

Mountain Views Chronicle



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Cover Photo: An early winter morning over western Utah with classic valley inversions creating low-lying fog. 📷 Scotty Strachan

Field Research in the Time of the Pandemic

by DAVID W. INOUE, *Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory*

Our research group was fortunate to get our normal quota of field data this summer at the [Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory](#). Because three of us own cabins near RMBL we weren't subject to some of the restrictions the county put on non-residents in late spring, although our other two co-PIs never got to the field site this year. The field station was able to house our two RAs and an REU student, despite the restrictions of only one person per bedroom, which greatly limited the capacity for researchers this summer.

Cancellation of the seminar program, restrictions on the number of residents, and the availability of only take-out meals in the dining hall made it a strange field season. After the mandatory quarantine period following their arrival, our RAs were able to use our lab space when needed, although most of our work involved data collection outdoors.

An unexpected consequence of the pandemic was the two co-PIs from Florida were able to get to Colorado earlier than expected as their spring field season in Florida was shut down by university restrictions. They also then stayed about 10 weeks longer than usual as they could do their teaching online, rather than returning to campus in August. The fact they are my son and daughter-in-law made for a good opportunity for a pandemic social pod,

and more time with our granddaughter than usual.



The bee crew ready for census work at RMBL (taking precautions not to infect the bees). 📷 Rachel Dickson

My early arrival at the field site made it possible to collect some data for a colleague who wasn't able to get there in time to census seedlings that were already senescent by the time she got there, later than originally planned. We were lucky to have a productive field season this year, although it will be nice next year to get back to a normal experience (we hope!) with the full complement of field researchers and the extraordinary opportunities for interaction that RMBL typically provides.



Lisa Tasker's image of Wild Hollyhocks was so remarkable it deserved a full-width spread.