

Summer Collecting 2009

This summer, I was able to experience what it is like to be a botanist. The herbarium crew went on five collection trips, the first of which was to the Lochsa/Selway River to look for coastal disjunct species (plants that typically grow in coastal areas that occur in small inland patches far outside of their range). Some of us, like myself, were new to collecting, but we still bagged over 100 different species. The second trip was to the St. Joe River, a distinctly more adventurous expedition, as we got caught in a lightning storm, and saw fresh bear scat along the trail. The most exciting part of that trip though, were the interesting plants (of course), the highlight of which was a new species, most closely related to *Saxifraga caespitosa* spp. *subgemmifera* that Pam had found there a couple of years before. I was unable to go on the third trip to upper Priest River, a relatively under-collected area despite its recreational popularity.

The last two trips took us further into northern Idaho, the second to last of which was to Snow Peak in the Mallard Larkin region. Even the pouring rain and snowy roads didn't keep us from botanizing sub-alpine areas rich with blooming bear grass, phlox, lupines and penstemons. The old fire watch-tower at the top gave us an added benefit of sitting right above a herd of mountain goats, which foraged on the high elevation grasses.

The last trip we made this summer was to Two Mouths Lake in the Selkirk Mountains. Our crew included this year's regular collectors, Pam, Emily, Karen, Will, Rosemary, and me, as well as Dave Tank, the new plant systematist and herbarium director and his wife, Kara, an elementary school teacher in Moscow. Our large crew collected hundreds of plants just along the trail and lakes at the top. There was a large enough change in elevation that what started out as dry shrubs and colorful forbs and weeds, eventually turned into moister areas with devils-club and mosses, then finally sub-alpine and lake-area sedges, rushes, and mountain wildflowers. An interesting aspect of the trip for me was pressing and identifying all of the plants after we got back from the hike, which was fast, fun and challenging, especially because of our campsite neighbors who ran their chainsaws until about 10 o'clock at night. Overall, the collecting trips this summer were successful for our collections and taught me skills that inspire me all the more to take up a career in botany.

—*Stefani Patten*, undergraduate herbarium staff.