



High Country Apps
creating mobile apps for outdoor enthusiasts

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Wildflower App Celebrates Beauty of Sagarmatha National Park

(April 2, 2020) – Nepal is famous for its spectacular mountain peaks and rich cultural heritage, but no less beautiful are its diverse forests and alpine flowers. Have you ever wondered what that gorgeous rhododendron is called? Or what the story is behind that delicate carnivorous plant with leaves like the hands of Buddha? How about the medicinal uses of the blue gentian?

Wildflowers of Mount Everest is the first-ever wildflower identification app for Nepal. The app virtually transports travelers to the world's highest peak and showcases its remarkable native flora through beautifully detailed images and easy-to-use graphical keys. For those visiting, working, or living in Sagarmatha National Park and Buffer Zone, it provides an easy-to-use field guide to identify the plants at hand.

Vegetation ecologist Elizabeth Byers has partnered with the Flora of Nepal Project, the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Nepal, and High Country Apps to produce *Wildflowers of Mount Everest*.

The flora of the eastern Himalaya is uniquely adapted to survive at high elevations, enduring extreme daily fluctuations in temperature, scarce soil, steep slopes, fierce winds, snowpack, and scarce pollinators. In spring, luxuriant displays of rhododendrons and primroses cover whole mountainsides with color. Summer brings the beautiful and sometimes bizarre alpine blossoms, such as the spine-covered alpine blue poppy or *Hippolytia gossypina* with its white-haired pillars topped by clusters of golden flowers. Fall trekking season is painted with the blue of gentians and the bright red and yellow autumn foliage of the shrubs and trees.

Wildflowers of Mount Everest, designed for iOS and Android devices, provides more than 2500 detailed images, 1000 local names, descriptions, plant facts, and local lore for 557 wildflowers, shrubs, and trees that grow on the slopes and trails of Mount Everest. While the geographic focus is on Sagarmatha National Park, many of the plants may also be found at upper elevations throughout Nepal.

The app doesn't require a cellular or internet connection to run, so it can be used in the most remote locations or in your own home. Users can create a list of the plants they see each day and email it to themselves or their friends.

Designed for beginners with no knowledge of plants, as well as experienced botanists, *Wildflowers of Mount Everest* will appeal to anyone who wants to identify or learn about plants in the Mount Everest region. According to Gopal Prakash Bhattarai, the Director General of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Nepal, the app is suitable for “students, educators, scientists, guides, and visitors interested in the beautiful wildflowers of Nepal’s Mount Everest region.” Mr. Bhattarai also notes that the app will be a “useful tool for park rangers and scouts as they work to conserve the park’s floral diversity.”

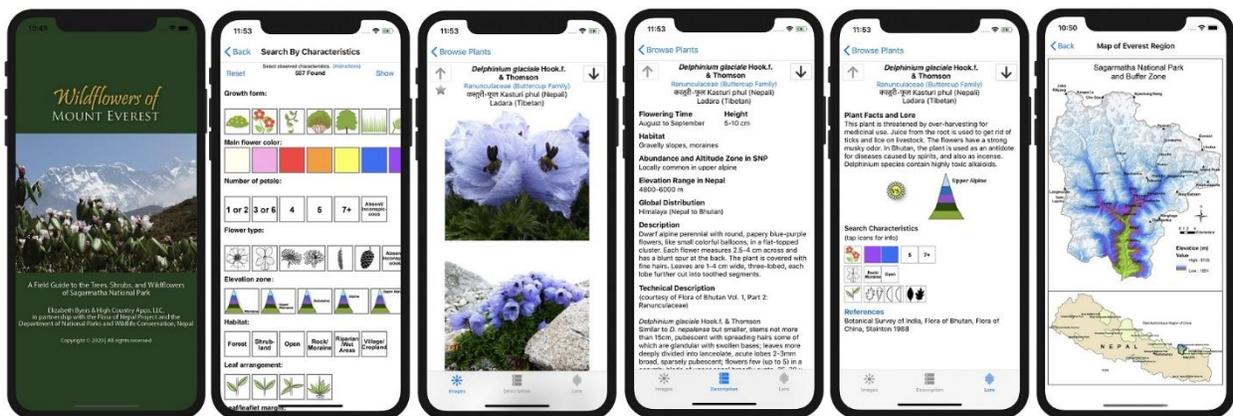
Build your skills during the pause in tourism!

Tourists and trekkers will be flocking back to Nepal before long. For guides and natural resource professionals, now is the time to learn new skills and increase your confidence and knowledge in preparation for when tourism picks up again.

A fun skill-building activity is offered by the *Wildflowers of Mount Everest* app, the first plant identification app written specifically for Nepal. This is an enjoyable way to learn the flora of eastern Nepal’s upper elevations. It is designed for beginners and experts alike, with easy picture-based keys, information about local lore, and plant facts. The richly illustrated app includes 557 species of wildflowers, shrubs, and trees.

“Two things make this field guide special,” says Elizabeth Byers, who has spent much of the last 40 years identifying, photographing, and studying the subalpine and alpine flora of eastern Nepal. “First, the knowledgeable local people who have graciously shared plant lore and stories to give us a glimpse of the cultural importance of each species. Second, the botanical experts from all over the world who have volunteered their scientific knowledge about the unique and specially-adapted plants of Mount Everest.”

The *Wildflowers of Mount Everest* app is available from the Apple App Store and Google Play Store for \$7.99. The authors will periodically update the app to include new species and other content, at no additional charge to users.



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Links to the app (\$7.99):

Apple - <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/id1479336982>

Google Play -

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.emountainworks.android.everestfieldguide>

About Elizabeth Byers:

Elizabeth Byers is a vegetation ecologist who has published numerous articles on rare plant species, natural vegetation communities, climate change vulnerability of plants, and a field guide to the wetland plants of West Virginia, USA. She has been studying and photographing the flora of eastern Nepal for nearly 40 years.

About the Flora of Nepal Project:

The Flora of Nepal Project is an international partnership tackling a knowledge gap identified in Nepal’s National Biodiversity Action Plan. The project is coordinated by the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh in partnership with the Nepal Academy of Science and Technology, the

Government of Nepal's Department of Plant Resources, Tribhuvan University's Central Department of Botany and the University of Tokyo, and draws on the expertise of taxonomic experts throughout the world.

About the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation:

The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation is a government agency of Nepal and one of five Departments of the Ministry of Forests and Environment. It is assigned with the responsibilities of conserving the wildlife of Nepal and managing the protected areas of Nepal, including national parks and conservation areas.

About High Country Apps:

High Country Apps is dedicated to developing applications that deliver high quality natural history information with an intuitive, easy-to-use interface. Our goal is to enable discovery! We present information in simple, non-technical language that will delight and empower the rank amateur who loves the outdoors and wants to learn more. Yet we are also meticulous about creating scientifically accurate apps, thus making them excellent tools for serious biologists. To accomplish this goal, we actively partner with expert botanists and photographers in each region so that we can provide information of the highest quality in our mobile field guides.