



GOLD FIELD NOTES

EL DORADO CHAPTER ☼ CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY ☼ November-December 2016

NOVEMBER 15TH PROGRAM CNPS CONSERVATION PROGRAM: 2021

Third Tuesday this
Program Only!

Calendar

November 15 (Tuesday)

Chapter program.
CNPS Conservation Program: 2021. See note to right for details.

December 3 (Saturday)

Workshop.
Wreath Making with Native Plants.. At Chico State Herbarium. Register online at: <http://www.friendsofthechicostateherbarium.com/>

January 9-10 (Monday-Tuesday)

Symposium.
Northern California Botanists 8th Symposium: Diverse Environments: How Plants Succeed. California State University, Chico. <http://norcalbotanists.org/symposia/symposium2017.htm>

January 24 (Tuesday)

Chapter program.
To be arranged. Check website and January newsletter for details.

Evening programs are held on the fourth Tuesday of January, March, May, July, September, and November. The program begins at 7 PM at the Planning Commission Room, Building C, 2850 Fairlane Court, Placerville.

CNPS Conservation Program Director Greg Suba will present an overview of the CNPS Conservation Program's recent history of work, and describe where the Program is heading over the next 5 years. Through narrative and pictures, Greg will present a tour across the state, touching on major conservation efforts by CNPS Chapters, and focus on major initiatives at the CNPS state office: statewide energy and conservation planning, forestry, and mapping Important Plant Areas. Greg Suba has been CNPS Conservation Program Director since May, 2009. Raised in Missouri, Greg studied in North Carolina, and began his professional career in California as an environmental scientist in 1990.

This program will be held on Tuesday, November 15, at 7 PM at the Planning Commission Room, Building C, 2850 Fairlane Court, Placerville. The program is free to both members and the public. **Note that this meeting is on the THIRD Tuesday not our usual fourth Tuesday of the month.**



Joshua trees at Lee Flat, Inyo County. Photo: Greg Suba

PICKY EATERS

Just like some two-year olds you may have been acquainted with, some butterfly caterpillars can be picky eaters.

The adult phase of most butterflies visit a variety of flowers to sip nectar, but when it comes to selecting the plant on which to lay their precious eggs they are usually more selective. Most everyone knows that butterfly larvae are called caterpillars and that they are plant eaters, but it is not common knowledge that, while some butterflies will lay their eggs on a wide variety of larval food plants (often referred to as larval host plants), others are 'very picky' about which plants they select for laying their eggs. I am going to discuss those butterflies that are very selective, so selective that they lay their eggs on only one species or genus of plant and their caterpillars therefore eat only one plant type during their lifetime.

The best known of these plant specific caterpillars are the Monarch butterflies. Monarch and Queen butterflies, which visually are quite similar, lay their eggs exclusively on plants in the Milkweed (*Asclepias*) genus. The Monarchs have received a lot of publicity lately because their numbers are declining rapidly across the country. One reason for this is that their larval host plant, the Milkweeds, have been decimated by herbicide treatments in agricultural and roadside areas. There is now a powerful public movement for agencies, farmers and private gardeners to plant the Milkweed species that are native to their area in order to bring back the Monarchs. It is important to plant local native species of Milkweeds rather than those from other parts of the country or tropical regions, to provide the right nutrients and toxic steroids (cardenolides) for the caterpillars and to avoid disrupting their normal migration patterns to their California coastal wintering sites. Monarch larvae/caterpillars ingest the cardenolides from the milkweed, which doesn't harm them, and they become toxic to vertebrate predators. Their distinctive yellow, white and black stripes announce to these potential predators that they are bad-tasting and toxic; once a bird tries one, they immediately vomit, and learn the lesson. The best species of milkweeds to plant in our area are Showy Milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*), Narrow-

leaf Milkweed (*Asclepias fascicularis*), Purple Milkweed (*Asclepias cordifolia*), and Indian or Woolypod Milkweed (*Asclepias eriocarpa*). All of these grow in various habitats in Placer and Nevada Counties. (*Editor's note: These species also grow in El Dorado County.*)

Another butterfly species that exclusively lays its eggs on one plant species is the Pipevine Swallowtail (photo below). As you may have guessed, its larval host



©2008 Franco Folini

plant is the California Pipevine (*Aristolochia californica*). Another common name for this species is Dutchman's Pipe, and both names derive from the striking resemblance of the large flowers to a Dutchman's pipe. The Pipevine Swallowtail caterpillars eat the leaves, flowers and seed pods, which contain the lethal toxin aristolochic acid, which is harmless to them, but makes them and the adult butterflies toxic to vertebrate predators. The vines can be heavily chewed up by the caterpillars feeding, but they recover each spring with a burst of new growth. California Pipevine can climb up into trees and shrubs or be trained onto trellises, and it also can become a rambunctious groundcover. If you want to encourage Pipevine Swallowtails to show up in your garden, plant their larval host plant as well as a variety of pollen and nectar producing flowering native plants.

My favorite butterfly is the Clodius Parnassian (*Parnassius clodius*), which is a member of the Swallowtail family, even though it doesn't look much like a Swallowtail. This beautiful butterfly has nearly

translucent, cream-colored wings and distinctive black, reddish-orange, gray and yellow wing and body markings that cannot be mistaken for any other species (see color painting). Parnassians are found in open woods, alpine areas, mountain meadows and around rock outcrops. It is almost always found flying where there are large colonies of Western Bleeding Heart (*Dicentra formosa*) or another member of the Bleeding Heart family, as Bleeding Hearts are its only larval food plant. Caterpillars feed at night at the base of host plant so it is quite lucky if you ever see one. Here again, we discover that by eating the toxic leaves of the Western Bleeding Heart, the caterpillars become poisonous as well.

The charismatic and endemic California Dogface Butterfly is our official state butterfly. It is a mostly dark yellow butterfly and its name derives from the black pattern on the upper surface wings which resembles the profile of a dog's face. Unfortunately, it is becoming less and less common, since its only larval food plant is declining, mostly due to residential and commercial development in foothill habitats. The Dogface butterflies lay their eggs on California False Indigo (*Amorpha californica*), a member of the pea family that is somewhere between shrub and vine, and which eventually forms colonies from spreading underground rootstock. False Indigo produces racemes of deep purple-maroon flowers with showy golden anthers which are unusual flowers for a pea, (cont. p. 3)



©2013 Joshua McDill

Aristolochia californica

ELECTIONS: NOVEMBER GENERAL MEETING

Our chapter biannual elections are here! As announced at the October general meeting, all officers have graciously agreed to run for another 2 year term in their current positions: Alice Cantelow, Chapter President; Debra Ayres, Vice President; Christie Johnson, Secretary; and Cindy Podsiado, Treasurer. However, you can be placed on the ballot as well for any of these positions—just let us know of your desire at the eldoradocnps.org contact page. The

election will be held at our November general meeting November 15 (one week earlier than normal due to Thanksgiving holiday)

The elected officers plus the standing committee chairs make up the executive committee (“Board”) of the Chapter and are responsible for organizing the Chapter activities listed on the back of this newsletter. If you wish to be more involved with the organization of the Chapter as a member of the Board, we welcome you! There is a current opening for Education Chair. For more details, contact us at eldoradocnps.org.

JANUARY 24 PROGRAM

To be arranged. Check website and January newsletter for more details.

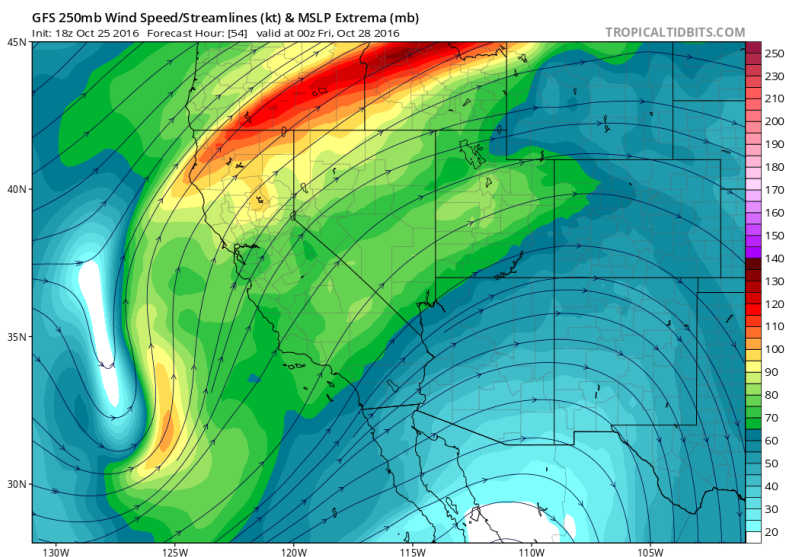
This program will be held on Tuesday, January 24, at 7 PM at the Planning Commission Room, Building C, 2850 Fairlane Court, Placerville. The program is free to both members and the public.

The California Weather Blog

brought to you by Weather West

More and more the weather—what it has been like historically, what to expect in the future—dominates the news and our con-

versations. Not sure what to make of it all? Well, help is on the way. Daniel Swain, a climate scientist with Institute of the Environment and Sustainability at the University of California, Los Angeles, hosts The Climate Weather Blog where he explains ongoing and upcoming weather-climate patterns. His explanations use plain language and incorporate interesting maps and graphs, many of which are time sequence graphs that change right before your eyes.



In his most recent posting, Swain discussed the unusual southern origins of the storms at the end of October and relationship to Hurricane Seymour. He included a wind speed map for October 28 (depicted to left) showing the direction and magnitude of the wind for that day. He also touches on what we might expect in 2017 based on results from continuously updated weather models and other information. He explains those models and trends concluding that “The unfavorable state of the tropical Pacific Ocean, plus the high likelihood of persistent warmth yet again this winter, suggests that we’re still likely to be talking about the ‘ongoing California drought’ well into 2017.”

Sound interesting? Check out his website and sign up for your periodic updates: <http://www.weatherwest.com/> (Note: The subscribe box is part way down on the right side of the page.)

PICKY EATERS (from p. 2)

since the flowers lack the banner and keel parts of the typical pea flower. False Indigo grows in oak woodlands, often uphill from a creek or river. If you see California Dogface butterflies, then there must be patch of False Indigo somewhere in your area. As an added bonus, *Amorpha californica* is also a very good pollinator plant and especially attractive to bumblebees. It is difficult to propagate and grow up into saleable size, but we occasionally offer it at our plant sales. It is a native plant well-worth seeking out in nurseries or starting from seed if you can’t locate it for sale.

Native grasses are probably not regarded as a butterfly larval host plant by most gardeners, but in fact they are vital for Grass Skipper, Wood Nymph and California Ringlet butterfly caterpillars. The adults may feed on flower nectar, tree sap, or animal dung, but when it is time to reproduce, they must find healthy stands of grasses to lay their eggs. California is home to a large and diverse number of perennial bunchgrasses that make wonderful additions to garden borders and pollinator gardens, to rural and agricultural hedgerows, on banks for erosion control, and of course, should be included in any pollinator garden. Some excellent native grasses for landscaping are Deer-

grass (*Muhlenbergia rigens*), California and Idaho Fescue (*Festuca californica* and *idahoensis*), the various Needlegrasses (*Stipa* spp.), June Grass (*Koeleria macrantha*), Blue Wild Rye (*Elymus glaucus*), Tufted Hairgrass (*Deschampsia* spp.), Blue Grama Grass (*Bouteloua gracilis*) and Reed grasses (*Calamagrostis* spp.).

Adapted from an Article by Nancy Gilbert, Education Chair, Redbud Chapter, CNPS.

Editor’s Note: Many of the plants above are offered at our twice yearly plant sales. You can use this article to start planning your butterfly habitat now and then check out our plant sale in April 2017 for your host plants.



El Dorado Chapter
 California Native Plant Society
 P.O. Box 1948
 Placerville, CA 95667

November-December 2016

For Updates Visit Us on the Web
www.eldoradoCNPS.org and



CALIFORNIA
 NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

**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 conserve California native plants and their natural habitats, and increase understanding, appreciation, and horticultural use of native plants. 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, or visit www.cnps.org to join online.

CHAPTER OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

PRESIDENT	Alice Cantelow	(530)622-5306	alicecantelow@gmail.com
VICE PRESIDENT	Debra Ayres	(530) 672-9976	drayres@ucdavis.edu
SECRETARY	Christie Johnson		mwdesigns@suttercreek.com
TREASURER	Cindy Podsiadlo	(530) 642-0648	clpodsiadlo@yahoo.com
BOOKS & POSTERS	Bonnie East	(530) 417-1086	redshldr.1002@yahoo.com
CLARK YOUTH FUND PROGRAM	Jinnah Benn	(916) 508-2982	jinnahbean@yahoo.com
CONSERVATION	Sue Britting	(530) 295-8210	britting@earthlink.net
EDUCATION & OUTREACH	Mahala Guggino		mahala@flourishontheweb.com
Field Trips	Diane Cornwall	(530) 888-1404	dancing wildflowers@me.com
HOSPITALITY	Marty Oberlander	(530) 333-1536	mober44@gmail.com
	Pat Guge	(530) 620-6583	pguge@yahoo.com
INVASIVE EXOTICS	Mike Taylor	(530) 626-1196	m.taylor@live.com
RARE PLANTS	Annie Walker	(530) 626-3678	agastache@att.net
MEMBERSHIP	Judith Whiffin	(530) 622-7945	deltajud@gmail.com
PLANT SALES	Mahala Guggino		mahala@flourishontheweb.com
PROGRAMS	Debra Ayres	(530) 672-9976	drayres@ucdavis.edu
WRIGHTS LAKE WILDFLOWER WALKS	Rich Wade	(530) 644-7210	rwade@spi-ind.com
COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLIC RELATIONS	Tripp Mikich	(530) 748-9365	trippdmnh@yahoo.com
	Deborah Nicholls		dnicolls@yahoo.com
WEB MASTER	Sue Britting	(530) 295-8210	britting@earthlink.net
NEWSLETTER			