

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF THE CALIFORNIA NATIVE FLORA

The California Native Plant Society



Bristlecone Chapter

Volume 23 No. 6
November/December 2003

NEXT CHAPTER MEETING

The November meeting will be our annual Potluck and Slide Show on Wednesday, November 19th at the Methodist Church on School Street in Big Pine. The potluck set-up will begin at 6:00 with dinner at 6:30 p.m. Please bring your own table setting, a dish to share, and some slides of plants and/or adventures during the past year.

NEXT CHAPTER BOARD MEETING

The next chapter board meeting will be at 7:00 PM on Tuesday, Nov. 4 at Sally Manning's house. All are welcome to attend.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

I'd like to use this President's message – my last – to thank all of our board members and other volunteers who make the Bristlecone Chapter a strong local voice for plant conservation and education. Our chapter exemplifies how a dedicated group of volunteers can achieve much. A few of the accomplishments we should be very proud of include spearheading efforts to keep Upper Harkless Flat and Juniper Flat free of the environmental impacts caused by a large array of radio telescopes, providing graduate students and local educators with small grants for botanical research and education projects, providing our community with a diverse array of native plants for horticulture, and establishing the Mary DeDecker Native Plant Garden at the Eastern California Museum in Independence.

It was an honor to host Pam Muick, Executive Director of CNPS, who spoke at our September general meeting. Pam remarked how impressed she was with how much the Bristlecone Chapter accomplishes, despite our relatively small population of potential volunteers.

Speaking of volunteers (again), we can always use more! People who want to get more involved with some of our activities do not need to be botanists or stay committed forever. Volunteers and board members (other than officers elected for one year) are always free to rotate through jobs or quit altogether when they need to. It is what you choose to make of it.

Finally, I want to lend a warm welcome to our next Bristlecone Chapter President, Sherryl Taylor. Though she has not yet been elected, recent polls indicate a landslide victory and strong support from the rest of the board. Go Sherryl!

.....Stephen Ingram

UPCOMING EVENTS

Doris Fredendall Memorial

Doris was a stalwart mainstay of the Bristlecone Chapter for many years. Her dedication and energy is an inspiration to those of us who follow along behind. She led field trips and kept Westgard Pass clean of trash and weeds up until she was about 90 years old! She also served in many other capacities over the years but her hospitality as host of countless Bristlecone Board meetings is legendary. We all miss those days of baked apples and numerous delicious treats. But the best part was getting to spend time with Doris.

Many of us would like to establish a permanent memorial to Doris at the Mary DeDecker Native Plant Garden at the Eastern California Museum. Doris was an avid gardener and a long time friend to Mary DeDecker so it would be appropriate to bring their memories together at the garden.

Ideas for a memorial are still being gathered. If you have any ideas, please let us know. If you would like to make a donation in Doris's memory, you may send it to the Bristlecone Chapter at P.O. Box 364, Bishop, CA. 93515.

2004 Officer Nominations

The nominations committee is pleased to present the following nominees. If elected, these women will serve as Bristlecone Chapter officers during 2004. The election will take place at the November general meeting.

- President: Sherryl Taylor
- Vice President: Sue Weis
- Treasurer: Rosanne Higley
- Secretary: Sally Manning



Penstemon sp.

Fall U.S. Hwy 395 Clean-Up

The Bristlecone Chapter is responsible for picking up litter along U.S. Highway 395 between our Cal-Trans Adopt-A-Highway signs on the Sherwin Grade. Please join us on Saturday, November 9th, 9:00-11:30. Meet at the parking area on Pine Creek Rd. just west of #395 at 9:00. Wear protective clothing, boots, hat, and sunscreen. Bring gloves and a light day pack for carrying water and extra trash bags. If you can come please call or email Sherryl Taylor 924-8742, sherryt76@aol.com.

Mary DeDecker Botanical Grant Program

The Bristlecone Chapter of the California Native Plant Society is pleased to request applications for its small grants program in memory of renowned local botanist, Mary DeDecker. This program is a fitting way to remember Mary's many contributions to the people and plants of the eastern Sierra. The program will award up to two grants of not more than \$500 each.

The purpose of these grants is to facilitate research and projects that increase the understanding and appreciation of our region's native flora and ecosystems. There are a wide range of appropriate possible subjects for funding, from basic taxonomic or ecological research to a school garden featuring native plants and their pollinators. The only requirement is that the project be relevant to the native plants of the northern Mojave Desert, Sierra Nevada, and Great Basin portions of eastern California.

The deadline for submission of grant proposals is December 12, 2003 (please note corrected due date). To receive guidelines for the grant application or for more information, contact Karen Ferrell-Ingram at 140 Willow Road, Swall Meadows, CA 93514, or at (760) 387-2913 or ingram@telis.org.

Native Plant Gardening Notes

Many thanks to everyone who supported the native plant sale this year either by purchasing plants or seeds or by helping with the sale. We had a very successful sale once again and it was wonderful to witness all the enthusiasm for native plant gardening. We raised enough funds to support our Mary DeDecker Botanical Grant Program for another year and look forward to receiving another collection of interesting proposals in the next few months.

For the people who purchased our local wildflower seed mix packets, it is time to think about sowing those seeds. The instructions that came with the packets cover the necessary details but the main thing you should be doing at this time is preparing the area you plan to plant. Weeds will out-compete wildflower seeds, so it is important to control the weeds in the site before you sow the seeds. Start this process about a month, if possible, before you want to sow your seeds. Till the soil to a depth of about 4 inches, and remove existing weeds. Water the site regularly for two weeks to germinate weed seeds. When weeds are a couple of inches tall, remove them by hand or hoe. Resume watering, and then repeat weed removal if more weeds appear. Don't till the soil deeper than about an inch as this could bring more weed seeds to the surface. Leave the seed bed "scuffed up" for planting.

It is recommended that you sow the seeds in late November or just before winter moisture begins. Some people will run out into a storm to sow seeds to ensure a good soaking rain or snow to begin the miracle of seed germination.

Please contact me to receive more information on sowing your seed packets. I am very interested to hear how these seed mixes grow in your gardens as this is a new experiment for us. Call 387-2913 or write ingram@telis.org for more information.

Bishop Schoolyard Safari

Saturday Nov. 22 - 9:00-11:00

Community Event

Sponsored by the Bishop After School Program

The Bishop After School Program is happy to announce our first Schoolyard Safari Day. This Saturday in November will consist of a number of activities at Bishop Elementary School District sites. They will include but not be limited to: Weeding, raking, place a compost bin and composting, seed planting, watering, picking up trash, bird study that might include building a bird house; and possibly cleaning the trail behind the schoolyard, located on the Indian Reservation property. Participants will be encouraged to discover ways to improve their schoolyard and build a prospering habitat for native plants and wildlife.

Our goals with this community event are:
To offer a Saturday After School Program event where parents and students can work together in a healthy and safe environment. The event will also allow participants to be a service to their community and local schools.

We would like to encourage all community partners to consider how they might volunteer or participate for the event. Please call for more information.
Bobbie Stryffeler 872-2527



Penstemon personatus

CONSERVATION

CARMA to be at Cedar Flat

Inyo National Forest Supervisor Jeff Bailey announced recently that his choice for the preferred alternative for the final EIS for the CARMA project will be Cedar Flat (i.e. Westgard Pass). By the time you receive this article, the decision will have been published in the Federal Record.

While it is hard to view the sacrifice of Cedar Flat as a victory, the alternatives (Upper Harkless Flat and Juniper Flat) were far worse. Supervisor Bailey chose the only alternative in which no new access road construction will be necessary.

The Bristlecone Chapter played a major role in this decision. In persuading Inyo National Forest to move the CARMA project away from Upper Harkless and Juniper Flats we have accomplished something of lasting value. Supervisor Bailey also deserves congratulations for identifying a compromise alternative which minimizes environmental impacts while allowing project proponents to accomplish many of their research goals.

.....Daniel Pritchett

Inyo Supervisors Endanger Meadow

At their meeting of October 28, 2003 Inyo County Supervisors directed Inyo County Technical Group members to approve a protocol for testing wells 380 and 381, two wells currently in "off" status. The test protocol, prepared by LADWP consultants, consists of pumping the deep aquifer for up to 18 months, or until the shallow aquifer is drawn down from 1 to 3 feet below its current level. Up to 7200 af of water will be pumped.

LADWP is already pumping the wells in spite of the fact that they went into "off" status on October 1. The Supervisors' action will retroactively legitimize a month of pumping in violation of the Inyo LA Water Agreement (LTWA).

The Supervisors' enthusiastic support for the test was apparent as soon as the discussion began. Their enthusiasm arose from their belief that test results will somehow allow pumping to be reduced. No one, however, explained exactly how this will occur. Persistent questioning by Supervisor Ted Williams also revealed that the Supervisors had erroneously thought test results would be applicable valley-wide when, in fact, the results will be site specific.

I advocated delaying the test until water tables and vegetation in nearby parcel Blackrock 94 have recovered to their baseline levels. I based my comments on language in the EIR to the LTWA which states explicitly that a "primary goal" of the LTWA is *impact avoidance*. This test will not only delay recovery of shallow aquifer water table (which already averages 2 meters below the grass rooting zone under meadow parcel Blackrock 94) but will also draw it down further. In so doing it will diminish any chances of avoiding significant pumping impacts at the parcel.

When the LTWA was signed, Blackrock 94 was one of the finest wellfield alkali meadow parcels in the Owens Valley. Its perennial cover has declined dramatically in the subsequent 12 years and it is also being invaded by shrubs. Cover declines and conversion of meadow to shrubland are two impacts the LTWA is specifically designed to avoid.

After hearing my comments, one of the Supervisors asked if the test were delayed but the water table never recovered, when could the test be run? The unstated message was "everyone in the room knows LADWP is not about to raise the water table and we're not about to do anything about it either."

This is the problem in a nutshell. Our Supervisors are completely passive with regard to the problems of Blackrock 94 and other parcels experiencing pumping impacts. They blame the weather and LADWP, and accept no responsibility to do anything. Implementation of the LTWA, however, is as much the responsibility of Inyo County as it is LADWP. Unless our Supervisors accept their management responsibilities, the ongoing ecological

disaster – which they give no indication of recognizing – will continue.

.....Daniel Pritchett



SUMMER FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Gaylor Lakes Basin Field Trip

July 26, 2003

This trip is a favorite of many of the members of the Bristlecone Chapter of the CNPS. It also garnered the attention of numerous plant aficionados, including friends from June Lake, Reno (the author), southern California, Berkeley, and even expatriots from Louisiana, looking to live part of each year in Mammoth Lakes.

We gathered, slightly more than 20 in number, at the turnout just east of the pay shack in Tioga Pass, then hiked, without toll, across the National Park boundary to the adjacent trail head. At 9900 feet, some of us lowlanders wondered what toll we would pay to the effects of elevation. The weather was promising, although afternoon thunderstorms had been an undeniable part of the recent afternoons. The start was in clear weather with moderate temperatures and extraordinary scenic clarity.

Cathy Rose as trip leader made us welcome, and insisted in short order that we should leave the trail head and get a good start. No time wasting around the first meager parking lot flowers for her. We had an initially steep hike to get to Gaylor Lakes Basin. Cathy led the way energetically to the ridge crest of 10,600 feet. Along the way she introduced us to such boreal and subalpine flora as *Erigeron peregrinus*, *Perideridia parishii* (Yampah), *Delphinium nutallii* (Larkspur), *Haekelia micrantha*, *Polygonum bistortoides* (Bistort), *Penstemon heterodoxus*, and *Horkelia fusca*. And more. Cathy gained much of her plant nomenclature knowledge and botanical enthusiasm from Carl Sharsmith, formerly of Yosemite National Park. Some of our group knew nothing of him. Others knew well enough that Cathy had made the most of a unique opportunity.

With plant stops, the steep climb was manageable for all. The first view over the ridge crest was awesome as we gazed at Gaylor Lakes Basin, a glacial cirque. Cathy pointed out the peak to the north that is proposed to be named for Carl Sharsmith. We also gazed on Mt. Dana to the east, with the associated Glacier Canyon and Dana Plateau. As we descended into the Basin, we looked for pica in the scree, but saw none. Later that day, however, a truly obese marmot presented itself. It must have had a body mass index of at least 50.

On the trail, we admired all three of the Sierra Nevada species of *Pedicularis*, *P. semibarbata* on the forested ridge hiking in, and *P. groenlandica* and *P. attolens* in the meadowed Basin. The latter two are known as the two Sierran species of Elephants Head. The bottom of the Basin was taken with grassy wet meadows, rocky morrainal material, bedrock scoured clean by the glaciers, and an impressive rock headwall cliff that formed the back of the Gaylor Basin glacial cirque. The rock in and around the basin consisted of granite and much older marine metamorphics. The Basin contains five lakes. In a cirque, the uppermost lake is known as a tarn. A connected chain of lakes in a cirque is known as pater noster lakes. We lunched at Upper Granite Lake, the tarn and uppermost of the pater noster chain.

In the Basin, we enjoyed the sub-alpine and alpine setting, including discussions of the whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*), with its co-evolutionary relationship with the Clark's Nutcracker, and its shape-response to the extreme snow, temperature and wind conditions of the high elevations. We encountered interesting alpine flora such as *Castilleja nana* (Alpine Paintbrush), *Dodecatheon alpinum* (Alpine Shooting Star), *Erigeron incanum*, Cinquefoil species such as *Potentilla fruticosa*, *P. glandulosa* and *P. flabellifolia*, *Silene sargenta* (Catchfly or Champion), *Raillardella scaposa* and *R. argentea*, and *Kalmia polifolia* (Bog Laurel). And more. Much more. The author of this review managed to write down 53 flowering plants, and

only during those moments when Cathy could be approached within hearing distance.

When prompted, Cathy pointed to and named all the impressive peaks of upper and eastern Yosemite National Park, and the view of Tuolumne Meadows. She continued without mercy to relate past treks to glaciers, to high peaks, to meadows with particular botanical and scenic marvels. We all vowed to return and hike all the canyons and peaks of the upper Yosemite. Cathy (nearly) promised to lead a hike next year to Dana Plateau or perhaps towards Mono Pass.

On our way out, we crossed a gravelly meadow area that contained many delicate *Saxifraga aprica* (Sierra saxifrage). This was a special flower to those of us with little alpine experience. It is identified with ovate, basal, entire to dentate leaves (brownish-orange with age), an unbranched solitary stem of two to four inches, and a subcapitate inflorescence with white elliptic petals.

We climbed out of Gaylor Lakes Basin and returned down the steep ridge to the park entrance. This trip was all we botanical amateurs could ask for with a knowledgeable leader, flowers in abundance, spectacular scenery and weather that only Cathy could have ensured. And no entry fees.

.....John Dyers

Trees of the Eastern Sierra September 6, 2003

The field trip was led by Cathy Rose, and attended by a group of ten. We started in the parking lot of the Inyo National Forest Visitor Center in Mammoth, where we looked at Jeffrey pines (*Pinus jeffreyi*) before proceeding to the Crystal Lake trailhead. The morning was sunny and clear but brisk- it was obvious that autumn had arrived in the mountains. The Crystal Lake trail starts at about 9,000 feet and we found several species there: red fir (*Abies magnifica*), mountain hemlock (*Tsuga mertensiana*), and lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*). We also found two five-needled pines coexisting at

that elevation, western white pine (*Pinus monticola*) and whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*). Cathy had prepared a detailed handout with illustrations and notes from her own observations for identification of each tree species. If I ever misidentify the five-needled pines again, it will be nobody's fault but my own!

The next stop was at Convict Lake. We walked along the trail on the southeastern side of the lake, and crossed one of the recent debris flows that have washed out the trail in several places there. We saw black cottonwood (*Populus balsamifera*) and water birch (*Betula occidentalis*), which both prefer a wetter site, and white fir (*Abies concolor*), which is found at lower elevations than red fir.

The third and last stop was at Rock Creek. We looked at the Pinyon pines (*Pinus monophylla*) at the beginning of the road, at about 7,000 feet, and then proceeded up to 9,300 feet, to a trail that takes off across the main road from Pine Grove Campground. The trail eventually joins the Hilton Creek trail at the top of the ridge. Halfway up the ridge we found a beautiful Sierra juniper (*Juniperus occidentalis* var. *australis*) in fruit, and a mature limber pine (*Pinus flexilis*), as well as aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) starting to turn gold. And here Cathy gave us a homework assignment. She told us that just north of the junction with the Hilton Creek trail, there was a single magnificent tree of a species that she hadn't seen anywhere else in the surrounding area. But we had to go see it for ourselves, because she would not reveal what it was. Well, Cathy, I went and found the tree, and I agree it is a singular specimen, and no, I will not reveal its identity either!

In the car that I carpooled in, all four of us were seasonal residents, and we talked about how we were all going to be leaving soon. The Trees of the Eastern Sierra field trip was a good way to end the summer field trip season, and a fine way to mark the end of the greater season as well.

.....Sarah McCullough

Hilton Creek
October 4, 2003

Sue Weis led the fall color/rare moss field trip on Saturday October 4. We left a car at the Hilton Creek trailhead, then drove over and started the hike from the Rock Creek drainage. We admired the Sierra junipers and occasional colorful aspens as we climbed the switchbacks up the Rock Creek canyon wall. Many of the herbaceous species were in autumn stage: fruiting, senescing, turning colors besides green. This made identification of some a challenge, though we think we made a good call on *Silene bernardina*. Surprisingly, *Ipomopsis aggregata* (scarlet gilia) still possessed bright red flowers.

At the top, Daniel noted the large population of *Achnatherum occidentale* (western needlegrass) growing, characteristically, beneath the *Pinus contorta* (lodgepole pine). We stopped at a small wet meadow, and Sue explained her recent collaboration with an expert on fens. To qualify as a fen, which is basically a seep or spring that has been buried, there must be an accumulation of at least 40 cm of organic matter. It turns out that there are fens in several locations throughout our region.

After lunch on the shore of Davis Lake, we left the trail and followed the Hilton Creek drainage, entering the upper end of a large mountain meadow. Plunging through willow thickets and jumping wet spots, we searched for interesting mosses. Sue pointed out *Vaccinium uliginosum* (western blueberry), but it had no berries. After a relatively brief search, Sue found a thriving, green population of a rare moss named *Helodium blandlowii*. The moss resembles sphagnum, but after she first collected it in this meadow, the experts keyed it to *H. blandlowii*, which is known from only a handful of locations in California.

Back on the trail, we made the long descent to civilization. As we crossed Hilton Creek, the aspens were glowing with color, so we stopped for photographs. The *Epilobium angustifolium* (fireweed), which had had red leaves a couple weeks earlier, had mostly lost its leaves, but the

backlit fruits of *Cercocarpus ledifolius* (mountain mahogany) were brilliant. Under one of these shrubs, on a north-facing aspect, we found senescing individuals of *Penstemon papillatus*. This medium sized penstemon has a very limited distribution, thus appears on the Inyo National Forest's Sensitive Plant list. It would be worth a trip back next summer to see it in flower!

It was a great day for a long hike with plants common and rare, colorful and dry, and big and small!

.....Sally Manning

Thank you to all our many renewals and a warm welcome to new members:

Judy Erb - June Lake

John Cunningham and Evanne Jardine - Mammoth Lakes



Abies concolor

Next Newsletter Deadline: December 28thth.

THE 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 the understanding of California's native flora and to preserve this rich resource for future generations. Varied interests are represented.

Name _____ P.O. Box or Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ Phone _____

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

Bristlecone Chapter Directory (Partial List)

Membership Category

| | |
|---|------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student/Retired/Limited Income | \$20.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual or Library | \$35.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> International | \$35.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family or Group | \$45.00 |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor | \$1,000.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate | \$1,000.00 |

Please make membership checks payable to:

The California Native Plant Society.
-Mail to: Bristlecone Chapter, CNPS

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 Rare Plant Committee - 2003 Chair. - Kathleen Nelson (760) 873-1095
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Gift Contribution: Where most needed _____ Conservation _____.

THE CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY (www.bristleconecnps.org) Bristlecone Chapter Newsletter comes out bimonthly. It is mailed free to members of the Bristlecone Chapter, CNPS. The subscription is \$5.00 per year for non-members and can be obtained by sending newsletter subscriptions to CNPS, P.O. Box 364, Bishop, CA 93515-0364. Send newsletter articles not memberships to Newsletter Editor Anne Halford at 312 Shepard Lane, Bishop, CA 93514 - or email to: fkhalford@earthlink.net

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