

INSIGNIS

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CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY ALTA PEAK CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

Please send changes of address to Membership Chair

REMINDER--February 17.

Sierra Scenes and Flora
Springville Memorial Building, 7:00.
Invite your neighbors, friends!!

When the Winter Insignis was mailed last month, it didn't address the topic of upcoming Springtime walks, explores, hikes, field trips....in other words where we might go to enjoy our rapidly greening world. Suddenly spring is here, in the sense that hills are green, buds are swelling at stem tips, and with intervals of warmth and sunshine in our foothills, the soil surely is no longer too cold for roots and bulbs to think about growing. This Insignis adds a Calendar. Mark dates now.

The first follow-up survey of what is happening in the area burned by Deep Fire in 2004 will be **18 March**. A large group went there in May of last year, on a walk led by Fletcher Linton, to examine post-fire regeneration of vegetation. Amazing!! a virtual ground cover of *Chlorogalum* (Soap Plant), re-sprouts as well as germlings of previously dominant chaparral species, and the anticipated "fire followers", flowers that are seen only in the first or second season after a fire.

After this 2005 visit, some of us returned in following months to observe changes. We found some very unusual taxa, and decided to continue watching how the area changes. So, we are formally scheduling 3 visits to what we called Oak Flat, off the Wishon Road, on **18 March, 15 April, and 27 May**. For our first visit to the burned site, now going on =two years into Recovery, meet at the "Stone Steps/Stairs" parking, pull-off on

190, about 7 miles above Springville at 9:30 on 18 March. Times for other walks will probably be the same. Call to confirm.

For **April 29** we are planning a Work Party/ Visit to the Demonstration Native Plant Garden at Cathy Capone's Native Plant Nursery in Porterville. She is a longtime gardener, and a few years ago accepted the challenge of growing valley oaks and three non-native trees to provide shade trees to donate to school groups and several tree projects in Porterville. Witnessing the denuding of the Tule River banks through Porterville and finding that native plants of local origin are not available for Tulare County got her interested in trying other native species, and from there.....well, you have to See It to Believe It. She and Clyde Amaral have over an acre of land, with their own well, and some of the most marvelously rich soil around.... the original alluvial valley soil washed down and deposited over the years. In just a few months plants grow in her yard 3,4 times as much as I see other places.. (redbud seedlings come up like weeds) but surely part of her success is due to the attention and experience she brings to the Nursery.

In 2004 she decided to plant a portion of the area to display a variety of the more attractive, and therefore promising for others to want, of our native plants and flowering shrubs. It is this Garden she invites us to visit in April. I asked if we could additionally make it an opportunity to help, and perhaps to actually practice some of her techniques, to learn about something of how she does

it. She agreed to this suggestion, and has accumulated a "shopping list" of tasks for us to share...thus making it a Work Party. Join us for a Saturday afternoon of hands-on botany. Bring gloves, trowel, favorite tool, and questions about native plant gardens. We'll have cold drinks.....

Anytime after 1:00, come to the corner of Westfield and Indiana. Address: 806 W. Westfield Avenue. Use a gate to the left, west of the house to enter the yard. Walk toward the back of the lot, behind the house, until you find us. Parking is difficult near the intersection; please park on Indiana or Ohio Court and walk a short distance.

May 13 is scheduled for a CNPS Hike, and we are hoping to go up the west facing slopes above the Wishon Fork, to the top of the ridge. This is an interesting climb through some rather unique shrubby vegetation....some in cool damp canyons, others on exposed slopes. We can anticipate finding *Garrya* and *Staphylea* in bloom...if you haven't seen these, it's not surprising as they are not common, and the *Staphylea* (Bladder Pod) occurs only in isolated spots, mostly north of our area. This is a walk we have taken before, but because of the interest in the plants along the road, the attraction of seeing the components of a 1910 hydroelectric plant (flume brings water from the river from near the Wishon Campground down to the ridge top where our road ends, thence from forebay down the penstock to the power plant), and the views along the way and from the top, it is one worth repeating for newcomers as well as those who have been with us in an earlier year. It's about two hours up on a dirt road that begins on the road to Wishon/Doyle Springs. Elevation is between 3000' and 4100' elevation. As for the Oak Flat, March walk, let's meet at Stone Steps pull out on Hwy 190, before the junction with the Wishon Road, at 10:00. We can eat lunch, or snack, or...., at the top. As for all CNPS

walks, dress for weather, and steady hiking up/down.

One of our members has come up with two prospective walks that I explored and found of great interest. There is a man-made pond uphill from Balch Park Rd, near the Conservation Camp, about 4500' elevation. Marshy edges, aquatic taxa, and I suspect there is an interesting history concerning when, why, the creek (Bear Creek drainage?) was dammed. We plan on going **17 June**, assuming roads will be clear.

To repeat what has become an annual climb, we will once more climb Jordan Peak, **24 June** with *Erythronium pusaterii*, rare and exquisite, at the top, and a group of sub-alpine species, mostly above timber line growing midst rocks on slopes below the Lookout. This is an easy, but mostly uphill 2+ mile climb, to the peak at about 9100' elevation. From Giffords in Springville, it is 24 miles up Hwy 190 to the junction with North Road, near Quaking Aspen Meadow where we will meet at 10:00 AM.

In July, for our annual Giant Sequoia experience (we have to visit at least one of these trees/groves each year), we go to the Octopus Tree, aka the Great Bonsai Tree. You have to see it to understand why it has been called this. Tentatively **22 July** is the date. Details of where, when to meet to follow in next Insignis, or call Joan at 539-2717.

August, September we'll move to high elevations to wander through meadows--last couple of years some of us have explored many of these special habitats, finding no two the same. As for July, details to follow.

For further information, or to suggest your favorite place as a place for a group visit, call Joan Stewart, 539-2717, or email at tori2toli@ocsnet.net. There surely are many special places, with amazing

collections of plants in our region.....we will only know about them if you share your favorites!!!

[See "LOOKING BACK" in the previous Insignis]

Continuing as background history of CNPS in Tulare, we reprint here from a State publication a summary description of important Conservation Efforts in past years. We do this as a preface to calling attention to some projects that are coming up here in our foothill area in which CNPS may become involved in the next year.

"A sand and gravel mining operation in Dry Creek, east of Woodlake, began to remove trees from one of the largest sycamore groves in California, under a permit issued by the County in 1985. After a long and unpleasant effort to curtail or impose conditions on the owner's permit, supported by Todd Keeler-Wolf, mining was continued, but somewhat less destructively. The company eventually found it unprofitable to work the area, and the land was bought by the Sequoia Riverlands Trust that now is beginning to restore the habitat insofar as possible. Thus, although our chapter work was unsuccessful in one way, the end of the story is positive.

In 1992, we were part of group invited to the site in Sequoia National Forest where Pres. H.W. Bush made his statement about wanting to protect the Sequoia Groves. This established CNPS in the area as an organization interested in working with, and supporting, USFS in managing the Forest resources in ways that were consistent with our mission. We continue to have a good working relationship with their professional resource staff.

Another sand and gravel operation was proposed for a site with vernal pools in Yokohl Valley. Alta Peak CNPS joined others to file a CEQA lawsuit against the County, on the grounds that the County had not required the applicant to do an

EIR with more extensive studies. In subsequent public hearings we expressed concerns about insuring adequate protection for riparian trees, freshwater marsh, and vernal pools. This operation never happened, although the land currently is under consideration for a huge housing development (see below).

Although we've had no single outstanding "achievements" in more recent years, we're maintaining our foot in the door with a Weed Management working group, and staying involved as the County General Plan is updated."

Which brings us to today, Now. Yokohl Valley "New Town" and an Adult-Only development in Springville are beginning to draw a lot of attention. Right now planning is "conceptual", meaning that neither proponent has proposed a definite plan for us to comment on. But each in its own way will have great impact on communities in which we live. CNPS will confine our comment strictly to "plant issues" as is our policy. At present, traffic and water are what we hear most about.... in addition to the question of whether such projects will be appropriate under the updated General Plan that is due later this year. Do they represent the kind of planning that Tulare County sees as desirable?

We need for a Conservation Chair or pair of co-chairs, to follow the process as these (and other) huge projects move forward. Riparian vegetation may/may not be impacted to a greater or lesser extent, and other plant related concerns need to be considered. Other community groups, organizations, and interested individuals are watching these projects... we won't be alone!!

As the season slides into Spring, watch the hills, take your local walks, and discover, share, enjoy what green plants and their reproductive morphology (i.e. Flowers) can bring to our daily routines. Join us on walks.

Insignis News, CNPS

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California Native Plant Society

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 are 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 \$25
City _____ Individual \$45
State _____ Zip _____ Family \$75
Tele. _____ Group, library, agency, business \$75
I wish to affiliate with: Plant Lover - \$100-300
 Alta Peak Chapter (Tulare County) Patron - \$300-600
 Other _____ Benefactor - \$600-1500
 Limited income \$ 25
Mail application and check to: Mariposa Lily, \$1500+
California Native Plant Society, 2707 K Street, Suite 1, Sacramento, CA 95816

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