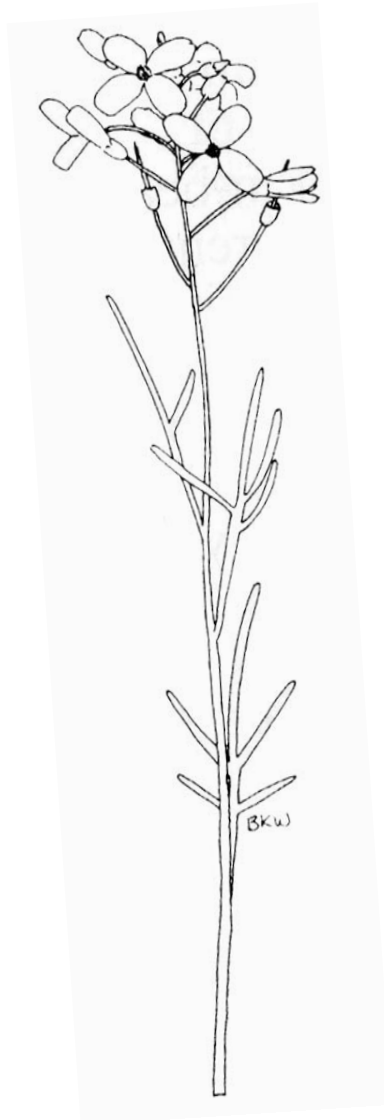

Obispoensis

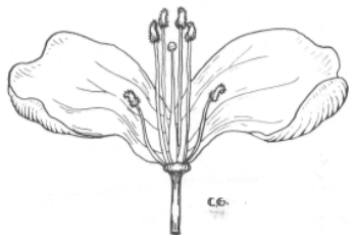
Newsletter of the San Luis Obispo Chapter of the California Native Plant Society



APRIL 2009

***Cardamine californica* - milk maids**

About the cover: This month's cover is of a drawing Bonnie made for the original edition of Dr. David Keil and my plant taxonomy textbook. It was completed back in 1975! My guess is that many of you will already recognize it as milk maids (*Cardamine californica*). It belongs to the mustard family, Cruciferae or Brassicaceae. The four petals characteristic of this family are apparent in the drawing. To make absolutely sure it's a member of the mustard family get up close and count the stamens. There will be six and four of them will be longer than the other two [illustration at right]. It is said that many species in this family display their four petals as a cross or crucifix. Thus the older, irregular family name Cruciferae which translates as 'to bear' = *iferae* and 'cross' = *cruc*. The other name, Brassicaceae, is the one preferred by the current Rules of Nomenclature. It is derived from the genus *Brassica* paired with the family suffix -aceae.



Its white to occasionally slightly pinkish flowers are a treat for us wildflower lovers. It is one of our earliest bloomers, often found as early as late January or more commonly early February. Occasional flowers can be found as late as April. However, milk maids is in full bloom right now from the coast through the Santa Lucia Mountains. Dr. Hoover reports that is occasionally found east of the Santa Lucias but at the time of the publication of his book, he had no specimens to verify it. Look for it on moist on wooded slopes throughout our Chapter area.

It is one of the first wildflowers I identified after coming to California and Cal Poly. I first identified it back in the winter of 1970. I had known a similar species from the eastern U.S. called toothwort (*Dentaria lacinata*), which by the way was also an early bloomer. Our milk maids also used to be placed into the genus, *Dentaria*. I was told back then that both the names *Dentaria* and toothwort referred to the use of its short rhizome as a antidote for tooth ache. I was told by Mr. Ralph Baker, one of the early members of the our Chapter, that he and

his childhood buddies had used the cut surface of the short rhizome as an antidote for tooth ache. I could not find any reference to either genus in any of the books on medicinal or poisonous plants on my shelf. So its use as a toothache antidote must be taken as hearsay for now. I did hear the same story about the source of the name toothwort for the Eastern U.S. species as well. - Dirk Walters,

Illustration by Bonnie Walters

President's Notes

Our experiment with moving our March meeting from the SLO Vets Hall to the Atascadero Library was a great success, and the crowd was 'standing room only'. While we suspected that the Cuesta Grade was a barrier for CNPS folks, this meeting proved it so from not only bringing lots of 'northerners' to the meeting, but also in the general absence of 'southerners'. Our Board will therefore consider having more meetings in the north, and perhaps going to the far south and the deep tropics of Arroyo Grande where we might get a similar effect. I would like to thank Tina Salter for getting the Atascadero room for us, and I would ask all of you to be on the lookout for roomier venues at either end of the County for developing our 2009-2010 schedule.

The Chapter Board has decided to support North County Watch's law suit against San Luis Obispo County concerning approval of the Santa Margarita Ranch project with a substantial cash donation. However N.C. Watch need a LOT more money to cover the high legal costs. I am therefore asking that, in spite of these hard times, that individual CNPS members make some cash contributions to this important litigation. The Watch's web site is <http://www.northcountywatch.org/>, and their address for checks is North County Watch, P.O. Box 455, Templeton, CA 93465

As flowers are late this year, I bet you will still find lots of trillium in Coon Creek, Montana de Oro State Park, and lots of chocolate lilies in Morro Bay State Park. As soon as you get this newsletter, take some time to see these beauties.

- David Chipping

Conservation Notes

We are hearing of new developments on the fringes of Arroyo Grande that might affect Pismo Clarkia. Cumulative impacts on the Clarkia from a combination of development and veldt grass invasion are probably severe but essentially unquantified. Unfortunately, while the plant is listed as Endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act, there is no real protection against 'take' of plants on private lands, and its listing as 'Rare' under the California Endangered Species Act places it under a less protected category than 'Threatened' and 'Endangered' species. The 'Rare' category was developed under the Native Plant Protection Act, which belies its name and provided almost no protection. NPPA- protected plants were grandfathered into CESA. CNPS has tried to get NPPA plants upgraded to CESA standards, but with no success so far.



Pismo clarkia

CNPS is also tracking county-level changes to the General Plan, and proposed fast tracking of solar power and highway projects to help the moribund economy. Other projects we have described in the last couple of months are moving slowly, so I have no more news. - David Chipping

Botanic Research on Phacelias and Lupines



© Roy Edwards-Cook 1998

Lupinus nanus

Our chapter has received two calls for help from researchers. Jessica Shade from U.C. Berkeley is looking for locations where *Lupinus nanus* and *Lupinus bicolor* are growing together and wants to know when they are up and in flower. She can be reached at shade@berkeley.edu or (831) 295-9677. She needs leaves for DNA extraction, so check with her and maybe you could collect for her.

The second study is by Genevieve Walken at SFSU . She is collecting leaves from every species of *Phacelia* that she can get her hands on for another genetic study. I imagine she can tell you more about it if you contact her at (415) 338-1237, (530) 902-0739, or gkwalden@sfsu.edu. She says that the 36 species of *Phacelia* have been defined by morphology and chromosome number, but less than 40% have been studied at the molecular level.

Your Membership Helps Preserve and Protect California Native Plants and Their Habitats

For more than 40 years CNPS has been a leader in habitat protection, conservation, and promoting the use of native plants in landscaping and home gardens.

As a member of CNPS, you play a key role in our ability to promote the conservation of native plants through science, education, advocacy, horticulture and land stewardship. So much of what we do depends on the strength and commitment of our members!

For a limited time, CNPS is offering a special incentive to new members! Join online, www.cnps.org, at the \$45 member or higher levels and we'll send you one of three of our beautiful wildflower posters: Wildflowers of the Desert, Wildflowers of the Coast, or Wildflowers of the Redwood Forest.



Field Trips

Saturday, April 4, The 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 the monthly meeting for April and will be led by David Chipping and Dirk Walters. We will car caravan from there making the first stop at the Santa Margarita Park, where restrooms are available. Traveling along Hwy 58 we will be 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 ends with lunch, usually sitting under a large tree in a field of wildflowers, where the informal April meeting is conducted. In the afternoon some people may choose to continue traveling to other parts of the east county, where there have been reports of good wildflower displays. If you are driving be sure to start the day with a full tank of gas. 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 \$10. For more information call Dirk Walters at 543-7051, David Chipping 528-0914 or Mardi Niles at 489-927.



Shell Creek

Sunday, April 5, 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 may turn out to be a fairly good 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 18, 9:00 a.m., LPNF and CNPS Wildflower Weekends Figueroa Mountain, at the Figueroa Fire Station: 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 Mtn. 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.

Sunday, April 19, 8:30 a.m. CARRIZO PLAINS CNPS FIELD TRIP

Led by George Butterworth, 438-3641, or george.butterworth75@gmail.com. We'll go to the Elkhorn Plain Ecological Reserve if we don't get there March 28. (Desert boxthorn, Kern tar plant, and the endangered San Joaquin woolly threads are there.) Otherwise we can visit beautiful Padrone Canyon Road for basalt ridges and the unusual Heerman's buckwheat and brickell bush; or Abbott Canyon; or a very interesting sandstone and juniper area in the northwest corner of the monument; or a rocky mountain on the American unit with a great variety of plants. Meet at SLO Vets Hall at 8:10 and at the Santa Margarita park and ride at Hwy. 58 and 101 at 8:30 a.m. All day trip; back around 5:00. Have food and drink, and a full tank of gas. Be prepared for any weather. Rain cancels. SUVs and trucks best.

Sunday, May 3, MCAS / CNPS PICNIC AT SANTA MARGARITA LAKE

This FOURTH collaborative Morro Coast Audubon Society and California Native Plant Society picnic will include several field trips. Daily use fees will be waived for event participants; we welcome members of either organization as well as the general public.

Book News

This is the time of year to plan that trip to see the wildflowers at Shell Creek, along Highway 58, and in the Carrizo Plain. If you haven't picked up your wildflower books for Highway 58 and the Carrizo area, there is still time. If you send me an e-mail with your address, I will mail the Wildflowers of Highway 58 book and/or the Wildflowers of the Carrizo Plain Area to you. You will then need to send me a check for \$10 for each book, and \$1.50 for postage for each book.

Heather Johnson

E-mail: SLO_CNPS_Booklady@yahoo.com



A Copy of Hoover's *Vascular Plants of San Luis Obispo County* is for sale. Contact Micaele Florendo, Vancouver, B.C. (604) 947-0689



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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 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 activities and conservation issues, and the chapter newsletter, *Obispoensis*.



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California Native Plant Society*
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Chapter Meeting

April's meeting is held during the Malcolm McLeod Memorial Field trip to Shell Creek, Saturday, April 4. See "Field Trips." There is no meeting at the Vets Hall in April.

Join Today!

- ☐ Limited Income \$25
- ☐ Individual or Library \$45
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