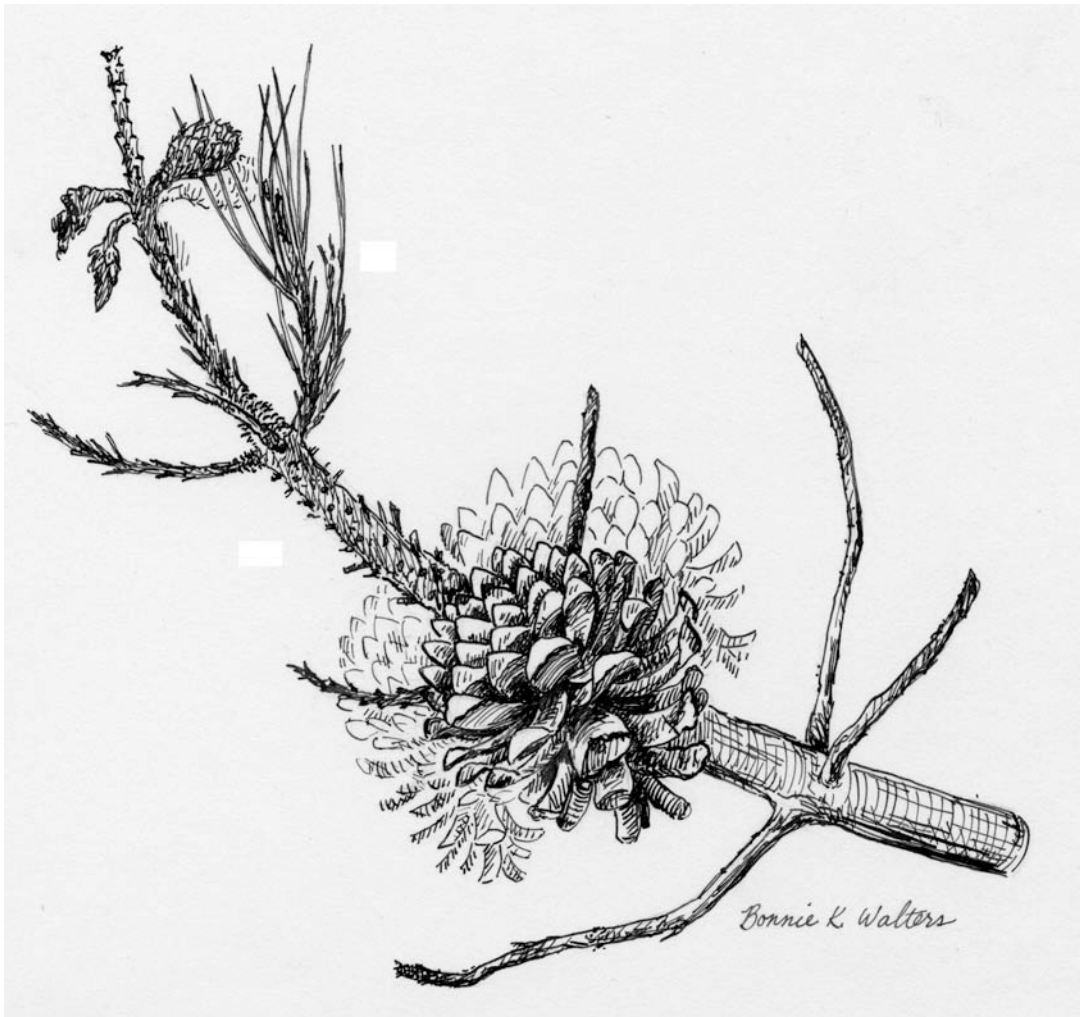


OBISPOENSIS

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



MARCH 2008

ABOUT THE COVER

The cover of this issue of the *Obispoensis* was drawn by Bonnie back in 1985. The drawing is of a burned branch and open cone of Knobcone pine (*Pinus attenuata*) and was inspired by the Los Pilitas fire that burned through the East Cuesta Ridge area that year. It was used as an *Obispoensis* cover in January 1986. Knobcone pine is a closed cone pine. That is, its cones do not open immediately, but stay closed on the tree until the tree dies. Since knobcones live on ridges usually surrounded by chaparral, death is usually due to fire. When fire does enter a grove, it burns very rapidly through the grove. The tree needles burn so fast that the fire doesn't stay long enough at one spot to heat the cones hot enough to kill the seeds inside. All the fire does is dry out the cone which causes them to open with a bang. My students who work summers as fire fighters tell me of how loud a bang is produced by the opening cones.

I can remember walking through the burned out grove and marveling at the huge number of pine seeds covering the ground. So, the closed cones are an adaptation for fire. I might add, that having the seeds shed after the fire, helps in another way. The climate where knobcone pines grow is really only a two season climate. It is usually hot and dry in summer and cool and wet in winter. Decay organisms such as fungi work best under warm-moist conditions, conditions that happen for very short periods in the spring. This means that there is relatively little decay, especially of woody stems and branches in a knobcone pine forest. The result is that most of the biomass and thus potential plant nutrients are tied up in un-decomposed litter. The fire turns all this litter into readily available fertilizer. So the closed cone habit not only replants the grove, it does it when conditions are especially favorable for seed germination and seedling growth.

Closed cone pine forests, like Chaparral, have an optimal interval between fires. This optimal interval insures that there is enough seed produced to effectively restart the forest. This interval is said to be on the order of 25-50 years. However, the trees don't wait that long to start producing cones. After the fires on East Cuesta Ridge, I would lead field trips into the area. It soon became apparent that the trees did not rely on what is said to normal. I recorded in my notes of cones appearing on saplings no more than five years old. Most trees are just thinking about having a growth spurt about then, their certainly not having sex and producing the next grove.

- Dirk Walters, Illustration by Bonnie Walters

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

I would like to thank all who contributed to our successful annual banquet. Jack Law's program was a winner, as was his earlier botanic illustration class. Mardi Niles, Heather



John Muir Laws teaching botanical illustration class

Johnson, Dave Krause, Linda Chipping, Theresa Lees, and Mary Ann Rutshaw and her catering crew are all to be thanked. A very great thank you is also extended to Lauren Brown for her excellent leadership of the chapter in the last two years, and Lauren received the chapter's Hoover Award for her great contributions.

Our February meeting was also great success, when Melissa Mooney gave us a great talk on native grasslands and their conservation. She reminded us about how much grasslands are under-appreciated by the general public, in spite of the fact that they provide some of our greatest wildflower areas. She also reminded us that our county is one of the most richly endowed in these ecological gems.

I am looking for ways to improve our chapter and respond to members' wishes. We are busy updating our web page complex thanks to Jim Johnson, and hope to build some more programs on gardening with native plants, add more field trips, and find more great speakers for our programs. Call me with any ideas you might have (528-0914). I would welcome the presence of any of our members at our monthly board meetings.

- David Chipping

CONSERVATION NOTES

The hot issue of the month is the issuance of the Supplemental EIR on Santa Margarita Ranch, which appears to do very little to provide development options which would be pleasing to CNPS. I will be commenting for CNPS. The chapter also wrote letters of support to the American Land Conservancy regarding the purchase of the Wild Cherry Canyon area of the Irish Hills, and to the Wildlife Conservation Board on behalf of Morro Coast Audubon Society for funds to purchase the eastern end of

Sweet Springs Preserve in Los Osos. The latter has gone through, so congratulations to Audubon.

The land purchase started a newspaper opinion page debate about the good and bad of removing eucalyptus, with some nasty to-and-fro about native plant fanatics vs. monarch butterflies and the rest. I will take this opportunity to restate CNPS policy here. We stand for protecting and enhancing native ecosystems and their dependence on native plants, but would not advocate the removal of an exotic plant species if a native animal required it for critical habitat. Thus we would support removal of much of the eucalyptus plantation in Montana de Oro that has displaced the diminishing Morro manzanita habitat, but not those portions of the groves which host monarch butterflies. In the last newsletter I asked for photo evidence of eucalyptus spreading into valuable native habitat, and so far have nothing from you. Any help here?
- David Chipping

2007 Hoover Award

Lauren Brown is the 2007 recipient of the Hoover Award. She wasn't expecting the award because she felt she hadn't been involved in the Chapter long enough. However, it is true that the Hoover Award is for long term service, it is also for promise of continued commitment. It was the Hoover Committee's feeling that Lauren was great in both areas.

Before Lauren came to us, she had been and continues to be active in the Dune Center where she has contributed as a teacher about dune plants and as a field trip leader. She continues to be active in the Dune Center's annual symposium.

Lauren first came to notice of the chapter people when she consented to be our Chairperson of our newly formed committee on the control of aggressive exotics (weeds). This she did by becoming our liaison with several local governmental agencies responsible for weed control. She attended a number of conferences on weed control.

We soon notice that she was helping out all over the place. She would volunteer to help us man booths at Creek Day, Bob Jones Trail Day and Farmer's Markets. She worked at almost every Native Plant Sale. When John Chesnut and Malcolm McLeod began working on an update on the Chapter's rare plant CD, there was Lauren



Lauren Brown

not only going on field trips but helping with the research. I, for one, couldn't help notice that by the time most of notice that Malcolm needed help, there was Lauren, with the help of Susie Bernstein, already helping him across fences creeks and up slippery slopes.

For the last two years Lauren has served as the Chapter President. She took on the role even though she was a relative new comer to the Chapter. She did a fantastic job. She could delegate when necessary and get required tasks done when needed. She masterminded the Chapter's hosting of the State Board Meeting last fall.

As President of the Chapter, Lauren was also our Chapter representative to the State CNPS Board. The State Board is large and most of the Chapter attendees attend and then go back to their chapters without much state involvement. The State Officials thought enough of Lauren's work on the Board that she was asked to run for state office.

Lauren remains the Chapter's Exotic plant Chair. In addition, she has taken on the very time consuming Field Trip Chair as well as consenting to help with finding programs for our general meeting.

- Dirk Walters (With help from Susie Bernstein, Jenny Langford, and Linda Chipping)

MEETINGS

MARCH MEETING IS AT THE BOTANICAL GARDEN, NOT THE VETS HALL

San Luis Obispo Chapter Meeting, Thursday, March 6, 7 p.m.: Lisa Andreano, California State Parks ecologist, presents a program on lichen diversity and conservation on the San Luis Obispo coast. In particular she will introduce the audience to the sensitive taxa that she has found and mapped, the lichen communities that she and others have described and how State Parks are incorporating the information into park management. You can see some of the excellent field guides that Lisa and other biologists have produced for the Morro Bay area at <<http://mbnep.org/publications/>>. Social half-hour begins at 7 p.m. Business meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. at the San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden Education Building.

APRIL - THERE IS NO VETS HALL MEETING
Instead we have the ANNUAL MALCOLM MCLEOD MEMORIAL FIELD TRIP TO SHELL CREEK ON APRIL 5.

MAY 1 - MEETING IS BACK AT VETS HALL
David Magney will speak on the rare plant of Ventura County, and how he and the Channel Islands Chapter brought about better protection from the County.

MAY 18 - PICNIC WITH MORRO COAST AUDUBON AT SANTA MARGARITA LAKE. Field trips all morning, good food and fun under the oaks, more good stuff in the afternoon.

HORTICULTURE

Winter is a beautiful season here on the central coast, and unlike other parts of the country, our mild climate allows us the opportunity to get out in our gardens and play. It is a good time to keep ahead of weeds that follow on the heels of our seasonal rainfall, and for native plant enthusiasts it is the perfect time for planting. With careful consideration of site conditions, proper plant selection, and timing you can give your new winter plantings a real jump start by planting them now.

Take a moment to think about what conditions exist in your garden where you'd like to plant: lighting (sun, shade, part shade), soil type (clay, sand), exposure (ex: south, north facing), and with this information you can begin selecting the right native plants for your site. For a sunny, low lying cold pocket in north county, consider a buckeye; for a sunny, well drained coastal site, ceanothus (*Ceanothus* sp.) or manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* sp.) can work well. For north county plantings affected by extreme temperatures, delay planting until soil temperatures warm up a bit. Also choose compatible plants for your site: for example coral bells (*Heuchera* sp.) and wild strawberry (*Fragraria chiloensis*) with similar lighting and watering needs under the shade of oaks, or shrubby monkey flower (*Mimulus* sp.) in well lighted and well drained conditions.

Timing is important for planting. If the ground is already wet from rainfall, wait for a dry spell to allow the ground to dry out a bit. If you have clay conditions, the rain will soften it making it much easier to dig. Avoid planting in overly wet conditions that may promote root rot, or where stepping in the beds can cause soil compaction. Generally speaking, soil amendments aren't necessary when planting natives. I will sometimes add amendments if the soil is very sandy and I feel the plants will benefit from the initial nutrient boost. I will also add gypsum to clay soils when planting to help with drainage. If there is a long dry spell after planting, provide supplemental watering as needed. For trees and shrubs give infrequent deep watering, perennials with shallower roots need less deep, but more frequent watering until they are established.

Many of our native plants are in a state of active growth during the winter and planting now will encourage root development, avoid transpiration loss with cooler temperatures, and take advantage of our seasonal rainfall cycles. Deciduous woody plants like buckeye (*Aesculus californica*) and redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) also benefit from winter planting as their roots will begin expanding right away, and leaf, bud and shoot growth start as they come out of dormancy. Happy winter planting!

Pam Thomas is a horticulturist owner of Paloma Landscaping based in Pismo Beach. (805) 458-9207

FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, March 15, 2 p.m. Chocolate Lily Hunt led by Barb Renshaw. CNPS members will be special guests on this hike that is sponsored by the Central Coast Natural History Association. Meet at the end of the Chumash Trail on Turri Road about 1/3 mile east of South Bay Boulevard at 2 p.m.. This is a moderate hike of 2 miles taking about 1.5 hours. We will hunt for chocolate lilies, *Fritillaria biflora*, along the trail that goes through granite rocks and serpentine as well as some shale with sweeping views of the Morro Bay sand spit, estuary, and Pacific Ocean. For additional information call Barb Renshaw at 534-1865 or Lauren Brown at 570-7993.

Sunday, March 16, 2:00 p.m. "Chaparral and Fire" by Rick Halsey. The program of the Lompoc Valley Botanic and Horticultural Society will feature a discussion of the role of fire in California chaparral communities, and ways those of us living here can understand and cope. Rick is the author of *Fire, Chaparral, and Survival in Southern California*. LVBHS meets 2:00 p.m. at the Lompoc First Methodist Church at the corner of E. North and N. F Streets in Lompoc. David Schroeder, 736-4902, or Rosemary Holmes, 735-3974.

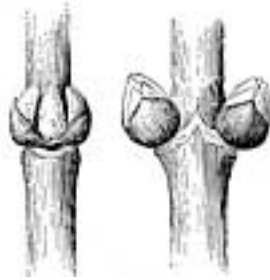
Saturday, March 22. Coreopsis Hill led by Lauren Brown and Dirk Walters. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the SLO Vets Hall. Take Hwy 101 south from SLO. Turn right onto Hwy 1 at Pismo Beach. Continue southward to Oso Flaco Lake Road, turn right and proceed to Beigle Road (look for a car with the CNPS sign). Park along Oso Flaco Lake Road near the entry to the road that leads to the trail to Coreopsis Hill. We may be able to park along that road or have to shuttle from Oso Flaco Lake parking lot. At 9:30 a.m. we will hike to the top of Coreopsis Hill. This is a moderate hike. Bring your "Dune Mother's Wildflower Guide" by Dr. Malcolm McLeod for the trip. For more information call Lauren Brown at 570-7993.



Saturday, April 5. 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. The Annual Field Trip Meeting to Shell Creek is named in memory of our friend and fellow CNPS member, Malcolm McLeod, who passed away in April 2006. 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 fossil shell deposits that give 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. For more information call Lauren Brown at 570-7993.

Sunday, April 6, 9 a.m. CNPS and Sierra Club Spring La Purisima Burton Mesa Wildflower Walk: Meet at the La Purisima Mission Parking Lot, corner of Purisima and Mission Gate Roads at 9 a.m. for this annual California Native Plant Society and Sierra Club spring tour of the beauties of the Burton Mesa Chaparral. This is turning out to be a fair year for wildflowers, annuals as well as shrubs. Optional afternoon tour. Sturdy shoes, lunch & liquids, camera and binoculars advised. For more information, call Charlie at 733-3189 or Connie, 735-2292.



Saturday, April 19, 9:30 a.m. Los Padres National Forest Santa Lucia District will hold one of its annual Wildflower Weekends on Figueroa Mountain in conjunction with the California Native Plant Society at the Figueroa Fire Station. 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 spectacular display. Sturdy shoes, lunch and liquids, and camera and binoculars recommended. Call Helen Tarbet at 925-9538 ext. 246 or Charles Blair, 733-3189, for details.

WEEKDAY CNPS NATURE STROLLS

Thursday, February 28: Estero Bluffs stroll along the marine terrace. Meet 9:30 at the pullout by the windmill and eucalyptus patch north of Cayucos and half mile or so beyond the point where the 4-lane becomes 2-lane. Leader David Chipping

Thursday, March 6: Calf Canyon and the western end of Highway 58. Assemble at the Park-and-Ride on Highway 58 at the 101 Freeway at 9:30. Leader David Chipping

If you would like lead a Weekday Stroll, let David Chipping know.

UPCLOSE IN THE PARKS, 2008

Barbara Renshaw is going to mount an exhibition of paintings, drawings and sketches on the theme of rare and interesting plants of SLO County at the Morro Bay Natural History Museum in May. This will be a little less formal than in previous years, and she will mount unframed drawings and sketchbook pages. Drawings should be no more than 12 inches on a side, and paintings will have a maximum framed size of 36 inches, preferably a little smaller. A lot of CNPSers sketch and draw, so this is a chance to get your stuff on a wall. Those of you who took Jack Laws' class can strut your newly learned stuff! The show will be in May, and I think take in is very late April (I will have news later). Call Barbara at 534-1865.

DHC

Officers & Committee Chairs

President

David Chipping (805) 528-0914
dchippin@calpoly.edu

Vice President

Dirk R. Walters (805) 543-7051
drwalters@charter.net

Lauren Brown (805) 438-4645
brownla@saic.com

Recording Secretary

Pamela Thomas (805) 489-4148
nikau@sbcglobal.net

Corresponding Secretary

David Chipping (805) 528-0914
dchippin@calpoly.edu

Treasurer

David Krause (805) 927-5182
dkincmbria@aol.com

Membership

Eleanor Williams (805) 528-7202

Conservation

David Chipping (805) 528-0914
chippin@calpoly.edu

Rare Plant Coordinator

John Chesnut (805) 528-0833
jchesnut@slonet.org

Invasive Plants Control

Lauren Brown (805) 438-4645
brownla@saic.com

Legislation

David Chipping (805) 528-0914
dchippin@calpoly.edu

Education

Susi Bernstein (805) 349-7180
susanne.bernstein@lfr.com

Historian

Dirk R. Walters (805) 543-7051
drwalters@charter.net

Horticulture & Plant Sales

John Nowak (805) 464-0717
gritlys@sbcglobal.net

Hospitality

Mardi Niles (805) 489-927
mlniles@sbcglobal.net

Publicity

Deb Dight (805) 462-3116
ddight@aol.com

Field Trips

Lauren Brown (805) 438-4645
brownla@saic.com

General Sales - Book & Poster Sales

Heather Johnson (805) 528-0446
hdtj@pacbell.net

Chapter Wholesale Contact

Linda Chipping (805) 528-0914
lindachipping@yahoo.com

Book Publication

James Johnson (805) 528-0446
jw_johnson@msn.com

Plant Sales

Karen Kawczynski (805) 481-0148

Photography

James Johnson (805) 528-0446
jw_johnson@msn.com

Cuesta Ridge Monitor

Neil Havlik

Newsletter Editor

Bob Hotaling (805) 238-6044
rhotaling@charter.net

Newsletter Mailing

Linda & David Chipping (805) 528-0914

Web Master

James Johnson (805) 528-0446
jw_johnson@msn.com

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 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*.



San Luis Obispo Chapter of the California Native Plant Society
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