with only a few seeds. The pods are borne at the base of the plant, on the outer perimeter. Seeds that fall out on level ground would germinate with others from the same pod, and very close to the mother plant. They are distributed somehow, as

shown by the scattered plants, but this hybrid may not spread as easily as *I. tenax*, with its leaning stems. In areas where the grass is mowed, as along road-sides, the pods are so close to the ground that they are unlikely to be harmed. Although some pods are "singles," many are double, two pods side by side. Looking down from above, it is not possible to see the short stem between the two pods. When flowering this stem is hidden in the spathe.

In the first location, flowering occurred before April 14 and was nearly over by April 30, 2012. Seeds were ripe or nearly ripe on

June 14, though later would be a better choice. This location is a roadside bank about waist high and facing south.

In the second location, with east exposure and nearly level, flowering began about a week later.

In the third location, flowering starting before April 20, with some flowers remaining on May 11th, or two to three weeks.

All of these locations and seasonal variations occur within two to three miles with only a little variation in elevation [this part of the Willamette Valley is slightly less than 400 ft above sea level].

I saw a few flowers with feeding damage along the edges of some of the standards, but no flowers were severely damaged. The damage did not really look like that due to slugs or root weevils; I wonder if it could be from cutworms?

Some Noti iris plants seem to hold dead, withered flowers at least for a while, and some clumps were seen with the whole top of the plant covered with dry, withered flowers. At this stage it is not attractive, but it is also not permanent. With two flowers emerging from many spathes, the second flower was often accompanied by the dry, withered remnant of the first flower, and they were persistent enough that when trying to take a picture they could not be removed simply by tugging on the dead flower.

How many plants did I see in total? A minimum of 250 plants, probably more than 500; but counting was only done in limited areas as this is a fairly small population, and occurs in a restricted area.

Noti iris habitat is mixed; some is in forest, much of it is home sites, some is pasture land. Most of the plants seen were along roadsides, so it is likely more plants exist on

private land. This hybrid covers an area of a circle (or triangle?) three miles or more in diameter.

The Noti iris has persisted at the originally reported location since before Clarkson's report of 1959, and presumably for a very long time prior to that. At present it does not appear to be in danger of extinction. Changes are inevitable, but at the present, laws restrict subdivision in the area to a minimum of five-acre lots, thus dense subdivision is unlikely. Forest will probably shade out some plants and roadside mowing may reduce the size of leaves on plants, but the iris should survive. Given that the Noti iris seedpods are borne at the base of the plant, they are likely to survive mowing. *Iris tenax* seedpods are borne on a stem that might be mowed off, so they would not produce seed if mowed, even though stems lean over when burdened with seed. A very few plants were seen in pasture, so may be grazed?

This is one PCI that could be grown in the garden and seed donated to the seed exchange in good conscience if the grower is willing to make some extra effort.

*Noti iris, at left
probable hybrid in
centre,
and Iris tenax at right*



Because it flowers ahead of most other PCI, seed from the earliest flowers should be pure Noti iris. If flowers are removed from the Noti iris when other PCIs bloom, or better, if the plants are covered to prevent pollen transfer, all of the seed which forms should be pure Noti iris. Covering plants could be done with the lightweight fabrics used to exclude insects or for frost protection, or even with old sheets. The fiberglass screening available as replacements for screen doors, commonly available at hardware stores, might be used if there are no insects small enough to pass through. Simply cover the plants with the protective material, then put mulch, sand, dirt or rocks on the edges of the covering to prevent access, removing it after the flowers wither. Result: pure Noti iris seed.

Are backcross hybrids common? It seems to me they may not be as I was unable to recognize them. Previous authors have theorized that the Noti iris would be "swamped" by the surrounding *I. tenax*, and it is perplexing that it does not appear to be happening. I saw perhaps 500 flowering plants and I saw one plant at location number two that was intermediate, among probably more than a hundred plants of Noti iris, in this location. The intermediate plant was noticed because it was about 8.5 inches tall, and had the long floral tube of the Noti iris. Closer examination revealed a short stem, about 2" long, which the Noti iris does not normally possess. There was only one plant seen, and it was small, barely flowering size. Was it a backcross to *I. tenax*, or simply an aberrant Noti iris? There were a few plants of

I. tenax in the area, which were taller, ten to twelve inches, and closer to the trees, while the Noti iris were closer to the road, in more sun and shorter grass.

In the third location the Noti iris clumps grew intermingled with clumps of *I. tenax*, and the Noti iris was still in flower when *I. tenax* started flowering. In this location I did not see the kind of aberrant plant described above, although later when looking at seedpods, I found three or four with a one-inch stem. The same clumps also had pods without stems, so it may be a normal variation.

Location three is a fairly extensive area, and a more detailed search may reveal some hybrids. If Noti iris crossed with *I. tenax*, would these plants resemble *I. tenax*? Not finding plants that could be identified as hybrids is puzzling.

The Noti iris appears to flourish, or at least grow where the grass doesn't grow well. Presumably it would enjoy better soil fertility if protected from more vigorous plants. Plants were not seen in full shade nor were they generally growing in wet areas, although a few grew in the bottom of roadside ditches in gravel. None of the plants receive summer water. Some plants form small clumps, often "C" shaped or semi-circular with an open center, but usually with only a few flower stems per plant. The largest clumps probably were not more than a foot in diameter.

Iris tenax, top,
and Noti Iris
hybrid growing
in a clump



Iris Coburg Cream

and other delights in the Cascade foothills



Words and photographs Ken Hixson

Coburg Cream is my working name for a natural hybrid between *Iris chrysophylla* and *I. tenax*. Hybrids between these two species in the Coburg Hills have been known for many years, and like the Noti iris, seem to be stable in some areas. The Coburg Hills are in Lane County north and a little east of Eugene, Oregon in the Cascade foothills; Coburg Ridge is around 2,600 ft in elevation.

After seeing the Noti iris last spring, visiting iris populations in the Coburg Hills seemed worthwhile. Like the Noti iris, the Coburg Cream hybrid population appears to be a stable cross between *I. chrysophylla* and *I. tenax*.

This population more nearly resembles *I. chrysophylla* in flower color, length of floral tube, and height of flower-

ing stems. Overall, it appears to be closer to *I. chrysophylla* than to *I. tenax*. This population may be the same as that found by Lorena Reid, who made several seed donations to the SPCNI seed exchange during 1988-90 of seeds from cream to yellow to pale lavender "*Iris tenax*" plants in the Coburg Hills.

Coburg Hills Field Trips:

My first visit to the Coburg Ridge area was on May 20, 2012. This is a working forest area with active logging, and serviced by a one lane road. It is not a good idea to visit during the week - meeting a loaded log truck on a one lane road in the mountains is not an

adventure you want to experience. Also, potential visitors must be aware that during fire season, access may be restricted and, by law, fire-fighting equipment must be carried.

I made a second trip on June 14 and found a few cream-flowered iris along the roadside. I made a third trip to the Coburg Hills on July 15th to check on seed production. I did not have an altimeter, and estimated elevations ranged from about 750 feet to about 1500 feet. Maximum elevation is about 2600 feet.

I. tenax occurs in limited numbers along Marcola Road and then along Shotgun Creek Road, for about two miles before reaching the Coburg Cream plants; the *tenax* plants are east of the "cream" population and at a lower elevation.

On the second trip on June 14, two *I. tenax* were found about a mile beyond the Dollar Road-Penny Road junction, and about half a mile from the start of the cream-colored iris populations, struggling under bracken ferns; clumps of *I. tenax* were later found on Penny Road at about the same altitude.

The first cream iris appeared about 1.5 miles past the Penny Road turn-off to the Shotgun Creek Recreation Area. The area with cream or pale yellow flowers extended for about 2.9 miles, trending west and upward; the total number of flowers seen was hundreds, possibly more than a thousand. Plants were found only along the roadside along the most recent clear-cut; an older cut with young Douglas fir trees had some flowering plants farther from the road. Plants were growing in part shade to full sun. In mature forest with dense shade, very few iris were seen, perhaps five per mile.

The first iris plants seen were 12" tall and resembled yellow *I. tenax*; these had a long flower stem and a very short floral tube. Other plants were half as tall, with a 4-6" flower stem and a floral tube more than an inch long. Plants at higher elevations, and close to the upper end of the population, were even more *I. chrysophylla*-like, no more than 4-6" tall. A few plants were very short. All plants had distinct stems, though sometimes the stem was only an inch long with a floral tube also one inch long.

Flower Characters:

Height of Coburg Cream flowering stems was more varied than among Noti iris, from stems 12" tall at the eastern end, ranging down to flowers about 2" tall at the west

or higher end. On average, this population was a little taller than the Noti iris, 6-8" versus 4-6".

Flowering season was later than for Noti iris, quite likely due to higher elevations in the Coburg Hills. Some flowers were withered on May 20, while a few still had buds that had not opened. Other plants at the upper end of the population had flowers present on June 14. It might be interesting to establish more accurately the length of the flowering season, and compare its timing with that of the Noti hybrid.

The Noti iris grows at about 400 feet elevation, Coburg Cream at perhaps 1000-1600 feet. The latest Noti iris flowers overlap the earliest *I. tenax*. Coburg Cream flowers at the same time as *I. tenax* in the Coburg Hills. Growing the two different hybrids along with their parent species at the same elevation might prove illuminating.

Plants were scattered, often there was only a single flower, or a few-flowered clump; a few clumps had a dozen flowers. In this respect, they were more like *I. chrysophylla*, which tends to which makes sparser plants and thus has fewer flowers than *I. tenax*.

Flowers of both hybrid populations had relatively narrow parts, rather thin petal texture, and pastel colors. Coburg Cream doesn't seem to hold withered flowers the way Noti iris does, although the withered floral tube remains attached on perhaps half of the Coburg flowers.



There were a surprising number of insects on the Coburg Cream flowers. A few flowers had at least fifty tiny black insects the size of the period at the end of this sentence. There were also small beetles, which were not easily seen as they had crawled completely into the center of the flower and were nearly hidden under the style. A few bumblebees, and a two-winged fly that looked somewhat like a bumblebee, but with a pointed abdomen [hover fly], were also seen on the flowers. Which of these serves as pollinators would only be a guess. I did not see insect-damaged flowers, such as were seen on some Noti iris.

When I returned on July 15, I counted more than fifty seedpods, but there were probably less than a hundred pods in total. This is a setting rate of no more than 1%. As with the Noti iris, a few pods were already open. Others were still green.

Nearby areas with cream-colored flowers:

Two additional areas were visited on May 28 near Fall Creek Reservoir, south of the Coburg Hills in eastern Lane County: Hills Creek and North Shore Drive along the reservoir. George Gessert visited these areas and reported on plants resembling PCI 'Valley Banner.' In both areas, cream-colored flowers and mid-blue *I. tenax*-like flowers grew intermingled.

In the Hills Creek area, flower colors progressed to all cream-colored flowers, closely resembling *I. chrysophylla*, with short stems, a few without a flower stem, and with a long floral tube. In this area plants were mostly few-flowered, in the 6-8 inch tall range. There were a few clumps with long flower stems and short tubes, to about a foot tall.

Along North Shore Drive in the Fall Creek Reservoir area, cream-colored and blue flowers were mixed for more than two miles. Due to heavy rain, no measurements or photographs were made.



Summary:

Coburg Cream has cream-colored flowers, short flower stems and a floral tube around a one inch long. Coburg Cream plants tend to have slightly taller stems than does Noti iris, six to eight inches rather than four to six inches. The cream-colored flowers are very distinctive in wild populations. Given the color and height ranges in Coburg Cream plants, it appears that this hybrid naturally backcrosses more towards *I. chrysophylla* than to *I. tenax*. In comparison, Noti iris has more of a blue-lavender color range typical of *I. tenax*, without an above-ground flower stem and with a very long floral tube. It may backcross towards *I. tenax*, but I am unsure I saw any backcross plants, even in areas where the two grew together.



After the 2012 Convention: A road trip with Debby 'Andretti' Cole

Words and photographs -Kathleen Sayce

Sunday, April 22, 2012: *I. douglasiana* and hybrids, *I. munzii*, PCIs, tall bearded and Louisiana iris

Bus tour to Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden and Matilija Nursery, sponsored by SPCNI; Debby Cole had organized the trip and the AIS convention committee had facilitated the bus and registration arrangements. Richard Richards was bus host for the trip, telling the group about the origins of SPCNI as we passed cities where several founding members lived. Richard offered a one-day tour of *Iris hartwegii australis* in the San Bernardino Mountains, east of Ontario, CA, to anyone who wants to fly in during the month of June, when these plants are in flower.

The bus stopped first at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, where Dr. Bart O'Brien, Director of Horticulture, toured us around the upper gardens and two *I. munzii* populations. Prof. Carol Wilson toured us around her study plants (comprising many iris species in a variety of subgenera) and the lower gardens.

Then we went on to Matilija Nursery in Moorpark, CA, which is owned by SPCNI President Bob Sussman. Bob and his wife Bonnie met us there and showed us around the nursery, which has a number of PCI hybrids, registered and unregistered, and Louisiana and tall bearded iris, many of which were in flower. He also showed us some new PCI hybrids developed by his son for a senior project.



Kathleen Sayce at the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden



Tour party looking over the PCI growing area at Bob Sussman's Matilija Nursery

Monday, April 23, 2012: *I. munzii*

We drove out of the San Bernardino Valley and around Los Angeles, north to Springfield and Hwy 190 by way of Bakersfield and Porterville to see *I. munzii* in the Sierras, in Tulare County.

We took Hwy 190 to a few miles beyond Coffee Camp Campgrounds, and saw *I. munzii* from the road in several locations. There were many wildflowers in bloom, including a rose-flowered calochortus, lupines, white ceanothus, redbud, and California buckeye. In all we saw several dozen species.

Iris sightings started at Siphon Rd, below 2,000 ft. Highway runs along north side of Middle Fork of the Tule River. Sightings of flowering plants continued on Hwy 190 past Wishon Rd. Later in the season, *I. munzii* flowers at higher elevations.

We drove back down 190 to Balch Park Rd (J37), and took a side road to SciCon (Science and Conservation Camp) on Bear Creek, off West Fork of Tule River. Checked in at office and walked up a dry creek bed to see *I. munzii* on slopes in open oak woodland, with many wildflowers in bloom nearby. Elevation here was about 2,000 ft.

Drove northwest on Yokohl Valley Rd to Visalia.

Lenz described the scent of citrus flowers in this area in his 1958 paper on PCI species, and we thoroughly enjoyed the same scents during this trip.

Overnight: Visalia, CA

Tuesday, April 24, 2012: *I. munzii*

Into Sierras to Three Rivers and Mineral King Rd, then north to Superstition Gardens, Mariposa and Oakhurst, the south entrance town to Yosemite. The community of Three Rivers is named for the South, Middle and North Forks of Kaweah River.

Went east on Hwy 198 to Three Rivers, and Mineral King Rd, just south of Sequoia National Park. *I. munzii* plants were just starting to flower at the lowest elevation on April 24th, 4 miles uphill from junction with Hwy 198. There are many wildflowers on this road, including several brodiaeas, silene, delphinium, dudleya, anemone, sweet cicely, nemophila, solanum, saxifrages, wild strawberry, paintbrush, shooting stars, and onions. Redbud and taller ceanothus were in flower. California



Iris munzii at Bear Creek in the Sierras

buckeye was starting to flower. Patches of *I. munzii* continued along Mineral King Rd to the Kaweah River Bridge, where we could see one patch in flower under oaks on the other side of the valley. Most *I. munzii* plants were not in flower yet. The total distance along this road with *I. munzii* plants on both sides is 3.5 miles, starting 4 miles above the junction with 198.

Then we drove north to Superstition Gardens, south of Hwy 140 on Old Highway Road. The owners were prepping for their annual open garden days, which were to start on Friday, but welcomed us cordially. They even had a bed of PCI in their 'house' garden.

From there we went east on Hwy 140 to Mariposa, CA, and on to Oakhurst, CA for the night. Oakhurst is the south entrance to Yosemite NP on Hwy 41. The road had been closed for a day and a half due to a sulfur spill, but was open again the next morning.

Overnight: Oakhurst, CA

Wednesday, April 25, 2012: *Iris missouriensis* and *Iris hartwegii*, both in foliage only.

No PC irises in flower this day. We saw *I. missouriensis* foliage with last year's seedpods in the big meadow along the Merced River, and possibly *I. hartwegii* foliage, but at 4700 ft, it was too early in the Yosemite Valley for bloom. Lots of water in the Sierras made the waterfalls full and the rivers high. Dogwoods and redbud were in flower, maples were just leafing out.

We left via the north entrance, then worked our way west on 41, 120, to I-5, and into the complex of freeways around the Bay Area to reach Santa Clara, CA for the night. Wildflowers along the smaller highways were glorious.

Sighting for the day: Ticks! Rita is a tick attractor, and brought at least ten into the car with her; we were shaking them out for days, and she was eventually bitten by one.

Overnight: Santa Clara, CA

Thursday, April 26, 2012: PCI at Gary Knipe's garden, *I. macrosiphon*

We drove to Gary Knipe's house in Cupertino to see his PCIs in flower, including his famous blues. Gary has been breeding for blues for years. It was a treat to see the new crop of PCI seedlings, and his garden.

He navigated us to Mt Hamilton via south Bay Area highways, and over the hills via Quimby Road to Hwy 130.

Purple-flowered *I. macrosiphon* grows on Mt Hamilton; they are very short-stemmed, with seedpods ripening at ground level. Plants start about 4 miles from the valley bottom on Hwy 130, measuring from a rural fire station (Fire Stn #12) on the highway at Smith Creek. We found several small patches, then a very nice area at a large gooseneck in the road with a pullout.

Many other species were also in flower: shooting stars, lupines, paintbrush, brodiaeas, wallflowers, saxifrages, large hound's-tongue, buttercups.

We drove north after dinner to Benecia, CA for the night.

Friday, April 27, 2012: *I. macrosiphon*, *I. tenuissima*, *I. hartwegii*

From Benecia we blasted north to Oroville and Chico, hoping to see *I. macrosiphon*, *I. hartwegii* and *I. tenuissima*. Rita, who is related to half the world, has a niece in Chico who was free to spend some time with us. Kathleen Jack and her daughter Tsiava (7) joined us, and led us to Table Mtn, off Cherokee Road, to look at wildflowers on a mesa.

There were many vernal pool flowers just peaking, and to our great pleasure, we found *Lewisia rediviva* in flower, along with buttercups, mimulus, orthocarpus, onions,

paintbrush, several daisies, gilia, linanthus, and pinks. Pipevine Swallowtail Butterflies were very abundant, and I learned later that 2012 is a 'breakout' year for this large butterfly, during which flying adults are very common.

On the way north off Table Mountain, we saw a few patches of wild iris along the road, which looked very like *I. tenuissima*.



Iris macrosiphon on Mt Hamilton.

The hand is Gary Knipe's, pointing out the long floral tube, and the ovary, just a few inches above the ground

Kathleen led us southeast of Chico and northeast of Oroville, on Honeyrun [Run] Road to an old covered bridge. We found several hundred plants of *I. tenuissima* on a woodland slope above the river. There is a small park on the west side of the river, with a few *I. tenuissima* plants nearby along the road.

We parked on the road, walked across the bridge, and at the rural fire station on the far side found this iris in full flower, with more Pipevine Swallowtails. Also in flower: a white calochortus, and a yellow one, along with brodiaea, etc.

Conclusion: Chico, CA would be a great place to center a field trip to look for several PCI species, including *I. hartwegii*, *I. macrosiphon* and *I. tenuissima*.

Overnight: Chico, CA

Saturday, April 28, 2012: *I. macrosiphon*, *I. bracteata*, *I. thompsonii*

We drove northeast of Chico past the airport on Cohasset Road, where we found a long-stemmed, pale lavender-flowered population of *Iris macrosiphon*; it also has a yellow signal and dark veins. Starting at the intersection with Rock Creek, about 4 miles from the airport entrance, we found hundreds of plants along the uphill side of the road. This population was first located on Cal Flora, looking for PCIs in Butte County, CA. Then we blasted north on 99 and I-5 to Oregon, aiming for Hwy 199 and Gold Beach, OR for the night.

On Hwy 199 we stopped at Eight Dollar Mountain Botanical Wayside, saw *I. bracteata* in flower near the lower parking lot, and then on the highway in Kerby, across from the Holiday Motel. Pale to darker yellow, with very red bracts. Also in flower: brodiaea, calochortus, Howell's violet, etc.

South of O'Brien, we saw more *I. bracteata*, gold-flowered, and then along the Illinois River, *I. thompsonii*, lavender-flowered. Continuing on down 199 into California, we saw many populations of *I. thompsonii*, usually in places where there was no safe spot to pull over.

I. thompsonii and putative hybrids with other nearby species continued to appear along the road; colors included orchid, lavender and purple as we went towards the coast. We took the road north across the Smith River rather than going into Crescent City. Low Divide Road and Rowdy Creek Road both go east off this road, and take people into the hills and into large hybrid populations (*I. douglasiana*, x *I. thompsonii* x *I. bracteata* x *I. innominata*). These areas are higher in elevation, and typically in flower in mid to late May.

We rejoined 101 and drove north into Oregon and towards Gold Beach, OR.

Overnight: Gold Beach Condos and Resort, Gold Beach, OR



Iris tenuissima , Honey Run

Sunday, April 29, 2012: *I. douglasiana*, *I. thompsonii*,
I. innominata, *I. tenax*

We took the Agness-Powers Road up the Rogue River and over the hills to Roseburg, OR. The first iris of the day was *I. douglasiana*, growing in among the native dune grass west of the hotel. There were preflowering stems, but no flowers open yet. The grasses hid the iris quite well. Rita spotted them on an early morning walk to the beach, in an area where the dune and beach grasses had been mown. We then saw more plants among the taller grasses. In flower this is probably quite lovely.

We took Jerry's Flat Road, Hwy 33 towards Agness and into the Coast Range along the Rogue River.

Seven miles upriver, we saw the first *I. innominata* in flower, very bright yellow, and large patches of many plants.

Scouler's valerian, saxifrages, bleeding heart and larkspur were in flower along the roads, along with a very low growing purple to pink flowered ceanothus, Siskiyou mat.

Near milepost 25, under power lines, we saw a large population of *I. innominata* flowering. A short spur road under the powerlines led to a roadside debris dump site, and in this, on the west side, was red-violet *I. thompsonii*. This was exciting, but in just a few short miles we came on many more undisturbed plants.

Other flowers included: yampah, field mouse-ear, several buttercups, rosy plectritis, ferns, *Aspidotis densa*, Howell's violet, death camas, larkspurs, geranium, sisyrinchium (no flowers yet), wallflower, strawberry, calochortus (white) and onion foliage, also trilliums, sedges and poison oak. Lots of poison oak. I never really appreciated just how many PCIs grow with poison oak until this trip. Trees in this area included Douglas fir, incense cedar, madrone, chinquapin, manzanita, huckleberry, with an understory of many grasses.

Red-violet to purple *I. thompsonii* variously marked with white were along the side road to Agness over the new bridge, and then on Bear Camp Road off 33 (rd #23). We drove up Bear Camp Rd for several miles enjoying irises, lithophragma, shooting stars, nemophila, lomatum, strawberries, and the oak woodlands, where oaks were just leafing out, and still a gorgeous golden green color. We also saw an Acorn Woodpecker's cache tree, a dead oak with thousands of holes to store acorns.

Back on 33 we continued into the hills over Panther Ridge, and stopped in Powers for a late lunch. Other

plants in flower as we went out of the Rogue drainage and into the next included: sweet coltsfoot, tall Oregon grape, a yellow violet, whipplea, red currant; several daisies were in bud.



Iris innominata, near Agness

Just outside Powers on the north side of town, there is a rich purple flowering population of *Iris tenax*, and it was in full flower. It is on the uphill side of the road just after the bridge. We saw more *I. tenax* near the dahlia nursery heading toward Myrtle Point, and on Hwy 42, the Coos Bay-Roseburg Road).

As we drove inland, we saw light blue camas and death camas along Hwy 42. Cribbens Road was a floriferous spot. *I. tenax* was more lavender colored inland. Several more patches were seen near the Douglas-Coos County line. The road here is along the north side of the river, so the slope faces south and warms early.



Iris thompsonii, near Agness, OR

Overnight: Eugene, OR

Monday, April 30, 2012: Noti iris

We met Ken Hixson, who had located dark lavender-flowered Noti iris west of Eugene this spring. Noti iris has the form of *I. chrysophylla* (large bracts, long perianth tube, fairly short flower stem) and the color of *I. tenax*, dark lavender with a yellow signal, veins and often some white areas around the signal. This population has an uncertain taxonomic status, something that SPCNI should help remedy. Its form is very distinct as compared to *tenax*, and color as compared to *chrysophylla*.

Ken led us to more than 200 plants, and we later spotted even more. We drove west on Hwy 126, went north on Territorial Rd, west on Suttles Rd, north on Evers Rd, and past the Twisted Bit Stables, where a flowering population of Noti iris had been sprayed in the past week. There were small patches on the right side of the road before this location. Noti iris were flowering all along

Evers Rd to house number 88780, but several had been mown. We went back down Evers Rd to Sky Lane, and saw more Noti iris, unmown, along with fawn lily, calochortus, camas and other flowers. Despite drizzle, it was a very nice sighting.

Ken led us to the site, 23903 Suttle Rd, Elmira, where Quentin Clarkson (who wrote about them as part of his thesis) first saw Noti iris. There were more Noti iris along Suttle Rd to the west; then just a few 100 yards before Suttle intersected Hwy 126, *I. tenax*, purple, was in flower. We drove back towards Eugene on Hwy 126, and saw more *I. tenax* along this road, interspersed with patches of Noti iris.

We continued north on I-5 into Washington, where Debby and Rita dropped me off in Kelso. They went north to Tacoma and Mercer Island, and I went west to the coast, and we all slept in our own beds that night. Rita was de-ticked by her spouse, and not a day too soon!

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On the road-

Photographs by Kathleen Sayce



Iris munzii hybrids at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden



Iris thompsonii, Rogue Range



Noti iris



Iris thompsonii, Agness



Noti iris, Elmira



Iris tenax, Powers



'Point Loma' at Joe Ghio's



Debby Cole's favorite seedling at Joe Ghio's