

The California Native Plant Society



Bristlecone Chapter

Volume 25 No. 4
July/August 2005

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Board Potluck

On Wednesday, August 10th beginning at 4:00 PM there will be a potluck for the Bristlecone Board and for members who are interested in becoming more active in our chapter. The potluck will be held at the home of Sherryl and Tony Taylor, 340 Fir Street in Mammoth Lakes. Call or email for directions. Respond to Sherryl at staylor@npgcable.com or phone 760-924-8742.

Mark Your Calendar!

Our next general meeting will be held Wednesday, September 28th at the Green Church near Mammoth Lakes at 7:00 PM. Program to be announced in our September newsletter.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It is such a treat to witness the march of spring blooms from Death Valley, up the Owens Valley, across the Volcanic Tablelands and now advancing up the Sierra slopes and into Long Valley and the June Lakes basin. Our Bristlecone members have had the joy of leading field trips to areas profuse with flowers and of welcoming guests to enjoy this season with us. And it has kept us busy!

In mid-May we hosted almost 50 folks from around the state to our 8th Sierra Spring Sojourn and 20 of our members joined them for field trips and meals throughout the weekend. Our guests were welcomed to Camp Inyo with an expansive display of our blooming native plants, collected and labeled by Karen Ferrell-Ingram, Jerry Zatorski and Jack Ferrell. Daniel Pritchett shared an excellent presentation about the impact and politics of ground water pumping in the Owens Valley. Ann Howald showed slides of her favorite botanically interesting areas in California, many of which are in our own backyard. And our guests could chose from four field trips each day. Our guests tell us we make it look easy to put on a weekend like this but I know what an effort it is for our small chapter. Field trip leaders scope out trips and prepare plant lists. Speakers are arranged and all the logistics for 50 houseguests are provided. Thank you, once again, to all.

The American Penstemon Society began planning their annual trip to our area two years ago. Steve and Karen Ingram and other chapter members participated in their visit and Steve Ingram presented a program of our local flora. The Penstemon Society certainly chose the year to visit the Eastern Sierra!

Our field trips, along with the blooms, will continue into October. See the descriptions in this newsletter or visit our website www.bristleconecnps.org for details. Hope to see you at many of them.

..... Sherryl Taylor

CONSERVATION

Good news!

It's nice to have some good news to report for a change!

First, in May, Antonio Villaraigosa was elected mayor of Los Angeles. As noted in a previous article, the mayor of Los Angeles, through his appointments to the LA Board of Water and Power Commissioners (BWPC), has arguably as much control over Inyo County as do Inyo County Supervisors. Mayor Villaraigosa was endorsed by the Sierra Club during his campaign, and the old BWPC – responsible for so much environmental degradation in Owens Valley – has already resigned. As of this writing I don't know if Mayor Villaraigosa has chosen new commissioners or not.

Even better news came recently in the form of a decision in the litigation by the Sierra Club and Owens Valley Committee over DWP's failure to implement the Lower Owens River Project and several other mitigation projects. The judge not only ruled in the plaintiff's favor, he did so in emphatic terms. He characterized one of DWP's arguments as "disingenuous if not mendacious." These words also aptly describe DWP's efforts to deny its ongoing desertification of Owens Valley meadows through excessive groundwater pumping. In a previous era, DWP managers responsible for this debacle would have been expected to fall on their swords in disgrace. In our era, those responsible will probably be promoted and given

raises. The judge will consider sanctions against DWP at a hearing in July.

Congratulations to longtime Bristlecone Chapter member Mark Bagley (acting for the Sierra Club) for his tireless efforts and indispensable role in this very difficult litigation. Congratulations also to Leah Kirk and Irene Yamashita of the Inyo County Water Department, who had the unenviable tasks of working on the mitigation projects which were the subjects of the litigation. The judge's ruling documents the absurdities and frustration they have endured for years in attempting to work with DWP to implement these projects.

.....Daniel Pritchett, Conservation Chair



UPCOMING EVENTS

2005 Summer Field Trip Schedule

July 16, Saturday. Silver Peak Range in Nevada. Leader Scott Hetzler. Meet at the Y in Bishop (intersection of highways 395 & 6) at 9:00 AM. Bring a lunch and fluids, we will be on our own all day. There will be very little hiking, and we will see most of the plants near the road. We hope to see some really cool Buckwheats. For more information, call Scott Hetzler at 873-8392.

July 30, Saturday. Tioga Pass Area. Leader: Cathy Rose. We'll hike via Bennettville to Crystal Pass by the Mine Creek Chain of Lakes, enjoying wonderful views, plants, abundance of birds, and geology. Bring lunch, water and a camera. Be sure you are ready for a high elevation ramble. Meet at 8:30 AM at Tom's Place fir carpooling or at 9:30 AM at the junction of Tioga Pass Rd. (hwy 120) and Saddlebag Lake Rd., about two miles east of the entrance of Yosemite NP.

August 13, Saturday. Grunion Plateau. Leader: Denise Waterbury. Join Denise for a botanical exploration to an alpine meadow in the Coyote area. Starting at South Lake, the group will "hike the pipe" to get to Brown and Green Lakes. From Green Lake, a short, steep trail (with good flowers) leads up to a meadow in the sky, known as the Grunion Plateau. If the Grunion are running, the flowers will

be stunning. If not, there are still spectacular views to be got! Meet at the South Lake parking lot at 8:30 AM. This is a moderate hike of about 8-9 miles with approximately 2,500 feet of elevation gain. Bring plenty of water and food, sunblock, and insect repellent. Wear sturdy shoes and bring your rain gear (just in case)! For more information call Denise at (760) 920-5204.

August 27, Saturday. White Mountains. Leader: Cathy Rose. We'll walk the new 3-mile Cabin Trail. Bring lunch, water and a camera. The walks are not difficult, but the elevation is all above 10,000 feet. Meet at 9:00 AM at the Edith Mendenhall Park in the north end of Big Pine on the Sierra side of the Highway 395. We'll carpool there to the trailhead at the Schuman Grove visitor center.

FIELD TRIP POLICIES: For all field trips, be sure to bring plenty of water, lunch, good walking shoes or boots, and appropriate clothing for hot sun and/or inclement weather. Also useful would be a hand lens, binoculars, camera, floras, and plant lists. Trips will leave at the time announced, so please arrive at the meeting sites a few minutes early. Unless indicated, the average car should do fine. Car pooling is encouraged. Everyone is welcome, but not pets. For general question on field trips or if you would like to lead a trip, please call Jerry Zatorski at (760) 872-3818.

Field Trip Report

Prior to groundwater pumping by LADWP, large areas of the floor of Owens Valley were occupied by alkali meadow vegetation, with shallow groundwater supporting a diverse plant community including grasses and shrubs. Such was the history revealed by Daniel Pritchett to five field trip participants on Saturday June 4th.

Our first stop was a site near Laws that met the requirements of the Inyo-LA Long Term Water Agreement, with about 50% cover dominated by saltgrass. The depth to groundwater was about 3 meters. We learned that a water table less than 2 meters deep will support groundwater-dependent grass and 4 meters deep will support shrubs.

Barely a half mile away we visited a stark, barren site that had almost no grass and was mostly bare

ground, with a few shrubs and invasive weeds. The disturbing part was that in 1984, the baseline year for the agreement, this site looked much like the other site with 50% cover, 75% of which was saltgrass. Today the depth to groundwater was over 20 feet because of the groundwater pumping in recent years. Attempts to make LADWP live up to the agreement have failed, causing desertification of meadow vegetation in parts of the valley floor.

After a few more stops, we ended the trip at a relatively undisturbed site south of Bishop and away from pumps. Here we saw dense cover, lots of grass including Great Basin Wild Rye, good species diversity (including a *Calochortus* species of special concern), abundant insects and other life. With less than 5 inches of annual rainfall it was obviously groundwater dependent, and had not yet been as affected by pumping like the other sites had been.

As Daniel passed out chocolate chip cookies from the Great Basin Bakery, he shared with us a glimmer of hope for the Owens Valley: that the new mayor of L.A. will appoint Water and Power Commissioners that don't share LADWP's prevailing view that "litigation is cheaper than water"--a view that allows LADWP to spend more on litigation than Inyo County's entire budget.

.....Greg Reis

Restoration Efforts Needs Volunteers!

Jamie Anderson, Wilderness Steward with Friends of the Inyo, invites you to volunteer to help with conservation and restoration projects to protect and preserve wilderness areas in the Eastern Sierra. The work includes invasive plant eradication, campsite restoration, fire ring removal, and trail work. Fifteen trips are planned this summer including day trips and a few overnights. If you would like to learn more, contact Jamie at Jamie@friendsoftheinyo.org, call 760-873-6500 or stop by the Friends of the Inyo Office next to Great Basin Bakery on Main Street in Bishop.

Next Newsletter Deadline: August 28th.

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

Membership Category

<input type="checkbox"/> Student/Retired/Limited Income	\$20.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual or Library	\$35.00
<input type="checkbox"/> International	\$45.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Family or Group	\$45.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting	\$75.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Plant Lover	\$100.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Patron	\$250.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor	\$500.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Mariposa Lily	\$1,000.00

President – Sherryl Taylor (760) 924-8742 Vice President – Sue Weis (760) 387-2349 Secretary – Denise Waterbury – (760) 873-4344 Treasurer - Rosanne Higley (760) 387-2803 Membership – Diana Pietrasanta - (760) 873-6262 Newsletter Editor - Anne Halford - (760) 873-6714 Conservation - Daniel Pritchett - (760) 873-8943 Plant Communities - Sally Manning - (760) 873-3790 Invasive Exotics - Brian Cashore - (760) 387-2789 Legislation – Kathy Duvall- (760) 387-2122 Education - Edyth Irvine (760) 924-5778 Programs - Sue Weis (760) 387-2349 Field Trips – Jerry Zatorski (760) 872-3818 Native Plant Sales - Karen Ferrell-Ingram - (760) 387-2913 Decker Native Plant Garden – Jerry Zatorski (760) 872-3818 Publicity – Cheryl Chipman – (760) 872-7636 Historian – Ann Fuiton (760) 873-9261 Librarian - EvelynMae Nikolaus - (760) 878-2149 Rare Plant Committee - 2005 Chair. – Anne Halford (760) 873-6714 hm., (760) 872-5022 wk. Book Sales - Sue Weis (760) 387-2349
--

Please make membership checks payable to and send to:

CNPS – Membership Coordinator
 2707 K. Street, Suite 1
 Sacramento, CA 95816

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

The California Native Plant Society
 Bristlecone Chapter
 P.O. Box 364
 Bishop, CA 93515-0364
 PERMIT NO. 47

Non-Profit Org.
 U.S. Postage
 BISHOP, CA
 93515-0364