

**DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF THE CALIFORNIA
NATIVE FLORA**

The California Native Plant Society

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Next Chapter Meeting



Bristlecone Chapter

The Bristlecone Chapter will meet at 7 p.m. Wednesday May 27, 2009, at White Mountain Research Station, 3000 E. Line St. in Bishop. Dr. Tasha La Doux will present: A Flora of Joshua Tree National Park. You'll see a few similarities to our area as well as some very interesting differences, and Tasha will talk about some conservation concerns. Tasha is JTNP Botanist and Assistant Director at the UC Sweeney Granite Mountains Desert Research Center. The public is welcome. (For more information, contact Sally Manning.)

Next Board Meeting

The Bristlecone Chapter Board will meet on May 20th at 7:00 at the USFS/BLM Building at 351 Pacu Lane. Everyone is welcome to attend.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Green? Energy

Driving home from the CNPS Chapter Council meeting in Claremont this past March, we passed the solar power plant at Kramer Junction. Because some of the discussion at the meeting was fresh in my mind, the thing that caught my attention was the steam rising from the wet-cooling facilities at the plant. With rising energy costs and increased awareness of the detrimental effects of CO₂ emissions from fossil fuel consumption, there is more interest than ever in developing alternative, renewable, sustainable sources of energy. Options such as wind, solar, geothermal, and biomass are typically characterized as "green" energy sources.

But solar and geothermal energy production are not necessarily renewable or sustainable—it all depends on how it's done, particularly in arid environments. Geothermal plants can either use a wet-cooling system, such as that at the Coso Geothermal Plant, or they can employ a dry-cooling system, such as at many other plants around the world. The former consumes significant amounts of water, the latter does not. The Coso Geothermal Plant needs to appropriate all of the aquifer recharge of the Rose Valley to maintain its operation (at least that is what the Coso Operating Company claims), which will completely desiccate Little Lake and all the surrounding wetlands.

Solar-thermal plants, such as that at Kramer Junction, also consume limited water resources. Solar-voltaic plants do not. The proposed Ivanpah facility will also be solar-thermal. Pumping ground water in arid lands to accommodate inappropriate technology will have severe effects on all wetland habitats that are maintained by the exploited aquifers. Once the ground water is depleted below some economic threshold, energy production will decline and inevitably cease. Meanwhile we will have lost unique desert wetland habitat and their complement of water-dependent plants and animals.

It is difficult for any conservation organization to oppose such domestic, non-fossil energy projects. CNPS and other conservation groups need to have the will and courage to do just that, however. Energy projects that depend on mining ground water are not sustainable in arid regions, although sustainable alternatives often exist. Coso Operating Company could convert its plant to air-cooling; apparently it's not as profitable. All solar-energy projects developed in the desert should be solar-voltaic rather than solar-thermal. Biomass-energy projects in desert regions would also consume excessive amounts of water. We need to insist that alternative-energy projects be truly "green."

.....Steve McLaughlin

UPCOMING EVENTS

Bristlecone Chapter Summer Sojourn

Come to the Sojourn! On July 17th-19th our chapter will host its second Sierra Summer Sojourn, a weekend of field trips, programs and conversation at White Mountain Research Station Crooked Creek facility. A choice of four field trips on Saturday and on Sunday focusing on native blooms, bristlecones, butterflies, and alpine ecology will be offered, along with two evening programs on alpine ecology and the

bristlecones. There is an option to spend one or two nights at the Crooked Creek facility, located in the bristlecones at 10,200 ft. More information about the weekend and a registration form can be found on the Bristlecone Chapter website at www.bristleconecnps.org. **EARLY REGISTRATION FOR YOUR FIRST CHOICE OF FIELD TRIPS IS ADVISED.**

New Book by Bruce Pavlik – Book Signing and Slide Show

Dr. Bruce Pavlik of Mills College will be at the White Mountain Research Station on Monday, May 18, to give a presentation and slide show based on his book *The California Deserts: an ecological rediscovery*. Tentative start time is 7:00 PM. Bruce's book is extremely well-written and well-illustrated, covering the people, the plants and animals, ecological processes, and conservation issues for the Great Basin, Mojave, and Colorado desert areas of the state. The book starts appropriately with a speculative history of a basket found in a limestone grotto by Mary DeDecker near the Eureka Dunes. This event will be co-sponsored by Spellbinder Books and the WMRS.

Upcoming Late Spring and Early Summer 2009 Bristlecone Chapter Field Trips

May 10, Sunday. Whippoorwill Flat.
 Leader: Michèle Slaton. We'll explore the lower sagebrush-pinyon pine interface in the Inyo Mountains after a good snow year. Expect plenty of blooming perennials and great shrub diversity. Depending on flowers, we'll walk toward Jackass Flat or lower in Waucoba Canyon, and look for the unusual Shockley's prickly-leaf, and rare cushion daisy and broad-shouldered milkvetch. Meet at 8:30 am at the Big Pine campground at the intersection of Hwy 395 and Westgard Pass Road. We will carpool

from there on a paved road to the Saline Valley turnoff, and then drive about 12 miles on a dirt road (high clearance, 4WD not required). Expect about 2 miles of walking on moderate terrain with no trail or along old roads. We'll depart for Big Pine around 3pm. Bring sunscreen, water, hat, lunch, and snacks. For more information, contact Michèle at (760) 938-3258, or mmlaton@schat.com.

May 16, Saturday. Benton Hot Springs Ranch. Co-led by the Eastern Sierra Land Trust, California Native Plant Society, and the Eastern Sierra Audubon Society. Enjoy a walk through alkali meadow and through a sage brush scrub canyon on an ESLT conservation easement. Last year a peregrine falcon was spotted, so we'll have to keep our eyes open. Trip will be an open-ended half day, with 2-3 miles of moderate hiking through hills. Bring plenty of water, your lunch, sunscreen, hat, and make sure to dress for varied weather. Meet in Benton at the intersection of HWY 6 and SR 120 at 9 am. To carpool from Bishop, meet at the "Y," HWY 6 and Wye Rd. at 8 am. Call Serena at 873-4554 or email her at serena@eslt.org.

May 23, Saturday. Swall Meadows, Wheeler Ridge Wildlife Migration Corridor. Led by Karen Ferrell-Ingram of the Eastern Sierra Land Trust. Spend a morning discovering new plants, spotting birds, and exploring the biodiversity of the Wheeler Ridge Wildlife Migration Corridor. 2-3 miles of moderate hiking off trail from 9 to noon. Bring a lunch, water, hat, appropriate clothing for weather, and ESLT will provide drinks. Meet at the gravel pit on Sky Meadow Rd in Swall Meadows at 9 am. Call Serena at 873-4554 or email her at serena@eslt.org.

May 30, Saturday. Birch Creek weed bashing and botanizing day. Friends of the Inyo and CNPS will have a joint project removing mullein, bull thistle, and some of the other weedy species from the riparian area near the Birch Creek trailhead. We may

see some *Calochortus excavatus* in the area; other plants of interest we'll see include *Comandra umbellata* and *Lotus crassifolius*. At this time last year there was a spectacular bloom of several lupine species in the watershed. In the afternoon, we will explore up the trail. Bring gloves, your favorite mullein rosette-removal tool, lunch, and water. Warning, mullein wool can be irritating. Meet at 8am at the Big Pine Triangle Campground at the corner of Highways 385 and 168 at 8am. For more information contact Paul McFarland at 873-6500 or paulmc@friendsoftheinyo.org, Steve McLaughlin at 760 938 3140, or Sue Weis at 760 873-3485 or sueweis@aol.com.

June 6, Saturday. Blackrock meadows: the good, the bad, and the ugly. Leader: Daniel Pritchett. In July 2007 the Bristlecone Chapter of CNPS formally requested DWP and Inyo County to modify groundwater management in the Blackrock area due to degradation of rare alkali meadow habitat. Shortly after we made our request, a fire burned part of the area. On this field trip we will learn about the ecology of alkali meadow ecosystems and their responses to groundwater drawdowns, fire, and non-native trout. We will explore an area from Blackrock Spring south toward Independence. Sense of humor and capacity for outrage required. 4x4 not necessary but high clearance may help. Meet at Blackrock Fish Hatchery raceway parking lot at 8:45AM. Bring water, snacks, hat, and sunscreen. Trip will end by noon. For more information contact Daniel at 873-8943.

June 7, Sunday. Highway clean-up. Leader: Scott Hetzler. Meet at the intersection of Highway 395 and Pine Creek Rd., west of 395, at 9.00 AM. We will try to be done by 1:00 PM. For more information contact Scott at (760) 873-8392.

Early to Mid-June - Piute Mountain Fire Recovery. Leader: Fletcher Linton, Sequoia NF Botanist. Contact: Janet Westbrook. During last summer's extreme fire season,

Indian Wells Valley residents observed this conflagration, starting on June 18. The fire burned both Sequoia National Forest & BLM lands. Contained on July 20, it consumed over 37,000 acres. We will visit areas deemed safe by Forest Service personnel, to see how thoroughly the woody flora was burned & to observe fire-following annual wildflowers. Meet at Inyokern Post Office at 8:00 am to carpool. Bring lunch, ample water, sunscreen, hat, camera. Return mid afternoon. Exact date to be set by Sequoia NF officials after the scoping process is complete. Contact person: Janet Westbrook; 760-375-8371; jwest@ridgenet.net.

June 13, Saturday. Parker Lake.

Leaders: Cathy Rose, Steve McLaughlin. The walk to Parker Lake is easy, with some steep uphill at the beginning. In addition to beautiful trees, shrubs, and flowers (we hope for masses of early Phlox), there are lots of birds and superb views. About 4 miles round trip. Bring lunch and water. Meet at 9:15 at the old kiosk on the Rock Creek Road just above Tom's Place or at 10:00 at the trailhead. To reach the trailhead from Bishop, go north on 395, and go left on the NORTH June Lake Loop exit. Quite soon you'll see the right hand turn for Parker Lake. For more information contact Steve at 760 938-3140.

June 19, Friday. Bodie Hills. Leader: Anne Halford. High-clearance vehicles recommended. This tour will take participants on a botanical transect from the west side of the Bodie Hills to the southeast side traversing through low to high elevation Great Basin plant communities. This approximately 14 mile one-way trip will end at the Historic Bodie State Park We'll take short excursions from the car to see plants, but no long hikes. Meet at 10:00 a.m. at the Toiyabe National Forest Parking lot south of Bridgeport on U.S. Hwy. 395. For more information contact Anne at (760) 872-5022.

June 20, Saturday. Tamarack Canyon & Badger Flat, Inyo Mts. Leader: Jerry Zatorski. This trip can also be called Inyo Mountains Odyssey, part deux. We will drive to Badger Flat, just east of Mazourka Peak, and take the hike up Tamarack Canyon from there. From Pinyon/Juniper woodland at Badger Flat we will make our way up into the sub-alpine forest zone of Limber and Bristlecone Pine. Many botanical wonders big and small await us. Because we'll begin hiking at 8700 ft and go up from there and the route is moderate to difficult, all participants should be in good hiking condition at high elevation. Bring plenty of water, lunch, snacks, sunscreen and appropriate clothing. We should be down by late afternoon. We will meet at the Citrus St. Park on the south side of Independence at 8:00 AM to carpool, high clearance vehicles and 4WD recommended. For more information contact Jerry Zatorski at (760) 872-3818 or jerryzat@verizonmail.com.

July 11, Saturday. McGee Creek.

Leaders: Cathy Rose, Steve McLaughlin. We'll wander up the flowery McGee Creek trail below colorful metamorphic mountains with no particular destination in mind. Besides abundant plant life, we should see birds of sagebrush, streamside, meadow, and coniferous forest. Bring lunch and water. About 4 miles round trip. Meet at 9:00 at the McGee Creek trailhead, a left turn from 395 north of Tom's Place and south of Convict Lake. For more information contact Steve at 760 938-3140.

Field Trip Reports

Poison Canyon, March 22

We picked the date in early January and, as it turned out, it was the worst day weather-wise in March, with snow on the Sierras, rain all around and WIND! However being a hardy group, we six went anyway. Poison Canyon was well worth it! First, just beyond our parking spot, there were dense *Phacelia tanacetifolia*, mixed with *P. crenulata*, *Cammissonia boothii* and *C. claviformis*, Sun Cups forming a beautiful palette of lavenders and yellows. Piles of *Eschscholzia glyptosperma* greeted us at the entrance to this trio of small, steep walled desert canyons. Fortunately, the wind diminished as we headed into the drainage. We chose to explore the east canyon first, wandering slowly up its sandy course.

There we added to the Phacelias, *P. distans*. *Atrichoseris platyphylla*, Gravel Ghost, ascended the rocky east wall with *Encelia farinosa* x *E. frutescens*, Brittlebush, and more *P. crenulata* in great numbers. We also observed *Antirrhinum filipes*, Twining Snapdragon, *Perityle emoryi*, Rock Daisy, *Stephanomeria*, Wire Lettuce, exuberant *Atriplex hymenelytra*, Desert Holly, *Geraea canescens*, Desert Gold, *Gilia latiflora*, Broad-flowered Gilia, and others. After walking back to the confluence, we set out to investigate the flora in the more rocky west branch. We found a lovely stand of *Mohavea breviflora*, *Eremalche rotundifolia*, Desert 5-Spot, always an "Oh, Wow!" plant, was just beginning to bloom, accompanied by some *Monoptilon belloides*. We had intended to explore on the other side of the highway but the wind proved to be too fierce by then.

We would like to go back to this location in 2010, possibly several times, to conduct a more thorough investigation of wonderful Poison Canyon—don't let its name fool you. Since the bloom is best in March, we would be happy to have

Bristlecone members from the more northern portions of the Chapter join us for a short respite from your much longer winter.

.....Judy Breitenstein & Kathy LaShure

Death Valley

April 4th

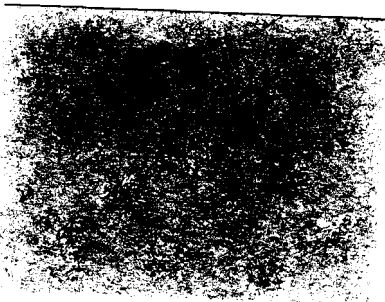
A small, but highly select and motivated group, joined Jerry Zatorski on April 4 for a botanical tour of Death Valley. Many species were found blooming at the mouth of Titus Canyon, including ghost flower (*Mohavea breviflora*), *Phacelia calthifolia*, and Death Valley sage (*Salvia \parallel unereal*). Interesting and rare plants seen included ringstem (*Anulocaulis annulatus*), annual snapdragon (*Antirrhinum filipes*), and golden carpet (*Gilmania luteola*). At one spot on the fan east of Furnace Creek Inn, Jerry led us to a plant community with five species of cacti: beavertail (*Opuntia basilaris*), cholla (*Opuntia echinocarpa*), Johnson pineapple cactus (*Sclerocactus johnsonii*), cottontop cactus (*Echinocactus polycephalus*), and Engelmann hedgehog (*Echinocereus engelmannii*). At the same locality were many mendora (*Menodora scoparia*) and turpentine broom (*Thamnosma Montana*), two unusual desert shrubs in the olive and citrus families, respectively.

.....Steve McLaughlin

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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

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 Kathy LaShure, Creosote Ring Sub-Chapter Coordinator (760) 377-4541

Gift Contribution: Where most needed _____ Conservation _____