

**PYRROCOMA AHARTII (ASTERACEAE: ASTEREAE),
A NEW SPECIES FROM NORTHEASTERN CALIFORNIA**

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ABSTRACT

A collection from Plumas Co., California, is recognized here as ***Pyrrocoma ahartii* Nesom, sp. nov.** Its lack of persistent fibrous remnants of the basal leaf petioles, herbaceous phyllaries, and rayless heads suggest that it is related to the *P. carthamoides* group, but the spatulate basal leaves, racemose inflorescence, and glandular phyllaries are out of place there. The species also is unusual in its serpentine habit.

A collection of *Pyrrocoma* by Lowell Ahart from Plumas Co., California, is described here as a distinctive species. The collector noted that it was growing on serpentine soil, which is unusual for the genus, and no further specimens of the species have been encountered, although serpentine is not unusual in Plumas County.

Lowell Ahart (Fig. 1) has long been a student and prolific collector of the northern California flora, as well as an accomplished plant taxonomist (e.g., see Oswald & Ahart 1998) — herbarium CHSC is the main repository of his collections and is named for him. The author here has often encountered and appreciated his collections, particularly in studies of Asteraceae. The new *Pyrrocoma* joins other eponymous taxa — *Eriogonum umbellatum* var. *ahartii* Reveal, *Juncus leiospermus* var. *ahartii* Ertter, *Paronychia ahartii* Ertter, and *Rosa pisocarpa* subsp. *ahartii* Ertter & Lewis.

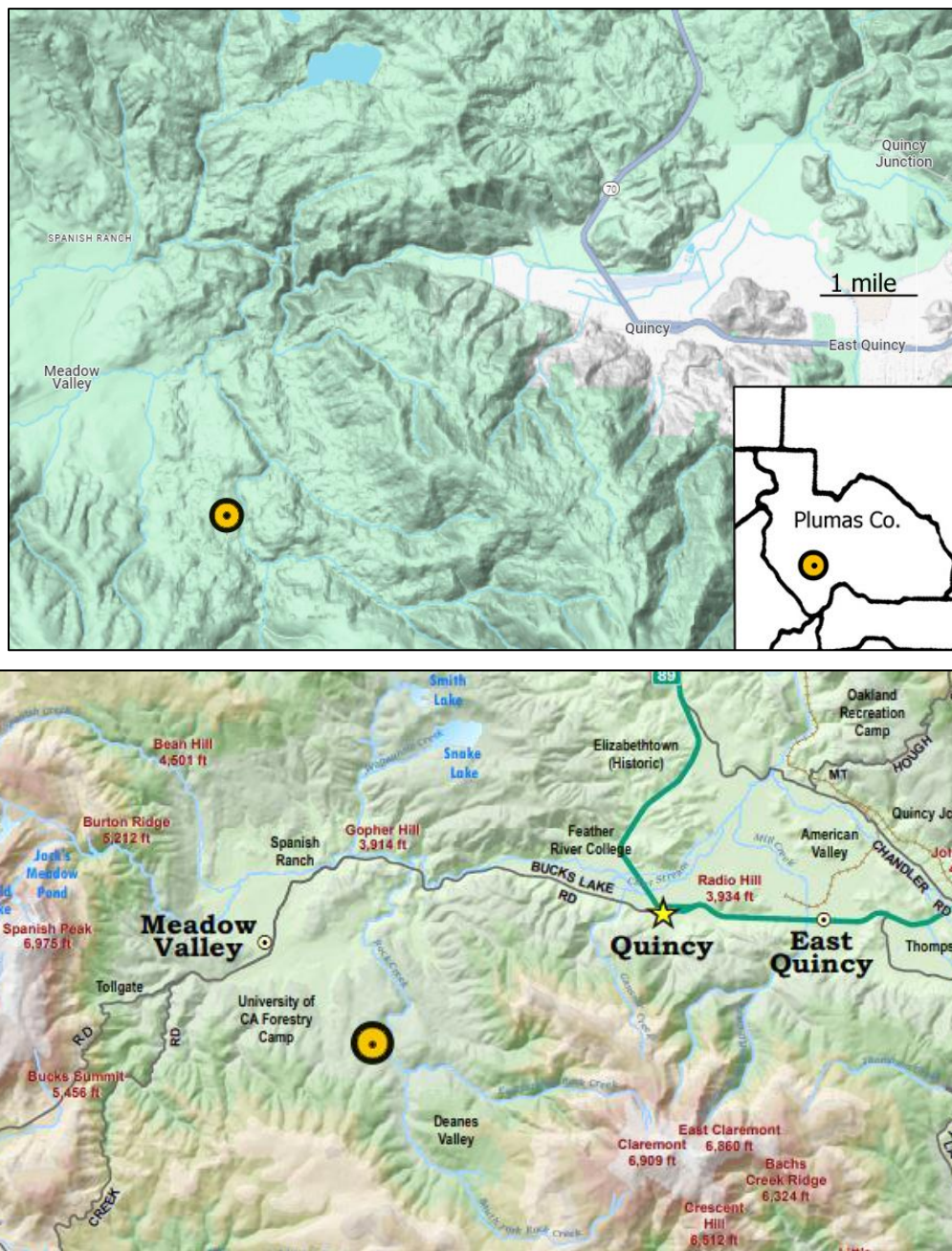
PYRROCOMA AHARTII Nesom, **sp. nov.** **TYPE: California.** Plumas Co.: 4.9 air mi SW of Quincy, 1.2 air mi NNW of Deanes Valley Campground, 3.2 air mi SE of Spanish Ranch, just E of USFS Rd 24N29, ca. 915 ft W of Rock Creek, 39° 54' 21.9" N, 121° 01' 49.1" W, dry rocky serpentine soil, open forest/outcrops, yellow pine forest, nearly level, low ridge, 4200 ft, normal size plant, uncommon, scattered, 14 Sep 2018, *Ahart 21,896* (holotype: CHSC). Figures 2–4.

Distinct in its spatulate basal leaves, lack of persistent fibrous remnants of basal leaves, heads in a raceme and with closely subtending bracts, prominently herbaceous phyllaries with subsessile or imbedded glands, lack of ray florets, and serpentine habitat.

Stems erect to erect-ascending, 22–26 cm high, moderately villous, eglandular. **Leaves:** basal persistent, 7–12 cm long, spatulate, blades elliptic to elliptic-obovate, 20–30 mm wide, attenuate to a petiole ca. twice the blade length, sparsely pubescent to hirsute-villous on both surfaces, eglandular; cauline 7–10, oblanceolate, 2–5 cm long, relatively even-sized or becoming smaller distally, continuing into the inflorescence, prominently tomentose-villous at the petiole insertion. **Heads** in a raceme on peduncles (0.5–)1–3.5 cm long, usually immediately or closely subtended by 1–2 narrow bracts. **Involucres** 10–15 mm wide (pressed); phyllaries oblong-oblanceolate with a deltate-rounded, indurate-apiculate apex, lightly villous-tomentose, at least the inner with minute, subsessile glands, not resinous, in 3–4 series graduate in length, inner 8–10 mm long, outer with a herbaceous area occupying the distal 3/4, indurate-stramineous at the basal margins, inner with the green patch on the distal half. **Ray florets** absent. **Disc corollas** 6–7 mm long. **Achenes** 5–6 mm long, strigose with long hairs.

Features of *Pyrrocoma ahartii* suggest that it is a member of the *P. carthamoides* group (Ertter & Nesom, in prep.) — lack of persistent petiole fibers, heads with closely subtending bracts, herbaceous phyllaries, lack of rays. Plumas County is at the southwesternmost extension of the species group. The racemose inflorescence and glandular phyllaries are out of place there and instead suggest a relation to *P.*

brachycephala (Nesom 2025a, even though the latter has persistent petiole fibers), which occurs in northeastern California and adjacent regions. A hybrid origin for *P. ahartii* might account for the unusual morphological mixture.



Maps 1 and 2. Locality of *Pyrrocoma ahartii* in Plumas Co., California.

Serpentine habitats are characteristic of species in the *Pyrrocoma racemosa* group but not elsewhere in the genus. *Pyrrocoma pinetorum* (Keck) Nesom, essentially an edemic of southwestern Siskiyou Co., California, occurs primarily on serpentine substrate, and the closely related *P. elata* Greene (west-central California) sometimes occurs over serpentine, although it is more variable in habitat (Nesom 2025b); *P. benitoana* (San Benito Co.) is an obligate serpentine species and *P. congesta* Greene usually occurs over serpentine. *Pyrrocoma ahartii* apparently is a serpentine endemic and is the only other species in the genus known to occur exclusively on serpentine.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LITERATURE CITED

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Figure 1. Lowell Ahart in the Ahart Herbarium (CHSC), 7 June 2022, after a naming ceremony recognizing his lifelong support of the botany program. Photo by Jason Halley, Chico State University, Chico Photographer.

Figure 2. *Pyrrocoma ahartii*, holotype.



Figure 3. *Pyrocoma ahartii*, heads.



Figure 4. *Pyrocoma ahartii*, basal portion, showing lack of persistent fibrous remnants of basal leaves.