



SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS

CHAPTER OF THE CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

MAY & JUNE 1998

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DATES TO REMEMBER

May 10, Sun. 9:00 am: *Eaton Canyon Mother's Day Plant Walk* with Gabi & Cliff McLean.

May 21, Thurs. 7:30 pm: *Propagating Native Plants* by Steve Dreher.

June 14, Sun. 9:00 am: *Eaton Canyon Plant Walk* with Rick Fisher.

June 18, Thurs. 7:30 pm: *Irrigation for the Native Plant Garden* by Rick Fisher.

June 27, Sat. 9:00 am: *The Calchorti of Charleton Flats Hike* with Rick Fisher.

IN MEMORY: BECKY ROTHENBERG

For me, it was a quite remarkable day on a third Thursday in the spring of 1985. I had attended my first meeting of the CNPS (based on my subsequent involvement in the world of CNPS, definitely a life changing experience), and had met four incredible people who remain important parts of my life today.

One of these people eventually became my wife, another the best and most patient field botany teachers I've had the pleasure of learning from, and still another the best all around naturalist I've known who has continued to remind me and awaken me to all the other aspects of natural history. And then there was Becky Rothenberg.

Always humorously self-deprecating and not professing great facility with the arcane world of native plants, Becky's warmth and friendship was a major part of what has held our little band together for many years. Her incredible writing skills made our little newsletter fun to read. As chapter president, her ability to make friends and welcome people into our circle brought in many people from the edges and made them feel an important part of the group.

Initially, tragedy struck her life many years ago when she was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor. After coming to grips both physically and mentally with her illness and unknown longevity, she appeared to have won a temporary reprieve, co-existing with her condition for many years. Although her previous careers had given her pleasure and meaning in her life (from struggling Nashville singer-songwriter, to Epidemiological studies and working for health care access for the poor, to environmental activism), she took the opportunity given to her (or won by her?) to finally attempt her life-long dream, writing a novel. In the end, she completed a series of three widely acclaimed and engaging novels in a style she called "Botanical Mysteries" (*The Bulrush Murders*, *The Dandelion Murders*, and *The Shy Tulip Murders*). For someone who did not profess to be a native plant expert, she skillfully combined her love of native plants and her love of the people and places of the San Joaquin Valley and Sierra foothills into wonderfully told stories.

Through her courageous example, Becky taught us all lessons about personal courage, living in the moment, and pursuing one's dreams and aspirations. Becky made the most of her second chance. Would that we could all be so lucky.

Recently, at her fiftieth birthday party, she confessed that her health was again in decline. On Tuesday, April 14th, she left us in the same manner we knew her, warmly and gently.

Rick Fisher
Acting Chapter President, San Gabriel Mountains Chapter.

FRIENDSHIP

Sometimes new friends can be more precious than people we've known for ages. I'd only known Becky Rothenberg since the fall of 1996, a short 2½ years. But she was responsible for encouraging me to dust off the writing skills I'd acquired in earning a degree in English at Pitzer College more than 25 years ago (a degree that I'd always considered useless in the real world). But Pitzer also instilled ethical values and a concern for others carried out through community service along with classroom learning. So, just as I'd mastered some basic computer skills, Becky gave me a project—this newsletter. It's been an enriching experience. Most especially because I was able to work with Becky and enjoy her droll sense of humor and commitment to issues. Thank you, Becky.

—Kathy



THANK YOU!

To Rick Fisher for agreeing to serve as President under these unusual circumstances. And also for committing so much of his time to Chapter events in June (see items to right). Please give him your support.



WELCOME!

New Members:

Margaret Alvarez & family
Yjae Chung
Anne Dove
Susan Gleason
Larry & Suzanne Haller
Judy Pollack
Rodney Sutherland

CHAPTER EVENTS

Meetings are held at Eaton Canyon Nature Center (map on back cover) on the third Thursday of the month. No meetings or newsletter in July & Aug. Next Newsletter in early Sept. (deadline Aug. 20).

PROGRAMS

May 21, Thurs. 7:30 pm: Propagating Native Plants by Steve Dreher, former nursery manager at Theodore Payne Fdn. He will cover techniques for seed collection, cleaning, storage and treatment, as well as methods for growing plants from cuttings. Steve's a very energetic guy so expect to get lots of info from this program!

June 18, Thurs., 7:30 pm: Irrigation for the Native Plant Garden by Rick Fisher. Due to the other events the week of our April meeting, we've delayed this program. By June our gardens will finally be needing some watering. Rick will be sharing his professional insights on keeping your native plants happy.

OUTINGS

May 10, Sun., 9:00 am: Eaton Canyon Plant Walk with Gabi and Cliff McLean. Continuing our new monthly "neighborhood watch." Start your Mother's Day with a walk to see what wildflowers are blooming. Meet at the trailer.

June 14, Sun., 9:00 am: Eaton Canyon Plant Walk with Rick Fisher. Come see how warmer weather and longer days affect the plants of Eaton Canyon. Meet at the trailer.

June 27, Sat. 9:00 am - midafternoon: The Calchorti of Charleton Flats with Rick Fisher. There are two beautiful mariposa lilies that occur in the Charleton-Chilao-Horse Flats area of the San Gabriel Mountains—*Calochortus palmeri* and *C. invenustus* (the "shy tulip" of Becky's last book)—we should meet them both on this hike. Meet Rick at the fire gate at the end of the Charleton Flats Rd. Bring the usual gear and lunch.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The Glendora Community Conservancy presents **Brodiaea Festival '98**. Among the events offered are walks to the Brodiaea Reserve, home of the endangered *Brodiaea filifolia*, during its bloom season, April 24 - May 23. Groups of 8-12 are recommended but smaller groups should call also. Contact the Conservancy at **626-335-1771** (phone/fax).

REMEMBERING BECKY

When I got a call in 1985 from Jo Kitz of the Santa Monica Mtns. Chapter asking if I would help organize a new Native Plant Society Chapter for the San Gabriel Valley and Mountains, along with the request came a list of about 60 members already enrolled in our area and a short list of people who were said to be willing to help. One of the first on the scene was Becky Rothenberg. She was immediately enthusiastic. She was willing. She was dynamic. She was capable. She was openly friendly. I was confident we would be successful. More than anyone else, she has kept the Chapter going ever since.

Her writings were special. When *The Bulrush Murders* came out, I tried to find opportunities to tell people . . . "Yes, the author's a friend of mine." She called me as she was starting her second book to ask for information on the high Sierran endemic sunflower Alpine Gold (*Hulsea algida*), a plant she thought she could weave a story around. I gave her some information and steered her toward an illustration. I remember being disappointed when she told me she'd decided on a different flower, the dandelion, for her book theme. My disappointment was short-lived as I realized she knew something about writing fiction that I did not. It was *her* book and she knew what she was doing. The flower didn't matter. The weaving of the words and the story mattered.

Becky took personal delight in learning about wild plants, their names, and their families. I saw her take equal delight in finding the means for other people to learn and be excited by California's wild flora. I will miss Becky's phone calls inviting me to the pizza parlor to have dinner with the speaker of the month. It is going to be hard not to see her coming through the door to the CNPS meetings.

I barely glimpsed her musical world. I learned more as I listened to her voice on tape at her memorial service. I remember my surprise, while talking with Becky during a lunch break on one of our field trips, that she knew of, and admired, one of my favorite California folk singers and songwriters, the late Kate Wolf. But one of my favorite folk songs is by Mary Chapin Carpenter:

Raised by the women who were stronger than you know.
A patchwork quilt of memories only women could have sewn.
The threads were stitched by family hands,
protected from the moths,
by your mother and her mother,
the weavers of the cloth.

Becky was one of life's best weavers.

—Mickey Long

BOOK NOTES

Some of you may have read Becky's series of botanically themed mysteries. But if you haven't, they're the perfect summer read.

In *The Bulrush Murders* microbiologist Claire Sharples escapes a dull research job at M.I.T. and takes a new position in California's San Joaquin Valley. But when a friend dies when his motorcycle plunges into a reservoir, Claire plunges headlong into the tangled politics of California agriculture to solve a deadly puzzle of greed and revenge. This book was nominated for both the Agatha Christie and Anthony awards for best first mystery novel.

The dandelion-like flower doesn't grow in the San Joaquin Valley—and it shouldn't have been on the dead body in the ditch. But even finding the body can't distract MIT microbiologist Claire Sharples from her efforts to save her rocky romance with stone-fruit expert Sam Cooper until two more bodies are found in *The Dandelion Murders*.

The Shy Tulip Murders finds Claire planning to use a newly discovered bed of endangered Slate Mountain Mariposa tulips (commonly called shy tulips) in her fight with the U.S. Forest Service to preserve the area—unless desperate loggers get to her first.

The Washington Post (May 1996) said of Becky's last book: "This is brainy, opinionated, enjoyable mystery writing, with one of the most believable heroines to show up in years."

The books are available at local libraries and bookstores.

NATIVE.NET

www.ridgecrest.ca.us/~matmus
Maturango Museum Homepage

If the post-Easter hot weather got you to thinking about summer, this is a great website to help you plan your vacation. Besides having information about the Ridgecrest-located Museum (cultural history, natural history and geology of the Northern Mojave Desert), webmaster Janet Westbrook has compiled two extensive files within the Maturango Museum site: Death Valley Visitor Center and Northern Mojave Visitor Center. Both Centers start with current information regarding weather, roads, wildflower sightings, etc. and continue with lots of detailed information. Janet's infectious writing style will have you packing your bags!

Here's a taste of her enthusiasm: "Northern Mojave Visitor Center—information on other places to visit in the Northern Mojave desert. Looking for something to do?? New in town? Haven't even been to Trona? How about cats? trains? Indians? Click for DAY TRIPS from Ridgecrest a file-full (60 K) of ideas for places to go from Ridgecrest which are 1/2 hour, 1, 1.5, 2, and 3 hours from town in all directions - Mojave Desert, Antelope Valley, Southern Sierra, Owens Valley, etc. **Recommendations for places in their prime right now! Current conditions in Yosemite, Bodie, Mammoth, etc. Check it out! Tioga Pass expected to open 2nd week in June, Sonora by Memorial Weekend. Come on over to the East side!!"

POEM FOR BECKY

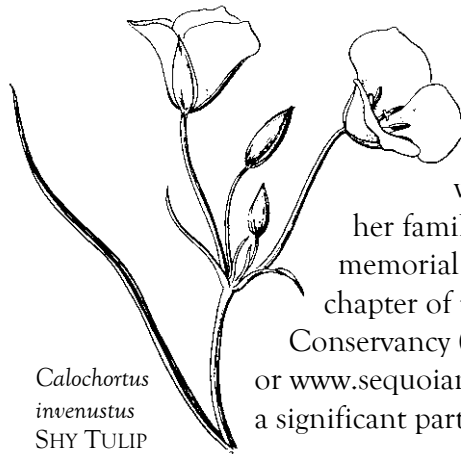
Courage, friend
as you step into that last meadow
where you do not know the plants.
But wait: they'll be new forms, perhaps, of ours,
or the endangered ones we thought we'd lost.

Eaton Canyon lotus, nightshade, lupine,
and fire followers, in their element somewhere.
The shy tulips, no longer shy.
Isn't that the Mt. Gleason paintbrush?

The best places, they say, are about gardens: Paradise, Eden
(and wild gardens the best of these).
In Eden, all the plants were native plants.

For all you left us, Becky, our thanks:
your books, your friendship, nature notes,
prayers for good rains,
and yes, for your courage.

—Elizabeth Pomeroy (April 22, 1998)



*Calochortus
invenustus*
SHY TULIP

BECKY'S MEMORIAL

At the service for Becky, which was held at Caltech on April 18, her family expressed their wishes for memorial contributions to be made to our chapter of the CNPS or to the Tule River Conservancy (P.O.Box 723, Porterville, CA 93259 or www.sequoianet.org/). Both organizations were a significant part of Becky's life.

Your Board has begun to consider how such funds might best express Becky's spirit. Most likely, the permanent memorial will be at Eaton Canyon Nature Center. We welcome suggestions from other members.

Of course, another way you can remember Becky is through your active participation in this chapter: come to meetings, go on an outing, show up for an Eaton Canyon Plant Walk (or better yet, offer to lead one), volunteer for a Board position (Vice President is open), recruit new members. Becky would have liked that immensely.

CNPS NEWS: POSITION AVAILABLE

The California Native Plant Society is seeking a dedicated person to fill a new half-time position of Conservation Biologist. This person will work with state and federal agencies and with CNPS chapters to improve management of rare California native plant species and science-based design of Habitat Conservation Plans, reserves and other land use plans involving rare plant species and vegetation.

The position will start at half-time (20 hr/wk) in the summer or fall of 1998. Long term funding for this position is not guaranteed.

The Conservation Biologist will work under the direction of the VP for Conservation and the Senior Land Management Analyst, and could work out of a home or shared office.

Desired qualifications include post-graduate training in Conservation Biology or closely related field, knowledge of California plants and laws and regulations that affect them. Applicants must be highly organized, have strong verbal and written communication skills, and a demonstrated ability to work independently.

Applicants from any part of California are encouraged to apply. Starting salary is \$13 - \$15/hr., depending upon qualifications and experience.

Send letter of introduction, résumé, and list of references to: Allen Barnes, Executive Director, CNPS, Attn: Conservation Biologist Position, 1722 J St., Suite 17, Sacramento, CA 95814. Or call 916-447-2677.



Have a wonderful summer and plan to share your native plant adventures with the Chapter in the fall.

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, 1722 J St., Suite 17, 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.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

For \$5.00 per issue you may advertise in our newsletter. For information call Kathy at 626-355-7064. We will continue to publish notices from not-for-profit groups for free.

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The California Native Plant Society is a member of Earth Share of California, a Payroll Deduction Plan for the Environment. If Earth Share is not part of your payroll deduction plan in your work-place, please let us know. We would like to change that!

Contact Halli Mason, 818-345-6749, for information.

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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.



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