



SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS

CHAPTER OF THE CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

MAY & JUNE 1997

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DATES TO REMEMBER

May 10, Sat, 9 am: Lower Arroyo Seco Restoration Field Workshop led by Rick Fisher.

May 15, Thurs, 7:30 pm:
The Inter-relationship Between Local Plants & Birds by Dustin Alcalá of the Audubon Society at Eaton Canyon Nature Center.

June 1, Sun, 9:30-11 am: Tarweed Nursery & Landscape Tour, Chatsworth Lake.

June 19, Thurs. 7:30 pm: Indigenous Plants of Southern California including Local Rare & Endangered Species by Tommy Dodson & Horace Birgh at Eaton Canyon Nature Center.

TREASURE OF THE TEHACHAPIS

I've been trying to get to the Carrizo Plain in spring for a long time. A modest dream, you would think. I mean, it's not like winning the lottery, but I could never pull it off. The first time I made serious plans I was hospitalized. Then a number of years—ten, actually—went by, and I made serious plans again. Sharon Green and I were definitely going last year. But, oh, it wasn't a very good year for wildflowers, and Sharon thought she should work, and, I don't know... we didn't get there.

So when RT Hawke planned a trip to the new Wind Wolves preserve—not the Carrizo Plain, but just this side of it—I thought “ah-hah!” and then “uh-oh.” What would interfere this time?

Well, nothing did; I went, and it was wonderful. The preserve, as Kathy LaShure told you in the last newsletter, is 90,000 acres (!) of what was the Spanish land grant of San Emigdio (silent “g”) in the foothills of the Tehachapis, just west of where I-5 ascends through the Grapevine. It was purchased by a somewhat mysterious entity called the Wildlands Conservancy, which is funded by rich people who “choose to remain anonymous.” Whatever. I suspect Hollywood types, but even if they're drug lords who want to scrub their souls by buying up ecologically valuable land to preserve it, fine.

Because the land has been a private ranch for over a hundred years, it's all virgin territory as far as naturalists are concerned. So a lot of the big guns of Southern California botany had come for the weekend, quick-drawing Jepsons and Twisselmans instead of Colt .45's: RT and Shaun; Andy Sanders of the UC Riverside Herbarium; “the Tims” (Thomas and Ross); David Hollombe and several other members of the Santa Monica Chapter; Pam McKay from Victor Valley College. The 15-20 folks also included hobbyists like me, just out for a beautiful day—sunny but cool—in fabulous country.

The preserve rises out of some unpromising saltbush scrub, but once you ascend along the steep, rutted dirt roads—definitely requiring high-clearance 4 X 4's—you are in high, rolling hills of grass that ripples under the wind (hence “wind wolves”). Owing to a century of grazing, much of that grass is foxtail, filaree and other introduced species, but plenty of native bromes and needlegrasses remain (for a detailed species list you'll have to turn to someone else). We climbed from pure grassland through showy fields of sky-colored baby blue-eyes, magenta owl's clover,



Stylomecon heteropylla
Wind Poppy

cont. on page 2

(cont. from page 1)

blue lupine (at least two species), flame-colored poppies (California and wind poppies), and pale monolopia, through oak woodlands (*Quercus douglasii*) to a high, grassy mesa. At 4,000 feet the hills were still green enough to remind you of Scottish moors—until you caught a glimpse of the San Joaquin Valley, laid out like a pool table, checkered with neat fields, dim with dust and smoke. Made you glad to be up here instead. Saturday's highlights for me were a whole slope of chocolate lilies, a momma gray fox, who posed coyly quite close to the trail, and a natural cave formation containing a wall of pictographs (only slightly defaced).

Wind Wolves is a treasure. It's huge, archaeologically important, geologically varied, and of course, botanically rich. And it's also close, less than two hours from L.A. For the present it's open only to organized group tours, which can be scheduled through Dave Myers, at 909/797-8507. RT and Shaun have already been back to Wind Wolves, and found two possibly undescribed species, a buckwheat and a galium, so you know they'll lead another trip next spring. Nothing short of a planet-smashing asteroid should prevent you from accompanying them. I'll be there, I swear.

—Becky



BOOK NOTES

The California Desert: An Introduction to Natural Resources & Man's Impact June Latting & Peter G. Rowlands, ed., 1995, \$22.00 for 2 paperback volumes

This work is packed with information about our state's desert lands—from detailed scientific studies of the flora and fauna to the history of desert-based research to the adverse effects of various human activities. Great resource for writing letters on desert issues!

It is available only from the CNPS state office at 916-447-2677. They have 500 copies.

CHAPTER EVENTS

Meetings are held at Eaton Canyon Nature Center (map on back cover) on the third Thursday of the month. After June we'll take a two month meeting break. Hopefully everyone will be seeing some California flora on their summer vacation. Note that there will not be a Board Meeting in May or June (we'll meet sometime this summer—date & time to be announced).

PROGRAMS

May 15, Thurs, 7:30 pm: The Inter-relationship Between Local Plants & Birds by Dustin Alcalá of the Audubon Society.

We'll be learning which local birds help specific plants in their quest for reproduction, whether through fertilization or seed dispersal, and which plants provide food and shelter for particular birds.

June 19, Thurs, 7:30: Indigenous Plants of Southern California including Local Rare & Endangered Species with slides by nature photographer Tommy Dodson and commentary by plantsman extraordinaire Horace Birgh. This will be a chance to learn about some of the special plants in our area.

OUTINGS

May 10, Sat., 9:00 am: Lower Arroyo Seco Restoration Field Workshop led by Rick Fisher. We will be able to explore/inspect two adjacent projects under the Colorado Street Bridge: a BFI mitigation area & the Arroyo Greenway EEM Grant Restoration Project. We'll hear from the people who designed, planted & supervised these projects. Meet at the Casting Ponds in the Arroyo Seco at 9 am. (through by lunch time). For additional information call Rick at 818-798-7270.

June 1, Sun, 9:30-11 am: Tarweed Nursery & Landscape. Owner Chris Van Schaack will give us a tour of his establishment which features native plants from the Santa Monica Mountains to the Santa Susana Mountains. His purpose is to provide site-specific plants that are genetically pre-adapted and therefore more likely to thrive when used for revegetation projects, whether in your yard or on public lands. Plants will be available for purchase.

The nursery is located at **23539 Knapp Way, Chatsworth:**

Take Topanga Cyn. exit south from the 118 Fwy. to Plummer St.;

Turn right, go west about 2 miles, going thru 2 STOP signs;

Just after you pass the Chatsworth Lake Market look for the second street which will be Ventura Way;

Turn right, go up about ¼ mile; look for a hand-lettered street sign for Knapp Way on a telephone pole;

Turn left, go 1 block, follow the sharp right & look for the quonset hut at 23539 Knapp Way;

Park in the gravel driveway.

It's an adventure getting there! You might want to car-pool. If you get lost there's a phone at the market; the Nursery's phone number is 818-888-2318. For additional information call Melanie at 818-794-7696.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

(☼ signifies San Gabriel Mountains Chapter events)

until **June 30**: Wildflower Hotline at Theodore Payne Fdn., 818-768-3533

☼**May 2-4, Fri-Sun**: a joint Orange County/San Gabriel Mtns. CNPS field trip to **Catalina Island** led by R.T. Hawke. This trip will afford an opportunity to see parts of the island that are not on the standard tourist route. Transportation to Catalina is about \$20, round-trip. Accommodations are available in a variety of price ranges & camping is a reasonable option. There will be a \$30/person charge for transportation on the island. If you are seriously interested in this trip, please call Sarah Jayne, 714-552-0691, leaving your name & phone number.

☼**May 10, Sat**: our Chapter's **Lower Arroyo Seco Restoration Workshop** led by Rick Fisher. See page 2.

☼**May 15, Thurs, 7:30 pm**: our Chapter meeting **The Inter-relationship Between Local Plants & Birds** by Dustin Alcalá of the Audubon Society. See page 2 for details.

May 16-18, Fri-Sun: a Bristlecone Chapter event, **Eastern Sierra Spring Sojourn**. A variety of outings to Sierra foothills, desert mountains & valleys. \$45 for CNPS members; \$80 for non-members. For registration packet send SASE to Kathleen Nelson, Rt. 1, Box 45C, Gerkin Rd., Bishop, CA 93514.

May 18, Sun: an Orange County Chapter trip to **Old Trabuco Trail**, one of the most beautiful and botanically diverse trails in the Santa Ana Mountains. For details call Sarah Jayne, 714-552-0691.

May 24, Sun, 7-9 pm: Docent-lead Moonlight hike at **Santa Clarita Woodlands**. Call 310-589-3200, x129 for info.

☼**June 1, Sun, 9:30-11 am**: our Chapter's outing to **Tarweed Nursery**. See pg. 2 for details.

June 1-30: Summer Sale: For the entire month of June all plants will be on sale at 10% off for general public, 25% off for members, 30% off for sales of \$150.00 or more at the Theodore Payne Foundation, 10459 Tuxford St., La Tuna Canyon, 818-768-1802.

June 12, Thurs, 8:30-noon: Docent-lead hike to the summit of **Rocky Peak, Simi Valley**. Call 310-589-3200, x129.

☼**June 19, Thurs, 7:30 pm**: our Chapter meeting **Indigenous Plants of Southern California including Local Rare & Endangered Species** by Tommy Dodson & Horace Birgh. See page 2 for details.

June 19-21, Thurs - Sat: a symposium at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, **Out of the Wild & Into the Garden: California's Horticulturally Significant Plants III**. For a brochure call 909-625-8767, x243.

June 22, Sun, 2:15-4:30: docent-led afternoon saunter at **Sage Ranch, Simi Valley**. Call 310-589-3200, x129.

July 11-13, Fri-Sun: an Orange County Chapter trip to **Telescope Peak, Death Valley NP**. Well above the hot valley floor, there is an amazing variety of vegetation from base camp at 8000 ft. in the Panamint Mtns. to the peak summit at 11,000 ft. For details call Sarah Jayne, 714-552-0691.

July 25-27, Fri-Sun: an Orange County Chapter trip to **Whitney Trail**. This is not an assault on Whitney summit. It will be a botanical foray along the lower two-thirds of the trail. Camping location other than busy Whitney Portal. For details call Sarah Jayne, 714-552-0691.

Aug 2-3, Sat-Sun: Desert, Riparian & Woodland Sale, 10% off for the general public & 25% off for members at the Theodore Payne Foundation, 10459 Tuxford St., La Tuna Canyon, 818-768-1802.

The Newsletter of the San Gabriel Mountains Chapter of the California Native Plant Society is published bi-monthly and is free to Chapter members. Non-member subscription is \$5.00.

To join the California Native Plant Society, write to
CNPS, 909 Twelfth St., Suite 116, Sacramento, CA 95814;
please specify San Gabriel Mountains Chapter.

Enclose check payable to CNPS. Membership categories: Individual/Library - \$35;
Student/Retired/Limited Income - \$20; Family/Group - \$45; Supporting - \$75.

A Gardener's Call to Arms: or, To What End Nature?

Rick Fisher

Often during these dog-days of late summer I remember back to spring-time here in the San Gabriel Mountain foothills. The rugged shoulders of my local range glow with the chartreuse-yellow of mustard blossoms. The golden tops of the wild oats and bromes sway gently in the ocean breeze, which gently wafts the fruity fragrance of Spanish Broom past my nose. Starlings sing cheerfully in the Eucalyptus trees scattered about the canyon bottom. The rugged form of the castor bean makes a stark silhouette against the ridge line.

To the untrained eye, all may seem well. Same is it ever was, at least as long as we can remember. But, once again I feel the emptiness of these sights. Ugh! Aliens all!

What has happened to the "real" flora and fauna of my beloved foothills—the refreshing symbols of a nature still alive and vigorous? Is there any "Nature" left in Southern California? Are there any wild places yet uninvaded by these un-welcome aliens?

At times I am afraid that things have been unalterably changed through the ignorant and ill-conceived acts of our culture. For centuries plants that were introduced for agriculture, pasture, horticulture, timber, and botanical oddity have invaded our wildlands while we weren't looking, and at times even with our own very gracious help! Some proof: Recent studies of the Altadena burn area revealed that about 85-90% of the post-fire flora were exotic plants, the result of seedings that began fifty years ago and continue even now.

Well, so what if they did? A quick glance tells us that the hills are covered, isn't that all we want?

The problem is that these exotic plants have few pests and predators here, and—if left unchecked—can

out-compete our native flora. Exotic plants provide much less food and habitat for native birds and insects than our own favorite natives species they have displaced (especially our favorite wild-flowers). Also, these introduced plants do little to control erosion in the long term compared to our native chaparral (which was seemingly "designed" just for that purpose!).

Our natural areas have become our collective "back 40", our untended area of the garden, that part of the garden—the ignored don't-let-company-see-it mess—that we cheerfully forget until we can stand it

**It is time for some
militant horticulture,
some healthy botanical
xenophobia!**



no longer. The time has come to remember. We must reclaim our "back 40", and bring it back to its original splendor.

That is where the gentle Gardener comes in. Not the "little g" gardener, the weekend warrior armed with a belt full of chemical pesticides, herbicides, fungicides and fertilizers to use as weapons in the war to enslave garden plants and command their good behavior and order—or else! No, I mean the "big G" Gardener, the one who has learned to guide with a gentle hand, allowing natural patterns to work and understanding the living cycles of interdependence. The gentle Gardener knows how to recognize that fine line between productive chaos and total collapse, between a healthy, natural, vigorous, diverse mix of plants and a weed patch—and how to achieve that balance.

So, it seems natural to me that an Army of (big G) Gardeners is what is needed. It is time for some militant horticulture, some healthy botanical

xenophobia! Our Southern California wildlands are still full of jewels; beautiful native trees, shrubs, annuals, perennials and bulbs. But for how long? The enemy is relentless and persistent. Exotic plants and animals are like viruses, slowly sapping the strength and resiliency out of our wild communities. We made the mess, even encouraged the process some-times, and now we must reclaim the spirit of the land while it is still possible.

Some of us are already hard at it. The California Native Plant Society, The Nature Conservancy and Sierra Club volunteers (and others), are out there somewhere almost every weekend waging this battle for all of us: bean-bashing, mustard-mashing, tamarisk-smashing, horehound-stomping, and thistle-pulling. But, from the deserts to the coastline, there is still a lot to be done. It is time for the gentle hand of the Gardener to act! You know who you are...won't you join us?

California Native Plant Society, San Gabriel Mountains Chapter: Rick Fisher, Conservation Activities Coordinator, 818-798-7270

Editors Note:

While summer may be too hot for working outdoors, keep this plea in mind for the fall.

The weeds will be there!



A Curious Tale of Mountain Mahoganies

We had not been to Devils Punchbowl County Park since 1992 and we'd never been there in spring, so I was looking forward to our hiking excursion on the last Fri. in March. It turned out to be a typically gloomy cismontane ("this side of the mountains") spring day in Sierra Madre, one that we were quite willing to exchange for a typically sunny, breezy transmontane ("the other side of the mountains") spring day in the western Mojave desert. Along the Antelope Valley freeway there were a few scattered patches of goldfields, but not the great show of color of some past years. The fields along Pearblossom Highway were dry and dusty. But once we began to climb towards the backside of the San Gabriels there were blooming Joshua Trees and goldenbushes (*Haplophappus* sp.).

On our past visits to the park we'd explored the punchbowl itself; this time we were headed to the Devil's Chair. The trail climbed south towards the mountains, passing through a woodland of *Arctostaphylos glauca* and *A. pungens* with grey-green and bright green foliage respectively. After meeting the Burkhart Trail which comes down from Cooper Canyon, our trail began to contour east along the lower (5000' elevation) section of the mountain. We strolled through a forest of *Pinus coulterii* and then re-entered desert chaparral and the domain of pinyon pines (*Pinus monophylla*). I saw several Desert Silktassel, *Garrya flavescens* (a shrub I'd probably been walking right by for years without knowing its name), a few sycamores, *Platanus racemosa* just leafing out (they seemed pretty high up at 5200', although Jepson says they occur to 6500'), one majestic Bigcone Douglas Fir, *Pseudotsuga macrocarpa* in a dry drainage (I thought they only occurred cismontane), and some curious Mountain Mahogany specimens.

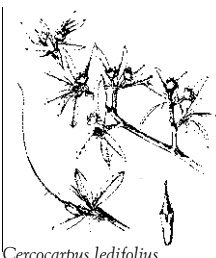
On the upslope side of the trail was a *Cercocarpus ledifolius*, Curl-Leaf Mountain Mahogany, the species common to desert mountain ranges and frequent companion of pinyons. On the downslope side of the trail was a *Cercocarpus betuloides*, Birch-leaf Mountain Mahogany, the species we associate with the Big City side of the mountains (although Jaeger says it occurs in the highest elevations of Joshua Tree NP). And a few steps further along the trail was the curiosity. This shrub had the leathery leaves of *C. ledifolius*, but instead of being narrow and curled, they were wide and distinctly veined like those of *C. betuloides*. So to

my amateur botanist eyes, this plant looked like a hybrid. As we continued on our hike, there were more shrubs of all three types. But upon returning home and consulting various references, the only Mountain Mahogany hybrids mentioned were between *C. ledifolius* and *C. intricatus*, Littleleaf Mountain Mahogany, a similar though smaller species of more desert-ish affinities that I've seen in the White Mountains.

So my question to those with more experience in these matters is this:

Are Mountain Mahoganies looser than their reputation? The San Gabriel Mountains are full of surprises and mysteries.

—Kathy



Cercocarpus ledifolius



Cercocarpus betuloides

RESEARCH REQUEST

The following request was received from Katie Bode, a graduate student in the Ecology program at San Francisco State University.

I am conducting research on the pattern of forest invasion into chaparral sites around California.

I need help in locating such sites and hope that YOU can help. If you know of any chaparral sites located adjacent



Arctostaphylos glauca
Big Berry Manzanita

to or within forests (conifer or mixed evergreen) please contact me. I need to know where they are and how to get to them, and the dominant species in both the chaparral and the forest (if known). However, any/all information is useful. You can reach me by email, phone or regular old U.S. mail:

kab@sfsu.edu
415-338-6406

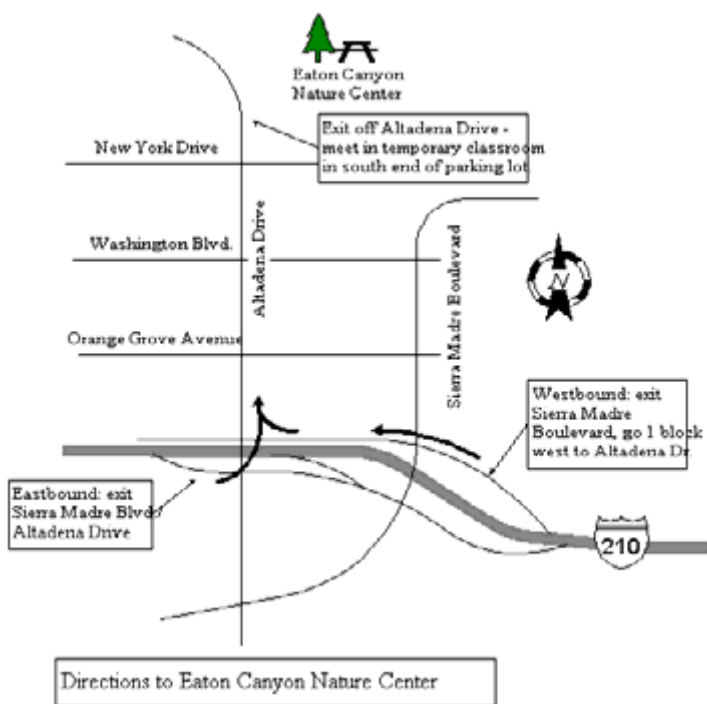
Katie Bode
5583 Lawton Ave.
Oakland, CA 954618

But though California is a contradictory state, I love it and find its wild plants among the few things in life really worth going after.

—Lester Rowntree
1947

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Dedicated to the Preservation of the California Native Flora

The California Native Plant Society is a statewide nonprofit organization of amateurs & professionals with a common interest in California's native plants. The mission of the Society is to increase understanding & appreciation of California's native plants & to preserve them in their natural habitat through scientific activities, education, & conservation. Membership is open to all.

Membership includes the quarterly journal *Fremontia*, the quarterly *Bulletin* which gives statewide news & announcements of Society activities & conservation issues, & the chapter newsletter.



CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
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