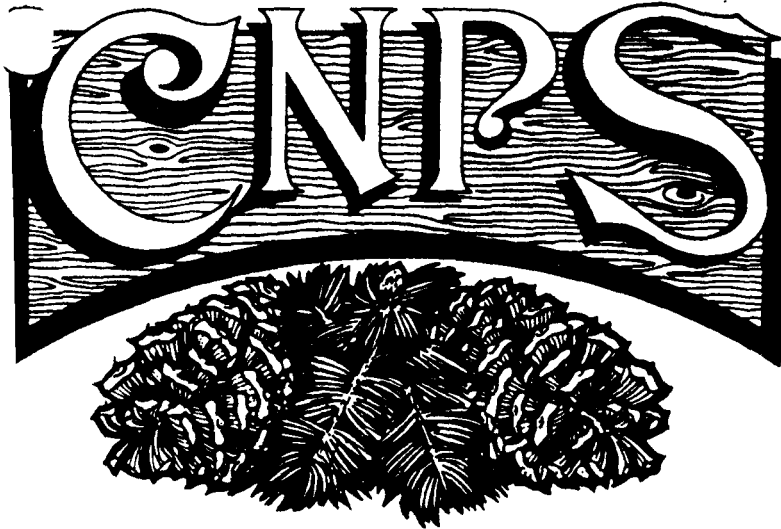


BRISTLECONE • CHAPTER



NEWSLETTER

Vol. 6, No. 5

September 1987

Next Meeting

September 23, 7:30 p.m. at the home of Evelyn Mae and Al Nikolaus. See details in July newsletter.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

In checking five notebooks filled with reports of outdoor trips I smile at memories of places I've enjoyed with the Bristlecone Chapter in the few years since the chapter was established. Think back with me to Red Rock Canyon, Argus petroglyphs, Fossil Falls, Saline Valley, Eureka Valley, Wildrose Charcoal Kilns, Saratoga Springs, China Ranch, Kingston Mountains, DAYlight Pass, Fish Slough, Bodie Hills, Pumice Flats in Mono County, Silver Canyon, and the various lovely canyons of the eastern Sierra Nevada.

We will have one more field trip (October 10 to the Nature Conservancy Kern River Preserve). I plan to add it to my store of memories. Why don't you do the same?

. Doris Fredendall

FIELD TRIP REPORT---White Mountains. July 18, 19.

The Bristlecone Chapter hosted the San Diego Chapter and representatives from a few others on an overnight outing in the White Mountains. A caravan of 18 cars left from the gathering site north of Big Pine. The goal for the first day was the Patriarch Area at over 11,000 feet. We found it bitterly cold, with a biting wind. Vince's thermometer registered 40°F. A little five-year-old girl commented that her hand was shaking and she wasn't doing it. All available clothing was donned before taking the trail up the little dolomite peak overlooking Cottonwood Canyon. The view was tremendous! Weathered bristlecone pine spires were white against the cold blue sky. Then some time was spent on the flat near the parking area checking out the hardy little plants of the dolomite barrens. Most prevalent was the raspberry buckwheat (*Eriogonum gracilipes*), its tiny heads the color of ripe raspberries. The effect of a dry year was evident even at these heights. In spite of this, the visitors were amazed at the richness of the tundra flora.

A stop at Campito Meadow was rewarding in spite of the drying conditions. Toad-lily (*Montia chamissoi*) dotted the mossy borders of a shrunken streamlet. A groundcover of the interesting Mono

Clover (*Trifolium andersonii ssp. monoense*) was noted near the roadway.

Back at the campsite, warming fires were lighted as suppers were prepared. Yoders hosted a pre-supper hour. A Forest Service slide presentation of the wonders of the night sky at the "auditorium" drew some of our people to sit blanket-huddled on the logs. Others shared the comfort of campfires at their camps.

In mid-morning we gathered at the Schulman Grove parking lot. The weather had warmed a bit. The group split. Some took the Discovery Trail to see spectacular trees and observe differing landscapes. Others took the longer Methuselah Trail to enjoy five hours of bristlecone forest specialties. Some of the plants noted were rock spiraea (*Petrophytum caespitosum*), Westgard penstemon (*Penstemon scapoides*), Clokey blue sage (*Salvia dorrii var. clokeyi*), Shockley ivesia (*Ivesia shockleyi*), rock senecio (*Senecio canus*), and Inyo Mountain abronia (*Abronia nana ssp. covillei*).

Hikers returned to the parking lot at different times, so went their various homeward ways without a formal group parting. There had been pleasant reacquaintances and new friendships formed. The cold weather had not dampened the appreciation of the magnificent White Mountains.

* * * * *

WATER FOR OWENS VALLEY AND/OR LOS ANGELES?

Interest in a pending water management plan by the City of Los Angeles and Inyo County is warming up. Meetings are scheduled in Owens Valley towns to receive public input. During the five-year interim agreement great hope has existed that a real partnership might develop. In-depth studies of the valley's hydrology and vegetation requirements provide more knowledge than has ever been available for guidance. In spite of all the effort, it appears that the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) has not altered its attitude that Owens Valley is to have only what Los Angeles will allow. The longed for partnership has not yet developed. It is encouraging though that there is some evidence of strength on the part of the Inyo Board of Supervisors. It seemed no less than a miracle when they appointed Thaddeus Taylor to fill a void on the Inyo County Water Commission. It was the first appointee to that body which had not received the approval of the LADWP. They were not very happy about that. Mr. Taylor, a knowledgeable and straightforward man, is expected to be a valuable representative for the people of Inyo County.

We have received permission to use an article by him which appeared recently in the Inyo Register. Following is a brief introduction: Thaddeus W. Taylor III is 41 years old and a native Californian. He came to Owens Valley (Bishop) in 1973 to open the Dean Witter Reynolds office and, as he puts it, to raise babies. He has two, Daniel - 7½ and Sarah - 3. He has been Inyo County Manager for California Trout since 1983 and was recently appointed to the Inyo County Water Commission.

WATER FLOWS SOUTH

California water flows not only downhill, but also uphill towards money and power. The controversy that has embroiled Los Angeles and Inyo County since about the turn of the century is mostly about money. There is nothing wrong with making money, if it's done honestly.

Why did Los Angeles take the water from the Owens Valley in the first place? Because a group of very powerful and wealthy men got together and found a way they could become more powerful and wealthy. They would start a real estate boom. The value of the property would go up as if there was gold under it, if there was water on it. These people realized that water supplies available to Los Angeles at that time were inadequate -- to expand, vast amounts of water would be required from elsewhere.

The first thing they did was to get some other peoples' money. They caused a bond issue to be passed in Los Angeles, and with the money from the public in hand, began acquiring land through a covert operation in the Owens Valley.

There are various reasons ranchers sold their land, but the common thread was money. Initially, land and water rights were thought to be sold to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. That ruse was part of the covert operation.

The availability of water began a land boom in Los Angeles, as expected. When the water was known to be coming, pieces of property in the San Fernando Valley would exchange hands five times in one day. Speculators drove the price of lots to astronomical heights.

The original organizers of this little plan, which was now a grand and powerful water project, became even more wealthy. They used their power, money and political muscle to increase the size of the City of Los Angeles by annexing other areas, allowing them to float even bigger bond issues and create even more grandiose additions to their water-gathering efforts.

In those days, the environmental concerns were about as popular as Kahdafi at a Bar Mitzvah. It took too much time and money to take care of the environment. And what happened to the Owens Valley was devastating. No native Californian over the age of 35 can be unaware of the environmental degradation of their home state.

Perhaps Los Angeles wasn't designed by nature to be the city of many millions. It certainly didn't have the water, and it's apparent now it doesn't have the air. Suffice it to say, the early land boomers were not into long-term planning. But water and power people are.

The band of far-sighted men who put this water project together were not immune from cutting each other's throats for the buck. In possession of inside information, the former mayor of Los Angeles, Fred Eaton, held onto a hunk of Long Valley that Mr. Mulholland needed in order to build a dam. In order to avoid paying his former friend and mentor's high price for his chicanery, Mr. Mulholland built a dam at an unsafe location. The resulting collapse killed many hundreds of people. Ultimately, the City of Los Angeles reached a lucrative agreement with Mr. Eaton. Long Valley Dam was completed, and Crowley Lake formed.

So today, land in Los Angeles, Beverly Hills and Brentwood is more valuable than the land in the Owens Valley. Consequently, they get the water, we get the pumps.

The notion of money is still very much at work and on the minds of the powers-that-be in Los Angeles. They have been required to re-water Rush Creek, which they had dried up in contravention of State Fish & Game codes. So they bemoan that imposition by saying that each fish costs X hundreds of dollars and the Department of Water and Power is giving up over \$16 million a year.

Well, \$16 million a year to the Department of Water and Power is not a significant amount of money, when it comes down to it. Their overall budget is approximately \$2.6 billion for the current fiscal year. They turn back to the City Council of Los Angeles some \$80 million a year in 'profits.' About 90% of this comes from their hydroelectric operations and other electricity sales. About 10% of the profit comes from water operations.

LADWP, also in contravention of State code, cut off the water in Owens River Gorge and killed what was one of the finest fisheries in the State. It certainly wouldn't cost the City of Los Angeles any water, or result in the browning of any bluegrass lawns, or keep swimming pools half-filled to keep water in the Gorge. It simply meant more money for the Department of Water and Power to send to the City Council of Los Angeles. When State laws got in the way, they had the money and power to afford to ignore them.

There may be those of you who believe that with sufficient money and power you can ignore certain laws and regulations; sadly, it appears that you are correct.

The engineers of the Department of Water and Power in the City of Los Angeles are some of the best paid municipal employees in the world, and they have demonstrated time and time again a high degree of competency in the execution of their skills. They are not lawyers, nor environmentalists, nor scientists. Their job is to get things done in the most efficient, safe and cost-effective manner possible. Their record on public safety has been less than stellar, but they are better than many other operations in the United States. Perhaps their big paychecks help them feel better about ignoring State Fish and Game laws.

Any high school graduate can read the Code, and see that Rush Creek and Gorge dry-ups were in violation of the law. They were done because they made money.

The plan to raise Long Valley Dam and expand Crowley Lake is another case in point. A rather crude sort of blackmail was employed by the LADWP high command when they said that this "great and beneficial" project would be abandoned if they had to spend money for an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Take that! Well, an EIR should be mandatory in this case. Among many other problems, they risk taking a great trout lake and turning it into a halfway-decent perch pond.

The Department of Water and Power wants to pursue groundwater pumping aggressively. They want to make sure that they have access to all viable sources of water in the Valley and in Mono County. That's because when they have to purchase water from other sources, specifically, the Metropolitan Water District, they have to pay a pretty good hunk of money for it.

The San Joaquin Valley pays far less; in fact, they receive the water at subsidized prices. But south of the Tehachapies, costs increase dramatically to get the water pumped over the mountains, about \$230 an acre foot (enough water to cover one acre one foot deep).

What about those farmers in the San Joaquin Valley? The largest land owners are oil companies, such as Unocal and Chevron and other corporations, such as Prudential Insurance and Tejon Ranch Company. In many cases, the crops they grow are nurtured with subsidized water, and the crops themselves are subsidized. Without knowing it, the taxpayer has gotten into the cotton business.

Los Angelenos squander vast amounts of water because it is relatively inexpensive. They use about 190 gallons of water per person per day. You must wonder what a person does with that much water!

In Tel Aviv, Israel, the most heavily built-up and industrialized section of that country, with a climate similar to Los Angeles, they use less than 80 gallons of water per person per day. But they have individually-metered apartments and low water consumption toilets. Such items would cost money to install, and might slow down real estate construction in Los Angeles.

When you tell someone who moved to Los Angeles from Iowa that he can't have a Kentucky bluegrass lawn because the water expense would simply break his back, he might not install one. But as it is, no one tells him, and he gets the bluegrass. The result is that it is now too expensive to water trees in Independence, and the trees die.

Lately there's been a growth of money and power on the other side of the coin. And the courts look at things a bit differently than they did in the past, and don't roll over for the rich and powerful quite as rapidly as they used to. There are organizations of ever-increasing membership and growing war chests that are finding the fishing assets, sport and commercial, of the State of California disappearing at an alarming rate. In many cases, protecting natural assets have resulted in costly and time-consuming defeats. But the fight continues. An occasional victory such as Rush Creek gives hope.

People come to this Valley not simply for the view, but for the flora and fauna which depend upon flowing water. If the water is sucked out of this Valley, it could all look like the bottom of Owens Lake. The Department of Water and Power engineers who work up here say that they would not allow that to happen, because they love the Valley, too. I'm sure

they are being completely honest. But if they become too concerned with environmental and legal matters, they could find themselves being a shift foreman at a Mojave pumping station or a lineman in Watts.

Long-term planning by the Department of Water and Power engineers requires looking far and wide for new sources of water. The question remains. Who will pay for the water -- the environment, or the voters in Los Angeles?

. Thaddeus W. Taylor III
Bishop, California
619/387-2569

* * * * *

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members:

Anna Leslie Billstrom
10187 Camberly Court
Cupertino, CA 95014

Patricia Eaton
Route 1, Box 189A
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Ed Clifton
Rt. 1, Box 1072
Crowley Lake, CA 93546

Tina Mark
P.O. Box 604
June Lake, CA 93529

Peggy Moore
P.O. Box 389
Lee Vining, CA 93541

* * * * *

FIELD TRIP

The last field trip this year will be on October 10 to the Kern River Preserve. See details in the July newsletter This should be a pleasant and informative trip, and an opportunity to see what The Nature Conservancy accomplishes. We have ordered balmy Indian Summer weather.

ATTENTION SUBSCRIBERS!

We do not send renewal notices. Please note the expiration date on your mailing label. Your interest is appreciated.



ESCAPED EXOTICS

of

INYO - MONO

Ailanthus altissima. Tree-of-heaven. Weedy in communities.

Asparagus officinalis. A nuisance in gardens, but appreciated by some who harvest them or transplant them to beds.

Cynodon dactylon. Bermuda grass. Difficult to control, widespread.

Eleagnus angustifolia. Russian olive. Not a serious problem, although it does escape cultivation.

Lotus corniculatus. Bird's foot trefoil. Apparently not a serious problem although it does occur here.

Robinia pseudo-acacia. Black locust. Escapes cultivation to some extent but not aggressively. Valued for shade and wood.

Tamarix aphylla. Athel. Often a serious problem on the low desert at springs or other water sources.

Tamarix parviflora. Not as aggressive as the one below, but any Tamarix is water-greedy.

Tamarix ramosissima. Salt cedar. Extremely aggressive and a serious problem in Owens Valley.

Ulmus pumila. Siberian elm. A weedy tree but mostly confined to residential areas.

The above species should be recognized as potential problems, although some of them have value for certain purposes.

One of them, Tamarix ramosissima, has become a horror story in Owens Valley. In the wet year of 1969 there was an unusual amount of surface disturbance in water spreading activities, such as building dikes, basins, and elevated roads. All this provided ideal conditions for tamarix to become established. Now, nearly ten years after the threat was called to their attention, the Inter-Agency Committee of Inyo County is facing the problem. It is hoped that a long-range eradication program will be initiated. The species is extremely aggressive, it consumes great amounts of water, and, once established, is difficult to eradicate. One reason for concern is the fact that the seeds blow eastward to the scarce springs in the Inyo Mountains. Then it is only a matter of time until they drink the springs dry. Thus, it is a serious threat to wildlife. It also crowds out native willows and poplars along Owens River.

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY - Membership Application

The California Native Plant Society is an organization of lay persons and professionals united by an interest in the plants of California. It is open to all. The Society, working through its local chapters, seeks to increase understanding of California's native flora and to preserve this rich resource for future generations. Varied interests are represented.

Name _____ P.O. or Street _____

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Membership Category:

_____ Life, Couple	\$500
_____ Life, Individual	450
_____ Supporting	50
_____ Household	30
_____ Individual or Library	18
_____ Student or Retired	12
_____ Retired Couple	15

I wish to be affiliated with the
Bristlecone Chapter _____
Other _____

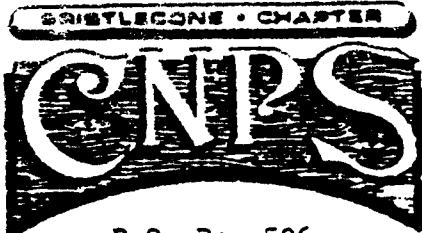
Please make check payable to:
California Native Plant Society

Mail to: Bristlecone Chapter, CNPS
P.O. Box 506
Independence, CA 93526

GIFT contribution: Where most
needed _____ Conservation _____

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California Native Plant Society



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