Dedicated to the Preservation of California Native Flora

The California Native Plant Society

Bristlecone Chapter Newsletter

Volume 34, No. 5
September-October 2013

September General Membership Meeting, September 25

Greg Suba, CNPS Conservation Program Director in Sacramento, CA will describe the work of the CNPS Conservation Program's almost fifty years of advocacy for California's diverse native plants. His presentation will give special emphasis to the recent plant conservation challenges associated with renewable energy projects and statewide forestry management planning. Greg Suba has been the CNPS Conservation Program Director in Sacramento, CA since 2009. Previous to joining CNPS, Greg worked as a watershed coordinator, science educator, and biological consultant in northern California, and spent several years monitoring streams and surveying forests throughout the state.

Join us at the September General Membership meeting on Wednesday, 7 PM, September 25, White Mountain Research Center, 3000 East Line Street, Bishop CA.

July General Meeting Notes

At the July Bristlecone General Meeting, Janet and David Carle reported on their voyages along the 38th parallel with a slide show and a synopsis of their book, Traveling the 38th Parallel, a Water Line around the World. Former park rangers, they set out on an around-the-world discovery in search of water-related environmental and cultural intersections along the 38th parallel. The book is a chronicle of their adventures as they meet people confronting challenges in water supply, pollution, wetlands loss, and habitat protection. At the heart of the narrative are the riveting stories of the passionate individuals—scientists, educators, and local activists—who are struggling to preserve some of the world's most amazing, yet threatened, landscapes. Traveling largely outside of cities, away from well-beaten tourist tracks, the authors crossed Japan, Korea, China, Turkmenistan, Turkey, Greece, Sicily, Spain, Portugal, the Azores Islands, and the United States—from Chesapeake Bay to San Francisco Bay. The stories they tell provide stark contrasts as well as reaffirming similarities across diverse cultures, but most important, the importance of water to all of us in a changing world.

The book is available at Spellbinder Bookstore in Bishop. Fabulous pictures and more information are available both on the blog dedicated to the book http://paralleluniverse38n.blogspot.com and on the Bristlecone Chapter website http://bristleconecnps.org/newsletters/index.php

September 7-8 (Sat-Sun), CNPS Rare Plant Treasure Hunt, Amargosa River, Hwy 127

Lots of rain in this area! We'll check out a few hot spots in the Nopah Range, Resting Springs Range, the Dublin Hills, Eagle Mountain and the southern section of the Funeral Mountains. We're expecting temps in the mid-upper 90s, so bring your misters! Bring your camping gear, food, botany supplies, camera and GPS. We hike between 2 and 7 miles a day, depending on the area and what we find along the way. Share what you know, learn something new, and take home a desert experience to savor, inspire and inform our future. To reserve your spot and get trip instructions, please contact kclark@cnps.org.

Bishop Native Plant Sale—Progress Report

Fall is the best time to plant your native plant garden. The soil is still warm, which encourages root formation, but the days are cooler and shorter, so the plants are less programmed to put out new top growth and flowers. It takes some patience and trust to plant in the Fall. We put the plants in the ground and they just sit there all winter, we can't see any changes. Under the ground, however, the roots are developing a good strong system that will reward us in the Spring with lots of new growth.

I have been working all summer to have a variety of plants available for the Fall sale. I have managed to

coax over 1,300 plants (in 53 species) to grow from their seeds this year. The Bishop Fall sale will be on Saturday, September 14th from 9a.m. to 11a.m. at the White Mountain Research Center, 3001 East Line St. Due to my past challenges with rodents, aphids and birds, the saying "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" aptly applies. I went on the attack of ants as soon as they came out from dormancy, and killing the farmer certainly knocked down the crop of aphids. I have had much less aphid damage this year. For the rodent problem I started trapping them, but finally had to resort to poison to stop the damage they were doing to the plants. For the baby kingbirds, who liked to eat all my young seedlings, I covered all the tables with bird net.

The plants are looking good. I am always amazed at how fast the seedlings that we sowed in March and re-potted with the aid of tweezers in May, grew to the size they will be in September. I was given some different seeds this year so there will be some new plant varieties as well as the regular favorites. The new plants are Heavenly Blue, Coffeeberry, Mountain Rose, Our Lords Candle, Silver Cholla, and Grizzly Bear cactus.

I hope to see you all at the sale in September. For an updated list of plants that will be available at the sale go the Bristlecone chapter website. Please remember to bring a box to carry your new plants home.

--Katie Quinlan

What's Up With Those Frogs?

Widespread Panic is the name of a popular jam band from Georgia, but it could also describe the reaction in Inyo County to the recent proposals to list Sierra Nevada Yellow-Legged Frogs (SNYLF) and Yosemite Toad (YT) as Endangered Species and designate critical habitat for both. Newspaper articles from the Inyo Register to the Los Angeles Times are forecasting doom for the local economy.

Inyo County officials appear to be particularly concerned about the economic impacts that may result from designating critical habitat at Rock Creek Lake, the Bishop Creek drainage (including South Lake), Coyote Flat, the Big Pine drainage, and Onion Valley, primarily through potential restrictions on recreation (fishing, hiking, camping, trail riding), access, and livestock grazing. Additional permitting burdens were also mentioned. The Inyo Register article of June 22 stated that the proposals "could devastate the local tourist-dependent economy and restrict assess to popular recreation destinations" and that "the critical habitat designations would limit or altogether restrict some uses on public lands, including grazing and fishing."

To understand better what is actually going on, I went to the Federal Register to read the actual proposed rules. The US Fish & Wildlife Service considers livestock grazing, pack stock use, and recreational activities as minor threats, according to the proposal for listing. Predation by introduced trout (all trout in Inyo and Mono counties are introduced) and a fungal disease (chytrid, or *Bd*) are the primary concerns.

So are trout going to be eliminated from Eastern Sierra lakes and streams? Hardly. The SNYLF occurs primarily in wilderness alpine lakes, not in the popular fishing streams that flow down out of the Eastern Sierra. The YT prefers alpine and subalpine meadows. The proposal for critical habitat specifically states that reservoirs (such as South Lake and Rock Creek Lake) with their steep, rocky banks provide poor habitat for amphibians, including SNYLF and YT. In addition, "developed areas such as lands covered by buildings, pavement, and other structures" will be excluded. Popular reservoirs such as South Lake and Rock Creek Lake have many of these developed features. Thus designation of critical habitat poses no real or credible threat to the most popular camping and fishing areas along lakes, reservoirs, or streams in the Eastern Sierra. Nor will it involve the "taking" of any private lands or restriction of access.

What designating critical habitat for endangered species does do is require federal agencies and other land owners to get permits for any projects proposed for lands within the critical habitat. Since nearly all of the critical habitat for SNYLF and YT would be in designated wilderness, it is not easy see what these projects might be. Livestock grazing does not occur within Yosemite toad habitat on the Inyo NF.

What, if any, are the implications for native plants? Excessive grazing does damage habitat, especially for YT, but CNPS should oppose grazing practices that cause environmental degradation to mountain meadows, regardless of whether or not they occur in habitats supporting rare species of amphibians. USFWS will release an analysis of potential economic impacts on September 13. Inyo County is also doing a study on potential economic impacts. It will be very interesting to compare the two.

--Steve McLaughlin

Yosemite Toad
Photo by Gary Nafis

More information on Frogs and a Toad

The US Fish and Wildlife Service is planning to hold two public meetings and one public hearing, likely in the fall 2013. The dates and times of these meetings and hearing will be announced when the draft economic analysis for the proposed critical habitat rule is made available to the public and will be scheduled within the subsequent open public comment period. Comments must be submitted by November 18, 2013 and may be submitted online at the Federal eRulemaking Portal at http://www.regulations.gov. The Docket Number for the proposed listing rule is FWS–R8–ES–2012–0100 and for the proposed critical habitat rule is FWS–R8–ES–2012–0074.

Owens Lake Update

The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power has developed an "Owens Lake Master Project" based on the draft Owens Lake Master Plan. The project proposes to transition existing selected water-intensive dust control cells on the lake to less-intensive management based on more vegetation, smaller ponds, and new waterless dust-control methods. Habitat for diving waterbirds, breeding shorebirds, breeding waterfowl, migrating shorebirds, migrating waterfowl, and alkali meadow species would be maintained at current levels or enhanced, at least after completion of build-out over 20 years. The project would also include enhanced public access and preservation of cultural sites.

One of LADWP's goals is: "Reduce total lake-wide water use by at least 50%, through the strategic use of waterless or water efficient control measures and groundwater under Owens Lake for dust control." City consultants have analyzed the effects of pumping between 9000 and 15000 acre-feet per year, mostly from wells on the east side of the lakebed. Hydrologic models project that this level of pumping would reduce short-term discharge to wetlands on the west side of the lakebed from 0 to 9 percent (up to 21% at Northwest Seep) but on the east side from 39 to 75 percent decrease.

Managed vegetation is a type of dust control, and managed vegetation on the lakebed can be structurally complex and diverse in species. But it does not constitute in-kind mitigation for the loss of ground-water dependent wetlands, simply because managed vegetation is not ground-water dependent and may not function like ground-water dependent ecosystems.
I became involved with the Owens Lake Planning Committee–over the objections of some of our Board members–because Seeps and Springs and Alkali Meadows were identified as Conservation Targets by the Owens Lake Conservation Action Plan, and preservation of such wetland habitats is a high priority for CNPS. CNPS policy is clear: the organization "opposes projects that adversely affect wetlands of any time unless there is a demonstrated net gain, *in-kind*, of wetlands *prior to project impacts*" [emphases added] and "recommends avoidance of impacts to wetlands" (CNPS Statement of Policy–Wetlands, August 1991).

Consider the following photo, which depicts cell T30-1, the most diverse managed vegetation on the lakebed, as it appeared on June 10, 2013. The aspect of the vegetation is mostly dry and brown. The green plants are mostly willows or willow seedlings. Some *Juncus* (Mexican rush) and *Scirpus* (bulrushes) were just beginning to green-up. And rabbits' foot grass (*Polypogon monspeliensis*), an invasive exotic uncommon in the natural wetlands, was very common. A few green rosettes of yerba mansa (*Anemopsis californica*) could also be found.

Contrast that photo with the second photo on the next page of Swede's Pasture taken on the same date: Here the aspect of the vegetation is wet and green. There is

abundant yerba mansa in flower. Bulrushes and Mexican rush form a dense carpet of green vegetation. Upslope (behind the photo point) there is a dense stand of dry alkali meadow (mostly saltgrass), green and mostly in flower, with leafy shoots 6-8 (12) inches in height. This is what we expect groundwater-dependent ecosystems to look like this time of year. This is what is unique and special about groundwater-dependent vegetation in a desert environment. It is green and actively growing at a time of year when other upland vegetation has gone mostly dormant. It provides productive habitat when it is not available elsewhere. T30-1 represents good dust control, *but it was not functioning as a groundwater-dependent alkali meadow/alkali marsh system* this spring. What happened was a failure of the infrastructure which prevented T30-1 from being irrigated for the 12 months prior to the time these photos were taken. It is LADWP's intention to irrigate managed vegetation to emulate the phenology of groundwater-dependent ecosystems, but changes in management or infrastructure failures can, and probably will, prevent that from time to time.

Groundwater pumping at 9000 to 15000 AFY, the numbers that LADWP have been exploring, would have severe negative impacts on groundwater-dependent ecosystems along the east side of Owens Lake, such as that pictured above for Swede's Pasture. This would be contrary to CNPS policy, and I would not recommend that the Bristlecone Chapter support it.

The Owens Lake Planning Committee has reorganized as an Owens Lake Advisory Committee. I will continue to participate. CNPS can contribute to the design of managed vegetation, comment on other aspects of lakebed management such as grazing, and continue to point out potential impacts from groundwater pumping. But if groundwater pumping at levels that fail to avoid impacts to alkali meadows eventually becomes part of the project, we will have to withdraw. Too bad, because the Master Project does not need groundwater pumping to succeed.

--Steve McLaughlin

New Rare Monkeyflower Discovered in Inyo County!

(Excerpted/adapted from article by Aaron Sims, from the CNPS eNewsletter, July 2013)

Five monkeyflowers were recently described as new to science by Naomi Fraga (Aliso 30: 49-68, 2012), all of which are rare, threatened, or endangered in California and are being added or reviewed for addition to the CNPS Inventory. One of these is the Inyo County local, Limestone monkeyflower, *Erythranthe calcicola*.

Limestone monkeyflower, *Erythranthe calcicola*

Limestone monkeyflower is known from the northern Mojave Desert of eastern California and from southwestern Nevada, where also rare. It occurs nearly exclusively on carbonate (limestone) substrate, which is where its common and scientific names come from. Limestone monkeyflower is currently only known from fifteen occurrences in California, mostly from Inyo County, with one occurrence from Mono County. It can be found in several mountain ranges in the northern Mojave Desert, including: Funeral Mountains, Inyo Mountains, Last Chance Range, Panamint Mountains, and White Mountains. Limestone monkeyflower is possibly threatened by historic mining and non-native plants, and with such a limited global distribution, has been added to California Rare Plant Rank (CRPR) 1B.3 (rare in California and elsewhere; not very threatened) of the CNPS Inventory.

You may find more information about Erythranthe calcicola on the CNPS Rare Plant Inventory, here: > http://www.rareplants.cnps.org/detail/3760.html, including a map showing the general areas where they have been found. At the time of this writing, not all of the five new species have been added to the CNPS Inventory. Be sure to check back to the Inventory to see additional information about them in the future.

Field Trip Reports

July 6, CNPS Field Trip: South Fork Big Pine Creek.
Six of us showed up in Big Pine to venture 4,000 ft. up to the Trailhead near the old Glacier Lodge.
Greeted by shade and abundant streamflow, we began our walk alongside Big Pine Creek. Many species of *Carex (jonesii, pellita*) and one of *Juncus (macrandrus*) grew at our feet, but not many showed much interest in these non-showy flowering plants. The Currant *Ribes cereum* was more accessible but not yet showing developed (meaning edible) fruit.
We did find the eastern Sierran endemics, *Lomatium rigidum*, and *Lupinus padre-crowleyi*. I get excited to find the one small population (meaning 1 or 2 plants) on the trail of *Nama rothrockii*. Although common in some locations (Pine Creek, Horseshoe meadows road) I have found it only along one stretch of the South Fork Big Pine Creek trail. Plenty of Mountain Mahogany (*Cercocarpus ledifolius*) a bit of Mountain Maple (*Acer glabrum var. diffusum)* and even some Black Cottonwood (*Populus balsamifera ssp. trichocarpa*) shaded our path at times. We did not make it past the creek crossing where the absence of the old bridge makes fording a bit more challenging. A break by the creek and early return home was the best recipe for this over 50 crowd.

Many other plants graced our presence but are too numerous to list here. Take note of the list for this region elsewhere at the chapter website. One last note, the lupine at that crossing (*Lupinus pratensis var. pratensis)* has always puzzled me. Not that taxon precisely, but for its alter ego. For its size, Big Pine Creek appears a quite a bit in the Jepson Manual. In this case, the previous lupine is known (from Big Pine Creek) in the variety *eriostachyus*. The banner back is supposed to be hairy (unlike var. pratensis) and I have yet to find such a critter there. I will keep looking!

Steve Matson

Dedecker Garden –Young People to the Rescue and Volunteer Opportunities for the Rest of Us

In September of 2001, CNPS volunteers planted the DeDecker Garden at the Eastern California Museum in Independence—150 plants in 8 garden beds. Over the years, volunteers have been weeding, pruning and watering it. However, time has taken its toll on some of the plants and the benches were looking too splintery to sit on.

On June 25th the Lone Pine and Bishop YCC crews came to the rescue. The eleven teens with their 2 leaders worked all morning sanding and painting the benches, weeding, removing dead plants, building and putting in new rabbit cages.

Lone Pine and Bishop YCC crew members
Photo by Katie Quinlan

When the garden was first planted, our hope was that once the plants were established the cages could come off, so small cages were built. We discovered that some plants are very tasty to rabbits and they need protection. Other plants had outgrown the cages and the cages themselves were shaping the plants they were meant to protect. So the crews removed the old cages and replaced them with larger ones.

On Saturday November 2nd we will be cleaning up the fall leaves and planting new plants into the garden. If you are interested in helping we will meet at 8:30 at the very end of S. Fowler (next to the DWP building) to carpool from Bishop and points north. If you are coming from the south we will meet in the Museum parking lot at 9:30. Bring rakes, gloves, water and hats. We will have a picnic lunch afterward.

--Katie Quinlan

Birch Creek Journal

August 11, 2013.–Here along Birch Creek, goldenrod is starting to bloom, rose hips are abundant, and fall migration is underway. Violet-green swallows materialize on telephone lines before sunrise as if condensed from cooling air. Western tanagers pose like Christmas ornaments at the tops of the birch trees while beneath them black-headed grosbeaks bounce from branch to branch. Rufous hummingbirds have taken over one of our feeders, but black-chinned hummingbirds are holding hold their own at the other two; some days the hummingbirds polish off three quarts of nectar, and I have the feeling that checkers at Vons are speculating on my sugar habit.

Also here along Birch Creek the battle against purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*), supposedly number nine on a list of the world's worst weeds, continues. Yes, I know it's edible. Help yourself, and make sure you get the roots. Every day I yank another pint or so of the stuff. I leave the carcasses on the ground as a warning to the others, not that it does any good. Purslane apparently has the ability to germinate simply on the memory of rain, and seedlings keep popping up in spots where no drop of water has fallen since July 23.

Those were some pretty amazing drops, by the way. We got seven-tenths of an inch of rain on July 21 and another six-tenths on July 23, along with lightning, thunder, strong winds, and rising water. We've seen nothing like it in the seven years we've lived here. It was much like a summer storm in the Sonoran Desert with two differences: no spadefoot toads calling from puddles in the aftermath and surprisingly little response from native vegetation. In the Sonoran Desert, most shrubs that lapse into leaflessness during the dry, hot months of May and June will form new leaves within a few days of the first substantial summer rain, and some even burst into bloom. Ocotillo (*Fouquieria splendens*), a candelabra-form shrub with long, whip-like branches, starts to leaf out within twenty-four hours, a transformation made possible by adaptations such as water storage in the stems and a layer of chlorophyll in the bark.

In our Birch Creek neighborhood, cheese bush (*Hymenoclea salsola*) greened up rather quickly after those July rains, as did brittlebush (*Encelia actoni*), but hopsage (*Grayia spinosa*) and horsebrush (*Tetradymia axillaris*) remain in a state of profound dormancy despite a soaking like none they have received since October 2011. Indigobush (*Psorothamnus arborescens*) made the transition from bare, white stems to compact canopies of leaves but only reluctantly–the process took two weeks, and not every plant made the effort. My point is simply that most shrubs native to the western Great Basin are not notably adapted to summer rain. Although old-timers say that Owens Valley used to get thunderstorms every summer, the absence of species adapted to summer rains suggests that those storms must have been spotty and infrequent.

Exotic species are another matter–see purslane, above. Also see old fields along Fish Springs Road about a mile northeast of our place. Some are as green as a golf course. It's not turf but tumbleweed, a solid mass of Russian thistle (*Salsola* spp.) that, when it dries up and blows away, could actually obstruct traffic along Highway 395. These old fields once belonged to dairy and pig farms. I don't know exactly where the cows and pigs were pastured, but I suspect that the densest stands of Russian thistle map their distribution pretty well. Puzzlingly, I was taught that Russian thistle is self-limiting–because it germinates and emerges on disturbed sites, it does not persist past the earliest stages of succession–yet for some reason it persists along Fish Springs Road, where old fields and pastures have been more or less undisturbed, except by grazing cows, for decades. The thing is, I don't think we can blame the cows this time. They graze along both sides of Fish Springs Road and probably spend less time in the tumbleweed pastures than elsewhere. I think we should blame the pigs. Pig farming is notoriously hard on the environment, discharging high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus, and it seems possible that pig operations so disastrously affected the soil that the pastures have remained in a state of permanent disturbance ever since.

The old pig pastures are beyond hope, but elsewhere in the neighborhood I've undertaken a one-woman campaign against Russian thistle, yanking it out whenever I walk up or down Birch Creek Road, then yanking it out again as more moisture bring up more plants. Call me Janny Tumbleweed, if you like, and by all means, stop by some day soon and pick yourself a pint (or a bushel) of purslane.

--Jan Bowers

Up-Coming Events

September 7-8 (Sat-Sun), CNPS Rare Plant Treasure Hunt, Amargosa River, Hwy 127
Bring your camping gear, food, botany supplies, camera and GPS. We hike between 2 and 7 miles a day, depending on the area and what we find along the way. Share what you know, learn something new, and take home a desert experience to savor, inspire and inform our future. To reserve your spot and get trip instructions, please contact kclark@cnps.org:

September 14, Saturday, 9-11:30 AM. Bristlecone Chapter Native Plant Sale. White Mountain Research Center, 3000 E. Line Street, Bishop CA
A wonderful array of native plants is offered every year. We've been busy coaxing from seed dozens of brittlebush, various buckwheats, penstemons, Mojave aster, lupine and many more favorites!! Plant prices are currently $5.00 for a small tree pot and $8.00 for gallon pots. Contact Katie at plant_sale@bristleconecnps.org if you have any questions.

September 14, Saturday, 9 AM. Gardening with Natives Symposium, sponsored by Sierra Foothills Chapter, CNPS, Sierra Building, Mother Lode Fairgrounds, Stockton Street in Sonora California. Early registration ends September 1. For more information contact Patricia Hohne (209) 352-4312, phohne@gmail.com or visit the website at www.sierrafoothillscnps.org

September 18, Wednesday, 7 PM. Bristlecone Board Meeting, Friends of Inyo Office, 819 North Barlow Lane, Bishop.
All members are welcome.

September 25, Wednesday, 7 PM. Bristlecone General Meeting, White Mountain Research Center, 3000 E Line Street, Bishop CA
Conservation of California's native plants
Greg Suba, Conservation Program Director, California Native Plant Society

Up-Coming Events

October 19, Saturday, 9:30 AM *Bitterbrush Planting/Indian Fire Rehab*. Leaders: Martin Oliver (BLM), Julie-Anne Hopkins
Last summer the Indian Fire burned over 10,000 acres of sagebrush/bitterbrush habitat east of Mono Lake, important for sage-grouse and other wildlife. Come out and help plant bitterbrush shrubs, needlegrass, and other native plants. Meet at 9:30 at the Mono Mills Interpretive Site on Highway 120 East, approximately 9 miles east of Highway 395. Four-wheel drive is recommended. The site is accessed through a Forest Service two track road that leaves Highway 120 in Big Sand Meadow west of Sagehen Summit. For more information contact Martin Oliver at mpoliver@blm.gov, 760-872-5035.

October 20, 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.

November 2, – DeDecker Garden fall clean-up. Katie Quinlan, Sue Weis.
Meet at end of S, Fowler at 8:30 to carpool or be at garden at 9:20. Bring your gloves and gardening tools and help get the garden ready for winter. For more information, contact Sue Weis at sueweis@aol.com, 760-873-3485.

Bristlecone Chapter Directory
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Creosote Ring Sub-chapter: Kathy LaShure 760-377-4541
Programs: Holly Alpert 760-709-2212
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Book Sales: Sue Weis 760-873-3485
T-shirt Sales: Scott Hetzler 760-873-8392
Conservation: Julie Anne Hopkins 831-566-6012
Partnerships/Chapter Council Representative 760-938-3140
Highway Clean-up: Scott Hetzler 760-873-8392

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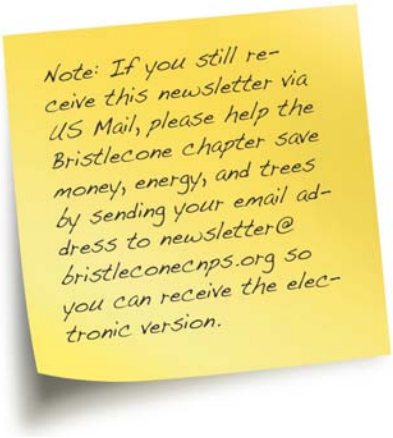

Membership

The California Native Plant Society is an organization of laypersons 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.
To Join or Renew Online: Go to cnps.org and click on the JOIN/renew button at the top of the page, or mail in the form below:

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ **State:** _____
Zip Code: _____ **Phone:** _____
Email: _____

I wish to be affiliated with the **Bristlecone Chapter**: _____
Other: _____

Membership Category

_Student / Limited Income	$25
__ Individual	$45
__ Family	$75
__ Plant Lover	$100
__ Patron	$300
__ Benefactor	$600
__ Mariposa Lily	$1500
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