

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

The California Native Plant Society



Bristlecone Chapter

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November-December 2009

Bristlecone Chapter Meeting

Wednesday Nov. 18, 2009, at White Mountain Research Station, 3000 E. Line St. in Bishop. First, it's our annual holiday potluck, with setup at 6 pm and dinner at 6:30. Please bring a dish to share, as well as your own place setting. Dinner will be followed by a presentation by Meredith Jabis, entitled, "What's a cute little plant like *Abronia alpina* doing in a place like this?" This species grows only in a couple of meadows in the high southern Sierra, and Meredith's careful research, funded in part by our chapter's Mary DeDecker Botanical Grant, provides insight into its persistence. (Hint: It attracts a variety of pollinators!) The public is welcome. For more information, contact Sally Manning.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Comings and goings

Change is perhaps the one constant we confront, both in the natural world, and in the world of human organizations. The Bristlecone Chapter is no exception. In a previous issue of this newsletter, we announced that Daniel Pritchett has succeeded Anne Halford as our editor. Sally Manning has taken over for Diana Pietrasanta as our membership chair. And most recently, Maggie Wolfe Riley will become the new webmaster, stepping in for Jo Bacon. I can't thank Anne, Diana, and Jo enough for all the work they have done in these roles.

Maggie will be both maintaining and redesigning much of our website. Now is the time to tell us what you would like to see on our web pages. Suggestions currently on the table are to add a "wildflower hotspot" page where members can post news of any particularly good flower displays they see in our area, from Ridgecrest to Death Valley, Owens Valley, the Mono Lake Basin, and Sierra Nevada. You'd be surprised how many inquiries we get from people planning to visit our area who want to know where to go to see good blooms. Another recommendation is to establish an on-line procedure to sign-up for field trips. Many of our trips are open to all who want to come (I've seen more than 30 people show up for some of Anne's Alabama Hills trips), but some trips do need to limit the number of participants. Trips into Wilderness Areas, for

example, needed to be limited to 15 people. How about a “mystery plant” page where members can post photos of interesting plants they are not familiar with? Maybe an archive of plant lists for popular field-trip sites? Please send your ideas to Maggie at about@bristleconecnps.org.

If you know of students, educators, or organizations involved in any work related to increasing our knowledge or promoting awareness and conservation of native plants in the Eastern Sierra, let them know about our [Mary DeDecker Grant Program](#). Funding for this program comes largely from proceeds from our plant sales in Bishop and Mammoth Lakes. Criteria and details for application are on the website; the deadline for applications this year is December 8.

Finally, I hope to see you all at our Holiday potluck on November 18, 2009, at the White Mountain Research Station. As usual, you can look forward to good company, great food, and an interesting presentation.

...Steve McLaughlin

From the Editor

This month I solicited articles for the newsletter from all Bristlecone Chapter Board members. Jan Bowers agreed not just to a single article, but to write a regular column based on observations she makes along Birch Creek, near her home south of Big Pine. Jan is an accomplished botanist and author. She has numerous publications to her credit, written for both professional audiences and the general public. It's an honor to have her contributing to the newsletter.

There's still room for more material, however, so I'm extending my call for articles to all chapter members. Many of our members live far from Owens Valley, so it would be interesting to get articles from people outside Owens Valley looking in. Also, letters to the editor can be an interesting means to foster discussion, so let's get those keyboards clacking!

In the two previous issues, readers were asked to let me know whether they would prefer to continue receiving hard copy newsletters in the mail, or if they would prefer to receive an on-line version. To date, I have heard from 30 people. If you haven't already contacted me, please do. Please leave a message stating your preference at 760-873-8943 or email me at newsletter@bristleconecnps.org.

Next Newsletter Deadline: December 30, 2009

Send articles to:

newsletter@bristleconecnps.org

Birch Creek Journal

More than a full month past the equinox, autumn has finally arrived along Birch Creek. Our neighbors' poplars and cottonwoods are brilliant yellow. Strong winds last week blew enough leaves from one of the cottonwoods to expose an oriole nest. Willows along the creek seem reluctant to lose their green, but birch leaves have acquired that distinctive hue that is not quite orange yet not pure yellow, either. The flowers of my favorite variety of rubber rabbitbrush, *Chrysothamnus nauseosus* subsp. *hololeucus*, approach that same ineffable yellow-orange. This is a common shrub right beside Birch Creek Road but not away from it. The plants might require a modicum of disturbance to become established: at any rate, we are finding them now on decomposed granite laid down when we built two years ago. In our neighborhood, this species reached its peak of bloom in early October but some plants are still in flower and still assiduously visited by honeybees.

Although autumn is definitely here, basil, peppers, and zucchini hang on in the vegetable garden, reminding us of summer. We even have paradoxical remnants of spring right around the house. Our truckloads of decomposed granite came with seeds of brown-eyed evening primrose (*Camissonia claviformis*). The seeds germinated early this year, producing plants that flowered for weeks during the spring. Those spring-flowering plants produced seed, then died, but some of the seed fell into the vegetable garden and germinated along with the green beans. Wanting to see what they would do, I treated them as garden flowers instead of weeds. This second generation also

bloomed and went to seed. A few of those seeds germinated during the heat of the summer, and two plants from that generation are still in flower. Even more oddly, brittlebush (*Encelia actoni*), normally a spring bloomer, has been flowering in our yard since the middle of July, when we had a brief but soaking thunderstorm. Because I water them once in a while, they never entered dormancy and were therefore able to respond to a storm that had no effect on other brittlebushes in desert scrub nearby.

We bought a number of shrubs and perennial herbs at the Bristlecone Chapter plant sale in September but could not find time to plant them until a week ago. They seem to be settling in nicely despite the delay, and we look forward to seeing them bloom in a timely fashion this spring

...Jan Bowers

REPORTS

More Than Plants: A Field Trip to Kennedy Meadows, Sept.19, 2009

We had hopes that there would be tremendous thunderstorms in the Southern Sierra this summer but they did not happen. The season ended with dusty trails & few flowers. Still, on Sept. 19 fifteen hopeful native plant lovers travelled to Kennedy Meadows (the southern-most location of this name), with four people having trekked up from Southern California. The field trip also marked the first time two of our participants had been on an outing since having surgery earlier in the summer. We were happy to have them all.

It was an incredibly beautiful day. The sky was intensely blue, as the sun was more oblique, nearing the autumnal equinox, with small puffs of cloud and a light refreshing breeze. We parked just off the Sherman Pass Road where it crosses the South Fork of the Kern River.

We began to wander from the parking area toward the river, brushing past dry needlegrass clumps, sagebrush & brightly blooming rabbitbrush. We were close to the margin of the 2000 Manter fire & could see blackened shrub and tree remains up the slope to the west. We could tell that this outing would not be one full of vast expanses of wildflowers, nor did we really expect that. But we were hopeful that there might be some late

blooming beauties. Our wonderful trip leader, Judy Breitenstein, who owns a cabin in the area, chose this location because Sept. 2008 had a good selection of blooming species, it having been a wetter summer.

Not surprisingly, most flowers were found along the river bank. Several of our younger participants enjoyed taking off their shoes & splashing through the water. We followed the fishermen's trail south along the west bank, finding paintbrush, goldenrod, fleabane, willow herb, buttercup, trefoil, and medick.

Judy had planned a lunch spot where an old no-longer-used ranching road climbs a small rise and gives a lovely view northward where we could see the scars of last year's Clover Fire. We scattered ourselves beneath a large Jeffrey pine. Several additional species were found on this slope: a few Desert Mountain sages (*Salvia pachyphylla*) and scores of dried flower heads of *Nama rockrockii* on the facing slope. On the stroll back to the cars we were surprised to find a number of Purpus' Gilia's bright pink blossoms in a dry channel.

All in all, it was a satisfying outing, not so much because of floral bounty, but because it was a congenial group of people gathered on a beautiful day in a grand landscape. If you would like to see the plants we found, please peruse Michael Charter's website: <http://www.calflora.net/recentfieldtrips/kennedymeadows09B.html>. We were pleased to hear that he may trek north from Sierra Madre more often in the future, giving our trips more web exposure.

... Kathy LaShure, Creosote Ring Leader

Desert protection needed

Many speakers called for complete protection for public lands from the ravages of Renewable Energy installations at a recent (October 17, 2009) symposium, "Desert Botany: Boom or Bust," presented by Southern California Botanists. Two of the speakers were from the California Native Plant Society's Sacramento office. A synopsis of some of the ideas presented follows:

Renewable energy facilities can be installed at or near the users' locale, or on lands that are

already seriously damaged by impacts of civilization.

Our deserts are among the 10 largest areas of pristine lands in the world. Desert plant diversity is essentially the same as the north coast rainforest. Much of the desert has not been properly surveyed for plant species, with an estimated 5-10% of the desert flora un-described. Because 40% of desert plants bloom in the fall, a minimum of two surveys should be done for any given area.

Coarse-grained soils of desert alluvial fans may recover from disturbance in 80-120 years, with most of the recovery in the first 20 years. Blackbrush (*Coleogyne ramosissima*) stands are an exception --they may take thousands of years to recover.

A procedural chart for renewable energy applications was presented. However, thousands of applications are attempting to bypass standard procedure. The size of the proposed and requested projects alone is mind-boggling, yet the acreage that would be destroyed by service roads and transmission lines would be even greater. Bureau of Land Management in California recognizes state-listed species, which is more inclusive than the national BLM standard. BLM staff is swamped with renewable energy project applications. Only 1/2 of BLM field offices have a botanist on staff.

Global warming may be affecting death rates of plants at lower elevations, although desert plants have amazing powers of regeneration. However, if creosote or ocotillo starts dying off, head for Canada.

This is not the first, nor will it be the last grandiose plan of desert destruction. Environmental groups need to unite for desert protection. A long list of supporters of desert protection was presented.

Speakers:

James Andre, Director Granite Mountains Reserve;
Greg Suba, Conservation Director, CNPS
Nick Jensen, Rare Plant Botanist, CNPS;
Matt Brooks, U.S. Geological Survey;
Robert Webb, U.S. Geological Survey;

Kristeen Penrod, Conservation Director, Science and Collaboration for Connected Wildlands;
Christina Lund, BLM;
Bruce Pavlik, Mills College.

...Connie Spenger

CONSERVATION

Good news (for a change)!

I've frequently written about the ongoing degradation of alkali meadow habitat due to the excessive pumping for the Black Rock Fish Rearing Ponds (aka Blackrock Fish Hatchery). On behalf of the Bristlecone Chapter I wrote a formal request to the Inyo-LA Technical Group over two years ago that management be modified. While the Technical Group is not even close to thinking about taking action the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) may be.

As a result of a lawsuit by the Center for Biological Diversity and the Pacific Rivers Council, DFG has been required to write an EIR/EIS for its entire statewide hatchery operations. The judge specified that the EIR/EIS include (among many other things) an analysis of impacts of water-gathering activities to supply the hatcheries. I submitted scoping comments last year to the consultants writing the EIR/EIS detailing the devastation caused by the excessive pumping for the Blackrock Hatchery. I suggested that pumping for the hatchery should not exceed the average amount which flowed from Blackrock Spring, the hatchery's original water supply. Reducing pumping to the amount of the former spring flow will give the hatchery as much water as it was built to use, and also should promote water table recovery to the grass rooting zone under the meadow (parcel Blackrock 94).

My comments were taken seriously. The EIR/EIS describes a potentially significant impact from ongoing groundwater pumping to supply the Blackrock Hatchery, and it includes my suggested remedy (limit pumping to the amount of the former spring flow) as a mitigation measure. I was particularly surprised and pleased to see this pumping reduction proposed as a mitigation.

Not everyone, unfortunately, will share my excitement and it is quite possible there will be opposition to this mitigation. Readers can help make sure the mitigation measure is included in the final EIR/EIS by writing comments. Comments will make it clear that people understand the importance of this mitigation measure and support it.

A simple comment would be to congratulate DFG for the pumping ceiling called for in mitigation BIO-13. It is long overdue, and it represents a fair compromise between the hatchery's legitimate claim to water and the need for conservation of rare habitat and plant species. It might be mentioned that Owens Valley has suffered enough from Los Angeles's water gathering activities and DFG should not continue to allow Los Angeles to use hatcheries as a "piscine shield" to protect excessive pumping for export. The Blackrock Hatchery has a legitimate claim to about 8000 af/yr of water, yet DWP routinely pumps 12,000-13,000 af/yr through the hatchery then immediately into the aqueduct. If you have been on one of my field trips to the area you could mention that you have visited the site, seen the impacts and some of the monitoring data.

Comments are due by Nov 10 (according to the Notice of Availability of the DEIR/DEIS) or Nov 16 (according to the DFG website). They can be e-mailed to dfghatcheryeir@dfg.ca.gov or sent by snail mail to:

Jim Starr
California Department of Fish and Game
830 S Street
Sacramento, CA 95811

... Daniel Pritchett

Bristlecone Chapter Board Meeting

The November Board meeting has been cancelled. The next Board meeting will be Wednesday, January 20, 2010. The location will be announced in the next issue of this newsletter.

Nominations for 2010 Bristlecone Chapter Officers

The nominating committee (Sally Manning and Sherryl Taylor) is pleased to announce the following slate of officers for 2010:

President: Steven McLaughlin
Vice President: Stephen Ingram
Treasurer: Rosanne Higley
Secretary: Connie Spenger

The floor will be opened for further nominations at the November 18 general meeting. Nominations will then be closed, and voting will immediately follow. Terms for the new officers begin January 1, 2010.

MEMBERSHIP

The Bristlecone Chapter heartily welcomes the following new members:

Don Peterson - Ridgecrest
Maggie Wolfe Riley - Bishop
Jane McDonald - Independence

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. To join, send the information below to Bristlecone Chapter, PO Box 364, Bishop, CA 93514 attn: membership

Name:
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City: State:
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Email address:
I wish to be affiliated with the Bristlecone Chapter
Other_____.

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Membership Category

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___ Family, Group, or Library	\$75.00
___ Supporting	\$75.00
___ Plant Lover	\$100.00
___ Patron	\$300.00
___ Benefactor	\$600.00
___ Mariposa Lily	\$1,500.00

Please make membership checks payable to and send to:

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

Bristlecone Chapter Directory

President – Steve McLaughlin (760) 938-3140
 Vice President – Sally Manning (760) 873-3790
 Secretary – Connie Spenger (760)-938-2159
 Treasurer - Rosanne Higley (760) 387-2803
 Membership – Sally Manning (760) 873-3790
 Newsletter Editor – Daniel Pritchett (760) 873-8943
 Conservation - Daniel Pritchett - (760) 873-8943
 Plant Communities - Sally Manning - (760) 873-3790
 Education - Nancy Hadlock (760) 878-2379
 Programs – Sally Manning (760) 873-3790
 Field Trips – Sue Weis (760) 873-3485
 Decker Native Plant Garden – Jerry Zatorski (760) 872-3818
 Publicity – Denise Waterbury (760) 873-7639
 Historian – Ann Fulton (760) 873-9261
 Librarian - EvelynMae Nikolaus - (760) 878-2149
 Rare Plant Committee - 2008 Chair. – Anne Halford
 (760) 872-5022
 Plant Sale Committee – Anne Halford, Diana Pietrasanta,
 Sherryl Taylor (924-8742), Denise Waterbury (873-4344)
 Book Sales - Sue Weis (760) 873-3485
 Posters – Stephen Ingram (760) 387-2913
 Creosote Ring Sub-Chapter Coordinator, Kathy LaShure,
 (760) 377-4541

Gift Contribution: Where most needed _____ . Conservation _____ .

THE CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY (www.bristleconecnps.org) Bristlecone Chapter Newsletter comes out bimonthly. It is free to chapter members. To subscribe to this newsletter without joining CNPS, please send \$5.00 per year to CNPS, P.O. Box 364, Bishop, CA 93515-0364. ATTN: subscriptions. Send newsletter articles not memberships to newsletter@bristleconecnps.org.