

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

## The California Native Plant Society



### Bristlecone Chapter

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**Volume 31 No. 3  
May-June 2010**

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#### **May General Meeting.**

7:00 pm, May 26, 2010, White Mountain Research Station, 3000 E. Line St., Bishop, CA. The program this month is "Native Plant Choices for the Eastern Sierra Garden," and it will be a group presentation by Steve Blair, Stephen Ingram, Sherry Taylor and Jerry Zatorski. Steve Blair is co-owner of Chalfant Big Trees Farm, and Bristlecone Chapter members Stephen Ingram, Sherry Taylor, and Jerry Zatorski have varied and extensive experience growing local native plants. Following the four brief presentations, there will be a group discussion, so please bring your ideas and questions and share your experiences!

#### **May Bristlecone Chapter Board Meeting**

7:00 pm May 19, 2010. USFS/BLM Conference Room, 351 Pacu Lane, Bishop, CA. Members are welcome.

### **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

#### **Farewell, Anne ....**

The September 1992 issue of this newsletter contained this brief note: "We announce only one new member this time, Anne Halford of Bishop. Anne is the new BLM Botanist for the Bishop Area office, the first one assigned to this area, so we are especially happy to welcome her." Little did we know. Now, after 18 remarkable years, Anne, Kirk, and their family are relocating to Idaho, and we are especially sad to see her go.

Anne hit the ground running. Her first contribution to the newsletter was a Long Valley field trip report that actually appeared in the issue prior to the one announcing her as a new member. The next year she served as Field Trip Coordinator, led her first field trip (to Fish Slough and Red Rock Canyon), and became the co-editor, with Mary DeDecker, of the newsletter. She took over as editor starting with the July 1993 issue, a role she maintained up until this year.

Over the years Anne led many field trips to various sites, but kept returning to her favorite spots: the Alabama Hills, Long Valley, and the Bodie Hills. The trips led by Anne that I was able to attend during the past two years were the most popular Bristlecone Chapter trips I have participated in. Anne's infectious enthusiasm for our native plants had everyone down on their knees to better see each new discovery, or off rambling among the rocks to come up with their own new species for the trip.

Anne worked the first Bristlecone Chapter native plant sale in 1997 and has been active in every one of our plant sales since. She worked closely with Karen Ferrell-Ingram on propagating and growing plants for the

first 10 years, and then, with Diana Pietrasanta, took over major responsibility for plant production after Karen moved on to concentrate on the Eastern Sierra Land Trust.

Many of you have had the pleasure of knowing Anne far longer than I have. Sally Manning wrote me the following: "Being newsletter editor (in the time and day it was, e.g. pre- email!) was no small feat. She took us beyond the typewriter and such, got into the recycled paper, and made the newsletter attractive."

"She's led field trips, given talks, educated about natives and invasives, literally started the successful (still going strong) Deepest Valley Native Plant Propagation Center at WMRS, restored areas injured by OHV's, fire, mining, etc., organized volunteer work groups, served on all sorts of panels committed to preservation of rare plants, performed research, and obtained all sorts of grants and funding. She has been an extremely effective collaborator, and thanks to her efforts, degradation of public lands has been curtailed and even reversed in many places."

"When she arrived, Anne immediately became a dear friend of Mary DeDecker, and Mary thought very highly of Anne. Anne ensured Mary's regional botanical works would be preserved. When Mary was first moved to the convalescent center in Bishop, Anne and I went down to the house in Independence and sorted through Mary's tidy files, with Del Wiens helping as well. Within the next 2 years, we did what we could for Mary, and in August 2000, Anne drove as she, Mary's granddaughter (Annette Busby), and I visited Mary for the last time at the convalescent center in Ridgecrest. Anne was the real force behind establishing the Mary DeDecker Native Plant Garden at the museum."

I'd like to add that Anne was responsible not just for preserving but also for finding a permanent home for the Mary DeDecker Library, a unique collection of books and papers on Eastern Sierra and Mojave Desert botany. The library is cataloged and housed at the BLM-USFS building on Pacu Lane; the collection doesn't circulate but all are welcome to use it during their regular business hours.

Sally summed up well what we all think: "The bottom line is, we'll miss Anne, and whoever gets her next is lucky! Meanwhile, we wish her all the rewards and happiness she deserves."

Anne, you're irreplaceable. Good-bye, good luck, and come back to visit us often.

**Steve McLaughlin**

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### FROM THE EDITOR

If you haven't already contacted me, please leave a message stating your preference as to whether you would accept an electronic version of this newsletter or would prefer a hard copy. So far 50 people are receiving the newsletter electronically. The Bristlecone Chapter Board encourages members to choose the electronic option to save energy, trees, and money. Contact me at: 760-873-8943 or email: newsletter@bristleconecnps.org.

**Next Newsletter Deadline: June 26, 2010**

**Send articles to: newsletter@bristleconecnps.org**

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### EVENTS

#### **New Field trip:**

**Friday, July 23. Minaret Summit Ridge.**

Meet at Mammoth Lakes Ranger Station/Visitors Center at 8:30 AM for carpooling. We'll have a steady uphill walk with spectacular views up and down the Sierra and over to the Glass and White Mts. Wildflowers should be excellent.

Be prepared for wind and exposure. Bring water, sunscreen, and lunch. Round trip distance is about 4 miles. Leaders are Cathy Rose and Steve McLaughlin. For more information contact Steve at 760-938-3140.

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### REPORTS

#### **Field Trip: El Paso Wash, April 17, 2010**

It's been a late and balky spring in the Indian Wells Valley. But 23 individuals showed up on a glorious (i.e. calm wind/warm temperature) morning to explore the El Paso Wash drainage southwest of Ridgecrest. Solar Millennium, LLC has proposed to use nearly 4000 acres of BLM land there for a 250-megawatt solar thermal electric power plant. The project site lies just northeast of the El Paso Mountains and is bisected by Brown Road (old Highway 395) forming a north field and a south field. The first iteration of the plan had the facility partially sited in the El Paso Wash proper. That was changed after the first public meetings in Dec. 2009. Now it is sited on both sides of the Wash. But the entire site is in an historic drainage, as evidenced by the tumbled appearance of the rocks there.

The original purpose of the field trip, as planned in January, was to informally survey the flora of this area. No rare plants were known to occur there, but that may be because no one had looked in the right place or at the right time. However, fauna there has been well-documented. The most significant species are Desert Tortoise, Mojave Ground Squirrel, Desert Kit Fox, Burrowing Owl, LeConte's Thrasher, and Loggerhead Shrike. Of course these animals would not be present without the specific plant resources needed for food and shelter.

Once CNPS hired Amber Swanson as Rare Plant Treasure Hunt coordinator for the Mojave Desert, she agreed to trek north from her Claremont home-base and help us survey the flora. She provided a list of specific rare plants that have been known to occur not far away in other El Paso Mountains locations. So we kept an eye out for them as well. We also had other participants from Southern California.

The trip's participants amiably split into two survey groups. Jane McEwen and Judy Breitenstein led the exploration of the north field which lies to the east of the broad, braided El Paso Wash. The second group tackled the south field on the west side of the drainage and was led by Amber Swanson and Kathy LaShure. We did not hope to cover the entire large footprint of the proposed solar site, but did the best we could in a single morning.

No rare plants were found by either group. But the combined plant list has 70 species in 25 families, indicating a diverse flora. Many known Desert Tortoise preferred food plants were documented. If you would like a copy of the plant list please contact Kathy LaShure, [desert\\_encelia@verizon.net](mailto:desert_encelia@verizon.net).

The Draft EIR/Staff Assessment was released on April 9 and the BLM comment period extends for 90 days from that date. Information about the DEIR can be accessed here: <http://tinyurl.com/2cugk79>. The Creosote Ring subchapter is working with Greg Suba, CNPS State Conservation Director, to be sure that our response to this poorly sited facility is as effective as possible.

Kathy LaShure

### Field Trip: Death Valley, March 20-21, 2010

It was a little early yet for postcard-type wildflower displays, but leader Mark Bagley was able to find many species in flower for the 16 participants from the Bristlecone and Sierra Foothills chapters. We started at Golden Canyon where the population of golden carpet (*Gilmania luteola*), a CNPS List 1B.3 species, was in full flower. From there we went to Ashford Mills where at least some individuals of numerous species could be seen in flower, including desert five-spot (*Eremalche rotundifolia*), desert chicory (*Rafinesquia neomexicana*), and sand verbena (*Abronia villosa*). We puzzled for quite awhile over a bright green, succulent annual which appeared to be desert pot-herb (*Calandrinia ambigua*).

At Jubilee Pass, over 2000' above the valley bottom, the story was similar, with many species evident but few individuals in flower yet. Mark speculated that both late rains and cool spring temperatures had delayed bolting and flowering of the spring ephemerals. At this site, however, we did see, among many others, chia (*Salvia columbariae*), desert gold-poppy (*Eschscholzia glyptosperma*), and desert star (*Monoptilon bellioides*). We camped that night just outside the park on the road to Death Valley Junction.

For me the highlight of the trip was one of the first stops early Sunday morning at the mouth of Titus Canyon, where Mark showed us many interesting plants. These included the shrubs chaff bush (*Amphipappus fremontii*), Death Valley golden-eye (*Viguiera reticulata*), and Death Valley sage (*Salvia funerea*); the perennial herbs rock nettle (*Eucnide urens*), sticky-ring (*Anulocaulis annulata*), and thick-leaf ground-cherry (*Physalis crassifolia*); along with many more spring ephemerals, including small mohavea (*Mohavea breviflora*) and yellow cups (*Camissonia brevipes*).

We stopped at the Devil's Cornfield to look at the halophytic vegetation, including arrowweed (*Pluchea sericea*), picklebush (*Allenrolfea occidentalis*), and inkweed (*Suaeda moquinii*). Our last stop was at the Mesquite Dunes, where there the Park Service has put in a new, badly-needed parking area. It was a little discouraging to see the density of tumbleweeds (*Salsola* sp.) on the dunes.

Steve McLaughlin

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## FEATURES

### A Reminiscence: Keith Bright

The Owens Valley recently lost a true friend. Keith Bright celebrated his 95<sup>th</sup> birthday March 31, 2010, but, sadly, passed away a few days later.

Keith Bright was an Inyo County Supervisor when the Inyo/LA Water Agreement (LTWA) was being negotiated in the late 1980s and early 1990s. He possessed vision and courage that I've since learned are rare in people and especially rare in political leaders. Along with fellow Board member Bob Campbell, Keith held true to the best interests of Owens Valley through some extremely difficult times. Both men worked with Inyo County staff to incorporate important goals and policies into the LTWA documents, including the Drought Recovery Policy and the concept that grass-dominated meadows would NOT be allowed to degrade to shrublands.

I was fortunate to know Keith, if only a bit. He enjoyed teasing me for being, in his mind, a tree-hugger. For reasons I no longer remember, he decided my nickname was "Chainsaw," and for 20 years he called me that as a tactic to get me to stop and talk. Then he would listen—patiently, graciously-- when I'd fill him in on how the Owens Valley native plants were doing.

Keith and his wife Jane were good friends with Mary and Paul DeDecker. With Keith's help, we found a beautiful boulder on which we mounted the plaque at the Mary DeDecker Native Plant Garden at the Eastern California Museum in Independence. Now, when you see the plaque on the boulder in the garden, you can reflect on the valley's heroes and hope their strength and vision will endure.

Sally Manning

### Birch Creek Journal

Probably the last thing you want your spouse to say just two days after you've put fourteen tomato plants in the ground is, "It snowed last night."

Hypothesizing before the facts, always a bad strategy, I said, "It couldn't have." Then I looked out the window and saw that indeed it could, and had. Not much snow, just enough for a skin of white on the deck and under the birch trees, just enough to make my heart stop. I survived the shock, albeit with a backwards glance at Tucson where spring

never behaved like this in thirty years of residence. My tomato transplants, tucked deep inside their walls of water, survived the shock too.

Although the snow was gone in a few hours, the day remained cold, windy, and persistently overcast. I took a badly needed walk up Birch Creek Road anyway. Many of the white tidy tips (*Layia glandulosa*) were missing rays, as if the snowstorm had battered out a tooth here and there, but they still gave the sky a gap-toothed grin, unlike the desert dandelions (*Malacothrix glabrata*), which would not even reveal their faces, much less smile. They seemed to be saying, "Well, you can go out in this weather if you want, but we think you're crazy and we're not having any part of it."

Another day of cloudy, wet weather followed, then the storm lumbered off to the east. The desert dandelions resumed their sunny aspect, and I resumed my negotiations with the calendar. Could we fit in a trip to the poppy reserve between dentist's appointments and jury duty? (And should not jury duty be cancelled entirely in a spring like this?) What about southern Death Valley, which we had heard was good this year? Closer to home, we could not let the spring go by without a visit to Division Creek to see the lupines, and a visit there demanded an additional stop at Sawmill Creek, which, according to rumor, was shaping up as a rival. And somehow we needed to make time at the end of at least one day to stroll through the swathes of evening snow (*Linanthus dichotomus*) in the Poverty Hills and wonder, as always, exactly what it is about this particular wildflower that makes everyone love it so much. In the end, we did not cover as much ground as we had hoped—we never do—but we covered enough to confirm that this was a spring worth remembering.

In the Birch Creek neighborhood, it was a banner year for white tidytips and false woolly daisy (*Syntrichopappus fremontii*) on the alluvial fan and for Bigelow coreopsis (*Coreopsis bigelovii*) and scale bud (*Anisocoma acaulis*) on the steep, south-facing slope of Fish Springs Hill. You could see the yellow-orange of coreopsis from a mile away but you had to get much closer than that to appreciate the true diversity of wildflowers in their midst. In late March, I found a dozen species of native annuals without putting any effort into the search at all, that is, without kneeling for a close inspection of comb-bur (*Pectocarya*) nutlets and popcorn-flower (*Cryptantha*) hairs. The Phlox

Family was well represented with sandblossom (*Linanthus parryae*), cinder gilia (*Gilia stellata*), and showy gilia (*G. cana*). I noticed more false woolly daisy, a tiny buckwheat with furry leaves, some brown-eyed evening primrose (*Camissonia claviformis*), abundant chia (*Salvia columbariae*), and, poking out of shrubs as if to test the weather, some early flowers of wild heliotrope (*Phacelia distans*).

Curious about the effects of the Inyo Complex Fire at Sawmill Creek, Steve and I went there twice in April. Shortly after the fire, the scene at Sawmill Creek was one of bleakest devastation. Birches and willows along the stream were killed to the ground. Desert scrub on the slopes was completely immolated. Now, three years later, without shrubs to compete for moisture and space, wildflowers have burgeoned. Some are fire followers, such as whispering bells (*Emmenanthe penduliflora*) and bush mallow (*Malacothamnus fremontii*). Others, like grape-soda lupine (*Lupinus excubitus*), thrive on disturbance of almost any kind.

On the day of our visit, grape-soda lupine was close to peak bloom, a wide ribbon of purple winding down the ravine. Being a relative newcomer here, I hesitate to say whether lupines at Sawmill Creek put on better show than those at Division Creek, but I will mention that the Division Creek population has dwindled in density since I first saw it two years ago. Fortunately, unless there is a scouring flood down Sawmill Creek, the lupines there should satisfy your hunger for purple long after the other population is but a fond memory.

Another treat at Sawmill Creek this spring were the robust plants of cobweb thistle (*Cirsium occidentale*) with their broad, magenta-colored heads. Every hummingbird within a three-mile radius had discovered those thistles, among them a beautiful male calliope with a streaky gorget about the same color as the thistle flowers. If the hummingbirds stick around for another week or so, they will find a further resource in the graceful flower stalks of rose penstemon (*Penstemon floridus*), which was on the verge of bloom when we were there. We made a mental note, in fact, to return in the middle of May for an explosion of pink.

I could go on. But you don't want to read my list of plant names. You want to hear how, in the county courthouse this spring, busy people with

minimal interest in nature were talking about the acres of color along Highway 395 north of Independence where scale bud had spread like the richest double cream across old fields and old burns. You want to hear about the vivid splashes of pink, purple, yellow, and orange on the alluvial fans near Sawmill Creek—color that must have been apparent even to Angelenos rushing to Mammoth at ninety miles an hour—and how the patches grew until they expanded into one another and how they lasted just short of forever. You want to hear how this was the spring that never ended—or maybe you don't want to hear that, no doubt you already know that what makes spring wildflowers in the desert so precious is their very evanescence and the fact that you might not see them at all next year or the year after that. And that of course is why you want to get outdoors as soon as possible and see it all for yourself.

Jan Bowers

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## CONSERVATION

### **Inyo's chickens come home to roost:**

#### **DWP's 2010 groundwater management plan**

By the time you read this, DWP will have released its proposed groundwater pumping plan for runoff year 2010-2011. The plan is released each year on April 20. This year's plan has much greater significance than any plan for the past four years. This is because pumping is no longer constrained by the 2007 Interim Management Plan (IMP). Because the IMP has expired, and because DWP stopped abiding by the Drought Recovery Policy of the Inyo-LA Long Term Water Agreement (LTWA) in 2001, the only management constraint DWP recognizes is the LTWA's "ON/OFF" protocol. This protocol, unfortunately allows far too much pumping to attain the LTWA's environmental protection goals.

Inyo County is thus confronted with the fruits of its fear-based decisions of the past. If you remember all my newsletter articles since 2001 you'll understand what I'm talking about! In case you haven't, I'll try to explain below.

Under the LTWA, pumps go on and off according to a set of calculations based on measurements of soil moisture and vegetation at 33 monitoring sites – the ON/OFF protocol. When the LTWA was negotiated ON/OFF was an untested, experimental protocol, and there was concern that it

might not be adequate to recover groundwater from enormous drawdowns caused by DWP's record volumes of pumping during the drought of the late 1980's. Inyo and DWP, therefore, agreed to an "overlay," or further constraint on pumping beyond ON/OFF. This overlay is the Drought Recovery Policy (DRP). It calls, among other things, for "...substantial recovery in soil moisture and water table conditions..." The DRP's explicit goal is to insure recovery of "soil water *within the rooting zone*" [italics added] to attain the LTWA's vegetation protection goals.

From 1991-2000, DWP asserted that its pumping complied with ON/OFF and the DRP. In 2000, however, DWP hired consultants to "evaluate" the DRP. In their evaluation, DWP consultants de-coupled the DRP's "substantial recovery" phrase from the "rooting zone" specified in the DRP goal. They decided that "substantial recovery" meant recovery of 80% of the pumping-induced drawdown regardless of rooting zone conditions. In fact, they only used the phrase "rooting zone" twice in their entire lengthy report. DWP used the report as grounds to unilaterally terminate the DRP in 2001 over Inyo's objections.

In de-coupling "substantial" from "rooting zone" DWP's consultants de-coupled management from science. "Substantial" is a relative term, while "rooting zone" is based in biology. If soil moisture doesn't recover in the vegetation rooting zone, the LTWA goal of maintaining groundwater dependent vegetation cannot be met, regardless of how "substantial" is defined.

In its unilateral termination of the DRP, DWP made itself vulnerable to legal challenge on both procedural and substantive grounds. The procedural argument is that because the DRP was established by the Standing Committee, DWP cannot unilaterally terminate it: Only the Standing Committee can terminate it. The substantive argument is that the DRP goal of recovery in the vegetation rooting zone had not been met in 2001 in many wellfields (and still hasn't in 2010).

Rather than initiate potentially costly dispute resolution and legal proceedings, Inyo agreed -- at a Standing Committee meeting in summer 2003 -- to have Inyo County Water Dept staff to meet with DWP staff and a facilitator to come up with an "interim management plan." The idea was that such a plan would constrain pumping in place of the DRP, while Inyo and DWP jointly developed an

alternative to ON/OFF. Both Inyo and DWP dislike ON/OFF, though for very different reasons. I vividly recall Inyo County officials threatening litigation over the DRP termination if the facilitated meetings failed to produce an interim management plan by September 1, 2003.

September 1, 2003 came and went with neither an interim management plan, nor the threatened litigation. County Supervisors were repeatedly told that progress was being made and just a little more time was needed. Finally, in early 2004, Inyo County CEO Renee Mendez became involved and the meetings broke down. The proposed interim management plan produced was so bad even the Inyo County Water Department (which negotiated it) recommended it be rejected, and Inyo Supervisors rejected it in a unanimous vote.

What happened next?

Instead of Inyo Supervisors making good their threat of litigation, the Inyo County Water Department started developing its own replacement for ON/OFF. It made some degree of sense to have developed a potential management solution before initiating DRP litigation. The Water Department publicly discussed its conceptual model for an ON/OFF replacement in 2006. DWP, apparently alarmed that Inyo was about to actually make a serious proposal, then attempted to co-opt Inyo's effort. It proposed that Inyo and DWP work jointly in an effort not just to replace ON/OFF, but to revise the entire Green Book.

Inyo Supervisors fell for DWP's proposal. It was planned that the revisions would take three years with assistance of a facilitator. Inyo and the DWP Board of Water and Power Commissioners agreed pumping would be constrained during the three year revision process by another "Interim Management Plan" (IMP) which "superseded" the DRP. Inyo agreed not to attempt to enforce the DRP while the IMP was in effect. Inyo Supervisors naively thought the Green Book would be revised by 2010 and there would no longer be a need for the DRP.

We pointed out in 2006-2007 the folly of this strategy. There was no reason to think the same staff who had been unable to developing an interim management plan with assistance of a facilitator in 2003 would now be able to revise the entire Green Book with assistance of a facilitator in 2007. We made a particular issue of the secretive nature of the

proceedings and pointed out that without meaningful public scrutiny DWP would have no incentive to act in good faith and would simply delay. We also argued that the Water Department should continue developing its own ON/OFF replacement because of the high likelihood the joint effort would fail.

It is now 2010. The IMP has expired, the joint Green Book Revision process has not produced any revisions at all, much less a replacement for ON/OFF, and the Inyo County Water Department hasn't completed its own ON/OFF replacement first described in 2006. Inyo County's position is thus the same as it was in 2003 and 2006. It couldn't pull the trigger and challenge DWP's unilateral DRP termination then, and there's no indication it can pull the trigger now.

By failing to challenge DWP's unilateral DRP termination, Inyo has allowed DWP to impose a biologically indefensible reading of the DRP. Because the DRP has the strongest language in the LTWA for attaining the LTWA's environmental protection goals, DWP has effectively gutted the LTWA with Inyo's acquiescence.

Daniel Pritchett

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## MEMBERSHIP

The Bristlecone Chapter heartily welcomes the following new members:

Laura Leigh Monterey  
Katie Quinlan  
James Varnam

### 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, please see back of newsletter

To RENEW: please contact Sally Manning or  
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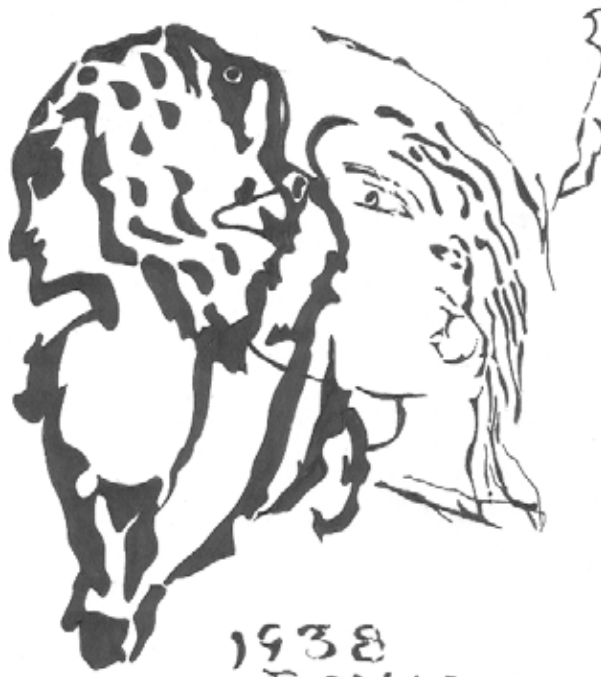
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### Aspen-glyph art: Faces

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