

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF THE CALIFORNIA NATIVE FLORA

Volume 19 No. 1 January 1999

NEXT CHAPTER MEETING

The next meeting will be one week earlier than usual, on **Wednesday, January 20** at 7:00 p.m. at the White Mtn. Research Station in Bishop. The speaker will be Bob Brister, Outreach Coordinator for the Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign. The slide presentation is entitled "Sierra Forest Protection," and was developed by the Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign, a coalition of conservation organizations and individuals who are fighting for protection of ancient forests and wild rivers in the Sierra. Bob's program will address conservation issues in the remaining Sierran forests, riparian and roadless areas.

NEXT CHAPTER BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, January 12 at 7:00 p.m. at the White Mountain Research Station. All chapter members and other interested individuals are welcome and encouraged to attend. Members, please bring a goodie to share.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This winter your president and some of his closest cabinet members are fleeing the country for warmer climates in Costa Rica. We will be gone for only a few weeks but we will need to empty the chapter's coffers so that we can live comfortably while we are down there. So that we don't feel so bad about taking all the chapter's money we will be looking at tropical plants, and if we feel it is safe to return to the USA we will report to you on what we found. This way you will not think that we have spent the chapter's money foolishly. About now you are probably thinking "this guy is nuts". Maybe that's true but I'm still the President with a little sense of humor. So remember to have a "Happy New Year". One last note - we still need volunteers to fill the following vacancies: Publicity, Field Trips, Hospitality and a Funding Committee Chair.

.....Scott Hetzler

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Upcoming Events

Retirement Party for Mono County Supervisor, Andrea Lawrence

The Mono County Board of Supervisors is sponsoring a retirement party on **Saturday, January 16th** for Andrea Lawrence who has dedicated 16 years of outstanding service to the county and to the landscapes of the eastern Sierra. The festivities will be at 6:00 (no-host bar) and dinner at 7:00 at the Mammoth RV Park Community Center on Highway 203 in Mammoth Lakes. Please RSVP by January 10th by calling Nancy Whitmore at (760) 935-4845

The Jepson Herbarium 1999 Weekend Workshops on Botanical Subjects

Bryophytes of the North Coastal Ranges
February 12-15
Brent Mishler and Mona Bourell

Lichens
March 6 & 7
Larry St. Clair and Clayton Newberry

Baja California Botanical Field Trip
March 17-21
Jon Rebmann

Ceanothus
March 27 & 28
Clifford Schmidt and Roager Raiche

Northern Vernal Pools
April 2-4
Bob Holland and Virginia Dains

Plant Insect Relationships
April 10 & 11
Jerry Powell

The classes are limited to 20 participants and enrollment is on a first-come, first-served basis, so register early! For Further information, please call Susan D'Alcama at the Jepson Herbarium, (510) 643-7008.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

The Walk of the Seven Heathers

On August 22, Kathy Duvall and Cathy Rose co-led a trip near Tioga Pass from Junction Campground to the restored mine buildings at Bennetville and on along Mine Creek to a series of lakes at the edge of the Harvey Monroe Hall Research Natural Area.

There is no place finer than the high country at the peak of its bloom, and participants enjoyed some superb sights, including masses of bright red Peirson's paintbrush (*Castilleja parviflora*), the uncommon burnt-orange groundsel (*Senecio pauciflorus*), and displays of various buckwheats such as *Eriogonum umbellatum*, *E. incanum* and *E. nudum*.

Dean Taylor, our speaker at the CNPS banquet and a botanist from the Jepson Herbarium, came along on the walk. He recognized the frustration that came with our attempts to identify the ground-hugging Lupines along the trail. "They belong to the *Lupinus lepidus* group," he said. "There are 31 flavors". He knelt above a stream among dense vegetation and pointed out the least common of the heaths that were to dominate the day. *Gaultheria humifusa*, a relative of the very common Salal (*Galtheria shallon*) of the California North Coast, is a small, spreading shrub with thick leathery leaves that can also be found in the lower reaches

of Cathedral Creek and in Slate Creek Valley.

The heaths, or members of the Ericaceae Family, are lovers of the acid soil provided by the decaying needles of lodgepole pine, whitebark pine and mountain hemlock. In addition to the *Gaultheria*, the group saw mountain red heather (*Phyllodoce breweri*) blooming beneath the lodgepoles; alpine laurel (*Kalmia polifolia*) clinging to the banks of lakes; tall Labrador tea (*Ledum glandulosum*) with clusters of white flowers; and the much-beloved white heather (*Cassiope mertensiana*) with its exquisite urn-shaped flowers standing out against its dark green foliage. One member of the group summarized the seven: creeping, red, pink, tall, dwarf, tea and white.

There was talk of *Saxifraga tolmiei*, which one member of the group had seen near Conness Lakes, but a search turned up only its more common fellow, *Saxifraga bryophora*, the bulbet-bearing Saxifrage, which grew densely in thin granite snow-melt soil and offered its yellow-dotted white petals to the scrutiny of hand lenses.

The Crowther's grandson Jacob, age 8, on his very first botanical walk, found the curious moonwort or grape-fern (*Botrychium* sp.) among dense sedges and grasses. Jacob said that he had enjoyed the walk "except when you were all standing in one place talking".

On the way back, with Tioga Peak rising to the east and Mt. Dana before us, we felt inspired by the beauty of the surroundings and the richness and variety of the flora.

.....Cathy Rose

CONSERVATION

Inyo Mountains Alert

The Owens Valley Radio Observatory (OVRO) continues to press quietly forward with its proposal to establish a new radio observatory at "Upper Harkless Flat" in the Inyo Mountains, despite objections raised by local environmental groups, Native Americans, and others. (See the description of this project in the November, 1998 issue (Vol. 18, No. 6) of the Bristlecone chapter newsletter.)

The Bristlecone chapter is taking a proactive approach and is attempting to dissuade OVRO from pursuing this proposal before it initiates the NEPA process. At our chapter's November meeting, a motion was introduced which formally declared our opposition to any activities which threatened the ecological integrity of Upper Harkless Flat. The motion passed unanimously.

Because the proposed observatory would constitute a major threat to the integrity of Upper Harkless Flat, I wrote a letter to Dr. Steve Scott of OVRO informing him of our resolution, briefly stating the basis for our objections to the proposal, and appealing to him to abandon consideration of Upper Harkless Flat as a potential observatory site. Dr. Scott then arranged another meeting (he had previously made a presentation to several CNPS members in October) to discuss OVRO's proposal.

The second meeting was held in early December. Most of the meeting was spent answering Dr. Scott's questions about our objections to the project as specified in the letter I had written. We presented, in effect, a brief lesson in plant ecology. We discussed grazing impacts and weed invasions and the absence of both at Upper

Harkless Flat. We discussed the nature of cryptogamic soil crusts present at Upper Harkless Flat and their vulnerability to trampling. We also explained how little-known the flora and vegetation of the Inyo Mountains really are. We made a concerted effort to explain to Dr. Scott that our objection lies as much in the fact that the observatory will impact an essentially intact, pristine ecosystem as in the fact that it will impact numerous CNPS- listed plant species.

While it appeared that we advanced Dr. Scott's knowledge of plant ecology, he gave no indication that OVRO had any intention of changing its plans. He said OVRO would make a decision soon on how to proceed. Until we hear anything to the contrary, we must assume OVRO will pursue this terribly misguided proposal and we must be prepared to oppose it.

To initiate the project, OVRO will apply for a Special Use Permit from the Inyo National Forest [INF]. INF will then require completion of an environmental impact statement according to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act before making a recommendation about whether to issue the permit. The final decision will be made by the Regional Forester.

If you have any interest in protecting the Inyo Mountains from this destructive project and would consider writing a letter at the appropriate time please contact me at (760-873-8943) or via e-mail at Skypilots@telis.org. Letters will be needed both during the initial scoping process for the EIS and also when a draft EIS is produced.

We especially encourage CNPS members who don't reside in the Owens Valley to get

on this list to write letters. OVRO has powerful political connections at both state and national levels and we need to be able to show that many people value the Inyo Mountains and that opposition to this project is not confined to Owens Valley residents.

.....Daniel Pritchett

Help Monitor Visitor Use at Eureka Dunes.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Park Service are interested in more closely monitoring visitor use and activities at the Eureka Dunes. With a better understanding of the types of activities occurring there, we'll be able to better develop strategies to protect the Dune's endemic plant and animal species and anticipate future trends in visitor activities. Resource and ranger staff for the Park have large areas to cover, however, so their time at any one park location is very limited.

Visitors to the Dunes can help! If you visit the Eureka Dunes, the Park Service and USFWS would appreciate hearing from you. A brief note that includes the date and time you visited, a rough estimate of the number of other visitors there, and a description of visitor activities on the dunes will be most appreciated. Detail is particularly valuable regarding vehicles and camping outside the bounds of the parking areas (where?), sandboarding, sledding, or horseback riding on the dunes, and locations where most visitors are congregating (which parking area?).

Your observations are valuable, even if to report that there were no other visitors present on the Sunday afternoon that you visited. Please send your observations to

Attn: Botanist, Division of Resource Management, Death Valley National Park, Death Valley, CA, 92328, or Attn: Diane Steeck, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2493 Portola Rd, Suite B, Ventura, CA 93003.

.....Diane Steeck

LEGISLATION

Legislative Update

It seems that the Salvage Logging Rider of 1994 worked so well that Congress has now made riders a routine lawmaking tool. Our anti-environmental policy legislation is being made behind the scenes by these riders attached to unrelated legislation. 70 are pending this new year. We need to tell President Clinton, our House and Senate Representatives and the House and Senate leadership (see addresses below) to stand firm against anti-environmental riders.

Bob Smith (R-OR) has a bill called H.R. 2493 that would lock-in very low, below-cost grazing fees on BLM and USFS lands. It would also make it harder to correct grazing mismanagement and make it difficult for citizens, scientists and others to monitor public lands. Interior Secretary Babbitt has said he will recommend a veto of the bill. Please contact Senators Boxer and Feinstein and urge them to oppose the Smith/Craig grazing bill.

You may wish to send a simple letter of support for strong environmental laws. Here is an example courtesy of Sally de Becker (East Bay Chapter):

Dear _____ I care about the environment. I do not want any environmental laws weakened and I will pay

attention to how you vote to protect my interest.

Addresses are: Senator _____ ,
U.S. Senate, Washington DC 20510

The Honorable _____ ,U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515
President Bill Clinton, The White House,
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. Wash. DC 20510

It costs about \$.25 to call Washington before 8:00 a.m. Phone numbers: Capitol Switchboard: (202) 224-3121 for Senators Boxer and Feinstein, Republican Leader Trent Lott and Democratic Leader Tom Daschle for the Senate. White House Comments: (202) 456-1111 or (888) 387-8263. E-mail the President at: president@whitehouse.gov

.....Kathy Duvall

BOOK REVIEWS

Inspiring Native Plant Gardening Books

During the topsy-turvy weather of this winter, there is no reason for gardeners to go dormant along with their gardens. Now is the time for dreaming and planning and gathering inspiration that will provide energy through the long growing season soon to come. I'd like to share two books that have charged me up with anticipation for spring.

Observing the insect-plant interactions that happen in the native plant garden adds a fascinating dimension to gardening. Besides just enjoying the spectacle of a myriad of buzzing and fluttering creatures, it is wonderful to feel you have an integral role in the web of life by planting and maintaining the garden. John Alcock's enthusiasm for this subject is contagious in

his book "In a Desert Garden: Love and Death Among the Insects." He is fascinated with every creepy-crawly and winged creature to be found in any kind of habitat. A compost pile or a blooming brittlebush can keep him busy all day. Dr. Alcock is an entomology professor at Arizona State and lives in a nearby suburb where he has transformed his yard into both a beautiful native plant garden and a laboratory for his insect studies. He relates many humorous and interesting insect escapades along with photos showing the yearly growth of his low-maintenance garden. This book is especially valuable to us because some of the featured garden plants are similar to ours: apricot globe mallow, brittlebush, Penstemons, and milkweed. "In a Desert Garden" is available at the Inyo County Public Library.

The book that is currently thrilling me is "Gardening with a Wild Heart: Restoring California's Native Landscapes at Home" by Judith Larner Lowry. This is both a personal account of a woman's love of native landscapes and their wild inhabitants and a how-to text on creating and enjoying a native landscape. Ms. Lowry's work involves wildland seed collection, native plant propagation, and landscape design. Her book is an inspirational guide for creating a dynamic and beautiful native landscape.

This book is available in both paperback and hardback by special order at local bookstores.

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Local growers have not had much success establishing brittlebush (*Encelia actonii*) in the garden by transplanting seedlings in the fall. A better method may be to directly sow

the quickly germinating seeds in the garden in March or April. Anyone interested in planting brittlebush seeds may send me a stamped, self-addressed envelope and will receive a packet of seeds along with planting instructions. The only requirement is that you report on your success or lack thereof!

.....Karen Ferrell-Ingram

NEW MEMBERS

The Bristlecone Chapter Warmly Welcomes
the Following New Members

Joe and Kathleen Bellomo
Lee Vining

Next Newsletter Deadline: February 25th

THE CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY - 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.

Name_____ P.O. Box or Street_____

City_____ State_____ Zip Code_____ Phone_____

I wish to be affiliated with the Bristlecone Chapter_____. Other_____.

Membership Category

<input type="checkbox"/> Student/Retired/Limited Income	\$20.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual or Library	\$35.00
<input type="checkbox"/> International	\$35.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Family or Group	\$45.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting	\$75.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Plant Lover	\$100.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Patron	\$250.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Life	\$500.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor	\$1,000.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate	\$1,000.00

Please make check payable to: The California Native Plant Society. **Mail to:** Bristlecone Chapter, CNPS. P.O. Box Drawer 989, Lone Pine, CA 93526

Gift Contribution: Where most needed_____. Conservation_____.

THE BRISTLECONE CHAPTER NEWSLETTER comes out bimonthly. It is mailed free to members of the Bristlecone Chapter, CNPS. The subscription is \$5.00 per year for others. Please send newsletter articles not memberships to Newsletter Editor Anne Halford at 312 Shepard Lane, Bishop, CA 93514 - or email to: ahalford@ca.blm.gov

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