



# Insignis

Spring/Summer, 2004

Vol. 14, No. 2

California Native Plant Society  
Alta Peak Chapter Newsletter

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By now, spring is moving up the hills, and we are scheduling walks into higher elevations. Several dates are definite. A postcard mailing will update you about others that are confirmed after this *Insignis* is mailed. All field trips are open to the public, and free of charge. Bring water, food, hat, sunscreen, and comfortable walking shoes. For details, call trip leader if so identified, or Joan at 539-2717.

## CALENDAR

**15 May**, at River Ridge Ranch, about 1.6 miles on Balch Park Road northeast of the White Barn in Springville. Enter through the gate next to large River Ridge sign, down the driveway, stay left, and into parking area. Continue on foot through another gate and follow sign to Pavillion. We will start the walk at 9:00, wander through a flat meadow, and continue up the north side of Mt. Lumreau. Parking site is about 1500' elevation, and there is about a 500' elevation gain to a turning point where we'll have a spectacular view down the Tule River Valley towards Lake Success. The trail/road passes through a narrowing canyon with springs that Gary and Barbara are restoring to natural condition, and it is on this lower part of the walk that *Clarkia springvillensis* grows. This is a rare species found only around Springville. Depending on weather in preceding weeks, there may or may not be other flowers in bloom. Those who want may then go on up the mountain (the top is about 3000' elevation), while others may turn back. This walk is co-sponsored by the Sequoia Riverlands Trust (Tulare County's land trust). WildPlaces, working with River Ridge, is presently doing wildlife habitat enhancement on the lower portion of the ranch. Mission and goals of the three organizations overlap and sharing tasks and activities helps us all.

River Ridge was formerly part of a ranch owned for several generations by a local family. When it was broken up for sale, Gary Adest and Barbara Brydolf were able to buy 720+ acres along the North Fork of the Tule River, and with help from private and public state funding, placed a conservation easement on the property that limited future 'development' and subdivisions. Their intent is to make the area available for recreation and outdoor experiences for people in addition to retaining ecosystem value for wildlife and native vegetation. SRT holds the easement, and uses the ranch as an example of what land trusts work for. CNPS uses the trails to help visitors understand and enjoy wildflowers and plant diversity. WildPlaces has an ongoing project on the lower pasturelands to provide connections and corridors for movement of wildlife. Co-leader, Barbara Brydolf, 539-0207.

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**4-5-6 June.** The 32 statewide chapters of CNPS will hold their quarterly Chapter Council meeting at SCICON, hosted by the Alta Peak and Sequoia (Fresno County) chapters. Fletcher Linton will present a program about Sequoia National Forest plants on Friday evening. All members are welcome to attend all or part of the Saturday meeting. [Call a Board member listed on back of this newsletter for agenda details]. Sunday there will be field trips--one into a Giant Sequoia Grove, others in Scicon area. This is a chance for Tulare County CNPS members to mingle with individuals from elsewhere in California; we have mutual purposes, certain concerns are pervasive, but often, different issues demand our attention. Mohave is not San Diego is not Mendocino!

And this is also a call for help...since our chapter is co-host for this meeting, we share the responsibility for all the details that go into planning the event. We need volunteers to help. Please call Joan (539-2717) for details, and to offer your support in any way that fits your interests.

**12 June:** Jordan Peak, again, and yet again. Yes, we make this climb nearly every year, partly because we always have requests, often from visitors from outside our area. Repeating last year's information: we carpool on North Road from just beyond where it turns north from Hwy 190. The junction is near Quaking Aspen and is marked 'Pack Station'. We drive 9 miles to the trailhead, then hike about one mile along an easy trail from about 7000 to 9000' elevation.

We are in Red Fir forest, and as we approach Jordan Peak we enter an area of rock gardens, high meadow flowers, with focus on the rare Fawn Lily. Erythronium, the genus, is considered a special garden lily in European landscapes, and people come from all over the world to see them on Jordan Peak!! Let's hope we are lucky once more and find them in full flower. Hat, sunscreen, water (it can be bright on top), whatever snacks you want for several hours in mountain scenery. Although walking is not hard, please note the elevation gain.

**19 June, Saturday:** Case Mountain Sequoia Grove Hike, 1:00 to 6:00 PM. The Case Mountain BLM Sequoia Grove is located near Sequoia National Park, six miles east of Three Rivers, California, and is made up of the BLM lands around Case Mountain and Milk Ranch Peak. Giant Sequoias grow in three separate groves located on these public lands. These groves have never been logged and are currently in excellent condition. Two plant species, Kaweah brodiaea, the Insignis species that gave our chapter its logo, (State listed) and Sequoia gooseberry (Ribes tulareense, a rare species found only locally), grow in the area. Southern spotted owls and pileated woodpeckers have been observed in the mixed conifer and sequoia groves. Join BLM Botanist Denis Kearns on Saturday, June 19th, 2004, from 1:00 to 6:00 PM. There is currently no public vehicular access to this area, so take advantage of this unique opportunity. There is the potential for overnight camping on Saturday night. We will meet in Three Rivers and carpool to Case Mountain from there. For final details and to RSVP, contact Fletcher Linton, co-leader, 539-2395, or email address [laurayfletcher@yahoo.com](mailto:laurayfletcher@yahoo.com).

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July, We hope to get up to Slate Mountain to see the species that have made this a designated Botanic Area, for special management purposes. Date and details to be confirmed.

July. Onion Meadow...another place that we have tried to visit in other years...typical, yet different from other high elevation mountain meadows. Giant onion grows here, along with all those other wet-soil-needing plants (orchids?) that make the southern Sierra meadows so distinctive.

August. We'll try again. In 2002 McNally fires turned us away from mountain areas. In 2003 a heavy and unseasonal storm hit the Middle Fork of Tule River canyon. In 2004...Earthquake? But let's reschedule the trip from Coy Flat Campground, just west of Camp Nelson, to the property of Gary Hohnstein that was logged for Giant Sequoias back then...the owner of small in-holding with Sequoia trees below the Black Mt. Grove, just east of Solo Peak invites us to visit. The property has cultural interest in addition to forest vegetation, since it was logged in late 1800's using the drill-and-blast method. Gary will point out artifacts that demonstrate techniques used in these early logging days. Re-growth and associated vegetation can now be seen, and nearby places may hold special wildflowers. We'll probably meet at Coy Flat Campground entrance at 10:00, then re-group just beyond Rogers Camp. Elevations will range from 5000-7000'.

If you have an idea for a group hike, let me know... (Joan:.539-2717).

SPRINGVILLE PARK. More of this in next *Insignis*, but this lets you hear about a project still in the talking stage. Springville Park is due for some renovation that includes use of native and other drought resistant (low water need) plants, and maybe a native plant demonstration garden that includes some species of special interest for their value in native american cultures. Laura Linton has taken this on as her personal concern and will be glad to have volunteers from the community join her. Watch for information in local papers, or call her, 539-2395.

On the subject of growing native plants in residential or commercial settings, several times we have been asked if CNPS could offer a Workshop on Propagation of some of the more frequently asked about species. This would include collecting and treating seeds, layering, use of cuttings, and special maintenance requirements. Let us know if you or others you talk with are interested.

IN PORTERVILLE, Tule River Parkway Docent-lead walks along the Tule River in Porterville area are scheduled for:

Saturday, July 10, 2004, 8:00 a.m.

Saturday, October 9, 2004, 9:00 a.m.

Saturday, January 23, 2005, 10:00 a.m.

Everyone is welcome to come out and enjoy the Tule River trails with a guide to show you the way and point out plants, animals, and safe ways to enjoy our river. All walks will meet at the Tule River Park and Ride Lot, on the south bank of the Tule River at Jaye Street. Each seasonal walk will feature a different trail or area of the river. Children are

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welcome. The walks will last one to two hours at a gentle pace. We will stop and observe birds, native plants, and the changes of the seasons. Bring study shoes, water and dress for the season. There are no restroom facilities and water is available only at the Park and Ride Lot. Handicap access is available at the Park and Ride Lot. Please call ahead if you would like to request a walk on a handicap access path. The Sequoia Riverlands Trust is co-sponsoring this series of walks and the Tule River Parkway Association is providing the docent. Call for additional information 783-0201.

**VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY.** The Forest Service is currently seeking volunteers in the month of July for the Yellow Starthistle Reduction Project in the Hume Lake Ranger District of Sequoia National Forest/Giant Sequoia National Monument, east of Fresno at several locations; Davis Road (FR 12S01), Fox Springs, Delilah Y, Convict Flat, and County Road 465. The project is under Forest Service direction and entails pulling and bagging Yellow Starthistle, an invasive species that is choking out native flora. If you are interested in volunteering for this project, please contact Rich Kangas at rkangas02@comcast.net.

Sent to us by David Chipping, Conservation Director, CNPS

**ANNOUNCING:** NEW CNDDDB ONLINE QUAD VIEWER--this may interest some of our members? Did you ever wish you could just go online to see what the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) has for a particular topographic quadrangle, including occurrences that have been reported but haven't yet been entered into the CNDDDB (the "data backlog")?

The CNDDDB has recently developed an online Quad Viewer. The Quad Viewer allows the user to generate lists of rare plants, animals and natural communities by USGS 7.5 quadrangle. Go to <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/whdab/> and click on the left link "Quad Viewer". Follow the instructions that come up when you first launch the program or by clicking the Help tab once the viewer is open. There are separate buttons for the data already processed in the CNDDDB and for data still to be processed. In addition, there are tools that generate lists from a nine-quad area (the quad you pick plus the eight surrounding quads) for CNDDDB data and the backlog, respectively. These data will be updated monthly.

Roxanne Bittman, Lead Botanist, California Natural Diversity Database  
California Department of Fish and Game

**HELP NEEDED.** Once again, we list some tasks that need helpers. The Plant Sale is our only fund raising event (programs and hikes are free and open to the public) and needs some new volunteers. We also need help tending the display table at community events, tracking legislation and conservation issues that CNPS has an interest in, and help with the tasks presently assumed by other board members...*Insignis* editor, planning hikes and programs, and taking part in State Plant Science projects such as vegetation surveys and rare plant monitoring.

**FIRST OF SERIES:** Laura Linton has studied and worked in the field of ethnobotany and offers to submit articles related to our own Tulare County native plants. Thanks Laura...

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**Traditional Native American use of "soap plant", Chlorogalum pomeridianum**

Chlorogalum pomeridianum, commonly known as "soap plant" or amole, is a fascinating species common to the oak woodlands and chaparral below 5,000 feet in the Sierra Nevada. It is of interest both for its habit of "vespertine flowering" (the flowers open in the late afternoon and evening, and close by morning) and for its cultural significance to Native Americans throughout central California.

A member of the lily family, C. pomeridianum is most easily recognized by its basal cluster of wavy, linear leaves, and by a single flowering stalk, bearing many delicate white flowers. The bulbs are 10-15 cm long, and are covered by a thick layer of dark brown fibers. Both the fibers and the fleshy bulb are utilized by the Mono, Sierra Miwok, and Yokut tribes. Saponin found in the bulbs is used to make soap, and in the past, it was used to stun fish. Pulp from the roasted bulbs is used to make glue. It is also edible, though I'm told it is not particularly tasty.

The bulbs are most notably used to make soap-root brushes. It can take up to two weeks to make a brush in the traditional manner. After the bulb is harvested using a digging stick, the fibers are separated, washed, dried, and tied into a bundle with milkweed twine. The bulb is then baked in an earthen oven, and the pulp is used to form the handle. Several applications of the glue are applied and allowed to harden. Pitch is applied to the handles of scrub brushes to prevent them from dissolving in water.

These brushes were once essential to daily life, and they continue to hold much cultural significance for California tribes. Some were used as hairbrushes, while others were used as brooms and scrub brushes. Soap-root brushes are essential for traditional acorn preparation. They are used to "round up" stray acorn pieces during the grinding process. They are then used in conjunction with special baskets to separate the fine flour from coarser grains. Baskets used to cook acorn mush are often cleaned with these brushes as well.

Sources: Louis Jean Conner (Mono/Miwok /Chuckchase), untitled pamphlet. Lucy and Julia Parker (Coast Miwok/Kashaya Pomo), panel discussion: Society of Ethnobiology 24th Annual Conference, Davis, CA March 2004. Dr. Judy Journsted, panel discussion: Society of Ethnobiology 24th Annual Conference, Davis, CA March 2004.

**LAST BUT NOT LEAST.** We have saved a Very Important Topic for an ending to this Spring 2004 *Insignis*...a fervent thank you to Janet Fanning for your years of leadership of the Tulare County, Alta Peak Chapter. From her home in Three Rivers, with loyal backing from other Three Rivers members, she has kept all the financial and membership records, dealt with correspondence, organizational business, has taken our table-top display to numerous events to spread our message and mails the *Insignis* and press releases. Now she has said 'ENOUGH' and turned over the presidential hat to Joan Stewart and the Springville core. Janet, you did whatever you said you would do, you supported others, were always decisive, and since the beginning of CNPS in Tulare County you have been a friend of native plants. We are grateful that you are staying with us. Again...THANK YOU.

**Dedicated to the Preservation of the Native Flora**

The California Native Plant Society is a statewide non-profit organization of amateurs and professionals with a common interest in California's native plants. The Society, working through its local chapters, seeks to increase understanding of California's native flora and to preserve this rich resource for future generations. Membership is open to all, and includes informative publications, free field trips, programs, and discounts on books and posters. Also included is the *Bulletin*, a quarterly statewide report of activities and schedules, and this chapter newsletter. Please call the membership chairperson for more information.

**New Membership Application**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Membership category:

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Student, Retired, Limited income, \$20

City \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Individual, Library, \$35

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Household, Family, or Group, \$45

Tel. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Supporting, \$75

**I wish to affiliate with:**

\_\_\_\_ Plant Lover, \$100

\_\_\_\_ Alta Peak Chapter (Tulare County)

\_\_\_\_ Patron, \$250

\_\_\_\_ Other

\_\_\_\_ Benefactor, \$500

**Mail application and check to:**

\_\_\_\_ Other: \$1000, 2500, 5000, 10,000

Membership Chairman, California Native Plant Society, 2707 K Street, Suite 1, Sacramento, CA 95816

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