

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

The California Native Plant Society



Bristlecone Chapter

**Volume 32 No. 2
March-April 2011**

March General Meeting

Wednesday, March 30, 2011, 7:00 pm at the White Mountain Research Station, 3000 East Line St., Bishop. Margot Griswold, a plant ecologist, will give a talk entitled "Using native plants in Owens Lakebed dust control efforts." Margot has worked on the Owens Lakebed for the past 11 years, and her responsibilities have included managing saltgrass

seed collection from the lower Owens Valley to plant 3.7 square miles of saltgrass. She will discuss the process of establishing more diverse native plant communities for dust control on the lakebed, and the potential to increase habitat value for plants, as well as birds. Margot has a background in family farming in the Central Valley of California which led her to study plant-insect interactions at UC Riverside (MS, 1985) and at UC Irvine (Ph.D., 1989). For the past 20 years, she has specialized in native habitat restoration. She founded and operated EARTHWORKS Restoration, consulting mainly for public agencies and conservancies from 1995 to 2009. In 2009 she merged her company with NewFields AER. She is currently Education Chair on the board of Los Angeles Audubon Society and serves on the board of the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy. Her passion is guiding youth from the Los Angeles urban core to discover and value the natural history of California.

March Board Meeting

Wednesday, March 23, 2011, 7:00 pm at the ESICE office, 512 N. 2nd St., Bishop. Members are welcome.

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

Welcome to the 29th year of the Bristlecone Chapter. The Chapter was founded by individuals who joined forces out of their love of our region's natural wonders. Our early leaders explored widely, botanized intensely, and also worked tirelessly to protect our lands. One of those individuals was Vince Yoder, the first Bristlecone Chapter president, to whom we dedicate this issue of the newsletter. We were saddened to learn of his recent passing. A review of our newsletters from 1982 to 1997, when Vince and his wife Ann lived in Lone Pine, reveal Vince's many contributions. His memory will accompany us in the field this year, and will offer strength to keep up the good fight.

Precipitation patterns thus far suggest 2011 will be an interesting botanical year. Chapter members have volunteered to lead a variety of field trips to help you enjoy it: a complete list is enclosed. When out enjoying our exquisite flora and awe-inspiring landscapes, remember that their survival depends on us. The many challenges now include a new push to build large-scale power plants (e.g. solar, wind, geothermal) within the

area served by our chapter. A report from Kathy LaShure tells how one such ill-conceived proposal was defeated, but many threats remain. Add this to the usual issues such as livestock grazing, mining, reckless recreation, and the never-ending water issues, and there's plenty to keep us busy. If you know of a particular conservation issue the Bristlecone Chapter should address, please consider volunteering and contact conservation chair Daniel Pritchett at newsletter@bristleconecnps.org.

Next Newsletter Deadline: April 27, 2011

Send articles to: newsletter@bristleconecnps.org

Vince Yoder 1920-2011

Vincent Stanley Yoder was born July 14, 1920, and passed away January 3, 2011. Vince was an avid naturalist, including ornithology and botany, and whatever else he ran across during his time in the outdoors. His bird-watching life list dates back to 1937. He worked for the Calif. State Highways for 31 years and spent most of his free time locating hikes and taking us, his children along. He was a longtime member of the California Native Plant Society, in the Marin and Bristlecone Chapters. After he retired he moved to Lone Pine, CA with his wife, Ann Yoder, and the two of them continued the hiking and record keeping. Much of the botanical information is included in, *Vegetation of the Alabama Hills Region, Inyo County, California*, published through UC Davis. He also compiled *An Alabama Hills Plant List*, published by CNPS Bristlecone Chapter. The Inyo County Water Commission benefited from his contributions for several years. He is survived by two daughters, one son, three granddaughters, and 3 (soon to be 4) great-grandchildren. We will deeply miss his intelligence, curiosity, and humor. We ask that you remember him by donating to a nature-focused nonprofit.

Elaine Yoder

REPORTS

Update on proposed Ridgecrest Solar Power Plant

Can I have a round of applause please? Or three "Hip, Hip Hoorays"? Or just a loud "Yippee!"? Yes, it's true the Ridgecrest Solar Power Plant project is officially history. In a letter dated Jan. 21, 2011 Solar Millennium withdrew its application for this project. In their own words "A review of the process and staff position on the project strongly suggests success is unlikely." In

other words the continuing CEC biological staff assertion that the site should not be disturbed was not going to change, even with a Mojave Ground Squirrel genetic connectivity study (which Solar Millennium proposed).

While those of us who opposed this ill-conceived project from a local and personal perspective can give ourselves some credit for standing up to Big Industry, we really owe the CEC staff a huge "Thank You." Not only did the biological staff perform professionally, but the CEC staff in charge of this project's approval process carried out the proceedings in a thorough and thoughtful manner. Thanks should also go to the official Intervors: the Center for Biological Diversity (Ileene Anderson and Lisa Belenky); Desert Tortoise Council (Sid Silliman); Basin And Range Watch (Laura Cunningham and Kevin Emmerick); Western Watersheds Project (Michael J. Connor); Kerncrest Audubon (Brenda and Dan Burnett and Terri Middlemiss); California Unions for Reliable Energy (Elizabeth Klebaner). These groups and their representatives brought a wide array of expertise to the table, making sure that Solar Millennium did not slip anything over on us.

In celebration of this outcome my husband and I have spent three mornings in the past two weeks exploring the northern edge of the El Paso Mountains that overlook the site. Last Saturday we climbed the large volcanic hill just to the west of the site. While it was tempting to gaze downward at all the little green wildflower sprouts, the larger picture was more important. From the top we looked out over the El Paso Wash alluvial plain. My heart was full of gratitude that the fully functioning ecosystem below would remain a home for Desert Tortoises, Mojave Ground Squirrels, Desert Kit Foxes, LeConte's Thrashers, Western Burrowing Owls and all the native plants that support them. It was a wonderful sight!

Kathy LaShure

2011 Bristlecone Chapter Spring and Summer Field Trips

Please check the website for updates or changes.

<http://bristleconecnps.org/events/index.php>

March 19 (or April 2), Saturday. Mary Dedecker Native Plant Garden Spring Cleaning. Leader: Joann Lijek. This is an annual spring cleaning for the garden. March is a great time to jump on any exotic weeds and get them out before they drop their seed as well as trim up anything that might need it. We'll meet at the garden at the Eastern California Museum in Independence at 9:00 AM, bring garden gloves, trowels, hand pruners, and wear sturdy work clothes. For more information contact Joann Lijek at 760 873-8503 or email at jalijek@yahoo.com.

March 26, Saturday. Kern River Valley/Fay Ranch. Leader: Alison Sheehey. Oh, my did it rain in the Southern Sierra in December; if (hopefully) nice gentle rains fall between now and our trip, the Kern River Valley should have a magical early carpet of wildflowers. The Kern River Valley sits at the intersection of three of our nation's ten floristic provinces; within a few miles one can encounter desert, grassland, forest & riparian ecosystems. As with all trips, Ali's scouting just before the trip will tell us where the best places are to go.

Those coming from the Indian Wells Valley or points north should meet at the Inyokern Post Office at 8:15 am to carpool to Audubon's Kern River Preserve Sprague Ranch addition on Fay Ranch Road in Weldon, arriving there at 9:15 am. If coming from the south or west, meet at the Sprague Ranch by the hay barn at 9:15 am (7901 Fay Ranch Road - a dirt road on the left 1.6 miles up Fay Ranch Road from Hwy 178). Restrooms will be available.

Bring lunch, ample water, sunscreen, hat, camera, binoculars if you're interested in birds or anything else in nature. Hiking will be minimal but those looking for a slightly more adventurous hike, we might find the Fay Canyon population of crowned muilla in bloom.

Contact Ali Sheehey for details at natureali@gmail.com or (760) 417-0268. (Ali offers her home for those with sleeping bags if you want to come up the day before).

April 2, Saturday. Red Rock Canyon State Park. Leader: Mark Faull. The Red Rooster and Tarweed Creek areas of the Park are normally very good wildflower zones, possessing both common and less common flora. Our guide will be retired Red Rock Head Ranger, Mark Faull. Unless the weather is warm early, our field trip will likely be a tad early for the late blooming rare Red Rock Tarweed. We certainly should see the plants, but probably few or no flowers. Such is the show provided by our desert flora, for our trip will likely be a little too late to see Charlotte's Phacelia! However, around early April often works out to be the peak of the overarching Red Rock Canyon annual wildflower display. We plan to spend the morning at Red Rock Canyon and then possibly return to the Indian Wells Valley by way of the Garlock Road, stopping to explore along the way. Hiking will be minimal.

Bring lunch, ample water, hat, sunscreen, camera, field guides (if you would like a PDF of Mark Faull's flora list for the Park please email desert_encelia@verizon.net). Or it can be downloaded from the Creosote Ring page of the Bristlecone CNPS website

Those coming from the Indian Wells Valley or points north should meet at the Inyokern Post Office at 8:00 am to carpool to the site. If coming from the south or west, meet at 8:30 am at the Hagen Canyon parking lot in Red Rock Canyon. This is the first parking lot after you turn off of Hwy 14 onto Abbott Drive (the road that leads to park headquarters and Ricardo Campground). We will then carpool to our Park destinations.

For further information, please contact Kathy LaShure (760-377-4541; desert_encelia@verizon.net).

April 8, Friday. Alabama Hills. Leaders: Martin Oliver and Steve McLaughlin. Meet at 9:30 AM at the intersection of Whitney Portal and Movie Flat roads. This outing is designed to find spring wildflowers; April is the optimal month to see a range of local favorites such as scarlet locoweed, golden linanthus, and sand blossoms. Field trip will last until about 12:30 PM. Bring water, snacks or lunch, and standard field trip items. Contact Martin Oliver at 872-5035 or email at martin_oliver@blm.gov

April 15-17. Fri & Sat, 10 am – 8 pm & Sun 10 am – 5 pm - Wildflower Show at the Maturango Museum, 100 E. Las Flores, Ridgecrest, 760-375-6900. Come see what wildflower treasures have been uncovered within a 50-mile radius of Ridgecrest. Volunteer teams with BLM permits will search for flora on the east-facing slopes & in the canyons of the Sierra Nevada, in the Coso and El Paso Mountains, as well as the Indian Wells Valley itself. No matter what the weather has been each year there will be wildflowers to enjoy. On average over 200 species representing over 40 plant families are displayed. On Sat. April 16 at 2:30 pm Kahlee Brighton, will present “Capturing Ephemeral Beauty: A Celebration of California’s Wildflowers. As an educator, writer, photographer and recent founder of the Wildflower Conservancy, Kahlee Brighton is deeply passionate about nature—especially wildflowers. She will share how all lovers of California’s floral beauty can enjoy our floral treasures without destroying them. This program will feature Kahlee’s beautiful images as well as tips for finding and photographing wildflowers.

April 17, 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.

April 23, Saturday. Indian Wells Canyon burn area. Leader: Shelley Ellis. Indian Wells Canyon was struck by lightning July 18, 2010. A major fire flared up and burned a long stretch of the riparian area, as well as Joshua tree woodlands on the hillsides and conifer forests in the higher elevations. Elevations that burned ranged from 4,000 to 8,000 feet. The conifer forest consisted primarily of pinyon pine, but graded into Jeffery pine, sugar pine and white fir at higher elevations on north-facing slopes. The fire burned about 1800 acres. Approximately 75% of the fire was within the Owens Peak Wilderness Area and included 2 miles of the Pacific Crest Trail. The field trip will explore the various species that have come in following fire. Many of the shrubs in the riparian area are root sprouting, including coffee berry (*Rhamnus californica*) and grape soda lupine (*Lupinus excubitus*). Joshua trees are also sprouting from the roots. Flannel bush and lavender wand mallow are some of the species that follow fires. Annual flowers should be abundant if rainfall and temperatures are favorable in the next few months.

Bring ample water, snacks, hat, sunscreen, camera. We will meet at the Inyokern Post Office at 8:30 am to carpool to the site. High clearance vehicles needed. We will be finished by noon but anyone who wants to explore longer can bring a lunch and be on their own. For further information, please contact Kathy LaShure (760-377-4541; desert_encelia@verizon.net).

Saturday, April 30. Pandora’s Box. Leader: Jerry Zatorski. Nestled at the foot of the Inyo Mountains, this box canyon has been carved from the mountains by water over the eons exposing a limestone substrate. Here we can find limestone endemic species as well as numerous generalist species. We will explore the canyon and climb about and around the general area. There will be moderate hiking a few miles and some rock scrambling. Bring food, fluids, field guide, camera, a hand lens, and dress for weather. Be prepared to be outside for the day. High clearance vehicles will be necessary on dirt roads and 4WD is recommended. We’ll meet in Independence at Independence Park on the south end of town along US 395 at 9:00 AM. For more information contact Jerry at 387-2920 or jerryzat@gmail.com.

May 7, Saturday. Owens Valley, Bishop area. Leader: Mark Bagley. Details TBA. See website for further information.

May 21, Saturday. Lime Hill, Eureka Valley Road. Leader: Michèle Slaton. We will visit the Lime Hill area along the Eureka Valley Road in the Inyo Mts. The outstanding geology and terrain in this area have resulted in unique and diverse plant communities. We will see carbonate-loving Nevada greasewood (*Glossopetalon pungens*) and rock heath (*Chaetopappa ericoides*), plus two rare shrubs - single-leaved ash (*Fraxinus anomola*) and yerba desierto (*Fendlerella utahensis*) - and the rare grass, (*Achnatherum aridum*), plus blooming cactus and annuals. We will begin our walk from the talc prospect south of Lime Hill and venture up a short but STEEP hill to visit the shrubs. We'll then walk down into 'Bowling Ball Canyon', to see what is blooming along the narrow marble passageways. We will walk about 2 miles, but the walking is steep with slippery footing. Meet at the parking area next to the campground at the north end of Big Pine, at the intersection of Hwys. 395 and 168 at 8:30am. Carpooling will be encouraged along the paved route to Lime Hill. Bring lunch, water, and the usual field trip items. Contact Michèle with any questions at mslaton@schat.com or 760-938-3258.

June 5, Sunday. Bodie Hills (confirmed). Co-host with Friends of the Inyo, Drew Foster. Come on out for an all day floral adventure in the Bodie Hills. Let's see what's in bloom in this mélange of the floras of the Sierra Nevada and the Great Basin high desert. Viewscapes are guaranteed to impress, sagebrush will be present and plentiful, and good times to be had by all! This will be an all day hike, moderate to strenuous, so please bring plenty of water, a lunch, snacks, and the usual outdoor stuff (sunscreen, hat, hiking shoes, etc.) Meet at the end of the pavement at Highway 270 (the road to Bodie State Park) to carpool, 8:30am. Don't forget your hand lenses! Call Drew at (805) 405-7577 for more information.

June 11, Saturday. Blackrock Meadows: "I told you so!" 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. Almost four years later, the Inyo County Water Department has finally agreed with our contention that management must be modified. Come on this trip to see what an official, Inyo County Water Department-certified pumping impact looks like, as well as an example of very successful groundwater management! We will explore an area from the Ft. Independence reservation north to 8-mile Ranch/Blackrock hatchery area. Sense of humor and capacity for outrage required. 4x4 not necessary but high clearance never hurts. Meet at Ft. Independence travel plaza/casino 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 12, 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.

June 25, Saturday. Devil's Postpile Rainbow Falls weed pulling. Leader: Holly Alpert. This will be a work day to help remove cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) from Devils Postpile National Monument and surrounding areas. We will hike from the Rainbow Falls trailhead to areas of known infestations. Hiking distance may be 2-4 miles and may be over rough terrain. Bring your gloves and some garbage bags. Wear long pants and layers. Meet at Minaret Vista at 9:00 am and we will carpool from there. Contact Holly Alpert; 760-709-2212; holly.alpert@gmail.com.

July 2, Saturday. Witcher Meadow Wildflowers and Weeding. Leader: Stephen Ingram. Start the holiday weekend off right with a combination botanizing and weed-pulling trip in a beautiful meadow surrounded by Jeffrey pine forest at 7640'. We may still see shooting star, but will definitely see rein

orchid, bog-orchid, spike-mallow, Kelley's tiger lily, starwort, and many other wildflowers, grasses, and sedges. The drier areas surrounding the meadow should have blooming porcupine prickly-pear. Easy terrain with moderate walking. After botanizing for an hour or so, we'll work at eradicating goat's beard, *Tragopogon dubius*, an invasive, weedy dandelion. Lunch among the pines and return shortly afterward. Meet at the gravel pit on Sky Meadow Road in Swall Meadows at 9:00 am. High-clearance 4WD needed, but we will carpool. Bring gloves, food, water, hat, sunscreen; bags will be provided. Contact Stephen at ingram@bishopwireless.net or 760-387-2913 for more information.

July 10, Sunday. Convict Lake. Leader: Holly Alpert. Come check out the best of both Sierra Nevada and Great Basin wildflowers and woody plants. This is a truly special place. We will walk around the lake (2 miles, fairly flat) and may head up the Convict Creek trail if time and interest permit (uphill). Meet at 9:00 at upper parking lot near entrance to Convict Lake campground. Contact Holly Alpert; 760-709-2212; holly.alpert@gmail.com.

Saturday, July 23. Saddlebag Lake and the Conness Lakes. Leader: Jerry Zatorski. This will be a backcountry hike from the parking lot at Saddlebag Lake. The trail around Saddlebag Lake is well maintained and the views of the back side of Yosemite are at the very least spectacular. The hike around Saddlebag Lake is relatively flat, and once on the northern end of the lake we'll head west making our way up to the Conness Lakes area on some trails and cross country. Most of this area is in the alpine zone, above tree line, and if the snows have receded enough, we should be greeted by many alpine species. Depending on your level of fitness, this is a moderate to strenuous hike at high elevation (all above 10,000 ft), and is only recommended for those in good hiking condition. This trip will take most of the day and participants should bring plenty of fluids and food, field guide, camera, a hand lens, and dress for weather. We will meet at the Saddlebag Lake parking lot at 9:00 AM. From Lee Vining, go west 9.8 miles up SR 120 (Tioga Pass Rd), just after the first lake on the left (Ellery Lake) take the right turn to Saddlebag Lake and go 2.5 miles to the trail head. For more information contact Jerry at 760-387-2920 or jerryzat@gmail.com.

Late July or Early August. Kern Plateau meadows east of Sherman Pass. Leader: Judy Breitenstein. Details TBA. See website for further information.

August 6, Saturday. White Mountains buckwheats. Leader: Scott Hetzler. Go on a hunt for buckwheat treasures in the Whites. Meet at the parking lot at the intersection of 395 and Highway 168 at 9:00 AM. Contact Scott at 873-8392 for further information.

August 7, Sunday. Casa Diablo buckwheats. Leader: Scott Hetzler. Another buckwheat day, this time along Casa Diablo road in the tablelands. Meet at the intersection of Five Bridges Road and Fish Slough Road near the interpretative signs at 9:00 AM. Bring lots of water because it will probably be hot. For more information contact Scott at 873-8392.

August 27, Saturday. Bishop Creek high country. Leader: Mark Bagley. Details TBA. See website for further information.

October 10, 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 873-8392.

CONSERVATION

Water Commission hits the ground crawling

In recent issues I've chronicled the near-death of the Inyo County Water Commission, my own unsuccessful attempts to serve, and the commission's re-birth in late 2010. The newly-constituted commission has now met twice. The results, however, are not encouraging. The first meeting, which only four of five members attended, was devoted entirely to discussions of the Brown Act and presentations by the Inyo County Water Department staff. No substantive items were on the agenda. The second meeting contained several substantive items, including one entitled "goals." I think it is wonderful that ICWC might actually set itself goals, and I have several ideas about what they might be. Unfortunately only three commissioners (of five) attended the meeting, so the "goals" item was put off until the next meeting – in late April. I suggest one of the ICWC goals should be to track attendance records of Water Commissioners, so those missing more than 2 meetings a year can be replaced.

Daniel Pritchett

Blackrock saga continues

Last year, I got to say "I told you so" when DWP objected to the CA Department of Fish and Game's attempt to reduce groundwater pumping for the Blackrock hatchery. DWP objected on the grounds that it viewed pumping from wells supplying the hatchery as part of its water supply. I had written in 2006 that DWP exploited the hatchery exemption as a "piscine shield" allowing it to export groundwater it would not otherwise be allowed to pump.

I recently got to say "I told you so" again. The Inyo County Water Department (ICWD) belatedly concluded that "significant change is occurring" at parcel Blackrock 94 and the change is attributable to changes in ground and surface water management. Excessive pumping for the Blackrock hatchery is the culprit. Bristlecone Chapter member Sally Manning publicly discussed degradation of the parcel at a talk in 1999 at a meeting of the American Geophysical Union. In 2007, after 8 years of fruitless waiting for pumping to be reduced, I wrote a formal complaint to ICWD and DWP on behalf of the Bristlecone chapter. I pointed out some of the changes that were

occurring and asserted that management must be modified to avoid creating significant impacts. Almost four years after I made these assertions, ICWD finally concurred.

What has this accomplished? When DWP proposes its annual pumping plan in April, it will be difficult for Inyo County to once again acquiesce to the excessive hatchery pumping, now that ICWD has concluded it is causing a significant change. On the other hand, Inyo County Supervisors have made their love of the hatchery and their lack of love for native plants and rare ecosystem types very clear. Rather than insisting on a pumping reduction to bring about water table recovery, I predict Inyo Supervisors will direct the ICWD to make a political deal in which hatchery pumping continues unabated and DWP "mitigates" somewhere else in the valley. It is up to us to insist on water table recovery to restore the meadow.

Daniel Pritchett

The online version of this newsletter contains another conservation article:

Standing Committee Follies

Please read it at:

<http://www.bristleconecnps.org/newsletters/index.php>

MEMBERSHIP

The Bristlecone Chapter heartily welcomes the following new members:

Eva Armi – Del Mar, CA
Andrew Kaiser – Death Valley, CA

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
RENEW ONLINE:

Using a credit card, go to www.cnps.org
and click on the JOIN button

The California Native Plant Society
 Bristlecone Chapter
 P.O. Box 364
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<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor	\$600.00
<input type="checkbox"/> 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

Gift Contribution: Where most needed _____
 Conservation _____

Bristlecone Chapter Directory

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