

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF THE CALIFORNIA
NATIVE FLORA

The California Native Plant Society



Bristlecone Chapter

Volume 32 No. 5
September-October 2011

September General Meeting

Wednesday September 28, Green Church
(corner of Hwy 395 and Benton Crossing Rd).

FROM THE EDITOR

Next Newsletter Deadline: October 26, 2011

Send articles to: newsletter@bristleconecnps.org

If you still receive this newsletter via US Mail, please send your email address to the editor (email address above) so you can receive the electronic version. Please help the Bristlecone chapter save money, energy, and trees

6:00 pm. Annual potluck. Bring your favorite potluck dish, a serving utensil, and your own plate, cup, and eating utensils.

7:00 pm. Maureen Finnerty and BryAnna Vaughan will give a talk entitled, **“First Bloom: A Partnership between Devils Postpile National Monument and Bishop Paiute Tribe.”**

First Bloom is a National Park program that plants the seeds for a stronger relationship between Americans and their national parks, beginning with our youngest citizens. First Bloom youth participate in regular outdoor, hands-on activities in order to grow as people and learn how to design and plant a native garden. Maureen and BryAnna will talk about the various activities that eastern Sierra tribal youth have engaged in through this unique program, including travels to Devils Postpile National Monument, Yosemite National Park, and Death Valley National Park.

September Board Meeting

Wednesday, September 21, 2011, 7:00 pm at the ESICE office, 512 N. 2nd St., Bishop. Members are welcome.

UPCOMING EVENTS

September 10, Saturday -- Native plant sale

Come to our chapter's annual native plant sale at White Mountain Research Station, 3000 East Line St., Bishop, 9:00 am – 11:00 am. Come early, as some species sell out fast. Plants are grown from locally collected seeds so they should do well in your garden. For more information go to http://bristleconecnps.org/native_plants/sale/

October 9, Sunday – CNPS Field Trip: Chapter Highway Cleanup. Leader: Scott Hetzler
Meet at the intersection of Hwy 395 and Pine Creek Road, west of 395 at 9:00 am.

REPORTS

Get ready for the plant sale!

If this summer's mountain wild flower displays have put a deep burning desire in your heart to have some of that spectacular beauty in your garden, you are in luck. The Bristlecone Chapter of the California Native Plant Society native plant sale is coming up quickly and you can get some of those plants in your garden. This will be the last plant sale of the summer (Mammoth has had 3) and the plants are geared for the Valley up to about 6,000 ft.

Fall is a great time to plant natives into the garden. With the summer heat diminishing, new plantings are not as stressed and are able to establish more quickly. They will grow large root systems all winter that help them withstand the drying winds of our climate and many will flower the next spring and summer.

Many of the ever-popular plants, *Penstemon floridus*, *Penstemon eatonii*, and *Penstemon incertus* as well as some new plants will be at the sale. For the first time this year there will be Water birch trees, *Betula occidentalis* and Desert fuschia, *Zauschneria californica*. There are 1384 plants of 56 species this year. For a complete list of all the plants available go to the Bristlecone CNPS website (www.bristleconecnps.org) and look under "plant sale".

How do plants get chosen for the sale? Well, it comes down to a series of chances. The first and foremost is if someone collected the seed. If the seed was collected and it was viable, then did it sprout and grow? I also try and choose plants that will have showy flowers and different species that will bloom throughout the summer.

The sale is on Saturday, September 10th and goes from 9-11a.m. at the White Mountain Research Station, 3000 E. Line St. in Bishop. Plant prices range from \$3.50 for a 22 oz cup to \$5.00 for a small tree pot and \$8.00 for gallon pots.

Bring a box to take home your new plants and if you have any black plastic pots from last year's sale we would love to recycle them.

Katie Quinlan

Field Trip Report: Convict Lake, July 10, 2011

Cathy Rose and I had a lovely, leisurely 5-hour walk around Convict Lake. Although I was

on the books as the trip leader, Cathy really should have been the leader as I learned so much from her. It's one thing to be able to identify the more common plants around you, or to know wildflowers to genus, but to really be able to dig in and look closely, you need someone like Cathy who can combine years of experience looking at and teaching about plants with the patience to wait for a clumsy student (me) to fumble through a key. Plus, Cathy knows a thing or two about birds, and the highlight was observing two different red-breasted sapsucker nests and watching the parent birds deliver food to the juveniles.

Holly Alpert

Field Trip Report: Devils Postpile Work Party, July 17, 2011

Unfortunately, nobody from CNPS showed up for this invasives-pulling field trip to Devils Postpile. Too bad, too, because volunteering at Devils Postpile means being able to drive into the Reds Meadow Valley and to do it for free! Nevertheless, my significant other, Alex, and I were not deterred. Two Devils Postpile maintenance staff and one off-duty ranger were able to help that day, so we had some extra hands.

A little background first...because of its small size in the realm of larger Sierra Nevada National Park Service units, Devils Postpile has had to rely largely on staff from other parks finding time in their busy schedules to help with natural resource management. Over the last decade, non-native plant species have been monitored and managed by the California Exotic Plant Management Team (Cal EPMT). Each year, this team visited the monument, mapped non-natives that they found, and did their best to eradicate these species (mostly through manual pulling). Over the years, the most problematic non-native was *Cirsium vulgare* (bull thistle). Cal EPMT began pulling *Cirsium* in 2002, and by 2009 it had largely been eradicated from the park. Keep in mind, however, that Devils Postpile is only 798 acres and is surrounded by many thousands of acres of national forest and wilderness. So the larger-scale impact of these control efforts can be second-guessed. However, Cal EPMT also surveyed and controlled the area between Rainbow Falls and Reds Meadow Pack Station, most of which is in the Inyo National Forest. Thus, much of the area around Devils Postpile National Monument that

sees the most foot (and horse) traffic has been monitored over the years.

Other species monitored and pulled by Cal EPMT include *Tragopogon dubius* (western salsify; it is unclear whether this is native in this floristic region), *Verbascum thapsus* L. (common mullein), *Poa pratensis* (Kentucky bluegrass), *Poa annua* (annual bluegrass), *Taraxacum officinale* (dandelion), and *Lactuca serriola* (prickly lettuce). Again, with the exception of the *Poa* species, all of these non-natives have become virtually non-existent in the monument. This would seem to indicate that the control efforts are working.

What has become more prevalent in the last few years, however, is *Bromus tectorum* (cheatgrass). It is primarily found in conjunction with pack stock trails, hitching posts, etc. From what I've learned, pack station operators are not yet required to purchase and use weed-free hay. Last year, when I was staff at Devils Postpile, my field crew and I worked to pull *Bromus* from several patches in the Rainbow Falls area, and also around Bear Crag, a popular climbing spot. During the July visit this year, I was heartened to find that several of the Rainbow Falls patches were no longer infested with *Bromus*, and indeed, native forbs seemed to be filling in successfully. One knoll above the Rainbow Falls hitching post was still pretty heavily infested (although not as densely as it was last year), and it took five of us about 1.5 hours to pull it all. This site will most likely need additional work in the future. We did not get to Bear Crag on July 17, though a Devils Postpile staff member visited there several times and was able to pull some of the *Bromus* before it went to seed.

Previous work by Cal EPMT on *Bromus* usually occurred in August, after it had already gone to seed, so their efforts at controlling it may have been in vain. Having staff or volunteers around Devils Postpile more often will allow us to keep an eye on it and pull it before it goes to seed. Furthermore, as I mentioned above, Bear Crag will continue to need attention, and this may be an opportunity to partner with the climbing community to (1) raise awareness and educate and (2) enlist them to help with eradication efforts. Any ideas are appreciated.

Bottom line...it's a small area, but I really do think we're making a difference. Go see for yourselves!

Holly Alpert

Field Trip Report: Bishop Creek High Country, August 27, 2011

Mark Bagley led a group of five participants a couple of miles up the Piute Pass trail from North Lake. Mark hates to leave any plant unidentified, so in addition to his 13-oz copy of Weeden's "Sierra Nevada Flora" he toted his 6-lb "The Jepson Manual" up the trail. We used them both frequently, particularly for the grasses. We studied the differences between the two sneezeweeds, *Helenium bigelovii* and *Helenium (Dugaldia) hoopesii*, and keyed out species of catch-fly (*Silene bernardina*), grass-of-parnassus (*Parnassia californica*), and groundsel (*Senecio fremontii*), among many others. Because of the heavy snowpack, it was a late season. Wildflowers were still abundant, particularly in the wet soils of springs. Only a few species had completely finished flowering (e.g., *Dodecatheon redolens*, *Phyllodoce breweri*), others still had a few flowers (e.g., *Sidalcea oregana*), but many were just starting to flower (e.g., *Ageratina occidentale*, *Ericameria discoidea*). We turned around at about 3:30 PM, still short of Loch Leven, just as it started to rain, after an enjoyable day of botanizing.

Steve McLaughlin

FEATURES

Birch Creek Journal

This is about the time of year when I begin to think that perhaps there *is* such a thing as too many vegetables. We stayed on the Oregon coast for a week, and when we got back I faced the task of immediately consuming or preserving two pounds of green beans, three pounds of zucchini, five pounds of eggplants, nine pounds of cucumbers, and thirty-five pounds of tomatoes. No doubt you're thinking, "Only *three* pounds of zucchini? That's ridiculous. She must be lying." But what you don't know is that according to cookbook author Marian Morash, no household needs more than three zucchini plants, and that's how many I grow. No doubt I should display similar restraint with tomatoes and eggplants.

So I had my work cut out for me. Fortunately, I had Steve's help—with the consuming, that is. He's gung-ho on preservation of the Bodie Hills and Little Lake, but when it comes to eggplants, I'm on my own. For the past four days I've gotten out of the kitchen only to pick

vegetables and turn the compost pile. I've made ratatouille, curried eggplant soup, tomato sauce, pasta with eggplant and peppers, zucchini frittata, and four loaves of zucchini bread. I have served green beans hot after stewing them with tomatoes and cold after tossing them with a little olive oil and salt. I've made pasta salad, cucumber salad, green bean salad, and tomato salad. Thanks to Marian Morash, I am not obligated to add a handful of zucchini to everything I cook, but I must admit that I did put diced cucumbers in egg salad. It wasn't bad.

This burst of domesticity followed hard upon a similar burst just before we left for the coast, when in a single day I made and froze four more loaves of zucchini bread, a pint of tomato sauce, two pints of peperonata, and a handful of roasted eggplant. By this point, almost every shirt in my closet is spotted with olive oil. When we were in Oregon, I finally bought an apron at a kitchen store, a clear case of closing the barn door after the horses have run away. People say to Steve, "Why don't we ever see Jan on field trips anymore?" "Knees," he says uncertainly, but really, my knees are no worse than usual. The truth is that in a time and place where a sizeable portion of the population spends the summer hiking, backpacking, climbing, or boating, I am a slave to my vegetable garden.

Even so, I manage to escape to the creek for a shady half hour now and then. Two weeks ago I noticed that painted aster (*Symphotrichum lanceolatum*) had started to flower. Today I saw tiny flower buds on California goldenrod (*Solidago velutina* subsp. *californica*). Our wild roses (*Rosa woodsii*) suffered from mites this spring and struggled to bloom. Now we have only a few red rose hips, bad news for the cedar waxwings that migrate through our neighborhood in the fall. As I poked my nose into various nooks and crannies along the creek this morning, I remembered too late that it's a good idea to wear a broad-brimmed hat when you walk under water birch (*Betula occidentalis*) at this time of year. Birch lace bugs, virtually transparent insects just two or three millimeters long, are easy to overlook until you brush against an overhanging twig and get a shower of them down your neck. Their vast army is somewhat diminished since the start of the summer, but their handiwork remains as drooping sprays of yellowed leaves. They pierce the leaf epidermis and

suck out the sap, killing the cells and eventually the entire leaf.

Insects are rife in the garden as well as along the creek: aphids on winter squash, stink bugs on sweet peppers, and, of course, hornworms on tomatoes and eggplants. If you've ever grown a tomato, you've made their acquaintance—long, fat, green caterpillars as big as a man's thumb. Yesterday I had to laugh when I visited a web forum for tomato enthusiasts and saw a message titled, "My Very First and Second Tomato Hornworms!" My melancholy boast is that I found forty-three hornworms in the first week of July alone. I dislike killing anything but needs must when valuables are at stake, and, in early July, nothing seems more valuable than tomatoes. Sometimes I walked down the road and fed my hornworms to a neighbor's chickens but mostly I dropped them in the creek. Eventually I sprayed the plants with *Bacillus thuringensis*, a bacterial solution in a bottle. The bacteria fatally disrupt the digestive systems of hornworms and other caterpillars without harming beneficial insects. That took care of the problem for a while, but now I am once again seeing the tell-tale signs of damage.

It's my own fault. Out of kindness, I suppose, I failed to spray the sacred datura (*Datura wrightii*) in our native plant garden. Like tomatoes and eggplants, datura belongs to the plant family Solanaceae, and hornworms devour all three with indiscriminate enthusiasm. In just two weeks, hornworms completely demolished the datura, turning a sizeable hemisphere of large leaves and gigantic flowers into a collection of bare stems. That was all right with me. I never wanted the darn thing in the first place. It arrived as a volunteer in the same pot with a brittlebush (*Encelia actoni*), and ever since I stuck the brittlebush in the ground, the datura had been winning the battle for space. Now it had lost. "Well," I thought, "at least I don't have to weed it out."

Meanwhile, mature hornworms deserted the defoliated plant, pupated underground, and, a few weeks later, emerged as moths that unerringly sought out my tomato plants. So much for kindness. By not spraying the datura, I had created a reservoir for re-infestation. Not only that, but since its apparent demise, the datura has rebounded with a full canopy of leaves and thirty to forty new flowers every day. A biologist should have more sense.

Although my datura plant hitch-hiked home with me from the Bristlecone Chapter's native plant sale, the species is not, I suspect, native to the Owens Valley. I've seen it only along roadsides and in other disturbed habitats, which is typical of introduced weeds. Moreover, the database for the Consortium of California Herbaria contains just twelve datura specimens from Inyo County. Of those, only two are from our region, the first collected at Little Lake in 1940, the second in Mazourka Canyon in 1976. This is what you would expect from a recent arrival: few collections, none of them old. In contrast, a common native shrub such as Mojave indigo bush (*Psoralea arborescens*) is represented by eighty-four Inyo County specimens. Of these, thirty-six were collected in our region between 1898 and 2006.

Hornworms must have frequented the Owens Valley long before datura arrived. Native Solanaceae such as Anderson wolfberry (*Lycium andersonii*), peach box-thorn (*Lycium cooperi*), desert tobacco (*Nicotiana attenuata*), and chaparral nightshade (*Solanum xanti*) could have sustained scattered populations of hornworms but probably not at the density seen in my garden. Once Anglos arrived with their tomato seeds, hornworm populations probably exploded. It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good, as they say. According to the *Inyo Independent* of August 3, 1878, "There is a plump, green and spotted worm, measuring from two to three inches in length, which is ravaging the tomato and other plants in the gardens about town. The Indians catch these worms, string them up by the dozens, slightly roast and then eat them." Anyone interested in repeating this moment in ethno-culinary history is welcome to call on my garden at anytime. But don't wait too long—I'll be spraying soon.

Jan Bowers

CONSERVATION

Bodie Hills Update

The Bridgeport Valley Regional Planning Advisory Committee (BVRPAC) passed a resolution on June 16, 2011, urging the Mono County Board of Supervisors (BOS) to support release of the Bodie Wilderness Study Area (WSA). Supervisor Tim Hansen put this request on the BOS agenda for their August 2, 2011, meeting. The primary effect of release of the WSA would be

to facilitate Cougar Gold's efforts to put an open-pit gold mine at their Paramount site and open up the rest of the WSA, including the Dry Lakes Plateau, to further gold exploration and mine development. Nevertheless, Supervisor Hansen stated that the BVRPAC resolution was *not* about mining.

The resolution primarily discussed some valid private property issues regarding inholdings within the Bodie WSA. These same issues (such as access and management constraints), however, would apply to other WSAs, and to inholdings in general within Public Lands. So why did the BVRPAC resolution address only the Bodie WSA? I don't think it is too cynical to suggest that the real issue in fact was mining.

The BVRPAC resolution also urged the BOS to support HR1581, a bill introduced into the House of Representatives on April 15, 2011, to release *all* Bureau of Land Management (BLM) WSAs and National Forest System Inventoried Roadless Areas not currently recommended for wilderness status. Bob Abbey, Director of the BLM, testified before Congress that "HR 1581 is a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach, that fails to reflect local conditions and community-based interests."

The status of many WSAs needs to be resolved, but on a case-by-case basis. In the specific case of the Bodie WSA, the 1990 BLM California Statewide Wilderness Study Report states that: "The no-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which uses all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts." Such impacts could include loss of populations of the many CNPS-listed plant species that occur in the Bodie WSA. All WSAs likely have similar stipulations regarding their release; none of these concerns are addressed in the superficial 6-page legislation. Like so much coming out of Congress these days, HR 1581 is all symbolism and no substance.

Fortunately, the BOS did not buy into the recommendations of the BVRPAC. They declined to introduce their own resolutions for WSA release or support for HR 1581. Supervisor Hansen introduced a resolution to acknowledge the BVRPAC resolution, but that motion died for lack of a second.

Personally, I do not want to see a gold mine in the Bodie Hills. I had the opportunity to co-lead a field trip into the Bodies as part of the recent Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua. I took the group up out of Masonic Canyon to the base of Masonic Mountain, which provides the first panoramic views of the high, wildflower-covered subalpine plateau that makes up the center of the Bodie Hills. Participants, particularly those visiting the Bodies for the first time, were awe-struck by the incredible beauty of this landscape. But once you know where to look, it is easy to find the Paramount mine site from this vantage point, and a modern open-pit mine would probably be the first thing one would notice. The economic benefits of a large gold mine would flow primarily to multi-national corporations. Local benefits would be few in the short term and none in the long term. The scars would remain for millennia.

Steve McLaughlin

Blackrock blows up the Water Agreement!

When we last left the Blackrock epic (I've been writing this narrative long enough so I can legitimately call it an "epic") Inyo County had released a report (February 2011) concluding that "significant change" is occurring at parcel Blackrock 94 and that the change is attributable to water management practices. This report was a belated response to a letter I wrote on behalf of the Bristlecone Chapter in 2007, invoking the Inyo-LA Long Term Water Agreement (LTWA) goal of "avoiding" impacts and asking that pumping be reduced. I wrote the 2007 letter because both Inyo and DWP had ignored Sally Manning's 1998 conclusions that lowered water tables were reducing grass cover and leading to conversion of the meadow to a desertified, weedy, shrubland. Sally's conclusions, turn, were actually predicted by DWP itself back in 1976 and 1979 in its first two attempts at an EIR for the second barrel of the Aqueduct.

Returning to 2011, on June 29, Inyo County issued a surprise press release stating that it was initiating a legal challenge to DWP's 2011 pumping program. The challenge was based on the county's determination that significant change was occurring at Blackrock 94 and this justified pumping reductions. Inyo, however, did not seek reductions that would do much good: it didn't ask for any reduction in pumping for the Blackrock

hatchery which is the primary cause of the drawdown destroying the meadow! In fact, half of the reductions Inyo called for are not even in the same wellfield as Blackrock 94.

Had DWP been smart, it would have called Inyo's bluff. It would have made a counter-proposal and offered to reduce pumping by the amount Inyo seeks, but with the stipulation that reductions occur where they would achieve the greatest water table recovery under Blackrock 94. This would mean reducing hatchery pumping. Imagine Inyo's dilemma! Had DWP made such a proposal, Inyo Supervisors would have been forced to choose between what they say they want i.e. to recover Blackrock 94, and what they actually want i.e. to maximize hatchery production regardless of the environmental devastation it causes.

Fortunately for Inyo Supervisors, DWP wasn't smart enough to use this strategy. Instead, it has tried an approach so outrageous it trumps the absurdity of Inyo's original challenge. DWP's strategy is to refuse to implement the LTWA Dispute Resolution language.

The LTWA Dispute Resolution language calls, first, for a meeting of the Inyo-LA Technical Group to attempt to resolve any dispute within 14 days after notice of a potential dispute. DWP wouldn't agree to a meeting until 15 days after notice was given. Then, when the meeting was held, after Inyo gave a brief presentation on the conditions at Blackrock 94, DWP staff noted that Inyo County attorneys were observing the proceedings in the audience (scheduled Technical Group meetings are open to the public). DWP staff then stated that they would not discuss the dispute so long as Inyo attorneys were present because there were no DWP attorneys present. Inyo pointed out that DWP attorneys had been notified that Inyo attorneys would be present, and, in any case, meetings are tape recorded and open to the public. DWP continued to not discuss the dispute and insisted that the meeting be "continued" at a future date when DWP attorneys could attend.

Two weeks later, the "continued" meeting began at 3:00 pm. DWP's Gene Coufal, who was chairing the meeting, immediately announced that he regretted to inform us that the meeting would have to end by 4:30 pm because his staff would be "off the clock." Discerning readers may guess what happened. After DWP's Dave Martin gave an embarrassingly bad "preliminary" presentation of

DWP's analysis of conditions at Blackrock 94, DWP staff proceeded to run out the clock. They asked a series of irrelevant and/or inane questions, interspersed with repeated assertions that Inyo had no grounds for challenging the pumping program because Inyo was really seeking mitigation and there was a different procedure in the LTWA for seeking mitigation. Inyo repeatedly explained the Technical Group is already following the procedure for determining if mitigation is needed and Inyo was challenging the pumping program while the (endless) procedure for determining if mitigation is needed is carried out. The LTWA explicitly allows challenges of the pumping program. Before you knew it, it was 4:30 pm, DWP refused to vote on the agenda item, and Gene Coufal "continued" the meeting once more. Rarely have I seen such highly- paid people with advanced degrees publicly acting so much like six-year-olds.

The second continuation of the meeting was held three weeks later, in late August. I was unable to attend, but the Big Pine Paiute Tribe had the foresight to make a video tape. After several hours of delaying tactics similar to those of the previous continued meeting, Gene Coufal lost his patience, declared the meeting "continued" (over Inyo's objections), got up, and walked out of the room, his staff dutifully following. Inyo County thus held the field, so to speak, and by military standards must be declared the victor!

In 2000 and 2001, when Inyo challenged annual pumping plans, DWP at least followed the steps of the Dispute Resolution procedure. These call for trying to resolve the dispute first at the Technical Group, then at the Standing Committee, then hiring an arbitrator, and finally, taking the arbitrator's decision to Inyo Superior Court if either party wishes. Now, however, DWP is refusing to follow the Dispute Resolution procedure, so it is unclear what will happen. There is a Standing Committee Meeting Scheduled in early September and it is possible DWP members will refuse to agree to proceed with hiring an arbitrator. If the Standing Committee cannot agree to hire an arbitrator, Inyo's recourse would, presumably, be to go to court over DWP's refusal to abide by the Dispute Resolution process. To my non-lawyer mind, this sounds like it would be a breach-of-contract suit.

DWP's actions effectively have created a new dispute. Inyo's dispute concerns the volume

of water to be pumped in 2011. By asserting Inyo has no right to challenge its pumping program and by refusing to implement the Dispute Resolution procedure, DWP has now created a dispute over the basic meaning of the LTWA. In 2001, when Inyo challenged DWP's annual pumping program, DWP wrote that Inyo didn't have the authority to force DWP to pro-actively modify its management. DWP asserted that the LTWA simply provides a procedure for determining, after the fact, if mitigation is required. This is an outrageous and self-serving mis-reading of the LTWA, but DWP's current actions are a logical extension of this mis-reading it articulated in 2001.

The good news is that finally, a decade after DWP put forth this self-serving LTWA interpretation, it may actually be challenged. The bad news is that it is entirely possible DWP will win, not because of the merits of its arguments, but because of its virtually unlimited resources for bombarding the arbitrator/judge with BS, and because of the demonstrated ineffectiveness of Inyo County legal staff regarding the LTWA. It promises to be a thoroughly depressing spectacle.

Daniel Pritchett

MEMBERSHIP

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 the newsletter. The Bristlecone Chapter warmly welcomes the following new members:

Roberta McIntosh, Bishop
Amalie Orme, Northridge

To RENEW: please contact Sally Manning or
RENEW ONLINE: with a credit card, go to
www.cnps.org and click on the JOIN button.

The California Native Plant Society

Bristlecone Chapter
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 Creosote Ring Sub-Chapter Coordinator - Kathy LaShure (760) 377-4541
 Webmaster: Maggie Riley webmaster@bristleconecnps.org

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