**CLOVER CREEK-MONUMENT GULCH TRANSECT OF BENNETT HILLS**

Miles:

0.0 Stop sign on Exit 137 from I-84 (= west access to Bliss). Turn north (i.e., left if coming from Glenns Ferry) onto Pioneer Road

0.6 Turn right (east) on 500 E

1.2 Road curves north

1.7 Road ends at T-intersection. Go left (east) on Spring Cove Road

3.5 Road ends at Clover Creek road; turn right (north). [NOTE: also possible to get here from exit 141 on east side of Bliss, if coming from the east. If so, adjust mileage accordingly from this point]

8.0 Continue straight on Clover Creek road (other better-used roads go to ranches)

10.8 End of pavement; continue on Clover Creek road heading north. Good all-weather road (not maintained in winter), though washboarded in places.

12.4 Good stopping point on top of rimrock. Lots of Lomatium papilioniferum, nice views from rimrock (keep an eye out for rattlesnakes!), some scattered natives in otherwise degraded shrub-steppe. (ca. 3900 ft. elev.)

15.7 Possible stopping spot (marked by white poles on both sides of road), with swales and shelves on basalt scabland. Lots of Trifolium macrocephalum (but also abundant further along, and more likely to be in bloom) and Lomatium leptocarpum, some Neoholmgrenia and Penstemon cusickii. Also Eriogonum thymoides, but that species increasingly common as the road continues.

16.8 Possible stopping stop with good displays (at least in early May) of several shrubby Eriogonum and Nestotus stenophyllus, all common elsewhere along this route. Sheep grazing just getting started during survey in early May 2025.

19.4 Optional stopping spot to walk down side road to the right, cutting across the slope below the basalt flat to a small seasonally wet area. Typical shrubland species for this part of Idaho, not unique to Bennett Hills, including Amelanchier utahensis, Prunus virginiana, Ribes cereum, Lomatium multifidum, and Ceanothus velutinus.

20.8 Possible stopping spot with scattered camas and other interesting plants in the swale on the basalt flat, including some Artemisia papposa. (ca 5000 ft. elev.)

22.0 Road enters Clover Creek canyon. Limited stopping options, but good for drive-by observing of canyon-side flora (typical of this part of Idaho)

22.8 Road exits canyon and crosses Clover Creek. Convenient stopping spot to take a closer look at streamside vegetation and adjacent sagebrush hillside.

23.8 Interpretive signage at junction with Davis Mountain Road; take left fork to continue on transect. Good stopping spot (and possible lunch stop, unless already claimed by ATVers etc.). The reddish barren-looking flats extending to the north are rhyolitic scablands that support an abundance of interesting plants, including Lewisia rediviva, Ranunculus andersonii, Cusickiella douglasii, and Antennaria flagellaris. A different suite of plants occur in the adjacent moister sites, including Viola nuttallii var. praemorsa and Arnica sororia. Prominent knob to the NNE is imaginatively named The Knob. (ca 5400 ft. elev.)

24.7 Junction with Dempsey Meadow Road (to the left); ca 5500 ft elev. Good stopping spot (staying on Clover Creek Road, since limited parking and turn-arounds on recently upgraded Dempsey Meadow road). Primary focal area is following streamlet to the left (west) to get to the habitat diversity on open rocky outcrops and scablands, also accessed by walking a short distance up Dempsey Meadow Road. Lots of the same things present at lower elevations, but earlier in their phenology. Also Primula cusickiana (“broadheadeae” variant, past bloom), Gymnosteris nudicaulis, Hesperochiron, Erythranthe suksdorfii, Floerkea proserpinacoides, both Castilleja flava and C. pallescens var. inverta, Eremogone kingii var. glabrescens,and Polygonum heterosepalum. Also check out the roadside drainage and creekside vegetation back at the junction, including Oenothera flava and Myosurus sp.

[Optional side trip: ca 3 miles up Dempsey Meadows road to a good-sized meadow complex, but with limited parking and difficult turn-around. The meadows themselves are low-diversity (probably due to overgrazing), but the drier openings around the edges contain some nice concentrations of Artemisia papposa, Eriogonum thymoides, and Primula cusickiana).

25.5 Gooding/Camas county line. with unexplored side road to the left [NOTE: mileage given here now with subtraction of 6.5 miles from recorded mileage to account for optional side trip]

26.8 Cattle guard on divide between Clover Creek and Monument Gulch (ca 5700 ft. elev.) Note the relatively abrupt descent down the north escarpment of the Bennett Hills block fault, in contrast to the gradual, almost imperceptible, ascent up the south side. Possible impromptu stops for any seasonally noteworthy flower displays, though good parking options limited and most plants common throughout this part of Idaho.

27.4 Possible stopping spot at cattle guard.

28.7 Cattle guard at bottom of grade (ca 5300 ft. elev.) Now at south edge of Camas Prairie, with Soldier Mountains to the north.

29.8 Road ends at T-junction with Stokes Road. Go left to get to Hill City.

[optional side-trip to the right: 1.4 miles to some alkali scalds in Artemsia cana flats on the N side of the road, with Artemisia potentilloides and Trifolium eriocephalum. Also possible to keep following roads to enjoy Centennial Marsh for birding options, especially if camas and Wyethia are in peak bloom.

30.6 After turning left onto Stokes Road, turn right on 1300 W to get to Hill City. [NOTE: mileage given here now with subtraction of 11.2 miles from recorded mileage to account for optional side trips, including overshoot]

33.8 Junction with Hwy 20 at stop sign in Hill City.

35.9 Camas/Elmore county line.

41.1 Junction with High Prairie Road on right (north).

[optional side trip: follow High Prairie Road at least 1.2 miles to where road bends north. Unfenced flat on left side of road contains Dodecatheon, Olsynium douglasii var. inflatum, Primula cusickiana, and Nothocalais nigrescens, all with at least some flowers in early May. If Sheep Camp road traversing High Prairie not closed, take advantage of it to find more Artemisia papposa, Trifolium eriocephalum var. arcuatum, Castilleja cusickii, C. pallescens var. pallescens, and Oenothera flava. Option of returning to Hwy 20 via Louse Creek Road (paved) or continuing straight on Sheep Camp Castle Rock Road]

48.0 Cat Creek Summit [NOTE: mileage given here now with subtraction of 14.4 miles from recorded mileage to account for optional side trips]

50.7 Junction with Castle Rock Road on right, angling back.

[optional side trip: take sharp right onto Castle Rock Road, drive 1.9 miles large wind-sculpted granite monoliths. Noteworthy plants include Penstemon fruticosus, Castilleja covillleana, Allium simillimum s.l., Linanthus pungens, Horkelia fusca var. parviflora, Oxytheca dendroidea, and possibly Calyptridium roseum; mostly not in bloom in early May.]

ca 62 Look for Astragalus adanus on right side of road (dense erect stems, pale flowers) [NOTE: mileage given here now with subtraction of 18.2 miles from recorded mileage to account for optional side trips]

77.4 Junction with I-84 in Mountain Home.