SUMMER FIELD TRIPS by Joan Stewart

The past several months have brought wonderful arrays of color and pattern to the hills around us and we all have independently explored, enjoyed our local springtime. We have tentatively scheduled hikes into many of our higher elevation mountain meadows, using that term to cover wet places in general...fens, bogs, seeps. June 12, depending on road conditions at that time, Jordan Peak, June 27, for those preferring a Sunday walk, July 10, 31, August 8, 21 and Sept. 18 or 19. This tentative schedule indicates that we will be going up often. In between the listed dates, the leaders, myself plus, will be visiting sites to scout the area and to add to plant lists for separate places. If you want to be part of this exploration team, call me, Joan, and you will be welcome to join. We will focus on the plants that are associated with these “wet places”---colorful flowers, grasses, sedges, rushes with fascinating flowers that are not colorful (!), the bushes and trees that fringe the wet parts of the forest, and in many cases observe the contrasts between high and low portions of the sloping terrain.

For ALL hikes, we will meet 9:45 am (in order to be ready to move on to the day’s designated site by 10 am) where Hwy 190 ends, at the junction with North Road (signs direct you to pack Station here). Good pull-off area, and a starting point for all the meadows we might want to visit. Arrange your own car pools. All CNPS events, hikes included, are open to the public and free of charge. Everyone is welcome, but we discourage bringing dogs. Because distances are not great, children may want to come, but be sure they understand the purpose and slow pace of the day’s activities. Bring water, any snacks you want for a several hour interval that includes driving up and down Hwy 190, a winding mountain road. Remember to wear shoes that can get wet, sunglasses, sun lotion if needed. Some will choose to wear short pants; long pants will probably get wet, knee height in some situations. If you have a wildflower book, it may be useful, as will be a hand lens. Because there is always a chance of unexpected change of plans, it is a good idea to call 539-2717 the evening before (not after 8:00 please) to be assured that the plan has not changed. [ed note: as we firm up dates with locations, they will be posted on altapeakcnps.org, the Chapter website.]

If there is anyone who is willing, interested, in leading or helping lead any of the trips, we urge you to contact field trip coordinator, Joan Stewart at 539-2717. The more we share these times, the greater our exchange of ideas, information, and mutual pleasure. Next spring, 2011, we are planning a series of visits to private ranches, mostly between 2500’ and 4500’ elevation, in our area. We have been working with owners recently to develop plant lists for these lands and find very interesting contrasts in the diverse arrays of wild flowers and shrubs.
Chapter President’s Report
by Joan Stewart

The president’s message for this *Insignis* shares some past and future project information for our Chapter. First, reviewing the County Revised Updated General Plan, is difficult, confusing, and definitely not fun! But insofar as the native plant species in our area depend for their existence on what the citizens do, if we believe in what CNPS stands for, then it is necessary to be part of the land use planning process.

In 2008 the County produced a General Plan Update, meeting a State requirement that every County prepare a plan for land use, development, public safety, zoning, for the next 30 years. A monumental task, but one that guides, shapes, what our area will be like to live and work in, enjoy, in coming years. The 2008 plan was contested in court as not addressing (all?) possible alternatives, and not including sufficient analyses for impacts of what was proposed. Back to the drawing board! Now, spring of 2010, an Updated General Plan is available, with four large documents (Goals and Policies for General Plan, Environmental Impact Report that compares and analyses what effects the five suggested alternatives could have, A Background Report, and, separately, discussion of how a changing climate could affect planning.) CNPS is a member of a coalition of organizations, groups, brought together for the purpose of discussing, then commenting on, the Updated Plan. These groups have various concerns, some overlapping, some quite different from others. We take upon ourselves the work of reading and thinking about all the sections that deal with native plants, both as separate species that may need attention, and perhaps even more critical, the way plants provide, define ecosystems and habitat that support all biological resources. The bottom line in this current update is the statement that “implementation of the General Plan Update could result in potentially significant impacts...... to Biological Resources.” Our comments will try to suggest changes that will lessen these impacts. One of the 5 Alternatives goes further than the other four in being guided by the six Principles of a Healthy Growth Alternative that the Coalition considers critical. Anyone interested in learning more about what this work involves, contact me. Note that there are firm deadlines for both our initial draft comments, and the final, formal Letter of Comment that goes to the Board of Supervisors (late May).

Follow-up on submitting to the County CNPS comments on the Updated General Plan documents: after struggling with this task for several weeks, I think that the final copy of three pages plus cover letter will be mailed by the end of this week, meeting the deadline. The final conclusion is that we can not presume that the County will put high, let alone top, priority, on their stated goal of “protecting and preserving” natural areas, sensitive species and habitats. Lands set aside for this purpose must be larger than "postage stamp" size, and connected as much as possible in order to accomplish the larger goals of maintaining biodiversity and ecosystems. Language such as "whenever feasible, encourage/discourage, as necessary", in discussing how the "protecting/preserving" goal will be met, leave gates wide open for land use decisions that do not support "native vegetation in natural habitats", our CNPS goal. So be it.... we try.

Now, the fun report: When snow and debris, rocks are gone from roads and trails, and we can hike, climb, wander, through higher elevation places, we will be able to be more precise about our summer field trip schedule. Jordan Peak, for our special Erythronium (lily) in June. This depends on access via North Road, from Hwy 190 near Quaking Aspen. Then as the season moves along, we will visit meadows (fens, bogs, wet places), that are easily reached from either North Road or Western Divide. These walks are mostly easy as far as distance covered, steepness of approach, or need for clambering over rocks. In most cases, feet will be wet/damp, and we’ll be in open sunshine all or most of the time (no shade, in other words). So, plan accordingly.

Some of these meadows are officially on maps, others we identify by reference to unique plants that grow there, or to the history of that particular part of our backcountry. Examples: Caltha and Onion Meadows, Last Chance, Mule, and Guthrie Cow Camp. Others commemorate long-ago individuals. Nobe Young is always a favorite for many reasons. We won’t neglect the quite different areas encompassed by Quaking Aspen Meadow. Several streams-creeks, are bordered by meadow-type vegetation; and entire day can be spent strolling along edges of Freemen Creek or the drainage into Double Bunk meadow. Does this sound inviting? See the Field Trip Report in this *Insignis*, mark dates that fit your summer schedule and join us whenever you can.

So, these reports on conservation, work, and field trips-fun, make up the President’s Message for this newsletter. Enjoy...

And finally, we plan to have a mid-summer Chapter Board meeting on a Wednesday, July 7, and will welcome any of you interested in learning about what Alta Peak Chapter hopes, tries, wants to do in coming months. Join us, suggestions and ideas....always welcome!
Honoring Janet

Janet Fanning, our long time Alta Peak Chapter treasurer, membership and plant sale chair, is being honored by CNPS with a Volunteer Service Award. Janet joined the chapter eighteen years ago. She has been invaluable in keeping our financial records in order. And she has been the mainstay for organizing our annual native plant sale. Thank you, Janet!!

Janet in her garden...

Our annual Native Plant Sale is coming on Saturday, Oct 2, 2010. Pre-order forms will be sent in the Fall Insignis. CNPS members will get a discount for ordering plants early. Call Janet with any questions at 561-3461. We will need volunteers to help with unloading plants on the Friday before the plant sale and also, plant experts to help with the plant sale itself on Saturday.

Again, we will be sharing the Three Rivers Arts Center with the TREW CREW, the group of environmentally active persons, under the direction of Mona Selph, who organize the Three Rivers Environmental Weekend and Green Home Tour. Call Mona for more information at 561-4676.

The Alta Peak Chapter Board needs someone who is interested in working on education issues for the Chapter. We would love to bring Jack Laws’ program to local schools. And we would love to provide more activities for children to share the legacy of California Native Plants with them. Young people are the future members of CNPS. If this idea strikes you, join us for our next Board Meeting on July 7. Call 559-561-4671.

CNPS Curriculum for Children’s Education

The Education program is developing programs for children that get them outside and engaged with nature. We want to provide opportunities for children to fall in love with nature - and the full spectrum of it, not just plants. John Muir Laws, naturalist and author of The Laws Guide to the Sierra Nevada and Sierra Birds: a Hiker’s Guide, is helping them fall in love by creating a standard based curriculum that emphasizes the use of drawing and field sketching and writing to explore and understand plants and animals. Through drawing exercises and games that he develops, students will learn to become keen observers and gain confidence drawing and writing about what they see. In addition, we are producing a series of short videos with John Muir Laws to help people get started drawing and sketching in the field. A grant from the Jiji Foundation is making this project and others a reality.

We will market this curriculum statewide to teachers and other group leaders, such as scout groups and after school programs, after testing a pilot program. Teachers will not need to know the names of plants or have any prior knowledge of botany to use these exercises. If you are interested in participating in using this curriculum please get in touch with Josie Crawford at jcrawford@cnps.org. This is just the first step in what we intend to be a multi-tiered project for children of all ages.

Do you have a personal story about gardening with California Native Plants? Please send your observations, experiences, and stories to the Insignis editor, Elsah Cort, at elsahc@dishmail.net by August, 2010. We will be focusing on native plant gardening for our next issue. Photos are most welcome, please send high resolution jpg format.

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“If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children, I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life....

If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in.”

Rachel Carson
Sulfur Buckwheat  

*Eriogonum umbellatum*

*From our Horticulture Chair, Cathy Capone*

*Eriogonum umbellatum polyanthum* is a wide ranging plant normal in the middle elevation Sierras, yellow flowers on a 1ft high by 3ft plant, likes good soil some summer water, good drainage. *Eriogonum umbellatum polyanthum* is called buckwheat bush, sulfur buckwheat, slender buckwheat, or sulphur-flower buckwheat. The seeds are an important food source for many species of birds and small mammals. Quail, grouse, deer and mountain sheep eat the leaves.

In landscaping, it can be used for environmental enhancement, erosion control and foundation plantings around mountain homes. It is an excellent dry flower for arrangements as it holds its color and structure for many months. Sulfur flower buckwheat plants withstand sun, heat, drought, and wind, making them ideal plants for dry sunny slopes. The showy flowers and seed heads, and compact growth habit make this plant a good choice for rock gardens. Bees produce a strong, dark honey from sulfur flower nectar.

Sulfur flower buckwheat is a native, low-growing woody perennial commonly found on hot dry sunny exposures on rocky slopes and ridges throughout the west. It is native to western mountainous regions at elevations of 2,500 to 10,000 feet. Sulfur flower buckwheat requires well-drained sandy or gravelly soils with low fertility and will not tolerate saturated soils. Sulfur buckwheat will grow in the central valley if given shade for part to all of the day. In my sandy soils sulfur buckwheat does better with deep watering every other week during the hottest months.

The plant forms low, broad mats with individual clumps reaching one foot high to two feet across. Leaves are one inch long, shiny green on top and woolly underneath. Flower stems 3 inches to 16 inches tall, are topped by clusters of tiny sulfur-yellow flower heads. Flowers range from yellow to orange or reddish, both in bloom and in mature seed heads. Flower displays can color entire slopes starting in May at lower elevations and continue into August at higher elevations.

Sulfur flower buckwheat grows well in medium to coarse textured and well-drained soils. Sulfur flower buckwheat can be raised from seed or purchased as container grown plants at local nurseries. Collect the sharply angled small black seeds from dried flower heads by rubbing the papery dried flower heads between your fingers. They generally germinate without pretreatment and can be sown in spring or fall. However, the rate of germination is improved if they are first cold stratified. Cold stratify seeds by placing them in a plastic bag with moist peat moss or sand in a refrigerator for three months. Plant out in the early spring. Seeds are naturally cold stratified by fall planting. Select a hot, sunny, well-drained planting site and broadcast the seeds directly on the ground where they are to grow permanently.

Sulfur flower buckwheat seeds will germinate better if the seedbed has been cleared of weeds, and/or roto-tilled, or spaded to a depth of eight to ten inches, and mixed with additional compost. Scatter seeds evenly over the seedbed and rake and water lightly. Cover seeds with sand or weed-free compost to a depth equal to one or two times the seed diameter (about one eighth inch). Keep the seedbed moist by sprinkling two to three times daily until seeds germinate. After the seeds germinate, continue to water once every two to three days for the next few weeks; then once a week for another month. Continue to water a few times a month through the fall. Plants are drought tolerant when established and will need only occasional watering. It blooms the second year from seed. It can be pruned back after flowering to promote a denser, more compact plant.

Sulfur flower buckwheat has a long taproot and thus mature plants are difficult to transplant. When container-grown plants are ready to plant, dig a hole two to three times the diameter of the root ball and at least six inches deeper. Backfill the hole with six inches of native soil. Make a few one-eighth inch deep vertical cuts in the rootball, or carefully loosen roots away from the rootball with your hands to encourage roots to grow into the new soil. Set the plant into the hole and fill in around the roots with planting mix, firming the soil with your hands as you fill, until the hole is half full. Fill the hole with water and allow it to settle. This will settle the soil and eliminate air pockets around the roots. Backfill with enough soil so that the plant will set at the same level at which it was growing in the container. Water it to allow the soil to settle, then add more soil if necessary. Build a berm of soil to form a watering basin around the outer edge of the hole. Break the basin down after two or three years. Control of weeds and irrigation is necessary in the first year of establishment.

The flowers dry beautifully and keep their bright color if merely cut and hung to dry, and this selection has stems long enough to be useful in arrangements. The leaves of the Sulfur Buckwheat are evergreen, but get a little sparse and tinged with purple in the dead of winter. Sulfur Buckwheat is one of only a few attractive plants that will grow and thrive in our climate with absolutely no to very little supplemental water. It survives in some of the roughest rocky sites in full Valley sun, and blooms in the hot season. With some water, it is lusher, blooms more and grows faster. For ultimate drought tolerance and low-maintenance along with showy flowers, it is hard to beat this plant.
We favor Berkeley Sedge for its lush meadow look. Ranging from Washington to California’s Monterey coast to the Sierras south to Merced area. This western native’s deep green and lustrous, thin evergreen blades elegantly arch out from a clumping base and yield inconspicuous brownish blooms held by lax, wiry stems.

This sedge is one of the most adaptable of the ground-cover grasses. Its ability to look the same in sun or shade makes it a valuable asset in plantings that go in and out of full sun. Berkeley sedge is a good solution for areas under stress where lawn grasses often fail. The flowers are not particularly noteworthy.

Noteworthy characteristics: Tolerates foot traffic and the occasional mowing.

Care: Berkeley sedge is very adaptable and can grow in full sun to full shade and most any soil.


This lush green sedge is one of the best plants for creating a natural meadow look, growing to 2 feet tall and as wide. Berkeley Sedge will grow in moderately dry conditions but can also be planted in wet soil or in shallow water, and can be planted in sun or shade - good as an understory planting. If you are planting in sun in the central valley, Berkeley Sedge prefers some shade during the day. Cut the foliage back once or twice a year to clean up older growth. This will also prevent it from seeding out, seeds will germinate in moist soils. It is an excellent, VERY TOUGH ground cover for shade (or sun), it thrives under trees - handily tolerating root competition. Tolerates foot traffic, too, so once it’s established it will take considerable abuse, so a good choice for DOG YARDS. It can even be mowed periodically to create a more lawn-like effect. Though drought tolerant, it looks better with weekly watering for well-drained soils and water every other week for slow draining soils during the hottest months.

Once established, the fast growing and versatile Carex Tumulicola can endure an array of factors: some drought, boggy areas, tree roots, sun or shade, and foot traffic, including the four-legged kind. You can space it closely and mow for a turflike effect, plant en masse as a ground cover in a small or large area or create a shady vignette with other shade tolerant plants such as deer grass, wild rose, blue eyed grass, and red berry. The popularity of ornamental grasses and grass like plants has grown widely in the last dozen years, due to their good looks, ease of maintenance, and water-wise nature. If you can identify an area of lawn that you don’t really need any more, take the plunge and create an interesting palate of mounding grasses.

One of the best aspects of Carex tumulicola is that it tolerates deep shade quite nicely, and allows a grassy area under moderately dry growing trees and shrubs. This is not a plant that would work under the very dry conditions needed for mature valley oaks. The plants are also quite tolerant of wet conditions as might be expected from a plant native to our ephemeral wetlands.
3rd annual “Go Native!”
Native American Cultural Celebration

Basketweaving, Native Plant Sale and guided hike of Preserve
Saturday, May 29, 10-3 pm Kaweah Oaks Preserve

A fun and educational day spent learning about and celebrating the rich Native American culture, art and traditions that once flourished in this Kaweah Delta region.

Schedule of Events
10:00 Opening Prayer - Marie Wilcox
10:15 Welcome/History of Gathering - Jennifer
10:30 Basketweaving Classes Begin - All Day
  -Milkweed Rope - Don Jack
  -Deerskin Rattles - Sandy Clark
  -Tule Decoy Ducks - Diana Almanderez
  -Pine Needle Baskets - David Garcia
  -Willow Rattles - Nicola Larsen
  -Coil Baskets - Lawana Jasso
10:30 Guided Nature Hike
12:00 - 1:30 Teachers Lunch/Break
1:30 - 2:30 Continuation of Basketweaving Classes
2:30 - 3:00 Closing Prayer / Teacher Recognition
All Day Indian Tacos, Children’s Activities, Craft Vendors, Raffle, and Native Plant Sale

Jennifer Malone, event organizer and master basketweaver, is a full-blooded California Native American whose family is Wukchumni, Yowlumni, and Tachi. In partnership with Sequoia Riverlands Trust, Jennifer has been transplanting soaproot and gathering sedge from Kaweah Oaks Preserve for years. This will be her second year organizing the “Go Native!” event, which teaches local weavers how to gather these plants for use in weaving traditional baskets. Jennifer carries on a long family tradition of basketweaving, having learned it from watching her grandmother Beatrice Arancis. Jennifer also serves on the Board of Directors of the California Indian Basketweavers Association.

Kaweah Oaks Preserve is located on Road 182, approximately seven miles east of downtown Visalia via Highway 198. Donation: $10 for SRT members, $15 for non-members. Become a member that day and attend the event for free. Individual memberships start at $35 and family memberships start at $50. Event is sponsored by the California Indian Basketweavers Assoc., Tule River Tribal Council and Eagle Mountain Casino.

The Fall Program for the Alta Peak Chapter on Oct 2, will be a presentation by Mary Gorden on the uses of native plants by the Native Americans who called the Kaweah River Valley their home. Mary will be speaking at 2 pm during the Three Rivers Environmental Weekend Saturday Fair inside the Three Rivers Arts Center. Details coming in next Insignis....

Check out this wonderful ethnobotany blog from Southern California, an art and photography website dedicated to California Native Plants, Native cultures and the environment from Deborah Small.
www.deborahsmall.wordpress.com
Jepson Herbarium Workshop
Alpine Rare Flora of the Kings River Canyon
June 3 – 6, 2010

Instructor: Dana York He received his M.S. (1999) from California State University, Fresno, in biology and botany, and his B.S. (1984) in forest management from Humboldt State University. He has worked on floristic and special-status species surveys throughout California and Oregon on both public and private lands. He has discovered new plants in the Sierra Nevada and Death Valley National Park. He was Death Valley's botanist for nearly five years. He currently works in Eureka, California, for Caltrans as an Environmental Unit Supervisor. He lives in Arcata with his wife, Eva, and two children.

Location: Canyon View Campground, Kings Canyon National Park and Sequoia National Forest. Kings Canyon represents one of the deepest river canyons in North America with a maximum depth of 8,200 feet. The confluence of the Middle and South Fork Kings River occurs at the terminus of Monarch Divide, an area known for several rare plants. At Boyden Cave, a large calcareous rock formation just west of the national park, live oak chaparral and pinyon pine plant communities are commonplace. This area has nearly 20 rare plant species. John Muir first visited Kings Canyon in 1873 and compared the beauty to that of Yosemite Valley. Participants will camp in Kings Canyon National Park, and explore meadows, experience waterfalls, scamper up rock outcrops (optional), hike trails, and see a plethora of plants including some canyon and southern Sierra endemics.

No trip to this part of the Sierra Nevada is complete until the participants have had a chance to experience the greatness of the giant sequoias. We will spend time exploring this truly unique and awe-inspiring plant community. Participants will come away from the workshop with a truly remarkable experience that only Kings Canyon can provide. Course fee ($460, members/$485, non-members) includes campground facilities, meals, park entrance fee, and transportation within Kings Canyon from Thursday dinner to Sunday lunch. Campground facilities include: potable water and flush toilets; showers are nearby.

The UC Berkeley Jepson Herbarium offer many workshops. See their website for more details at ucjeps.berkeley.edu

(ed. note just as the newsletter went to press, I see that this workshop is filled and there is a waiting list for it. It’s good to know that this is happening in our neighborhood.)

“Most people are on the world, not in it - having no conscious sympathy or relationship to anything about them - undiffused, separate, and rigidly alone like marbles of polished stone, touching but separate”

“The clearest way to the Universe is through a forest wilderness”

“Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature’s peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves.”

John Muir
CNPS MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: ________________________________________________

Address: ______________________________________________

City/Zip: ______________________________________________

Telephone: _____________________________________________

Email (optional): _________________________________________

I wish to affiliate with: ____ Alta Peak Chapter

Other Chapter ____________________

Membership Category:

____ Student/Retired/Low income, $25
____ Individual, $45
____ Family/Group/Library, $75
____ Plant Lover, $100
____ Patron, $300
____ Benefactor, $600
____ Mariposa Lily, $1500

Mail with check to CNPS, 2707 K St., Suite 1, Sacramento, CA  95816, or you can join or renew automatically year after year via the website www.cnps.org and click on JOIN.

CNPS Workshops: The Plant Science Training Program specializes in providing workshops for professional botanists, biologists, and ecologists to teach the skills and provide the tools and resources for conducting sound scientific surveys for rare plants, rare plant communities, vegetation, wetlands, and invasive plants. Discounted registration fees are offered to CNPS members.

cnps.org/cnps/education/workshops

Alta Peak Chapter
Annual Native Plant Sale

NEXT FALL
October 2, 2010

Three Rivers Arts Center
North Fork Drive in Three Rivers