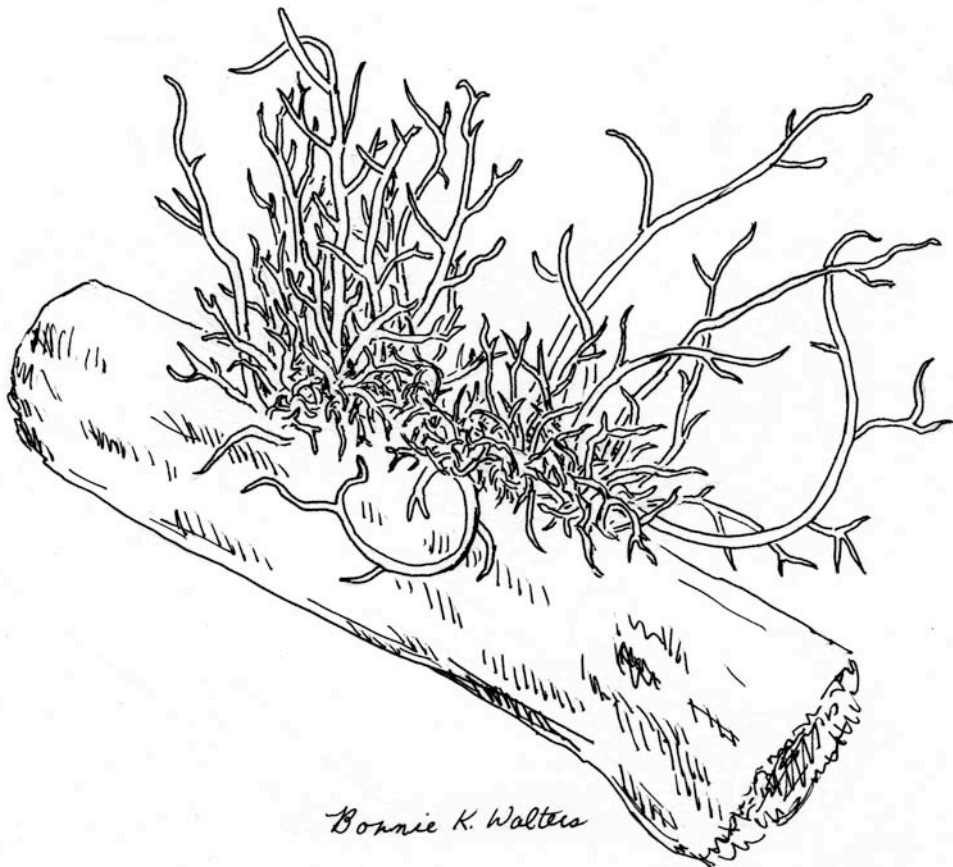


OBISPOENSIS

Newsletter of the San Luis Obispo Chapter of the
California Native Plant Society for San Luis Obispo
and Northern Santa Barbara Counties



APRIL 2007

About the Cover

The “plant” chosen for this month’s cover is actually a community of two organisms, neither of which is considered a plant in current thinking. It is lichen that is made up of an alga and fungus. It is probably the lichen genus, *Usnea*. I say probably because its identification was a community effort with the lichen expert not present. We encountered it on a recent field trip to Coon Canyon in Montaña de Oro State Park. I remembered a genus name out of the blue and David Chipping responded that if it was what I thought, then he remembered Dennis Sheridan telling him how it could be confirmed. All we had to do was pull gently on the branches and a strong, nearly unbreakable core would be revealed. Well, I followed Dr. Chipping’s instruction and the soft covering easily broke away revealing a very strong, but flexible core strand. So, if lichen can be identified by committee’s memory then this lichen is *Usnea* sp. According to the Elfin Forest species list, this lichen genus has the common name of beard lichen.

Most of us might easily accept that a fungus is no longer considered a plant, but why not a photosynthetic alga? It shares many characteristics with organisms still classified as plants. They have cell walls; they’re photosynthetic and they’re attached to their substrate, which in this case is a shrub branch. Lastly, lichens, algae, and fungi are still all studied in plant biology (botany) classes. The first of the trio to be thrown out of the plant kingdom were the fungi. Although fungi possess cell walls, the cell walls are composed of the very unplant-like substance chitin. Chitin is a primary constituent of the exoskeletons of arthropods such as insects. Fungi are certainly not photosynthetic and they have a very different body construction consisting of long threads called hyphae. To make a long story short, fungi can only be considered “plants” in the sense that they are clearly not animals.

Algae, on the other hand, are harder to explain away. They are photosynthetic and possess cell walls with a matrix of cellulose just like plants. The algae found in lichens are non-motile. So why aren’t they plants? The answer gets a little technical. It has to do primarily with their structure and their reproduction. First, most algae do not possess specialized tissues (groups of cells modified to accomplish specified tasks). All of their cells are basically alike. When essentially all algae go to reproduce, whether by spores or gametes, a single mother cell divides to form them. In contrast, all organisms currently classified as plants have sterile protective cells around their several to many mother cells. Because of these differences, algae are now placed in the kingdom Protista.

One last problem of lichens as plants is that they are composed of two independent organisms living together.

True, it is a case of mutualism. Mutualism is a type of symbiosis in which both partners benefit from the association. That said it is still an association of convenience. Except for fragmentation, each partner must reproduce in its own unique way. There is no known mechanism that allows the two to coordinate their sexual (or asexual) reproduction in a way that new individual lichen can be formed some distance from the original. Also, I recall reading once about experiments in which lichens were grown under different environmental conditions. If the environment was changed to be particularly favorable for the fungus, the fungus expelled the alga. On the other hand, if conditions were more favorable to the alga, then it quit the relationship and set off alone. – Dirk Walters, illustration by Bonnie Walters

Help Wanted:

Hi CNPS members. Your chapter needs your help. The State Chapter Council meeting will be held in Morro Bay on June 1, 2 and 3 this year. We have reserved the Morro Bay Community Center for this event. We will need to provide refreshments for the Saturday meeting and help find housing for the members attending the meeting.

About the meeting (excerpt from CNPS website): “CNPS chapters and programs send representatives to quarterly council meetings. These meetings promote communication and coordination between groups. Council meetings are often the source and final approval for CNPS policies. The Chapter Council elects its own officers as well as the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors is responsible for the financial, administrative, general business, and sustainability of the Society.”

A Chapter Council meeting is held once a quarter. The December meeting is held in Berkeley, and the March meeting is held at the Ranch Santa Ana Botanic Garden. The other two meetings are hosted by chapters on a rotating basis. Three chapters typically host the meetings, so the burden doesn’t fall on one. The Santa Monica Mountains, the Channel Islands, and the San Luis Obispo Chapters will host the June 2007 meeting. Morro Bay was picked as the location this year and we have arranged to have the meeting at the Morro Bay Community Center.

On Friday night, we only need to provide a meeting room for Chapter Council officers, which has already been arranged. Saturday will include an all day meeting (from 8 to about 5:30) for about 50 people, followed by a reception, dinner and program. We will bring in a box lunch for Saturday or meeting participants may elect to lunch in Morro Bay. On Sunday, there will be several local field trips (open to all members). (continued next page)

How to help: We would like to get volunteers to help with the following:

- **Place to stay:** We expect it will be a busy time in Morro Bay, if you have a guest room or extra bed that you can offer for Friday and Saturday night, please contact Susi Bernstein evenings or weekends at 805-878-4287. Please include specifics (i.e., type of bed, must like kids, dogs, cats, etc.) and your contact information. We are looking for places in the vicinity of Morro Bay. You can expect the guest to arrive Friday evening, spend Saturday at the meeting, dinner and program, and leave Sunday morning. You are not expected to provide any meals. We will coordinate potential guests with potential hosts and then provide the contact information to individuals.
- **Homemade goodies:** Do you have a special muffin or cookie recipe you want to try? The group is about 50 people, so a small selection of items would cover it. We would need to have these ready on Friday so we could arrange to pick them up. Please contact Lauren Brown at 438-4645 or brownla@saic.com.
- **Volunteers on Saturday:** We have the Native Rooters group (many thanks to these fine folks) ready to help with the evening event; we need volunteers to help in the morning with setting up and refreshments (especially someone that can make good coffee in one of those large urns) and perhaps a couple more people to help in the evening. Please contact Lauren Brown at 438-4645 or brownla@saic.com.

If you have any question, please feel free to call or Email me. Thank you, Lauren.

Conservation

Last month I discussed the Santa Margarita Ranch DEIR for the agricultural cluster development and its long list of Class I impacts that cannot be fully mitigated. That project, also known as Tract 2568, is only part of the project. About half of the document is a so-called Program EIR for the rest of the project, and I have serious reservations regarding the cumulative impacts on biological resources that are produced by both Tract 2568 and the remainder of the project. I have already attended three meetings, and it turns out that the most gigantic issue of all is the availability of water. The DEIR basically states that there is not enough water, and that water will have to be imported. We then run into the manner in which imported water will be used on the ranch, including on a proposed golf course. Whether Nacimiento Lake water or State Water project water is used, there has to be

a higher better use than putting on a golf course, particularly one which destroys habitat.

Everybody is cheering Atascadero for completing an inventory of its native trees. I noticed that the March 6 agenda of the Atascadero Planning Commission had a lot split at 8200 Coramar that would result in the removal of 17 live oaks, 7 blue oaks, 1 valley oak, and 1 tyrone (sic) ranging in size from 2-inches to 21-inches. An additional thirty-one (31) native trees will be impacted during construction (approximate). As SNL's Church Lady would have remarked "Isn't that special". At least they counted them. There are a whole bunch of CNPS members in Atascadero. They can find the Commission agendas at "www.atascadero.org".

SAVE A TREE. HOW ABOUT AN ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER?

The Chapter Board is exploring the possibility of both saving paper and money by sending an electronic pdf –file version of the newsletter to those that request it. It all depends on your desires. If you would like this, send David Chipping (dchippin@calpoly.edu) your name and e-mail address and clearly state if you (a) would like an electronic letter INSTEAD of a paper letter (b) would like to be on a chapter e-mail list for last minute communication such as outings, speaker changes and the like. Note that (a) and (b) are two totally different things, so responding to (b) will not affect your newsletter. David would also like to hear from you on any other ideas you might have to make us all more efficient.

– David Chipping

Meetings

San Luis Obispo Chapter Meeting. There is no April meeting at the Veterans Hall. This month's meeting is the field trip to Shell Creek, see Field Trips below, Saturday, April 7.

Field Trips

Mardi Niles Field Trip Chair

Saturday, April 7, Malcolm McLeod Memorial Field Trip Meeting to Shell Creek. Meet at the SLO Vets Hall at 8:30 a.m. and Santa Margarita Park & Ride area off Hwy. 58 just east of Hwy 101 at 9:00 a.m. This is our monthly meeting for April and will be led by David Chipping and Dirk Walters. This year and in future years the Annual Field Trip Meeting to Shell Creek will be named in memory of our friend and fellow CNPS member, Malcolm McLeod, who passed away one year ago to this date. We will car caravan along Hwy. 58 making frequent stops to look at wildflowers and significant plant communities. We will walk along Shell Creek Road looking at flowers and visiting spots with

shell fossils that gives this area its name, Shell Creek. The morning part of the trip will end with lunch somewhere along Shell Creek Road. Bring water, lunch, dress in layers and don't forget your "Wildflowers of Highway 58" plant guide by Dr. Malcolm McLeod or plan to purchase one on the trip (\$10). For more information call Dirk Walters at 543-7051 or Mardi Niles at 489-927.

Saturday, April 14, 9:30 a.m., LPNF and CNPS Wildflower Weekend at Figueroa Mountain. The Santa Lucia District, Los Padres National Forest (LPNF), will hold one of its seventh annual Wildflower Weekends on Figueroa Mountain in conjunction with the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). Meet at 9 a.m. at the Fire Station on Figueroa Mountain Road. This will be a "drive and stroll" tour of this year's display. Sturdy shoes, lunch and liquids, camera, and binoculars recommended. Call Helen Tarbet at 925-9538 ext. 246 or Charles Blair 733-3189 for details.

Saturday, April 21, Field Trip to Chimineas led by George Butterworth. We will explore the western region of oaks, chaparral, and ponds on this CNPS trip to Chimineas. Meet at SLO Vets Hall at 7:30 a.m. and at Santa Margarita Park & Ride on Hwy. 58 east of Hwy. 101 at 8:00 a.m. We will car caravan from there with one last stop at the Fire Station in California Valley at 9:00 a.m. Trucks or 4-wheel drive vehicles are necessary on this trip. Note: To get to the north entrance of the Chimineas, from Soda Lake Road on Carrizo Plain at 7 Mile Road, turn off to the south on San Diego Creek Road and go several miles to the locked gate. This will be an all day trip, beyond locked gates, so we'll have to stay together. Rain cancels. Wet roads may mean that we meet on Hwy. 166 like last year, 37 miles east of 101, since the north road gets too muddy. A decision will be made 12 hours in advance, that's Friday at 7:30 p.m., regarding north or south access or cancellation. For questions or information call George Butterworth at 438-3641 or Mardi Niles at 489-9274.

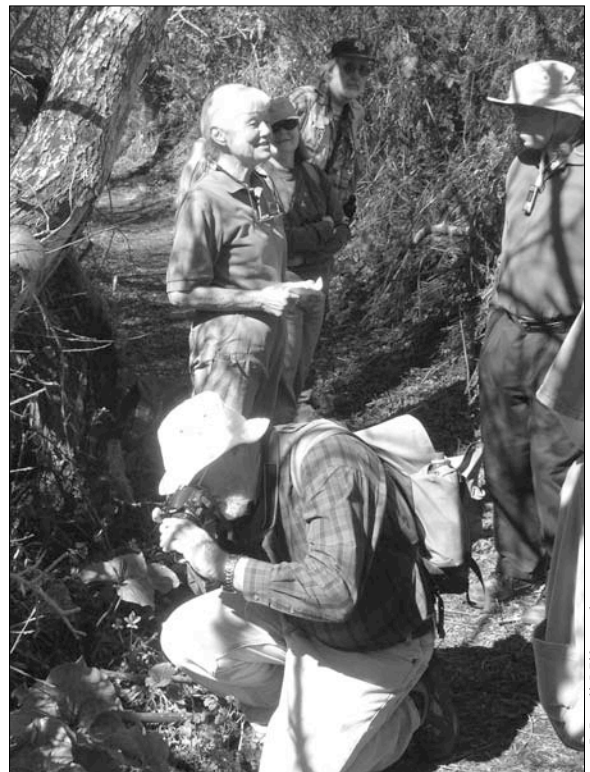
Saturday, April 28, Field Trip to Indians, Santa Lucia Memorial Park, Los Padres National Forest, Monterey County led by John Chestnut and Mardi Niles. Meet at SLO Vets Hall 8:00 a.m. and be sure to have a full tank of gas. We will meet again at the Entrance to Fort Hunter Liggett Military Reservation at 10:00 a.m. From here we will enter the Military Reservation and all drivers must have:

- 1) Valid Driver's License
- 2) Proof of Car Registration
- 3) Proof of Automobile Insurance

We will drive to Mission San Antonio and plan to depart from there at 10:30 a.m. There are restroom facilities there. We will drive Del Venturi and Milpitas Road to Indians and park at Santa Lucia Memorial Park. Here we

will see a Santa Lucia Fir, *Abies bracteata*. There are toilet facilities here. Our destination is the trail head to the Santa Lucia Trail. It is back up the road a short walking distance from the parking area. From here we will cross a very small seasonal creek and then go out into a meadow that is usually covered with sky lupine, *Lupinus nanus*, this time of year and surrounded by majestic valley oaks and picturesque rock outcroppings. Here we will explore this beautiful and interesting area with views of Junipero Serra Mountain and have lunch. Bring water, lunch, dress in layers and wear a hat. For additional information call John Chesnut at 528-0833 or Mardi Niles at 489-9274.

Saturday, May 12, 9:30 a.m. Los Padres National Forest and CNPS Pozo Wildflower Weekend. As part of its seventh Annual Wildflower Weekends, the Santa Lucia District of Los Padres National Forest will have a "drive and stroll" tour of wildflowers along Hi Mountain Road, including some serpentine areas, and the lookout station, now a focal point of the Condor Recovery Program. Meet at the Pozo Fire Station on Pozo Road, south of State Route 58 at 9:30 a.m. Sturdy shoes, lunch and liquids, camera, and binoculars recommended. Call Helen Tarbet at 925-9538 ext. 246 or Charles Blair 733-3189 for details.



Mardi Niles photo

February 24 Coon Creek trip led by Barb Renshaw (center)

Visit the websites: www.cnps.org & www.cnps-slo.org

Memorial Meanderings for Mary Coffeen

Please join Marcia Coffeen-McElroy in celebrating her mother's life, at any or all of these three events:

Meet Friday, March 30, at 2:30 p.m., at the 13th Street parking area in Los Osos, for a walk through the Elfin Forest.

On Saturday, March 31 around 10:30 a.m., at the Shell Creek wildflower area, to meander around and enjoy the bloom.

Saturday evening, also March 31, we'll gather at the parish hall of St. Peter's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church, at 545 Shasta Avenue, Morro Bay, for a potluck gathering. Enjoy good food and share some memories of Mary's many exploits in the natural world. It won't be complete without a brief wildflower slide show. Please bring any pictures you would like to share, and plan to take home a book or two from Mom's personal library, and some slides if you'd like!

Cambria Wildflower Show

You can have your wildflower questions answered at the Second Annual Cambria Wildflower Show presented by Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve. It will be held Saturday afternoon, April 28 from noon to 5 p.m. and Sunday April 29 from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. You will see a display of wildflowers collected from the Monterey County line to the Morro Bay Estuary and from the coastal bluffs to the ridge of the Santa Lucia Mountains. Each plant will be labeled with its botanical name and family, along with its common name.

The purpose of the show is to enhance the enjoyment of wildflowers by educating through viewing. Trained teams of collectors will be picking flowers only for educational purposes, from habitats with large populations, so that people can learn to respect them in their natural habitats without picking the flowers themselves.

Our very first show featured over 400 specimens and received rave reviews from attendees, including author Sharon Lovejoy and members of the Pacific Grove Wildflower Show team. Lee Taylor, a professor at Michigan State University, saw the show and said it "surpassed even the big one in the Great Smokey Mountains." Who knows what this year will bring!

The California Native Plant Society will have a table at the event featuring wildflower books and other items for sale. FFRP will have an information table also.

The show will be free to students of all ages, but we

will be asking others for a \$2 donation at the door to help cover costs. A bibliography will be provided to all attending and a list of last year's specimens will be available at for \$3. Refreshments will also be available for purchase.

Please feel free to call the FFRP office at 927-2856 for more information.

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Dedicated to the Preservation of the California Native Flora

The California Native Plant Society is a statewide non-profit 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 the Society activities and conservation issues, and the chapter newsletter, *Obispoensis*.



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