



INSIGNIS

Vol. 17, No. 1
Winter 2007

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY ALTA PEAK CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

Please send changes of address to Membership Chair
41116 Blossom Dr., Three Rivers, CA 93271

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.

Beginning a chapter newsletter in this way is a tradition for CNPS, so although it seems somewhat 'formal', I'll use the heading to talk about some past, future news and comment.

Looking back, Steve's program on that cold Friday evening was a great enticement to look ahead into spring-summer days of being outdoors, finding birds and flowers, and learning more about how they share habitats. Thank you, Steve, for being cheerful about "life in Springville", frozen water pipes, a cold bedroom, but lots of cheerful neighbors. He commented that he never had had a friendlier, more interesting audience (and he has given this program in many other parts of the State!).

SPRING? yes, it approaches, and the first blooms that catch my eye are the local *Ribes*, with small yellow blossoms all along the prickly stems. I picked a twig for a jar outside my back door to remind me that plants are preparing for "whatever"? And just in past couple of days the buds of the weedy yellow 'mustard' are opening. What buds or blooms are you finding?

VISALIA HOME AND GARDEN SHOW, at the Visalia Convention Center over the weekend of **Feb. 9,10,11** offers us a chance to talk with a large segment of Tulare County about issues, places, pleasures that draw us together as a group. The

managers, to encourage our work, provide at no cost a table in a prominent position as well as necessary support. The only requirement is that someone be there during the entire course of the event, meaning 12-8 on Friday, 10-7 on Saturday, and 10-5 on Sunday. At the program in January many of you signed up for an hour or two at times to suit your schedules. Not only does this give free admission, but we have additional tickets to be shared with others in your family or friends who may want to come with you but not 'work'. Being at the display simply means sitting/standing at our table-top display, indicating free informational material and answering questions about CNPS. We do not plan to sell anything, so there will be no need to deal with money. A current catalog will be available, and anyone interested in posters or books can be referred to the Sacramento office or website.

Having explained what this entails, we need more people to show up and give time over the three days. Please, call Joan to let her know which time slots you can cover. As of now we need more help on Friday afternoon to evening (3-8:00)--if someone closer to Visalia than Porterville could volunteer here, that would be Lovely!! Saturday has some open space, as does late morning on Sunday. I'd like this to be fun, easy, for all of us (including myself

and other stalwarts), so I encourage each of you to help, and come and enjoy the event in the.

The advance copy of the Show Program describes this as the south Valley's Largest Home Show with 350 displays. On page 5 they include a couple of paragraphs about CNPS, another indication of their support of our mission. Our location is in the Landscaping Tent, near Master Gardeners, several nurseries, and various horticulture-related exhibits, close to a main show entrance.

MORE OUTREACH

(anyone interested in helping with this work?)

A group from Three Rivers cooperated with CNPS Sequoia Chapter, in Kings County, to support an 'outreach' event in Lemoore, helping "create the Burris Park Outdoor School", an effort to develop "an outstanding model of experiential education in the Central Valley of California."

We were invited to rent a booth for the Visalia Earth Day in April, but the emphasis is on environmentally-safe or recycled products, not our primary focus, we will save our energy for efforts more closely related to our native plant concerns such as the Visalia Home and Garden show, described above.

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And in anticipation of exploring, PLANS FOR FIELD TRIPS/HIKES are coming together. Leaders hesitate to set dates at this time, not knowing what weather is coming-- rain, snow, sunny/cloudy days, and of course abrupt temperature changes dramatically affect plant

physiology. Dates for the March-June hikes are tentative, attempts to make reasonable guesses. By mid-June we will have a more definite summer schedule, to be announced in the next Insignis. Please call, or **confirm with one another the schedule for these first three walks.**

We'll continue to follow up on the **Oak Flat burn** site, visited several times last year, to discover the amazing abundance of some species as they disappear in coming years, (strict 'fire-followers'), and the over-all changes in vegetation that succeed fire. If this is of particular interest to you, call, as several site visits will be made between mid-late Feb. and early July. Join as you can; let's definitely plan on a visit there on the **31st of March**, a Saturday morning. As we did last spring, we'll meet at the "Stone Steps/Stairs" parking-pull-off on Hwy 190, about 7 miles above Springville, at 9:30. From there, carpool about 2 miles on the road to Wishon Campground, to Forest Road 20S97. Leaving cars there, we walk into burned area. Elevation about 3000', partly brushy terrain, no designated trail.

Last spring a member reminded us of the very different habitat of **vernal pools** by taking us several times to track changes in the Pixley preserve that is a legacy of Jack Zananovich. **Early May, the 5th**, a Sunday, should be a good time for this place, so let's arrange car pools, and visit this area, north of Ave. 96, to the west of Terra Bella. I suggest that we meet at Jenny Lynn's (Plano just north of Hwy

190) at 9:00; call for directions if you want to drive separately.

Jordan Peak, 24 June... this hike draws from around the state so we repeat it, each year, to see our *Erythronium*, and also *Fritillaria pinetorum* if these two species will cooperate in flower production. We'll meet, 10:00, at the junction of North Road and the end of Hwy 190 just before Quakng Aspen Meadow Campground. Repeating the caution we included last year, this depends on North Road being open...put a ?? on your calendar, but do plan on being with us. This hike is an Alta Peak Special, one not to be missed if you want to truly know what our part of the southern Sierra holds. Jordan peak supports a group of sub-alpine species, mostly above timber line, amidst rocks on slopes below the lookout. An easy, mostly uphill 2+ mile climb, on a good trail to about 9100' elevation.

Our **Giant-Sequoia-Experience** this summer will take us to a slope below Solo Peak on the east side of Bateman Ridge. There are about 80 trees, of mixed ages, in this portion of the Black Mt. Grove, unknown to most of us. This will be steep up/down, no trail, another of Gary Hohenstein's discoveries, and a special opportunity to see more of the reason we have a Monument in our backyard.

Fens-and-other-Wet-Places. Fletcher Linton, Botanist on Sequoia N.F. and Monument, has made fens a special part of his work during the past year, recognizing that these places differ from meadows/bogs, seeps in our high country, with distinctive arrays of conditions and plants. Look up 'fen' and

you will learn that this is "a type of bog, especially a low-lying area wholly or partly covered with water, dominated by grasslike plants, grasses, sedges and reeds. In strict usage, a fen denotes an area in which the soil is organic (peaty) and alkaline rather than acid." Fletcher has conducted surveys of our local mountain fens, finding distinctive plant species in these habitats. We hope for a late July date. Also late July or early August we will plan another **mountain meadow** field trip, when/where to be determined!

Going farther east, we have never gone together to the **Bald Mt. Botanic Area**, and this is The Year to see the unique vegetation there. This will be an all day, mostly driving trip, so easy in terms of terrain and distance on foot.

Some of these hikes respond to expressed member interest... as we have repeatedly remarked, CNPS must give you enjoyment, or we fail in our mission ("understand, conserve", and enjoy!). Are there plants or habitats you want to share or discover? In the Kaweah drainage, in the Hot Springs area?

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CONSERVATION

CNPS has been asked to take part in the task of reviewing and commenting on the County General Plan update that will determine how land is used for the next 20 + years in our area. A 'final' document is not yet complete but a draft, Goals and Policies, is available. As a citizen and resident here, we share concerns about rural sprawl, where new growth should be directed, potential loss of

ag land, how infrastructure needs can be met, clean air, water supply for competing uses, provision for parks, recreation.

But our contribution will be directed toward the sections of the Plan that refer directly to natural habitats, open space, places where native vegetation needs to be preserved. When the final document, with the EIR that details the consequences of the several alternatives, is released we will submit a letter of comment. If you are familiar with this process, or if you want to learn more about what is being proposed to accommodate the anticipated Tulare County "growth" in coming years, contact me and join us in studying and writing comments to the County about this General Plan, a plan that will guide what happens in the County for many years ahead. Note: This is a plan for unincorporated portions of the county. Cities prepare their own plans for land within their boundaries.

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AROUND THE STATE

From the San Luis Obispo Chapter Newsletter, written by one of their members: 'The term, 'Pearls of Wisdom', often refers to distilled insights, pithy sayings, or other significant reflections as guidelines for a particular problem or as general advice. There also is an injunction about 'casting pearls before swine' that will not appreciate their value and turn and attack the giver because they don't see immediate benefit in them. Another view of these insights is as seeds, some of which will reach willing ears (good soil) and bear fruit, but many of which will be lost on an

unsuitable substrate.

When we and others dedicated to environmental preservation speak, act, and testify, we often wonder if we are really being heard, or are but voices crying in the wilderness. Are our 'pearls of wisdom' being taken seriously, or are they simply ignored, 'trampled under foot'? We are at times attacked as disruptive of business or progress, especially when we defend a plant or animal that stands in the way of some pet project. The Standing (right to bring legal suits) of various environmental groups is even now being challenged in the court system.

In our education and outreach roles, I see us rather as 'sowers'. Much of our effort falls upon deaf ears but those who do 'get the message' (the good soil) can become real advocates. Who knows which participant on one of our field trips or programs will become a future leader? I know of a well-known Ph.D. biochemist, who in his formative years took a great liking to a Mariposa Lily, *Calochortus*, and went on to become one of our more effective State Presidents. I refer, of course, to the late George Clark who piloted us through a difficult period, and, by his gentle guidance, encouraged me in CNPS activities and leadership.

The analogy of the sower seems to leave out one important characteristic of native plants; delayed germination. We all know of annuals, particularly in the desert or in fire-prone areas that sprout and bloom only when the conditions are right to mature and set seed. An example

is *P. californicum* the Fire Poppy, which has been known to only bloom up to 30-50 years after a fire. A corollary of this concept is the importance of reaching out to children. After all, they are the future generations that we are preserving the environment for.

We need to maintain the camaraderie and joy along with the quality of our programs and field trips, so that they will continue to nurture 'good soil'. Let us then rejoice and be glad when a few seeds grow and bear fruit, and not be discouraged by the occasional swine that turn and attack us."

Thank you, Charlie Blair, for reinforcing our emphasis on the key value of enjoyment, as a purpose of CNPS.

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OTHER RELATED ANNOUNCEMENTS.....

This newsletter is as interesting as you make it. This month PAM CLARK, MEMBER FROM PORTERVILLE and panelist on our September program, submits the following information:

"It's safe for you to eat spinach, but what about the bees? Remember last summer when we saw headlines because *E. coli* 0157 in bagged spinach was sending people to the hospital? The Western Growers Association is responding to this food safety issue by proposing new rules for the handling of leafy greens. Some make environmental and public health sense--others don't.

One proposed rule calls for a twenty foot buffer of bare ground between crops and other vegetation. If adopted, this rule would fall hard on farmers who have incorporated native vegetation into the fields as hedgerows of buckwheats and

other plants. The message was just getting out that native plants were useful to the farmer as a refuge for pollinators and predatory insects. Now, the message will be to get rid of those nastyweeds, and that is unlikely to solve the problem. The source of last year's contamination has not yet been determined, but a good bet is cow manure, either in compost or irrigation water.

Right now the rule-making is an in-house process of the WGA, but several legislators have expressed interest in introducing bills to "protect the public." This might be a good time to drop your state legislator a note saying you're all for safe spinach but that can be achieved without sacrificing integrated pest management and environmental protection.

For more information contact the Community Alliance with Family Farmers (www.caff.org) or WildFarm Alliance (www.wildfarmalliance.org). You can also call me, Pam Clark (784-4643). I'll talk your ear off!"

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We continue to seek ways to collaborate and cooperate with other groups with missions that overlap ours. Short of space here, but between Feb. and May AUBUBON SOCIETY has trips to Carrizo Plain, Merced Wildlife Refuge, the eastern side of the Sierra, an egret/heron rookery, and a combined wildflower-bird trip into the foothills east of Woodlake. We'll try to include more in next Insignis. Monthly programs in Visalia. Details, Brian Newton at 627-3571.

Insignis News, CNPS
 Alta Peak Chapter
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 Three Rivers, CA 93271

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 _____	___ Individual \$45
City _____	___ Family \$75
State _____ Zip _____	___ Group, library, agency, business \$75
Tele phone _____	___ Student, Limited Income, \$25
I wish to affiliate with:	Mail application and check to:
___ Alta Peak Chapter (Tulare County)	California Native Plant Society, 2707 K Street
___ Other _____	

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