



GOLD FIELD NOTES

EL DORADO CHAPTER ☼ CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY ☼ JULY-AUGUST 2005

THE PRESSING NEED TO PROTECT LOCAL AND RELICT PLANT POPULATIONS

BY ARTHUR M. SHAPIRO, PH.D.

CALENDAR

July 9 (Saturday)

Plant walk.
Jake Schneider/Government Meadows.
See details inside.

July 16 (Saturday)

Work party, 8:30AM, IFG
Join us for weeding at the Institute of Forest Genetics. We will be working in the native garden transect and the lathe house. Contact Amy Hoffman (530) 676-1916 for more info.

July 19 (Tuesday)

Monthly program. George Green slides. Check website for an update closer to the meeting date.

July 23 (Saturday)

Plant walk.
Castle Peak, El Dorado. See details inside.

August 6 (Saturday)

Plant walk.
Lyons Creek Trail, El Dorado. See details inside.

August 20 (Saturday)

Plant walk.
Barker Peak, Placer County. See details inside.

September 20 (Tuesday)

Monthly program.
Melissa Morris, an ecology graduate student at UC Davis, will talk to us about her research on mycorrhizae in of oaks in the California's foothills and Mexico.

October 1 (Saturday)

Native plant sale.
Native plants, seeds and books will be on sale from 9 am to 1 pm at Building "C" of the El Dorado County Government Center in Placerville.

Monthly programs are held on the third Tuesday of each month with the exception of August and December. Programs begin at 7 PM at the Placerville Public Library, 345 Fair Lane, Placerville.

The western foothills and lower montane zones of the Sierra Nevada contain species populations and biotic associations ("communities") which are not globally endangered (hence not protected under the U.S. Endangered Species Act) and often not endangered on a statewide basis (hence not protected under the California statute) but which are at high risk of regional extinction in the Sierra Nevada. Many of these are restricted to unusual soils (such as serpentine, gabbro, limestone and certain clays) that make up minuscule proportions of the counties concerned, although they may be widely scattered over the region. Others are restricted to areas with impeded drainage such as bogs, fens and vernal pools. Why are they important?

- They are usually "relicts," populations left behind in special places by climate change. Many have persisted for 10,000-20,000 years since the last Ice Age. A good example of a relict species in our zone is Knobcone Pine (*Pinus attenuata*), which today occurs only in very local colonies in the Sierra, but is common and widespread in the North Coast Range.
- They are often genetically unique, due to long-term isolation from gene flow. An example is the California Pitcher Plant (*Darlingtonia californica*) at the Grouse Ridge fen [Nevada County], which has a color morph unknown in any other population.
- A few occur only in the Sierra Nevada, such as the two races of

the Milkwort Jewelflower (*Streptanthus polygaloides*)-- a species of special interest for its bizarre flowers and its ability to accumulate enormous and toxic amounts of nickel from the soil.

Why are they at risk? Precisely because they occur in many localities, they have not been perceived as being at risk. And because some are relatively common and widespread in the Coast Range or elsewhere, their Sierran populations have not been viewed as being of special concern - but they are at risk. The very local Sierran populations are scattered over several counties, from Plumas and Butte to Kern and Inyo. At the county level they are afforded no protection. As a result, more and more populations are being lost to development, willy-nilly. There is no monitoring across county lines. Several of them will be or have been lost from much of their range, and only then will an alarm be raised that they are in danger of being lost from the Sierra altogether. And by then it will probably be too late.

Most species have a dynamic of colonization and extinction. Local catastrophes such as fires may wipe out local populations, but other populations exist sufficiently close by to allow relatively easy recolonization. As more and more populations are lost, the ones remaining are increasingly isolated from one another and hence increasingly vulnerable to being lost forever. Consider MacNab Cypress (*Cupressus macnabiana*), a tree confined to serpentine and gabbro soils. There are about 15 known popula-

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A BIG THANK YOU TO MEMBERSHIP CHAIR MARGE JUNGNITSCH!

For many years now, Marge Jungnitsch has been serving as our Chapter Membership Chair. Marge has been the friendly voice and presence at our membership table at the plant sales — encouraging new people to get to know us and telling them about membership opportunities. Marge is also the person who has been greeting each new member with a

note card and newsletter. These services are important to welcoming new members to our Chapter and we owe Marge a big hand for creating a friendly and inviting atmosphere in the Chapter. Sadly, Marge has decided to step down from her responsibilities. True to form, Marge has offered to train someone in the transition to a new Chair and will stay on through the October plant Sale to help out at the membership table. Marge has been generous with her time and we will miss her presence and terrific ideas tremendously.

PLANT COMMUNITY AND BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

(cont. page 1)

tions in the Sierra, from Butte County to Amador County, occurring in clusters (two near Oregon House, Yuba County; several near Grass Valley and Nevada City, Nevada County). Because they are clustered (reflecting the distribution of serpentine and gabbro soils), if one is lost there are many nearby seed sources. But suppose the colony near the hospital in Grass Valley is completely lost to development. A small colony across the freeway has already been wiped out. A small colony east of McCourtney Road is down to about 15 trees and may soon disappear. That will leave only the population at East Van Tam Road, adjacent to the county landfill. If it should be destroyed, what are the odds that any seeds will reach any of the sites from another county? MacNab Cypress has a special butterfly, John Muir's Hairstreak (*Mitoura muiri*), which feeds on it. It is apparently on most of the known stands, but is conspicuously absent from the southernmost stand at Mt. Aukum, Amador County, despite that being one of the largest populations of MacNab Cypress (5-10,000 trees). We suspect it was there, became extinct for some reason, and has never been able to recolonized because the place is so far from the nearest colony. If we allow these species to disappear site by site with no control, they will disappear from the whole range of the Sierra Nevada.

The survival of serpentine and gabbro specialist plants and butterflies has been

favored by the poor quality of these soils, which has discouraged development until very recently. Now we see an accelerating loss of such sites. In Placer County a significant serpentine site has been developed along Iowa Hill Road, and others are at risk. In Eldorado County the suburbanization of Pine Hill has apparently led to a complete loss of its rare and endemic butterfly fauna, which was still common as recently as the 1960s. Even if these species survive elsewhere in their geographic ranges, their loss from the Sierra Nevada removes an element of patrimony that cannot be replaced. If we act now, our descendants will still be able to see them in place and not have to travel to Mendocino or San Luis Obispo to see rare and beautiful organisms that once existed happily just down the road.

I encourage the foothill counties to confer a reasonable level of protection on such organisms, including, but not limited to, plants identified by the California Native Plant Society as meriting special concern.

Dr. Shapiro is a Professor at UC Davis and has conducted research on the butterflies in California for over 30 years. This article was originally published in the Redbud Chapter newsletter in 2000.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY: MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

We are seeking a friendly person who is able to spend 1-2 hours each month managing our membership list plus a couple of days each year at our plant sales encouraging new people to join our chapter. See the job description below for more details. If you are interested in helping out the chapter, please contact Amy Hoffman (530-676-1916; AmyHof@gmail.com).

CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP CHAIR JOB DESCRIPTION

The Chapter Membership Chair welcomes new members to our chapter, keeps track of the status of our members, and invites new people to join our chapter at plant sales and other events. The membership chair is responsible for sending a welcome note and introductory information about our chapter to new members. Another important task is to send a letter of reminding to those folks whose membership has lapsed to renew their membership. The Membership Chair invites new people to join at the chapter plant sales and any other events that the chair chooses to attend. The Membership Chair also collects information from people who wish to have chapter name badges and arranges to have the badges made. The Membership Chair is encouraged to come to the board meeting, but attendance is not required. The State Office of CNPS supplies a complete list of our members twice per year and monthly updates to our membership list. Marge Jungnitsch, our present Membership Chair, will train the new person and has records from which the new chair can begin working.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!
 Fidette Concepcion
 Elena DeLacy
 Deborah Hall
 Kaitlin Lubetkin
 Richard & Sandy Carlson
 V. Gerber
 ... AND WELCOME BACK!
 Angelo & Jean Ballungay

SUMMER PLANT WALKS

IMPORTANT REMINDER

Please contact the trip leaders by the Wednesday prior to the hike to let them know you will be attending.

DUE TO THE LATE SEASON, SEVERAL OF THE LOCATIONS FOR TRIPS MAY CHANGE AND THE CAR POOL LOCATION MAY ALSO CHANGE.

July 9, 2005 (Saturday)

Jake Schneider/Government Meadows

Meeting time and location: 8 AM Safeway parking lot, Pollock Pines

Duration: We will return to Pollock Pines by 4:30 PM.

Description: Starting from the trailhead at Silver Fork Campground (10 miles from Kyburz on Silver Fork road), it is approx. 3 miles to Jake Schneider Meadow and an additional 1-mile to Government Meadows. We climb from 5,600 to 6,200 ft. and hike along the Silver Fork American River and Caples Creek. Expect nice views of the streams flowing through granite bedrock and boulder, springs and small aspen stands. Habitats include open, dry granitic slopes with whiteleaf manzanita and huckleberry oak, riparian areas along stream, and dry and moist meadows. Meadow plants include tufted hairgrass, pull-up muhly, oatgrass, sedges and rushes, clover, western bistort, potentilla, alpine aster, buttercups, veronica and yampah. On the way back we can decide to return the same way or do a loop along the old Silver Fork trail which requires two stream crossings (wade or log and bridge) on Caples Creek.

Level of difficulty: Moderate

Bring: Water, lunch, hiking boots, bug repellent, hat, sunscreen.

Contacts: Cindy Podsiadlo/(530)642-0648; clpodsiadlo.yahoo.com; Susan Durham/(530)626-6736; durham-sus@yahoo.com.

July 23 (Saturday)

Castle Peak, El Dorado County

Meeting time and location: 8:00am, Raleys on Forni Road

Duration: Expect to return to Placerville around 5-6 PM.

Description: Large displays of spring flowers at 8,000 feet in volcanic soil and spectacular views of the surrounding mountains. Jepson stops will be limited to 2-3 because the best displays are several miles up the hill. Avid Jepson Manual fans have the alternative of enjoying the flowering meadow about a 1/2 mile from the parking area while the others hike up the hill.

Level of difficulty: moderate to strenuous

Bring: Lunch, water, hiking boots, sun lotion, bug repellent, and a rain jacket. Possible afternoon showers.

Contact: Karen Gaia Pitts 916-599-4329

August 6

Lyons Creek Trail, El Dorado County

Meeting time and location: 8:30 AM Safeway parking lot, Pollock Pines.

Duration: We will return to Pollock Pines by 4:30 PM.

Description: This is the Don Smith Memorial Hike, honoring the spirit and accomplishments of the late amateur botanist and CNPS Fellow whose many contributions to the botany community in El Dorado County spanned 30 years. Beginning at the Lyons Creek trailhead at 6,750', we will hike up Lyons Creek to about 7,200', about 4 miles round trip. We'll encounter open granite, mountain meadows, and fir-lodgepole conifer forest, all under the shadow of the beautiful Crystal Range. Intriguing plants will be marked on the hike up the creek for botanizing as we return to the trailhead.

Level of difficulty: Moderate

Bring: Hat, sunscreen, lunch, water, sturdy shoes, insect repellent.

Contact: Rich Wade (530) 644-7210; rwade@spi-ind.com

August 20 (Saturday)

Barker Peak, Placer County

Meeting time and location: 8 AM Safeway parking lot in Pollock Pines

Duration: Allow a full day for this trip.

Description: The Barker Peak Trail is 2.5 miles with a net gain of just under 700 feet (7500' to 8166'). A scramble up rocks to the summit is optional. The nearly 8-mile drive from the Kaspian sign at Highway 89 to the trailhead passes through Blackwood Canyon with drainages hosting plants characteristic of these wet habitats and, at the top, large mountain hemlocks. The lower end of the Barker Pass Trail passes Leichtlin's mariposa lilies that grow up to 18" high and dwarf chamaesaracha. Further up the mountain, views of Desolation Wilderness and Lake Tahoe make the saddle an attractive resting place. Higher up we will find many more plants typical of high elevations in the Sierra Nevada. Highlights include Whitney's locoweed, butterballs, ballhead gilia, and hot rock penstemon, a medicinal plant traditionally used to treat VD and to heal sores. Back at the trailhead (and if time allows), nearby seeps provide more botanical opportunities with species such as western spring beauty, toad lily, and bowl clover. From the trailhead, a level 1/4-mile hike leads to the first creekside meadow. A 1/2-mile hike leads to Brewer's mitrewort with other interesting plants found further along the trail. Due to the long travel time by car and foot, this trip will provide little time for keying plants with Jepson. Trip description from: Carville, J.S. 1997. Barker Peak and Surrounding Gardens. In: Hiking Tahoe's Wildflower Trails. Lone Pine Publishing. pp. 219-232.

Level of difficulty: Moderate

Bring: Water, lunch, hiking boots, hat, sunblock, insect repellent, jacket or layers (can be windy at summit).

Contact: Susan Durham, durham-sus@yahoo.com, (530) 626-6736; Joanne Geggatt, joannegeg-gatt@sbcglobal.net, (916) 939-3394.



*For updates between newsletters
www.eldoradocnps.org*



El Dorado Chapter
 California Native Plant Society
 P.O. Box 1948
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July-August 2005



Learn more about State CNPS at:
www.cnps.org

REMINDER: NO PROGRAM MEETING IN AUGUST



DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CALIFORNIA'S NATIVE FLORA

The California Native Plant Society is a statewide nonprofit organization of amateurs and professionals with a common interest in California's native plants. The mission of the Society is to increase understanding and appreciation of California's native plants and to preserve them in their natural habitat through scientific activities, education, and conservation. Membership is open to all.

Membership includes the quarterly journal, *Fremontia*, the quarterly *Bulletin*, which gives statewide news and announcements of Society activities and conservation issues, and the chapter newsletter *Gold Field Notes*. To join, call our main office in Sacramento, (916) 447-2677.

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