



Insignis

Newsletter of the Alta Peak Chapter, celebrating and supporting the native plant communities in Tulare County, serving the Central Valley and Sierra Nevada Mountains and Foothills.

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Outgoing Chapter President's Message

by Melanie Keeley

As out-going president, I am contemplating my past (just shy of 5 years) term and what accomplishments I am most proud of. This question, posed to me by in-coming president, Barbara Brydolf, made me realize that I should offer a "State of the Union" report for our members. Upon first becoming president, membership was frightfully dwindling and the board was overworked. For years, all the chapter responsibilities had fallen on the same few people, (thank you, Joan Stewart, Janet Fanning and Elsay Cort). Having juggled primary leadership roles between them, they were tired, albeit so very dedicated! With the passing of treasurer Janet Fanning and the loss of Joan Stewart as Conservation Chair, the board took quite a hit, struggling to fill the vast chasm they left.

Thankfully, new chapter members came forward to round out the board, Betty Avalos (Educational Grants); Ginger Bradshaw and Shelley Quaid both served as field trip chair; Ann Huber and Barbara Brydolf (treasurer); Joy Semple and Denise Griego (secretary); Ann Huber, and Mary Merriman (both Rare Plant Chairs) to do the work. Together, we offered the membership informative events: field trips, educational talks, native plant landscaping classes, with a deliberate inclusiveness of the entirety of Tulare County. We also

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Incoming Chapter President's Message

by Barbara Brydolf

I'm very excited and not a little afraid to take on the mantle of President for the Alta Peak Chapter of CNPS. Thinking about what the job of president entails, I'm beginning to realize what a big commitment it is and to appreciate, somewhat belatedly, the work of the previous presidents of this chapter. I especially want to thank Melanie Baer Keeley for her leadership these last five-plus years, and for her continuing service.

Along with the rest of you, I share a love for and urge to protect the treasure that is our native California flora. I was born and raised in southern California, on the outskirts of Pasadena. My father knew a considerable amount about native plants and encouraged me and my sisters to share his enthusiasm. My neighborhood, which bordered on the wild lands of the San Gabriel Mountains, had lots of undisturbed native habitat. We had Toyon, California Laurel, Elderberry, Wild Cucumber, and other native plants in our yard. However, as I grew, so did the neighborhood. Many of the wild areas in which I played became covered with houses, and the butterflies, cottontails, and grey squirrels that inhabited our neighborhood gradually disappeared. Later, when I moved to San Diego, I saw a repetition of that same process. While my education in biology (at CSULA and UCSD) served to increase my knowledge and appreciation of native California plants, at the same time I witnessed its gradual diminishment. *cont'd pg 2*

Chapter Winter Program

Adaptation of Plants, Animals and Humans to Wildfires: What to Expect Following the Pier Fire

with Dr. Jon Keeley, fire ecologist/research scientist for the United States Geological Survey and adjunct professor UCLA

**Saturday, February 24, 2018 at 7pm
Springville Veterans Memorial Building**

Wildfires are a necessary part of the ecology of many wild landscapes in mediterranean-type climates across the globe, promoting healthy wildlands and biodiversity. After an explosive fire year in California, many questions arise as humans more commonly move into areas that are subject to burning. Dr. Keeley will provide an overview of the fire history of Sierra Nevada forests and shrublands, describing interesting ways plants and animals have adapted to survive wildfires. This talk will touch on important issues related to the wildland-urban interface, as well as the future in an era of global change.

Field Trip before Winter Program see Page 3 for details

After the field trip and before the program, join Chapter members for dinner at Nuevo Mexicali III restaurant in Springville, located at: 35258 Hwy 190.

Pier Fire Observations

By Barbara Brydolf

On December 28, I visited part of the area burned by the Pier Fire, which occurred above Springville this fall. Starting from a car fire on Hwy 190 at the end of August, the fire burned without containment for a month, then continued to smolder for another month until finally being extinguished near the end of November. Over 36,000 acres were affected.

Taking part of my family that was in town for the holidays, we drove up Hwy 190 to the Stevenson Falls trailhead turnout and hiked down to the river. The area is above the Wishon Road fork at about 3500' elevation. On the south-facing slopes of the Tule River canyon (where the road is located), the chaparral vegetation was mostly charred to the ground. The resulting landscape was spectacularly blackened and bare. On the north-facing slope across the river however, the mostly oak vegetation appeared largely untouched. It was a testimony to the dramatic differences in vegetation and exposure on the two sides of the canyon and their effect on the fire.

There had been a small amount of rain since the fire, but the soil was dry. Even so, I was impressed by the amount of living plants I saw. It seemed as though about half of the blackened stumps were already resprouting. I noticed redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*), chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), bay (*Umbellularia californica*), fremontia (*Fremontodendron californicum*), live oak (*Quercus wislizeni*), poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*), perennial grass, and yerba santa (*Eriodictyon californicum*)—a far larger variety of species than I had previously thought was growing there. I had assumed it to

be almost all chamise, especially based on how it had burned, but I stand corrected. Sprouting bulbs of amole (*Chlorogalum pomeridianum*) were also seen, along with an unidentified brodiaea-like bulb.

I was also very interested to see that the heat from the fire caused many of the exposed granite rocks to split and fall apart, exposing unweathered, light-colored rock beneath. I had never seen this before. One other thing impressed me, but not in a positive way. Now that the plants were largely burned off, I could see how much trash was on the ground. I saw old cans from before the pop-top era, cans from the pull-off tab phase, and modern cans. There were lots of glass bottles as well. I also saw brand new plastic bottles that must have been tossed after the fire, as they never would have survived otherwise. The stuff was everywhere.

Incoming President's Letter *cont'd from pg 1*

My husband, Gary Adest, and I moved to Tulare County precisely because we saw that wild California still existed here. We purchased a cattle ranch and placed a conservation easement upon it to ensure that it will stay undivided in the future. I am glad that I live here and can immerse myself in the nature that nourishes my soul. I hope to work along with you, our members, to strengthen the Alta Peak Chapter and to learn more about, enjoy, and protect our native California heritage.

Outgoing President's Letter *cont'd from pg 1*

sponsored some wildly successful plant sales. We all owe a debt of gratitude to each of these hardworking individuals.

Our newsletter, the *Insignis*, is a crucial educational and outreach tool used to inform, unify and connect both current and prospective members to what is transpiring locally and statewide in all aspects related to native plants. This organization is making significant strides that deserve to be shared and noted. I am immensely proud of our chapter's outreach including the *Insignis*, as well as of our internet presence on our facebook page and website. We largely can attribute this to the visionary and technical wizardry of Elsay Cort. Thanks to Cathy Capone for taking on the editorship of the *Insignis* during Elsay's hiatus as well.

Although the outlook for the chapter is improving, measured in part by the upward membership trends, we still need to fortify the board. Every board member has taken on multiple roles with many more tasks and much work to be done. As the current board again jostles positions, with artist, Martha Widmann, who entered the board as historian, Barbara Brydolf moving from treasurer to president, and me moving to the position of vice president, focusing more on newsletter and conservation issues, the board is still struggling to cover its basic tasks. Cathy Capone has stepped up to the important role of state chapter delegate, but also covers horticulture and acts as our educational grant Coordinator — a lot to handle.

It's been an honor serving as chapter president with this fantastic and dedicated board of directors. Thank you!

Spring Field Trips

Free events and open to everyone, not just CNPS members

Pier Fire Area Field Trip

Saturday, February 24, from 1-4 pm

before Winter Program in Springville

Led by Jon Keeley and Barbara Brydolf, this field trip will be mostly driving along Hwy 190 above Springville with stops at various overlooks, and a short hike on steep terrain (this could be skipped by people who want to go on the excursion, but are unable to do the hike).

Meet at the Springville Veterans Memorial Building at 1 pm to caravan and carpool. Carpooling is encouraged, as pull-outs along Hwy 190 are limited.

Fire Effects in Blue Oak Woodland Field Trip

Sunday, March 25 from 9:30 - 12:30 pm

River Ridge Ranch in Springville

Gary Adest of River Ridge Institute, Barbara Brydolf, and various forest experts (TBD) will lead this field trip to see how the Pier Fire has changed blue oak (*Quercus douglasii*) woodland on the lower slopes of Lumreau Mountain. We will explore the effects of the fire on soil, vegetation, and wildlife, and discuss the function of fire in the landscape. Expect to see wildflowers on this walk, as well.

Meet at 9:30 am in the lower parking lot of River Ridge Ranch, located at 37675 Balch Park Rd, on the east side of the road, 1.6 mi. north of the White Barn in Springville. The walk will be moderately strenuous, approximately 5 miles, with a 1000' elevation gain. Bring lunch and water and dress appropriately.

Springville Clarkia Field Trip

Saturday, April 21 from 9:30 -12: 30 pm

River Ridge Ranch in Springville

Led by Barbara Brydolf, this field trip will focus on the rare Springville clarkia (*Clarkia springvillensis*). The genus *Clarkia* is represented by over 70 native species endemic to California, and is much celebrated by British horticulturists, although sadly underutilized by Californians themselves. In addition to Springville clarkia, River Ridge Ranch also has elegant clarkia (*Clarkia unguiculata*), a close relative. Because of an accident of

genetics the family that contains *Clarkia*, the *Onagraceae* or Evening Primrose Family, is especially prone to speciation. Small changes to the chromosomes during mitosis (egg and pollen formation) can cause reproductive isolation, instantly creating a new species. The elegant clarkia that co-occurs with Springville clarkia is very similar and may well be its parent.

For this field trip, there should also be a good display of other wildflowers, depending upon weather and rainfall this spring. The hike is moderate, approximately 3 miles, and up to 500' elevation gain. Bring lunch and water and dress appropriately. Meet at 9:30 am in the lower parking lot of River Ridge Ranch. The Ranch is located at 37675 Balch Park Road, on the east side of the road 1.6 mi. north of the White Barn in Springville.

Bryophyte Field Trip*

Saturday, May 5, from 8-5 pm

Giant Forest in Sequoia National Park

In cooperation with the CNPS Bryophyte Chapter, Dr. Paul Wilson, professor at Cal State Northridge, will lead this gentle, slow walk in Sequoia National Park, teaching the basics of mosses, liverworts and hornworts. Providing the snow has melted, we will be going up to the Giant Forest; if not, we will hike Salt Creek in Three Rivers. Heavy rain will postpone the event until May 12. Meet at 8 am at the Pizza Factory in Three Rivers for carpooling.

* On **Sunday, May 9 from 9:30-1:30 pm**, there will be follow-up bryophyte lab day at College of the Sequoias. Following a lecture on bryophytes, participants will examine and learn to identify them through microscopes, with a focus on local species. Meet at Parking Lot 4 (northeast corner of campus) at College of the Sequoias, 915 S. Mooney Boulevard, Visalia.

People are welcome to attend either or both of these bryophyte events. For additional or updated information closer to the event, please call Melanie Keeley at 559-799-7438 or email at mbaerkeeley@gmail.com.

Tule River Parkway Demonstration Gardens

Cathy Capone, Horticulture Chair, has begun a project to establish 10-20 native plant demonstration gardens along the Tule River Parkway pedestrian path between Jaye Street and South Chess Terrace in Porterville. These gardens are in the initial planning stage. The land owner is the City of Porterville. Cathy is working on submitting a grant proposal to the US Fish and Wildlife's Partners Program by March 2018 with a potential funding decision date as soon as July 2018 or the following year, July 2019. These gardens will be city lot sized and are intended to be native plant demonstration gardens for the community. Community groups and businesses will be approached to adopt an individual garden. In addition to the demonstration gardens, the grant will propose habitat improvement and educational signage in the project area. Currently Cathy is working on this project independent of the chapter. She will invite CNPS and chapter involvement along with partnerships with civic, school, business, and social groups when the project details are refined and outreach documents are ready to share. The City of Porterville has a paved parkway path along the south bank of the Tule River between Main Street and Highway 65. The long-term goal is to have a pedestrian and bike path from Lake Success to the City of Tulare.

Fire-safe Landscaping with Native Plants in the Southern Sierra Foothills

by Melanie Keeley

California has been subjected to a grueling and exceedingly long fire season in 2017. As wild fire has swept through the state, many residents wonder what can be done to reduce the chances of their property burning. Although there is no such thing as a plant that won't burn, managing your landscape is key to keeping your home and property safer. The first line of protection against wildfire can and should be your landscape. With thoughtful selection, placement, maintenance and watering, the native plants surrounding your home can actually slow or deter fire. It is possible to have a fire-safe, attractive *native* landscape.

Native Plants

While it is true that native plants of the foothill regions of California are adapted to fire, it is important to retain, and maintain native vegetation. These plants perform vital functions such as watershed protection, slope stabilization, wildlife food and cover, while retaining the unique character and beauty of the region.

Maintenance and Pruning

Existing plants should be thinned and spaced with excess dead, burnable fuels removed from the premises.

- **Surface fuels**—Dried weeds and grasses must be cut close to the ground, especially those surrounding shrubby vegetation and ones located within 30' of any structures. Remove excess leaf litter at the base of shrubs, although it is important to retain a layer of water-conserving mulch.
- **Ladder Fuels**—Mid-sized shrubs may carry fire vertically from ground to crown of intermingled plants. To prevent this ladder effect, be sure to thin dead branches and twiggy growth from these shrubs. Open up the canopy, reducing quantities of live foliage as well. Raise the shrub canopy up 1/3 of the total shrub height, removing branches that lay on the ground. Selectively remove individual shrubs, spacing canopies approximately 15' apart. If necessary, cut, but retain the shrub's root mass to bind and stabilize soil.
- **Crown Fuels**—Tree canopies should be thinned of dead wood annually. Keep trees away from chimneys and away from rooflines. Avoid planting highly combustible trees such as acacia, eucalyptus, or conifers such as pines and junipers near or overhanging structures.

Watering

Water the landscape immediately surrounding structures regularly, keeping vegetation hydrated and healthy. Well-watered plants are less likely to burn.

- Studies have shown that moisture content was the main determinant of fire resistant plants. Keeping leaf moisture elevated in plants throughout the fire season and allowing only minimal accumulation of dead material will significantly decrease chances of burning.

- Anticipate extreme weather events such as heat and wind by watering the soil a little in advance of actual plant needs. However, native plants of the foothill regions are drought-adapted, so water cautiously.
- Radiating outward from your home, create more planting zones with compatible plants that require less and less irrigation as they filter into the surrounding wild landscape.

Plant Selection and Placement

Choose and position native plants wisely, separating planting areas into "islands" to reduce continuously available fuel.

- Select plants with thick evergreen leaves, such as interior live oak (*Quercus wislizenii*) that maintain moisture even when drying winds are present. Or, select trees that are broad-leaved, and deciduous from riparian areas such as the Fremont cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*). Deciduous trees tend to have higher moisture content within their leaves.
- Pick plants with a low profile. Prostrate plants like ground cover forms of manzanita (E.g. *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) deter weedy growth, keep live moisture-filled plants close to the soil, build minimal biomass. Don't create a fuel ladder.
- Plant in distinct groupings in order to disrupt an on-going movement of fire.
- Avoid planting invasive species that rampantly spread into wildland areas and add to the fuel load.
- Space tree and shrub canopies 15' apart away from chimneys, rooflines, and other shrubs or trees to keep fire from spreading upward into structures and other canopies.

By following these simple suggestions and preparing your landscape for fire season annually, enjoy greater peace of mind by having a safer, more secure defense against wildfire.

Report of December 2017 Chapter Council

by Cathy Capone, Chapter Council Representative

Steve Hartman has been reelected as President of the Board for another two years. He reports that CNPS state office budget has increased from 1 million to 3 million in the last few years. CNPS state staff have developed regional plant posters; the Tulare County poster is available.

Executive Director, Dan Gluesenkamp, reported that state office staff has tripled and that there are more than four times the staff working on rare plants. Dan announced that the newly created position of Southern California Conservation Analyst has been filled by Dr. Nick Jensen. The central publications of CNPS have gone through major changes. *Fremontia* will be published in English and Spanish editions. *Fremontia* will continue to be a scientific journal. It will be significantly larger and be published twice a year. *Flora* is the new name for the *Bulletin*. *Flora* will be published quarterly and be the heart of CNPS.

A new guidebook on how to recover land after fire is close to publication. Many people have contacted CNPS concerning how to handle restoration of burned areas. The public's interest in "re-oaking" is energizing efforts that align with

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Conservation News

Status of Giant Sequoia National Monument

by Barbara Brydolf

Late last August, Secretary of the Interior Zinke made a public recommendation that the president shrink three monuments: Bear's Ears, Grand Staircase-Escalante, and Cascade-Siskiyou, and in September, a leaked memo stated a recommendation that ten monuments be shrunk or opened to resource extraction, including Gold Butte (NV), Katahdin Woods (ME), and 3 oceanic national monuments. On November 27, I attended a planning meeting to discuss GSNM and future actions, and on December 4, a rally in support of GSNM was held outside Kevin McCarthy's (23rd district, US House of Representatives) office in Bakersfield. The office door remained locked and no acknowledgement was given to our presence.

In December President Trump announced his decision to shrink Bear's Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments. So far, no other official actions have been taken by the White House.

Yaudanchi Ecological Preserve

by Barbara Brydolf

The Yaudanchi Ecological Preserve (YER) is a small piece of land (about 155 acres) inside the Porterville city boundaries. It is owned by the State of California and attached to the Porterville Developmental Center, bordering on the south side Highway 190. Formerly part of the Tule River channel, it was cut off from that supply of water when the Success Dam was built, but until now it continued to receive water flow from the Campbell-Moreland Ditch, which is an open channel. It was declared an Ecological Preserve in 1976, open to the public and managed by the California Department of Fish and Game (now called the California Department of Fish and Wildlife). The YER has a significant amount of riparian (river) vegetation, containing willow (*Salix* sp.), cottonwood (*Populus* sp.), valley oak (*Quercus lobata*), and sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*). Kit fox, several raptors, and other species have been reported from the site, and it has hosted a Blue Heron rookery.

Recently, the Vandalia Irrigation District (VID) proposed to convert the open ditch crossing the property to a closed pipe. In November, VID issued a CEQA document (California Environmental Quality Act) stating that this action would have a minimal negative impact on the site.

I obtained a copy of the document (Notice of Intent to Adopt and Consideration of Mitigated Negative Declaration). The document states that the removal of water would have a negligible effect on the habitat at the site, but gave no evidence to support such a statement. The document also contains a letter from CDFW (CA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife) stating that the removal of water from enclosing the ditch in pipe would have a significant negative effect on the property. However, after this letter was received by VID, the Porterville Developmental Center (who controls the property), requested

that the land be removed from protection as an ecological preserve. As the preserve designation was an agreement between CDFW and PDC, and could be cancelled at the request of either party, the request was granted. YER is no longer considered an ecological preserve, the signs were removed, and the property is no longer open to the public.

On December 12, I attended a public hearing at the offices of VID to give feedback on the Notice of Intent document. Several interested parties were present and gave oral and written comments. I also made a statement and submitted a letter on behalf of CNPS Alta Peak, giving the opinion that the CEQA document did not adequately address the issues. Also, a group of concerned citizens are investigating the cancellation of the ecological preserve.

Currently, the follow-up public hearing meeting for the adoption of a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Campbell Moreland Ditch has been postponed to a later date to be determined. VID is reviewing comments received.

Bureau of Land Management Proposed Action Vegetation Management and Forest Health Plan Environmental Assessment for Case Mountain, Three Rivers by Melanie Keeley

The Bakersfield Field Office (BFO) of the BLM has proposed various fuel treatments be undertaken to protect Case Mountain giant sequoia groves and to reduce the chance of catastrophic wildfires across 444 acres of BLM administered public lands bordering Three Rivers in Tulare County. They have prepared a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) evaluating the risks and benefits of these actions as they pertain to "Air and Atmospheric Values," special status plants including the giant sequoias (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*), Sequoia gooseberry (*Ribes tularensense*), Shirley Meadows star-tulip (*Calochortus westonii*), (as well as the Pacific fisher, California condor and spotted owl) and cultural and historical resources. The public comment period is soon to end on February 2, 2018. The final EA is expected to be out in May of this year, and the BLM hopes to proceed with the work, if permitted, next fall. The work is needed because of a combination of fire suppression and past timber harvesting. There has been an accumulation of dead biomass surrounding a half dozen giant sequoia groves on Case Mountain and this increases the likelihood of higher-than-normal severity wildfires. This potentially threatens not only the ancient trees but the residents of the nearby community of

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February 9-11—Springfest Home & Patio Show

Hours: Fri 11-6, Sat 10-7, Sun 10-5

Visalia Convention Center

Join us at the Chapter booth to spread the word about native plant landscaping (selling books, posters, and some plants). Melanie Keeley will be one of the speakers at 1 pm Fri and 6 pm Sat. Volunteer to help at the booth and for setting up and taking down. Contact Barbara Brydolf at bbrydolf@gmail.com to sign up!

Conservation News *cont'd from pg 5*

Three Rivers. With the goal of protecting both, the BLM recommends removing excessive biomass using a combination of hand crews, tractors, cable logging, chippers, masticators and prescribed fire. These activities should also encourage healthy diversity of species in the forest.

The proposed work would be done in phases, beginning with roadside clearing of dead and hazardous trees, salvaging and selling those for lumber to create a fuel break along the roadside as well as to create access to other parts of the forest.

"Absolutely no sequoias greater than eight inches diameter will be cut and sequoia trees smaller than this would be the preferred "leave" trees when thinning the smaller trees," according to BLM Natural Resource Specialist/Project Manager Tiera Arbogast. Once thinning and biomass removal has been done, prescribed fire will be introduced into the system. There will be no heavy equipment allowed on slopes greater than 40% to reduce the possibility of soil erosion.

The Alta Peak Chapter of the California Native Plant Society generally supports these forest management actions although we would want to see an analysis of the population structure of the giant sequoias and the associated forest before signing off on this entirely. We wonder if the BLM contractors are going to be cutting within the old growth sequoia groves. This sends up red flags to us. The possibility of cutting any age giant sequoias, especially considering how poorly they have been reproducing under similar conditions is of concern to us.

Also, we are concerned with the possibility of weedy invasions occurring as a result of bringing heavy unwashed equipment especially into designated "Areas of Critical Environmental Concern." Scientific data indicates that mastication and creating fuel breaks can create avenues to invasion by weeds into natural areas. Therefore, we'd insist that pre- and post-measures be taken including inspection and cleaning of all heavy machinery prior to entering designated the Areas of Critical Environmental Concern as well as that follow-up monitoring be performed for a period of at least five years to ensure that the introduction of noxious invasive weeds to vulnerable native areas does not occur. Additionally, we'd like assurance from the BLM that long term management of this area utilizes natural ecosystem processes i.e., prescribed burns rather than what we consider destructive and questionably effective mechanical fuel treatments.

Please submit any comments by email to
BLM_CA_Case_Mtn@blm.gov.

Or, send written comments to: BLM Bakersfield Field Office, Attn Case Mountain Vegetation and Forest Health Plan, 3801 Pegasus Drive, Bakersfield, CA 93308.

The BLM addresses this note to commenters: "Before including addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, or other personal identifying information in a comment, be aware that the entire comment — including personal identifying information — may

be made publicly available at any time. While the public may ask the BLM to withhold personal identifying information from public review, the BLM cannot guarantee that it will be able to do so."

To read the California Native Plant Society policy on fire safety and native plants and wild areas in California, please see cnps.org/cnps/conservation/pdf/fire/frem38.2_38.3_landis.pdf and the special issue on fire and native plants at cnps.org/cnps/publications/fremontia/Fremontia_Vol38-No2-3.pdf.

Report of Chapter Council *cont'd from pg 4*

CNPS goals. "Re-Oaking" is a recent approach to reintegrating oaks and other native trees into the developed California landscape to provide a range of ecosystem services. Jim Bishop reported on crafting a CNPS response to climate change issues. Dave Chipping will lead the effort to form an expert working group to define CNPS goals, to make recommendations, and to build a program focused on climate issues.

Greg Suba, Conservation Program Director, reported on US Department of the Interior Zinkie's focus on modifying national monuments. Additionally, the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) 2016 finalized where solar and wind should concentrate future development. Any energy project around a 1B or higher status native plant is required to provide a quarter mile buffer at this time. CNPS is reviewing the appropriateness of that distance. The Conservation Program will investigate what the U.S. Forest Service plans are for rare plants. The USFS plan language is aspirational not science based. Greg is interviewing candidates for a Sacramento lobbyist position.

Kristen Wernick, Outreach Coordinator, Horticulture, reported on her efforts to inspire the general public to landscape with native plants. She is looking at ways to support professionals who are working in the industry, identifying local plant ambassadors, and producing landscape guides. David Pryor provided information on concerns with limitations on the use of Roundup (Glyphosate) in restoration projects. The item will be on the March agenda.

The next Chapter Council meeting will be held March 9-11 at the Anza Borrego Desert Research Institute.

Calling All Alta Peak Chapter Members!

We want you! We know you are strongly committed to the mission of this society. Now is the time to show that commitment. Giving back to this worthy organization can be very satisfying work. Please consider joining the Chapter Board of Directors. See open positions on page 7 and contact President Barbara Brydolf for ways to participate.

**Next Board Meeting on March 17, at 9 am
at the Springville home of Barbara Brydolf**

Call 559-539-2927 for directions. Chapter members are welcome.

California Buckeye or Horse Chestnut—*Aesculus californica*Family: *Sapindaceae* (formerly *Hippocastanaceae*)

By Denise Griego

Through all the seasons the California buckeye has its own special beauty and character. Due to superior drought-defying features, its appearance morphs drastically from fall through summer. This tree responds to heat or drought stress by holding its compound leaves for only a few months of the year, dropping them as precipitation wanes and after they've dried into pretty coppery foliage. Following leaf drop in early summer, beautiful, ghostly silver, smooth bark is revealed. The almost startling leafless trunk is very conspicuous in the landscape from June—February. Unusual in its summer deciduous habit, this water conserving adaptation is distinctly unlike the other mostly winter-deciduous trees and evergreen chaparral found growing around buckeyes. This suggests that the species evolved under markedly different climatic conditions and possibly at a very different time. In early spring, bright green foliage bursts forth, followed by foot-long bottlebrush-like white fragrant flower clusters in May—June. Most of the flowers in each cluster are male with only a couple at the tip which are fertile and will produce the actual buckeyes. Golf ball-sized fruit develops into the fall, falling to the ground with the first rains. Outer skin splits open to expose a 1-3" shiny mahogany colored seed. If the seed falls to a habitable site, within days a root radicle winds its way into the moist soil, starting the next generation. If fire passes through, the California buckeye can sprout from its root crown. Buckeyes can reach to 15-45 feet high, growing usually multi-trunked, although it can be dominated by a single trunk in age.

The California buckeye grows below 4,000 feet in chaparral or foothill woodlands in the Sierra Nevada and Coast Ranges, surrounding the San Joaquin Valley, from Oregon to as far south as Chino Hills in Los Angeles County. Companion trees in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada include western redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*), blue oak (*Quercus douglasii*), black oak (*Q. kelloggii*), interior live oak (*Q. wislizeni*), gray pine (*Pinus sabiniana*), California bay laurel (*Umbellularia californica*).

The seeds are poisonous to most mammals (a sure reason for its success in rodent-prone environments!) including humans, and the pollen and/or nectar can be lethal to European honeybees and their hives, however, *not* to native pollinators. Native American tribes, including the Pomo, Yokut, and Luiseño used the nuts after boiling, washing and leaching up to 10 times then pounding into meal. The mush was cooked and eaten right away. Also, a mash of earth with ground buckeyes would be placed in still water to stupefy fish, making it easy to gather them by nets or by hand.



photo by Denise Griego

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Alta Peak Chapter Annual Native Plant Sale

October 6, 2018



Three Rivers Arts Center
North Fork Drive in Three Rivers

image: Melanie Keeley

Grant Deadline – March 31, 2018

The Chapter will be accepting applications for grants to promote projects and research that will increase appreciation and understanding of native plants and natural areas of Tulare County, the Central Valley and the Southern Sierra Nevada Mountains and Foothills. See altapeakcnps.org/grant-program for more submission information.

CNPS MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

City / Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

Email _____

(optional): _____

I wish to affiliate with: ____ Alta Peak Chapter

Other Chapter _____

Membership Category:

____ Student / Limited income, \$25

____ Individual, \$45

____ Family \$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 — cnps.org — click on JOIN.

Elsah Cort, Editor
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Three Rivers, CA 93271