



## Bristlecone Chapter

*Dedicated to the Preservation of California Native Flora*

# The California Native Plant Society

Bristlecone Chapter Newsletter

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**Volume 40, No. 4**  
**July - August 2019**

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## President's Message, July 2019

This nice cool and extended spring has been great! I hope you all have been out hiking and enjoying the extended bloom. The extra water and cool beginning-of-the-season gave all the plants a little boost and a lot more volunteer plants have shown up in my garden. I have let the poppies, scale bud and desert dandelions go and finally, after five years, my front yard is covered in oranges and yellows. Of course, by letting the chosen annuals go they hide the weeds I don't want. When I became a host of a garden for the Eastern Sierra Land Trust's pollinator garden tour, I felt like my garden looked a little weedy. But the bees just loved rolling around in the poppies and the finches stand on the scale bud flowers and peck out the seeds, so I feel I can't clean them up until the critters are done with them.

In getting my garden ready for the Pollinator Garden Tour, I was deadheading my lupine bushes in the front yard. All of a sudden, a large animal scuttled away, scaring the bejesus out of me. I looked down and there, tucked under the lupine bush, was a mallard nest with nine eggs in it! Once I moved away from the bush the mother came back and took up her spot. She calmly sat on her eggs while 30 garden visitors were none the wiser of her presence. I thought not only has my yard become a good habitat for insects and songbirds but other wildlife as well.

At least 30 people came to visit my garden and get ideas of how they could incorporate natives into their own garden. In this year of plenty of water, I hear less talk of putting in natives to save water (after all the governor has declared that all of California is now out of the drought) and more concern for helping out the pollinators. The shift of concerns is warranted because 40% of insect species are at risk of extinction in the next few decades.

There is also a certain amount of enjoyment in watching the different insects flit around the garden.

Part of this spring's huge migration of painted lady butterflies came through my garden; so many were enjoying the blossoms in my almond tree that they made the branches sway. The carpenter bee that was working the Palmer's penstemon had to go all the way into the flower to get his treat. Later in the summer, the *Melissodes* (long-horned bees) will come out. The males all like to sleep together on one flower. Once in a while, one of my black-eyed susans will be their bachelor pad, and although they have flown around chasing each other all day, they will all be crashed out in the same flower.



A carpenter bee looking for a treat in Palmer's penstemon.  
Photo by Katie Quinlan.

My neighbors all love their lawns but planting for the pollinators, perhaps, is a good thing. On some summer evenings I look out at 15-30 dragonflies dancing above my front yard, and theirs is an insect desert where nothing is happening.

--Katie Quinlan

## Spring Field Trip Reports

### April 27. Tungsten Peak with Steve Matson

Ten intrepid souls turned out for the first field trip of the year on the last Saturday in April. Actually, nothing was intrepid about it; it was one of the nicest days of spring so far. Just warm enough, sunny and clear, and....no wind....at all! Wonderful.

Perhaps the turnout was small given my description of the hike, steep up and steep down at times. My 65-year-old knees had had enough by the time we got back down to the bottom.



Photos by Steve Matson.

Many shrubs at the trail head had not even begun to leaf out yet: indigo bush (*Psoralea*) for one. Plenty of annuals and assorted other shrubs, like budsage (*Artemisia spinescens*), were abundant along the trail. Some weedy tansy mustards were common (native *Descurainia californica* and nonnative *Descurainia sophia*), as was filaree (*Erodium cicutarium*). However, the natives were dominant and

we managed to see one spectacular geophyte (go look that up) *Muilla coronata* and an early-blooming “buttercup” *Ranunculus andersonii*.



*Muilla coronata* (top) and *Ranunculus andersonii* (bottom). Go to the Bristlecone Chapter’s website to find Steve’s [incomplete plant species list](#) recorded during this trip. Photos by Steve Matson.

The views all around were fantastic, especially from the summit. A relaxed lunch and pleasant conversation were indulged in while on top. Before we left, we managed to spy some ski tracks high on Mt. Tom and Basin Peak. A quick descent by mid-afternoon was just right for the demographic on the field trip (everyone older than or at least pushing 60). Even the canine cohort experiment went well.

-- Steve Matson

### May 24. Lower Rock Creek Gorge with Ann Howald

Our small but very enthusiastic group enjoyed a cool, overcast day exploring the lower reaches of Rock Creek Gorge. Ambling up the trail from the Paradise trailhead, we immediately encountered an array of Mojavean wildflowers, including whispering bells (*Emmenanthe penduliflora*), spotted wild buckwheat (*Eriogonum maculatum*), desert trumpet (*Eriogonum inflatum*), chia (*Salvia columbariae*), blazing star (*Mentzelia* spp.), and desert pincushion (*Chaenactis*

*stevioides*). Perhaps the most interesting of this group was New Mexico thistle (*Cirsium neomexicanum*), a tall, deep pink-flowered biennial or short-lived perennial. Its distribution in California is mainly in the Mojave Desert, including the Death Valley region and the mountain ranges of the eastern Mojave, although there are a few disjunct records on the east slope of the Sierra west of Reno. The Rock Creek Gorge population is one of only two known sites for this thistle in Mono County. As with all thistles, it's an important nectar plant, and has seeds that are relished by goldfinches.

Above the first creek crossing we entered a grove of stately ponderosa pines (*Pinus ponderosa*) that extends up canyon for quite a ways. This stand of more than 200 individuals is the largest known for this tree in Mono County. In the eastern Sierra south of Lake Tahoe, ponderosa pine occurs at similar elevations to where it's found on the west slope, but the dryness here restricts it to riparian situations. Our ponderosa stands are limited in number: Lower Rock Creek, and Lone Tree Canyon (White Mts.) in Mono County; and Pine Creek, Bishop Creek and a few other creeks in Inyo County. We examined the trees and cones closely to see if hybridization with Jeffrey pine (*Pinus jeffreyi*), abundant upstream and elsewhere, could be noted. The bark smelled like a pine tree rather than the butterscotch-cream-soda smell of Jeffrey, and the cones were the size and prickliness of ponderosa. But the cone scale pattern trended a bit towards Jeffrey. Hybrids between these two closely related pines would be expected in sites like this one where populations overlap.



*Cirsium neomexicanum* © 2017 Jean Pawek.

Soldiering on, we came to small stands of two interesting shrubs: California coffeeberry [*Frangula* (= *Rhamnus*) *californica* ssp. *cuspidata*] and desert

olive (*Forestiera pubescens*). Coffeeberry is common in many east-slope canyons in Inyo County, but this is its only known location in Mono County. Coyotes relish the seeds when there's nothing else to eat. Desert olive barely makes it into Mono Co., just here and in Owens River Gorge, but is quite common to the south in Inyo County; its northern outliers are near Big Pine and in Cottonwood Canyon at the east base of the White Mts.

Exploring along the banks of Rock Creek, we found Kelley's lily (*Lilium kelleyanum*) still in bud; meadow paintbrush (*Castilleja miniata*); the twining vines of American vetch (*Vicia americana*) and Virgin's bower (*Clematis ligusticifolia*); and two herbaceous artemisias, mugwort (*Artemisia douglasiana*) and mountain mugwort (*Artemisia ludoviciana*), including intermediates between the latter two. We also took the time to describe the leaf differences between black cottonwood (*Populus trichocarpa*), which we saw, and which grows at higher elevations, and Fremont cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), which is so common in Owens Valley around Bishop.



Our group admiring ponderosa pines in Lower Rock Creek Gorge. Photo by Ann Howald.

Venturing a bit further up the canyon, we found a few more interesting wildflowers: Death Valley phacelia (*Phacelia vallis-mortae*), lacepod (*Thysanocarpus curvipes*), common silver lupine (*Lupinus argenteus* ssp. *heteranthus*), Wilcox's woolly-star (*Eriastrum wilcoxii*), and rose penstemon (*Penstemon floridus*). Interestingly, cut-leaf thelypodium (*Thelypodium laciniatum*), so common here, in Owens Gorge and on the Volcanic Tableland last year, with flower stalks eight feet and more tall, was conspicuously missing, except for skeletons from last year. Perhaps this huge biennial blooms abundantly only every two years, or

perhaps just the next year after each big rainfall year. If so, they should be out in force in 2020.

The enthusiasm and curiosity of our group, as well as the many interesting plants, made this a day to remember!

--Ann Howald

## Help for the Insect Apocalypse: Calscape Adds Host Plant Information for CA Native Butterflies and Moths

The California Native Plant Society announced today that its Calscape native plant database now includes host plant information for California native butterflies and moths (Lepidoptera). For these insects, host plants are those on which they can lay their eggs and their caterpillars can eat—and only specific plants will do.

Now, people can go to [Calscape.org](http://Calscape.org) and type in any California address to see which butterfly and moth species are native to their location, and which native plants to grow for those moths and butterflies. Calscape users also can select from more than [1,300 butterfly and moth species](#) to see which plants those species need to survive. For example, Pasadena users can quickly see the [270](#) native butterfly and moth species native to their location and view the list of [host plants](#) on which they depend. They can also view the host plants to support any selected species, such as [Monarch](#) and [Lorquin's Admiral](#), at their location.

“If you care about the collapse of butterflies and other pollinators, this is a simple tool you can use to help in a very real way,” said ecologist Douglas Tallamy, one of the nation’s most published researchers on the specialized relationships between native plants and insects. Research shows 90 percent of butterfly and moth species can only eat the native plant species with which they’ve co-evolved. If a given species of butterfly or moth can’t find its particular host plants in the area it resides, it will die out in that location. “The problem is loss of habitat, so restoring these host plants to our neighborhoods and green spaces is a powerful solution.

Caterpillars and insects need native plants to survive, and creatures further up the food chain need those insects, especially caterpillars. For example, Tallamy’s popular book, *Bringing Nature Home*, explains that 96 percent of terrestrial bird species rely on insects to feed their young, and fat juicy

caterpillars are a key part of that diet. So if the required native plants are not present in an area, most of the butterfly and moth species will die out in that area along with much of the other animal life that depends on them.

“We hope this new tool will lead to many more people growing the native plants that support our natural ecosystems,” Calscape creator and project lead Dennis Mudd said. “If enough people join in, we can help mitigate the loss of biodiversity we’re now seeing in California.”

### Acting locally

Retired marine biologist and CNPS Garden Ambassador Ann Dalkey took it upon herself to address habitat decline in her community with the help of her local CNPS South Coast Chapter. “More and more people are recognizing that the place to expand habitat is within our urban landscapes,” she said.



An El Segundo blue butterfly with its host plant, sea cliff buckwheat (*Eriogonum parvifolium*). Photo by Ann Dalkey.

Together, Dalkey and the CNPS South Coast Chapter started the Patch Habitat Program to expand habitat for their local El Segundo blue butterfly and other local native butterfly species. To do so, they planted sea-cliff buckwheat (*Eriogonum parvifolium*) and additional host plants in residential and urban landscapes. As part of the effort, volunteers planted hundreds of sea-cliff buckwheat in the chapter’s Point Vicente Interpretive Garden in Rancho Palos Verdes, where visitors can learn about the butterfly and the importance of habitat. Today, just about every plant in the garden supports some kind of butterfly, said Garden Manager Megan Wolff.

"It's about finding the sweet spot between landscaping and creating habitat," said Cris Sarabia, a CNPS board member, co-founder of Flora y Tierra in Long Beach, and active member of the South Coast Chapter. "People want to have something beautiful in their landscapes, something to make you feel inspired as you step out the door every morning. We can do that, and we can also create much needed habitat at the same time. With Calscape, CNPS is showing us that it can be done."

### About the new data

The Calscape team created the new tool by integrating:

- Host plant information primarily from Doug Tallamy's lab at the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware, the National Wildlife Federation's [Native Plant Finder](#), and the National History Museum's [Database of the World's Lepidopteran Hostplants](#).
- Geographic range maps of the butterfly and moth species in California based on approximately 50,000 geo-referenced field observations provided through [iDigBio](#), the [Symbiota Collections of Arthropods Network](#), [Butterflies and Moths of North America](#), and the [Essig Museum of Entomology](#) at UC Berkeley.
- Geographic range maps of the plant species native to California based on more than 2 million field occurrences provided through the [Jepson Herbarium](#) at UC Berkeley and the participants of the [Consortium of California Herbaria](#).
- Thousands of butterfly and moth images with the help of [Calphotos](#).

"We want to acknowledge every organization, intern and field researcher who conducted the painstaking business of properly recording and digitizing these kinds of records," added CNPS Executive Director Dan Gluesenkamp. "So, support your nearby research institutions and scientists. This work is never-ending and is needed now more than ever to fight both local and global extinction."

--Liv O'Keefe, CNPS Sacramento

### Field Notes: 2018

American bugseed is not an attractive name for a plant. Although it must be admitted that this plant is

not particularly attractive in and of itself. What do you really expect from Chenopodiaceae, the goosefoot family? Nevertheless, is there any attraction whatsoever?

Yes there is, namely rarity and location. In California, American bugseed, *Corispermum americanum* var. *americanum*, is known only from Eureka Valley in Inyo County. I first became aware of this plant via the UC Berkeley image library [CalPhotos](#). I was searching for plant images from Marble Canyon in Inyo County. This is a bit problematic as there are numerous locales with this name, befitting a considerable amount of this type of rock in Inyo County. Fortunately, there is only one of these in the Inyo Mountains. I had been thinking about a trip to the Marble Canyon in the Inyo Mts. for a while. This is the canyon that drains the east side of the Inyo Mts. into the south west corner of Eureka Valley. An intrepid botanist named Drew Kaiser had posted a picture of *Corispermum americanum* var. *americanum* from the Marble Canyon Dunes, also known as the Hidden Dunes, in 2015. Working for Death Valley National Park he has been monitoring this rare population for several years now.



*Corispermum americanum* var. *americanum*. Photos by Steve Matson.

There is nothing like a rare plant in a hard-to-get-to and unique location. Eureka Valley, roughly 25 square miles in area, sits just east over the Inyo Mts. from Big Pine, CA at about 3,000 feet in elevation. It is one of the least developed valleys in the desert

southwest of California. It has paved roads running to it but not through it. The best-known feature is the Eureka Dunes in the southeast corner of the Valley, about an hour and half from Big Pine.

I ran into Drew at the Banff film festival in Bishop in March of 2018. I talked with him about when he had surveyed for it and he said, "Right about now!" Well, that certainly lit me up, so my wife Eileen, friend Paul and I went off on April 1, 2018 to Eureka Valley. We drove part way to the Eureka Dunes and then turned and drove west until we were out in the middle of the valley. We then walked an hour or so west toward a slot in an arm of the Saline Range. After that we searched for a rather non-descript plant in the sandy draws near the Hidden Dunes, which lie in and just west of the slot in the Saline Range. We searched for a few hours in the increasing heat before giving up to watch the zebra-tailed lizards dart through the sand. It turns out we were a bit early. I really had wanted to get a better sense of what this plant looked like, so I made a trip to the Jepson Herbarium in Berkeley, CA. There was but one collection made by John Roos from 1955. I had a look and photographed the one collection of this plant. On April 17, I returned alone on a colder and windier day. It is an interesting walk across the valley bottom, past ventifacted rocks, creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*) and lots and lots of sand and gravel. This time I was luckier. I found a few plants in the first sandy draw on the south side of "the slot". I searched up and over a rocky outcrop and found more in a more easterly draw. It was just in flower and that was perfect. Better still would be to return later, in May or June, when the plants are in seed. Maybe this year!

The hidden dunes themselves are a worthwhile destination for anyone with an interest in desert exploration. The opportunity for a solitary adventure in a vast and austere locale is exceptional. Eureka Valley is also home to three other rare plant species, which are notably more charismatic and even endemic to this region, a further reason to visit this valley. They are a story for another time.

-- Steve Matson

## Garden Updates

The plant sale at Easter Sierra Land Trust's Gardenfest was a resounding success! We had more customers than at the fall sale last year and doubled the number of plants sold and money made. In fact, the sale was so successful that the plants I thought we

had plenty enough for the fall sale sold out this time around. Many thanks to Pete Anderson for helping me run the sale.

The cool spring has allowed me to plant more of other plants to fill out the numbers that were sold at Gardenfest. I am experimenting with planting fresh seed right away. For the first time, I have gotten *Ephedra viridis* to sprout! Now I will see if it will continue to grow.

People are asking: when is the plant sale? I have tried to consistently schedule it on the third Saturday in August. We should call it the late summer sale instead of the fall sale. I am often asked why I schedule it in the hot weather (Anne and Karen had held it on the third Sat. in Sept.) The problem I run into is that there are far too many events going on in September: the Tricounty Fair, Millpond Music Festival and Public Lands Day. Even if these events don't take up the entire weekend, they do engage a lot of my volunteers and make it hard for me to find help to run the sale in September. Thus, I moved it to August. I have also found that the plants do fine if they are planted into a garden where they are going to get regular water and can be shaded for a little bit to get going.



Banner for the annual plant sale/fundraiser.

This year, to help people remember the sale date, we have arranged with Caltrans to allow us to hang a banner on fences at Home Street School and at the Fairgrounds. The only condition was that we couldn't have the word "sale" on it (something to do with regulations and not being allowed to advertise off-site sales). To get around this we are reminding people of our "Annual Fundraiser"—look for the banners beginning in August.

--Katie Quinlan

## New Members, Welcome!

Thank you to our newest members for choosing to support of our local chapter! Welcome to the Bristlecone Chapter,

David of El Portal  
Diana of Rancho Cucamonga  
James of Santa Monica  
James of Wrightwood  
Kristofer of Minneapolis  
Robert of Bishop  
Todd of Berkeley  
Zachary of San Diego

Have a beautiful flora- and fauna-filled summer, members!



*Eriogonum ovalifolium*. Photo by Steve Fletcher.

### Up-Coming Events (For updated information, visit [bristleconecnps.org/events](http://bristleconecnps.org/events))

**Wednesday, September 11, 6:00 pm**  
**Bristlecone Chapter Board Meeting**  
Eastern Sierra Land Trust, 250 N. Fowler, Bishop  
All members are welcome.

### Up-Coming Events (For updated information, visit [bristleconecnps.org/events](http://bristleconecnps.org/events))

**Wednesday, September 18, 7:00 pm**  
**Bristlecone Chapter General Meeting**  
TBD

**Saturday, August 24, 9:00–11:00 am**  
**Bristlecone Chapter Annual Native Plants Sale**  
**White Mountain Research Center, Bishop**

This is the largest native plant sale of the year, and yes, we can accept credit cards! We open to all CNPS members at 8:00 am and then to the public at 9:00 am. If you register with us to become a member that morning, you can get in at 8:00 am too!

A wonderful array of native plants is offered every year. A variety of flowers, shrubs, and trees adapted to our area will be for sale. Click this link for a [list of some of the plants that have been available at past plant sales](#). Proceeds from the annual native plant sales provide funding for our Mary DeDecker Botanical Grants. The grant program is a fitting way to remember Mary DeDecker's many contributions to the people and plants of the Eastern Sierra.

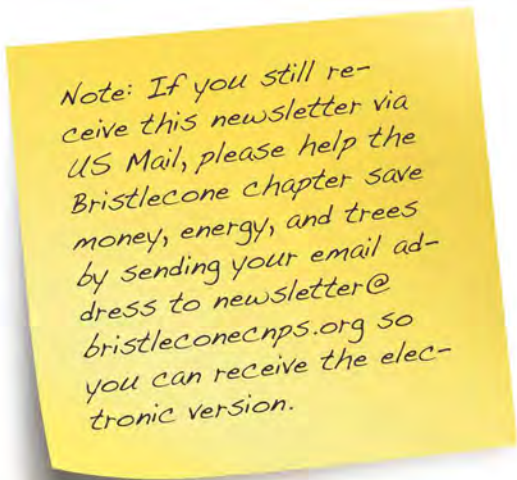
**Please send your articles and other information to us by August 15, 2019 for the next issue.**

#### **Bristlecone Chapter Directory**

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DeDecker Grants: Michèle Slaton 760-920-8693  
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DeDecker Garden: Peter Anderson

**The California Native Plant Society**

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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](http://cnps.org) and click on the JOIN/renew button at the top of the page, or mail in the form below:

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