Field Trip Calendar
For several reasons the field trip schedule has been revised from the list inserted in your last Insignis...please note...This Page

June 15 Sunday:
North Road and Freeman Creek meadows out of Springville
Assuming that North Road will be open, let’s wander along the meadows that lie just east and west of this access road. All are easy strolls from cars, so nothing strenuous. Reminder, however, meadows are sunny and can be wet, so hats, sun ‘protection’, shoes that can sink into squishy mud. Meet at 10am at the junction of HWY 190 and North Road, where the sign points to “Pack Station, Summit Trailhead.”

July 12 Saturday:
Nobe Young Meadow
Located off Western Divide Highway, this site has much history, having been a stop-over camp for early horseback forest rangers. Meet at 10am at end of HWY 190 out of Springville.

SUMMER FIELD TRIPS
As the snow disappears from distant peaks as well as from the roads and trails we want to explore, we can plan with more specifics our summer field trips. By the last “end of summer” walk, we will have seen, or at least looked for, more than a hundred species that have been seen in these several places. Perhaps we can compile a chart of what flourishes where—demonstrating the fact that meadows are not all the same—hydrology, aspect, soils, support different arrays of plants. Hopefully these field trips will appeal to those of you interested in how these factors combine to provide different physical environments, defining our terminology for “wet places” including bog, fen, marsh, sedge meadow, seep habitat, wet/dry montane mountain meadows, alkali meadows, and riparian stringers.

Call Joan Stewart, 539-2717, if you have questions about field trips.

July 19 Saturday:
Montane Meadows of Sequoia N. Park
Sylvia Haultain and Athena Demetry are planning an amazing view of meadows in the Park, both used and “restored” in recent years. We start at Halstead Meadow, the site of an ambitious restoration project, followed by lunch at Crescent Meadow in Giant Forest, then end with an amble to see the wildflowers blooming in Crescent Meadow and Huckleberry Meadow. This a chance to get into an area that may be new to chapter members who live in the Tule River drainage of the southern Sierra, and fun for all of our members. Meet at parking lot at Three Rivers Memorial Building on HWY 198 at 8am, to carpool.

August 17 Sunday To be announced
Perhaps locations along Western Divide HWY, and the longer walk into Onion Meadow as mentioned in the previous Insignis, the flowers that elicit ooh’s and aah’s should be waiting us.... We’ll meet at end of Hwy 190 at 10am.
Save Yokohl Valley
Frequently asked questions, answers prepared by TCCRG

Where is Yokohl Valley?
And why is it so special?
Yokohl Valley is located in the Sierra Nevada foothills, east of Visalia and Exeter, and south of Lake Kaweah. This beautiful part of Tulare County is varied in terrain and vegetation, containing steep slopes, expansive valleys, waterways, oak woodlands, stands of sycamores, grasslands, chaparral, and wonderful wildflowers. Over 30 important Native American sites have been documented here, including significant rock art areas, two major village sites, unique rock slides, ceremonial cupules, bedrock mortars, and at least one burial ground. In the mid-19th century, ranchers started grazing cattle in Yokohl Valley, and the descendants of some of these original ranching families still graze their cattle here today. Amazingly, most of Yokohl Valley area still looks much as it did 150 years ago, and still provides a home to many native plants and animals, including several rare, threatened and endangered species. It even includes a National Wildlife Refuge for the California condor, and critical foraging habitat for that magnificent bird. Cyclists, wildflower enthusiasts, nature lovers, connoisseurs of California’s scenic byways, those interested in Native American history and culture, and anyone who wants a glimpse of the old West will savor a visit to the Yokohl Valley area.

What is Yokohl Ranch?
The J.G. Boswell Company (operating as the Yokohl Ranch Co. LLC, out of San Diego), wants to turn over 36,000 acres of Yokohl Valley into a new city of 30,000 people, living in 10,000 houses, with three golf courses, a 550,000 square foot commercial center, a resort and private recreation facility up Horse Creek, a new dam to create a water storage facility (with the water to be pumped over from the Kaweah River), a wastewater treatment plant, many new roads (including one coming down the Horse Creek canyon to Highway 198 at Lake Kaweah), a new utility line corridor running from Lindsay, and some public service facilities (e.g., police and fire substations, a school, etc.).

Why does this affect me?
The proposal to build a new town of 30,000 people on what is virtually undeveloped ranch land affects everybody in Tulare County. Preliminary environmental impact studies prepared for the Yokohl Ranch project list 73 “potentially” significant impacts to our air, water, wildlife, agricultural land, and cultural heritage. Development of this proposed new town will impact water supply, air quality, traffic, schools, and police and fire services. The proposed development will affect not only everyone who walks, bikes, or drives through Yokohl Valley, but also those in nearby communities, as the new town could attract investment dollars and businesses away from our existing towns.

Don’t we need Yokohl Ranch to house Tulare County’s growing population?
Won’t it relieve development pressure on prime agricultural land?
No! Tulare County can easily accommodate all the growth projected over the next several decades within the existing development boundaries of its current cities, communities, and hamlets. A study prepared by Tulare County’s consultants found that a population increase of over 950,000 people – considerably more than we’re expecting within the next 20 years – can be housed within our existing development boundaries without increases in density.

Yokohl Ranch is not being designed to meet Tulare County’s housing needs, but to be marketed to buyers from outside areas looking for relative bargains in high-end housing. Thus, it would not “save” farmland on the valley floor from development. The key to meeting Tulare County’s housing needs, preserving valley floor agricultural lands, improving our air quality, diversifying and

...........................................continued on page 3
strengthening our economy, managing our water supply and quality, and maintaining our open space is to promote cost-effective, resource-efficient development located where jobs, infrastructure, transportation, and services already exist. This is a much healthier alternative to rural sprawl and the destruction of our air-, water-, and viewsheds and our foothill agricultural and tourism economy.

What about property rights? Shouldn’t Boswell be able to do whatever he wants to with his land?

In California, for many decades, zoning has been a primary factor in protecting property rights and property values. Yokohl is zoned for foothill agriculture (such as grazing). Your property values and quality of life are protected by zoning, which keeps your neighbor from pursuing incompatible land uses next to your property (e.g., I can’t turn my residential-zoned property into a casino, a gravel pit, or a hazardous-waste disposal site next door to your residence).

Zoning lets us know what to expect and enables us to plan effectively, by directing various land uses to designated appropriate locations. If Boswell wants to build houses in Tulare County, he should do so on land zoned for residential development, and already supported by nearby jobs, transportation, services, and infrastructure.

What can I do to help?

-- Stay informed! Sign on to the TCCRG mailing list, which will keep you up-to-date on key hearings, updates, and events related to Yokohl Ranch.
-- Contact your elected officials to let them know you oppose revising current zoning laws to permit development of new towns like Yokohl Ranch. It’s never the “wrong” time to contact your Supervisor or Assemblyperson, then know you oppose the construction of new towns in Tulare County.
-- Attend public hearings, and speak up on these key issues!
-- Support TCCRG. We’re almost entirely a volunteer organization, so we rely on donations to fund our part-time campaign coordinator, outreach materials and events, and website maintenance. Every little bit helps. Thank you for caring about Tulare County!

website: www.tccrg.org
Our Rare Iris Adventure by Joan Stewart

There are two wild Iris’ found growing in Tulare County. One is rather common, the Iris hartwegii, which is widely distributed on shady slopes between about 2000-9000’ elevation, with varieties throughout the Sierra and southern California mountains. It has shorter stems, leaves, and the flowers are more creamy yellow than lavender, compared with the very rare one.

Our rare iris, Iris munzii, is found only along the Tule River and Kaweah River canyons in Tulare County. The State Fish and Game’s Natural Diversity Data Base lists six occurrences for this rare iris. Five sittings are along the forks of the Tule River, and one is above the Ash Mountain Visitor’s Center in Sequoia National Park.

Reviewing the information written on the old collections in herbaria and trying to obtain coordinates, numbers that translate into exact locations on a topo map, or by use of a GPS unit, leave us unclear about exactly where these plants are to be found. Are they still there? Have the populations become larger, smaller? Are there other patches nearby? Just what are the associated plant forms, and are there other features of the environment that provide clues as to what restricts these plants to such a narrow range? What about information about dispersal—pollination? Iris grow from horizontal, underground “stems” called rhizomes that produce erect stems in the same way that above-ground stems branch. So when you see several clumps close together, it is reasonable to presume that all are connected, perhaps the result of a single seed germinating. This is the background information available to someone wanting to study Iris in California. The horticultural Iris, sometimes termed “bearded”, were all originally derived from wild European species, much changed by many years of selection for desirable characters. So botanists who study Iris for any reason, are interested in observing the range of color, shape, size of natural plants.

With only six recorded sites where Iris munzii can be seen, the challenge of finding them and perhaps increasing the number of populations, enlarging the known distribution, recently drew two young men to Springville. Andrew, from Massachusetts, and Eric from France, both are now working and studying at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden and the Claremont Graduate School. They contacted our Alta Peak Chapter for local support and assistance in their search.

After making contact and learning of my willingness to help, they sent information about where the species had been found in the past 50-60 years, essentially about the six documented occurrences already mentioned. Larry Otter studied these data and tried to place dots on a topographical map to help re-locate the sites. He and I coordinated the two day search, notifying persons of the project, asking for permission to cross private lands when necessary. Brian Rueger obtained the necessary permit to seek plants on Tribal Lands along the South Fork. Wherever we went, individuals were interested, curious, and helpful.

And this is what we discovered:

Site One: referred to as the Milo Site, was poorly described in the available data, and after checking several possible spots (Thank you Steve and Vanola Jeffries), we moved east along Balch Park Road to the Loscotoff property. Both Marilyn and Jean recognized the description of the plants we were seeking, and assured us, yes, they knew exactly where they grew. And they did! It was Iris munzii blooming, giving us a reassuring way to start the day. Thank you, both.

Site Two: On the Scicon property, giving us again a successful confirmation because Rick Mitchell, and the naturalists who lead walks there, had all spotted clumps prior to our coming up. They led us directly to the plants. Another thank you!!

Site Three: We then moved over to the Middle Fork of the Tule River drainage, to try to relocate the type locality, simply noted as “coffee camp.” We had no luck in, or around the existing picnic or campgrounds. But following patches of what we had determined was potential associated vegetation, including poison oak, Andrew and Eric worked upstream, and eventually, up the bank away from the water, found some iris’ in bloom. This probably was not the exact Site Three that had been previously documented, as it certainly wasn’t very close to “coffee camp”, but in the intervening years obviously much of the roadside area had been graded and disturbed for facilities. We speculate that the actual clumps earlier identified no longer existed. Nevertheless, there are Iris munzii plants in the general area, a positive finding.

Site Four: Another and even more unsuccessful search was for the “Wishon” site, where nothing was relocated where the data indicated plants had been found. We parked at the Steps turn-out, walked up and down the highway looking into the canyon, and then decided to go all the way down, for no particular reason, except that closer to the river seemed a plausible place to look. Just upstream from the bottom of the stairway, over some rocky places, and scrambling a bit, Andrew, leading the way, loudly emerged from a narrow draw filled with poison oak, to say “lots of it”…..but only in this one place. Another positive record, and an indication that more of the species is around, just not found.

Enough for one day? Larry remarked (he had indeed told us earlier, but now he insisted that we follow through) that his brother, Jason, living up Balch Park Road, said he had some clumps “in his yard”? So back up the hill, and Jason showed us the species near his house, with the buds and flowers displaying all the necessary characteristics to say it was indeed Iris munzii. And as long as we were there, on Larry’s suggestion again (I believe he had talked with her earlier?), up toward Blue Ridge Road to the property of Shelly McKnight and Mathew Haynes. She led us back into some oak woodland habitat, where, scattered under the trees, several

........continued on page 5
........rare iris, continued from page 4
patches were located. By then we had
learned to compare the color of unopened
buds, partly opened blooms, and fully
opened, paler flowers, understanding the
progression of deep purple to paler
shades, with the developmental stage.
This was a valuable clue to how to more
definitely identify single stalks with only
one or another of the color stages. This
was enough for the first day. Four early
sites had been searched, and two new
sites located. We came back to
Springville for meal, clean up, and for
careful writing up of notes by Andrew
and Eric. The day had had its ups and
downs, in more ways than one.
Clambering over rocks, pushing through
heavy bushes to get up narrow steep
draws, falling into creeks, were all set
aside with the realization that we had
ended the day on a positive note. Thank
you, Jason, Shelly.

Site Five: For day two, Brian Rueger had
arranged our visit to the Tule River
Reservation, helping Larry figure out just
how to interpret the early records for Site
Five, but we gradually realized that with
marked spots “along the river”, and more
recent development also along the river,
chances were poor for finding
undisturbed vegetation of any kind. But
we looked long and hard! A
disappointing day thus far, frustrating for
Larry who kept hoping some of the
points he had laboriously marked on
maps might produce something, but
finally we left, checking in with Brian to
report on the failure to relocate old
records. Question? Did early settlers or
Native Americans have any use for the
bulbs (technically rhizomes) of Iris? If so,
perhaps some of the clumps disappeared
as a result of collecting? We will follow
through on this query. Thank you to the
Tribal Council for allowing us to search
up and down the River on their land.

Site Six: By then mid-afternoon, we
headed for site six which was clearly
marked relative to Tunnel Rock, beyond
the Ash Mt. Visitors’ Center on the road
into SNP. It was a long drive from the
Tule River canyons where our search had
been centered, but Andrew, with youthful
energy and hope, wanted to go. (They
had to be back in southern California that
night, so had that drive ahead of them
regardless of when we finished.) For the
first time in these two days, there was
little uncertainty about just where the
plants were “supposed” to be....up (north)
from the road, a given distance
beyond Tunnel Rock. Yet there they
were.... up the usual steep overgrown
draws, but alive and well. And since that
had proved so easy, the two “Iris-seekers”
spent nearly another hour, above and
below the highway, using the now rather
well known associated vegetation as a
guide to potential habitat, to locate
several additional patches of the Iris.
Interesting question--do these constitute
new populations or extend the size of the
“known” population? We agreed on the
latter conclusion, as all that we found in
this spot were easily within a reasonable
dispersal distance, and pollinator range
of each other. Thank you to Sylvia
Haultain, who had responded to our
earlier request for help, and was available
had we needed a local expert!

The formal purpose of the survey was to
attempt to answer the question about the
status of this rare plant species. It is a List
1B plant in the CNPS Inventory. After
distributed in a limited number of
occurrences (only in Tulare County),
probably not very endangered, and
endemic to the state.

If an attempt were made to validate the
known occurrences (6 prior to recent
trip), would be updated, new information
indicates that it continues to be not under
any immediate threat, or on the other
hand, should it receive consideration as
needing more concern? If so, it was to be
Andrew’s task to draft a suggested
outline for providing protection. After
their return to southern California,
Andrew contacted me to ask that I once
again thank all the individuals who had
made their trip possible and successful.

Based on what we found, the answer is
that with two new and two former sites
on private lands where the owners care
about having a “special” plant, three sites
on public lands with adequate oversight,
and although the site on Tribal Lands was
not relocated, the persons there with
responsibility for environmental
resources share our interest in
maintaining the integrity and diversity of
their lands, it appears that the species is
not in any way in need of help!

A reassuring conclusion to an interesting
couple of days.

**CNPS Rare Plant Program Contacts**

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Iris Munzii photo
courtesy of Fletcher Linton,
Botanist for Sequoia National Forest
website: www.fs.fed.us/r5/sequoia/
Three Rivers Environmental Weekend on Oct 4, 2008

(A planning group met at the home of Mona Selph in Three Rivers on April 27, 2008. If you would like to help with this endeavor or want to contact us with any ideas and input you may have, call Mona at 561-4676. Their next meeting is August 3, 2008, at 1:00 pm at Judy Smith’s house, if you want to go. Call Judy at 561-4417. This will be the second year of presenting this event.)

Planning is well underway for the Three Rivers Environmental Weekend 2008, now scheduled for October 4, 2008. It has been moved up to coincide with the California Native Plant Society fall plant sale at the Three Rivers Arts Center.

The Saturday program will be coordinated by various people from Sequoia National Park, currently employed and perhaps also retired. Bill Tweed has been invited to participate. Current employees taking on planning the program are Annie Esperanza and Jenny Matsumoto, joined by Alex Picavet, Stephanie Sutton, and perhaps others as well. Solar cooking will again be featured, led by Bill Becker of Three Rivers. The solar cooking group from Visalia, which supports funding for solar cookers for the refugees of Darfur, tentatively plans to participate again.

Information tables and displays will include many environmental options by Three Rivers Mercantile, One Earth Solar, Farm Fresh Foods, and Mark Alvis of Clovis, who will show insulated concrete forms and structural insulated panels. Others will provide additional information.

The Tulare County Citizens for Responsible Growth and people who are working to save Yokohl Valley will bring information, and probably present a power point presentation. In an attempt to raise awareness and possibly raise funds to support the efforts of the above groups, a photography show of Yokohl Valley scenes will be on display. Two of the participants in that event are Dr. Georgellen Parker and Shirley Keller. Others may come forward. Mona Fox Selph will head up that effort.

Again on Sunday, October 5, 2008, a Green Home Tour is planned. This time, rather than Three Rivers homes, we are planning to visit a variety of different concept homes in Visalia. Pete Crandal, Bill Haxton, and Mona Fox Selph will take on that planning.

Fall Native Plant Sale

(This date is tentative, pending confirmation from Intermountain Nursery to provide plants.)

The annual native plant sale is slated for Saturday, October 4 from 9am to 12pm. It will be held at the Arts Center on North Fork Drive in Three Rivers. All CNPS members can pre-order plants for a 15% discount using the plant order form that will be provided in the next Insignis. We will need volunteer “plant experts” for that Saturday morning. Also, we will need help setting up the plants on the day before. Call Janet Fanning at 561-3461 for details or to volunteer your help. Its fun!

The Secret Life of Plants

(quoted from the Introduction in the book of the same name, published in 1973 by Peter Tompkins and Christopher Bird)

.....Short of Aphrodite, there is nothing lovelier on this planet than a flower, nor more essential than a plant. The true matrix of human life is the greensward covering mother earth. Without green plants we would neither breathe nor eat. On the undersurface of every leaf a million movable lips are engaged in devouring carbon dioxide and expelling oxygen. All together, 25 million square miles of leaf surface are daily engaged in this miracle of photosynthesis, producing oxygen for man and beast......

At the beginning of the twentieth century a gifted Viennese biologist with the Gallic name of Raoul France put forth the idea, shocking to contemporary natural philosophers, that plants move their bodies as freely, easily and gracefully as the most skilled animal or human, and that the only reason we don’t appreciate the fact is that plants do so at a much slower pace than humans........

Evidence now supports the vision of the poet and the philosopher that plants are living, breathing, communicating creatures, endowed with personality and the attributes of soul. It is only we, in our blindness, who have insisted on considering them automata. Most extraordinary, it now appears that plants may be ready, willing and able to cooperate with humanity in the Herculean job of turning this planet back into a garden from the squalor and corruption of what England’s pioneer ecologist William Cobbett would have called a “wen.”

[from the Oxford English Dictionary—wen, meaning “1 a boil, or other swelling or growth on the skin, especially a sebaceous cyst. 2 archaic a very large or overcrowded city.”]

Looking for a native plant nursery?

Intermountain Nursery
30443 N. Auberry Road
Prather, CA 93651
559.855.3113
The only grower of native plants in the Central Valley, started in the 1980’s.
www.intermountainnursery.com

Las Palitas Nursery
3232 Las Palitas Road
Santa Margarita, CA 93453
805.438.5992
Located near San Luis Obispo, has a great website for learning about the growing of native plants.
www.laspalitas.com

Traveling in the state this summer?

You might want to join other Chapters’ field trips. Go to www.cnps.org/cnps/chapters and you will find a map of California that is color coded with links to the Chapter that serves that particular location. You can visit the individual chapter’s website to find information about their field trip schedule or other special plant events happening in the area. Alta Peak Chapter always welcomes statewide members to our field trips.

So..............
This leads into the announcement that our own chapter will be launching its own website. The new website’s address will be www.altapeakcnps.org, so look for it by the end of August.

...worn thin by the vast summers
again turns into a new
insight and the mirror of intuition;
where the flower’s color
wholly forgets that lingering of our eyes.

(from The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke)
from the editor...

I have come full circle to find myself again editor of the *Insignis* newsletter. The first one I did was in the winter of 1992. In those days I was very reluctant to use a computer, even swearing I would never have one of those things! Mike Neuman assisted me with the computer part of setting up the newsletter. It felt tedious to me, all that computer stuff, and in a way it still is......Mike was a scientist working for the Park and in those old days we would have some interesting conversations about what to put in the newsletters. I always wanted to add a touch of the esoteric and poetic side of nature and our wild (who is wilder, humans or plants?) flora with their beauty and diversity and abundance and generosity. Mike would push for only the real science. We had some fun, “wild” discussions at his computer screen. Mike lives in Oregon, the last I heard, and he came for a visit several years ago. Heidi Anderson, who also worked in the Park, gave us the artistic rendition of the *Brodiae Insignis*, our endemic Kaweah Brodiae, which I have resurrected for this newsletter. Heidi also edited the very first chapter newsletter in September of 1991. I lost track of Heidi years ago.

I welcome anything you want to share with me for the newsletter—plant news items, wildflower photos, calendar items, or whatever is on your mind about CNPS. Please email me using the contact information in the Board of Directors column on this page, next issue will come out in early September.................Elsah Cort PS I still may sneak in a poem or a quote here and there..............

*m Offer Yourself*

(Do something to help protect native flora.) We need people to join our board in the capacity of Legislative Chair. We also want help with program and field trip planning. Joan is asking for a few people to form a small conservation committee.

more on conservation..

Two other major ongoing planning efforts presently need CNPS attention, besides Yokohl Vally. For further information call Joan...a more active Conservation Committee perhaps can be assembled in coming months?

The Tulare County Planning Dept. is currently reviewing comments on the EIR for an updated County General Plan. Groups and individuals have been very critical of the overall document--- its organization, clarity, consistency, and the usefulness of figures, graphs, and tables. Many have asked that this draft document be withdrawn and rewritten. CNPS submitted a four page letter (February ‘08) that questioned specific sections referring to natural or biological resources. Note that other areas throughout California are experiencing similar frustrations with the way in which long-term General Plans (these describe how, where growth, in a broad sense, will occur over many years into the future) are being written, amended, or used. Currently, CNPS chapters in Monterey, Nevada, and Humboldt Counties are actively engaged in the process of commenting.

The Forest Service has begun a long process of developing a management plan for the Giant Sequoia Monument (after the first one was rejected as not adequate, for a number of reasons). Part of the problem is the range of often conflicting opinions about what can, should, should not, or must not, be allowed or planned for within the Monument. There is also disagreement about just how to interpret the language of the Proclamation that lays down “ground rules” for management. The Forest Service is approaching the planning project at this time by gathering as many as are willing to “collaborate” together in a series of meetings, to hear, listen, explain the many adversarial ideas about what the eventual Plan “ought” to say. CNPS is taking part in this appropriate to provide information about the effect that various “uses” (roads, trails, motorized, horse, foot traffic, other recreational facilities, fire-related activities) might have on plant resources. We hope to interject substantiated data on these issues, rather than vague opinions about what we “like” or “dislike.” We would like to have a second person tracking this process, able to serve as an alternate when Joan is unable to attend sessions. Each of the participating groups is requested to have a representative at all meetings, to provide continuity in discussions as we move through a long, and we hope productive process.
The California Native Plant Society (CNPS) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the understanding and appreciation of California’s native plants and how to conserve them and their natural habitats through education, science, advocacy, horticulture and land stewardship.

JOIN CNPS TODAY AND INVITE YOUR FRIENDS TO JOIN!

CNPS members enjoy the following benefits, and more:

• Membership in the statewide CNPS organization
• Affiliation with the local CNPS chapter
• Quarterly Fremontia journal
• Quarterly CNPS Bulletin
• The local chapter newsletter
• Access to a wide range of local and statewide activities
• Meeting people with similar interests
• Access to chapter plant sales, book sales, lectures, classes, workshops, hikes, field trips, and wildflower shows
• NEW: A membership card with benefits from partner organizations like Smith and Hawken and Pacific Horticulture Magazine

Visit the official website of the California Native Plant Society at www.cnps.org

Elshab Cort, Editor
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