



www.plantsandhealers.org

Rainbow Gathering Utah

Edited and Published by Plants and Healers International 2014

Written by Frank Cook
2003

I joined a band of young rainbows in a rainbow painted van for the journey to Utah. On the way we visited a sweet new hot spring to me but one I had heard about over the years—a long warm pool outside Wells, NV. We climbed over the Elizabeth Ridge (10,300+ feet) and down into the gathering area. With the sunset only a half an hour away on the new moon, I decided to pitch a tent and find my spot in the morning. The next day I did find a beautiful area to camp to the northwest of the main meadow. The land felt very familiar to me—my fourth gathering in the alpine Rockies. This site was around 9500 feet. I heard many stories of the 16 inches of snow that fell over 4 days. I arrived only 4 days later but other than the ground being very wet and some drifts up on the ridges, there was no snow about. Everything was coming together quickly. I was impressed by the perseverance of those who were there for seed camp. No precipitation fell in my 10 days there; each day the scene got drier and finally even dusty.

Despite the heavy grazing of sheep and the logging we did manage to find some sweet spots up the springs blessing us with a bog orchid, several lily members, and more. The meadows were dominated by medicine and poison plants, many were not native. There were millions of Dandelions and Larkspur. Quality time was spent with the Willow, Lodge Pole Pine and Sagebrush. I walked with 7Song several times. With him and a few others we dove deeper into the distinctions between the 16 Ligusticums (Osha) and the 78 Lomatiums in the country. Quite amazing stuff for plant lovers! Greenlight only did one formal walk but we had some good moments discussing questionable plants and looking at the growing plants list. There was a nice group of us who showed up a lot to look at plants. All in all we got down 32 families representing over 65 genera and approaching 100 species. I am typing up a listing of what we saw. If you would like a copy let me know. I was honored to look at plants with hundreds of people. One evening we served a few hundred dandelion heads to the dinner circle-Bon Appetite!

Possibly because of the possible weather conditions, the dark times we are living in, or the relative remoteness of the site, the estimated numbers of us on the 4th was down to 15,000. But that felt good—I noticed there was a lot less trash about this year. The kitchens served us well and I even met a person who gained weight while there! Enough filtered drinking water seemed to be an issue. After the second day I drank from the spring taps with only minor stomach upsets around the sixth that could have been from food.

On Interdependence Day a calvary of national forest people-7 of them-with the front person bearing an American flag paraded around the field. That evening we served a wild soup with thistle and dandelion roots and a bunch of other ingredients. Yum!

I left for the rainbow feeling somewhat overexpanded. My time there being with that part of my family was very grounding. I had a wonderful ride home zooming across the desert under a waxing gibbous moon. We stopped at a familiar healing hotspring to prepare us for re-entry. Now here I am back at home in Cali getting ready to go east for some summer fun and plant adventures! My tenth national will be remembered as a healing time in a growing community high in the mountains amongst the sacred springs.