

---

# *Obispoensis*

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

---



**May 2009**

## California Bay-Laurel (*Umbellularia californica*)

About the Cover: Bonnie's cover drawing this time is of a tree that I'm surprised hasn't graced an earlier cover of an *Obispoensis*. It is one of our more common riparian or stream-side trees. It has more common names than one can shake a stick at. So far I've found, balm of Heaven, cajeput tree, bay-laurel, Oregon myrtle, spice tree or bush, California or green bay tree, California olive, mountain laurel, California sassafras, sassafras laurel, myrtle-wood, as well as pepper wood. Its scientific name is *Umbellularia californica* and it is a member of the Laurel family or Lauraceae. Its more famous family cousins including the avocado (*Persea americana*), true, sweet or European bay (*Laurus nobilis*) cinnamon and camphor (*Cinnamomum* sp.), and sassafras (*Sassafras officinale*). I suspect its many common names reflect the many different ways people have viewed the tree. Its most outstanding characteristic is its odor which can be detected on a hot day long before it is even visible. It is reported that some people get a headache just walking through a grove. On the other hand, it was used by Native Californians as a headache remedy. They either placed some leaves under their hats or stuck small pieces up their noses. How many of us have plucked a leaf to smell it as a way to further our "wilderness experience"? Its leaves are dried and sold in grocery stores as bay leaf. I remember just after arriving in California, I saw them being sold in jars of six leaves for 75 cents in a local super market. I have always wondered why people didn't just pick them. California bay leaf has a much stronger flavor than the true or European bay leaf, so if one is going to flavor stews or soup with it, remember a little goes a long way.

California bay-laurel prefers moist soils such as along streams, canyon bottoms and north-facing slopes. It reaches its greatest height (100+ feet) in Southern Oregon and adjacent California but individual specimens can get quite large. The largest tree I know about from around SLO County is in a pasture in the mountains south-east of Cambria. It is (was?) so large, that it was clearly distinguishable in aerial photographs. I was told that the CALTRANS highway engineers used it as an aid in scaling their drawings used in planning the re-routing of highway 46. I was lucky enough to visit it once. Although it is

not very tall, its crown spread was several scores of feet. This tree, like many, was multi-branched from a large root crown.

Every reference that included an entry for this tree discussed its beautiful wood. They would talk about its great workability and its ability to take a high polish. The wood is relatively light colored with interesting light brown streaks which was used for furniture and paneling for covering interior walls. Because through much of its range it tends to branch from near the base, it hasn't been a great lumber producer. It does have a tendency to produce burls and these are sought after for turning into souvenirs and bowls which is a major cottage industry in Southern Oregon. Many years ago Bonnie and I visited Oregon and of course had to stop at the roadside souvenir stands. While there, we picked up and read a paper explaining that the bowl we were admiring was made from a tree that only grew in Oregon and the Holy Land. However, this plant only grows in Oregon and California! Obviously then, by Holy Land, they meant California and not that insignificant Eastern Mediterranean region.

— Dirk Walters, Illustration by Bonnie Walters

## President's Notes

What a strange spring this is! In early April Trillium is actively growing in Coon Creek, and Baby Blue-eyes are in flower near the summit of Caliente Peak. In the backcountry of Montana de Oro, which is generally drought-short on flowers, the serpentine outcrop on the East Boundary Trail was ablaze in poppies, goldfields, and delphinium. There is always a surprise somewhere. This brings up an issue.. how do we let people know where the flowers are located? I am going to suggest to members that we start a wildflower hotline-web page next flower season, which will also serve to bring attention to our local presence. I welcome any proffered help or ideas on this issue. In a similar vein I have had requests for plant lists for different areas, trails etc. but have too few. I would love to have us collect plant lists and publish them on the web. For this we would need the donation of many lists that have been prepared for different purposes, and would publish them with full acknowledgement. At the very least we could web-link to those lists if they are on academic sites or government sites. I would prefer that lists had both common names and latin binomials, and we could eventually strive for some uniformity of style.

## President's Notes *continued*

Another idea from artist and board member Mardi Niles. Why don't we bring art and native plants together in an art show? We have some excellent photographers and painters, well known printmakers

and other talented CNPS members, and could focus on a show during 2010.

If any of these ideas have jumping up and down yelling "me! me! me!" contact me (dchippin@calpoly.edu or 528-0914).  
—David Chipping

---

## Chapter Meeting

Thursday, May 7 at the SLO Veterans Hall. **Brian LeNeve presents the genus *Clarkia*.**

7 - 7:30 p.m. enjoy social time, refreshments and browse our book table. The meeting begins at 7:30 with a little time for chapter business and announcements, followed by the presentation.

Brian LeNeve grew up hunting and fishing and became interested in flowers and a member of CNPS when his wife Carol started to develop a love of native plants. Now his hunting is confined to native plants although he still fishes. Brian is a past president of the Monterey Bay Chapter of CNPS and is currently Chapter Council representative to the state board of directors and V.P. of Monterey Bay Chapter. Brian says this about his search for Clarkias: "I fell in love with the genus *Clarkia* in 1995 when I decided that I should actually key out a plant from family to species. The first two plants I keyed out were *Clarkia*'s that did not appear to be related. After that I thought it would be interesting to find all the *Clarkia* species in Monterey County. Shortly after the first keying I found two, still different, *Clarkia*'s in Butte County. At that time Carol and I decided to find all the *Clarkia*'s in California. We have now traveled from east central Oregon to the Mexico border and have found and photographed all species in North America and all but three sub species including one sub species I was told by experts was probably extinct. I am still looking for those three sub species and think I have a line on one." Brian's talk will follow the Jepson key to *Clarkia* and will show all species in that order with a habitat photo, a photo showing the "growing pattern" of the species and close up of the plant.

## Field Trip

**Saturday, June 6, to Arroyo de la Cruz and Arroyo de los Chinos.** This is a morning field trip to the coastal bluffs of northern SLO County. We will start at the Elephant Seal Overlook at 9:30 a.m., south of the Piedras Blancas Lighthouse, and travel as a group up Highway 1 making stops at Arroyo de la Cruz (66.5), where the trails are good and at Arroyo de los Chinos (66.7), where there are no established trails and the terrain is uneven.

This area is home to a suite of rare species including the Arroyo de la Cruz Mariposa Lily, *Calochortus gracilis* ssp. *recurvifolius*, pocket dunes and unique wind sculptured chaparral. Wear sturdy shoes, a hat, and windbreaker and bring plenty of water. Please, no dogs. For information call Mardi Niles at 489-9274.





# George Brusch writes about his first CNPS trip to Carrizo Plain and the Elkhorn Plain Ecological Reserve led by George Butterworth on March 28, 2009

By George Brusch

"If you want to take any pictures please feel free to use my camera." Her offer was warm and generous, like all the other words I'd ever heard from Mardi. I wasn't going to need any photographs today; no frame could ever hold something like that. We stopped right off the side of a dusty dirt road in what seemed to be the absolute middle of nowhere. We'd fallen head-over-heels down the rabbit hole and landed in a painted fairy-tale landscape. Sunshine leapt from the heavens and smothered the ground with an extravagant yellow tinge. A literal sea of *Lasthenia chrysostoma* spread out as far as the eye could imagine. The bright yellow ocean cascaded against a paler greenish swath of what turned out to be the rare *Lepidium jaredii*. The two factions juxtaposed so close it looked like a toddlers failed attempt at keeping his paint colors separated. You couldn't take a picture, you can't justify a beauty that unexplainable. It felt like a person could spend a hundred years in one spot and never truly

take it all in. Flower fields brighter than the sun, and a heavenly calm that stretched on farther than the pacific. The hills didn't smell like the California I knew, the comforting smell of artemesia was absent. Instead, *Ephedra californica* and its ever present companion *Pholistoma membranaceum* filled the nostrils with a tangy mix that brought thoughts of medicine cabinets and a Jurassic world time forgot. Whether we were looking at rare *Monolopia congdonii* near extinct ocean bottoms, chasing extremely endangered *Gambelia silus* down washes, or stopping for roadside pictures of *Salvia carduacea*, always was the presence that we had stumbled upon another world. I couldn't erase the images from that day if I wanted, they're burned so thoroughly into my memory. Etched into the back of my eye-lids so every time I blink I see the happiest yellow that ever naturally was. I thank her for the offer and go back to kicking rocks on the ground. No, I don't think I'll need a picture...



Photo Steve Schubert

**Field Trips in April** Upper left, George Butterworth at Elkhorn Plain Ecological Reserve. Upper right, Coreopsis Hill. Below, Shell Creek.



Photo: Mardi Niles



## Weed Abatement And Your Natives

With fire season just around the corner, it is time to start thinking about weed abatement. Weed abatement is usually required if you have a large yard with areas covered with vegetation. Most of the time this vegetation contains some native plants. Many cities throughout the Central Coast require that mowing be done by the first of June. It's best to check with your local fire marshall about due dates. I thought this would be a good time to discuss how best to save these natives while complying with the fire department.

Most of the time only mowing of weedy grasses is necessary. Sometimes removal of dead wood may be required. This removal of dead wood means trimming branches that are dead and dry. It's sometimes difficult to tell what is dead and what is not. A good rule of thumb is to scratch the branch with your pruner. If the layer just under the bark is green, the branch is alive. If you see any green, it's not to be removed. If the layer is not green then the branch is dead and can be removed. Many older

plants, especially manzanita, can still look quite nice with the dead branches removed.

Another way to protect natives from mowing is to take some time now to search for them in the grass. You will be looking for seedlings that may have germinated over the winter. Some of these seedling may be very small, so plan on taking some time to look. When I find a plant, I like to mark them with marker flags (you can buy them at all Farm Supply stores). If you want, you can even label the flags with the names of the plants. After this is done, you can decide if you what to transplant the seedling or leave them to grow. The marker flag make it easy to avoid the seedlings while mowing. If you see a flag, don't mow there.

Well I hope this offers a little help for you. Wishing you all the best for a great summer. If you have any questions over the break about gardening feel free to call me. Until I see you at the next meeting, happy gardening. — John

## CNPS Education Program

***The California Native Plant Society and the California Department of Fish and Game present:  
May 29-30 Rare Plants of Coastal San Luis Obispo County Workshop***

**Dr. David Keil, Deborah Hillyard, and Kevin Merk**



Cirsium, Grindilia & Dudleya

**Course Description:** The distinct combination of climate, soils and topography of coastal San Luis Obispo County are the foundation of the unique array of natural communities, which in turn support a wide variety of endemic, rare and endangered plant species. This workshop will utilize both classroom and field exploration of various local coastal communities, such as serpentine seep, grassland and chaparral; coastal dunes; coast live oak woodlands, including the local "elfin forest"; estuarine marsh; maritime chaparral; and coastal prairie. Learn to recognize these communities and their associated species, and which laws and regulations apply to their conservation.

**Cost: CNPS members: \$310      Non-members: \$335**

Last day to cancel your registration and receive a 50% refund is May 15, 2009. After May 15, we will not be able to refund your registration fee, regardless of personal or professional emergencies.

To find out more information about these and other CNPS workshops, go to: <http://cnps.org/cnps/education/workshops/index.php>.

For more information e-mail or call Josie Crawford at [jcrawford@cnps.org](mailto:jcrawford@cnps.org) or (916) 447-2677 ext 205. Josie Crawford, Education Program Director, California Native Plant Society, 2707 K St., Suite 1, Sacramento, CA 95816-5113, (916) 447-2677.

## CALIFORNIA INDIANS and THEIR ENVIRONMENT

An Introduction

KENT G. LIGHTFOOT and OTIS PARRISH



## Book News

Look for this new book on our book tables  
at our May CNPS meeting.

### California Indians and their Environment: An Introduction

Kent G. Lightfoot and Otis Parrish

"At once scholarly and accessible, this book is destined to be a classic. Framed around pressing environmental issues of concern to a broad range of Californians today, Lightfoot and Parrish provide an historical ecology of California's amazingly diverse environments, its biological resources, and the Native peoples who both adapted to and actively managed them." — Jon M. Erlandson, author of *Early Hunter-Gatherers of the California Coast*.

512 pages, 4 1/2 x 7 1/4, 130 color illustrations, 3 line illustrations, 8 maps  
Natural History/Native Americans/California & the West

\$20.00 including tax

### Grass Identification Workshop: A two-day class and field course for the beginner

#### Central California Workshop – San Luis Obispo & Field Sites

Saturday and Sunday May 16-17, 2009 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Room A, Ludwick Community Center, 864 Santa Rosa Street, San Luis Obispo

\$220/CNGA member, \$260/non-member

The theme of this workshop is "Grasses are fun and easy to identify." Our goal is to learn the basic skills of identifying grasses. On the first day, we will learn about California's grassland ecology, the qualities of specific native grasses for restoration, and become skilled at recognizing the basic groups and common species through our work with plant samples in the classroom setting. We will review both the old Tribe method of identifying grasses as well as the artificial key methodology focusing on the important distinguishing traits. A valuable class syllabus binder and basic keys will be provided. The next day, we will explore a local grassland, rich with a diverse assemblage of both native and naturalized grasses, and make use of our new understanding and skills. Bring a 10X hand lens, notebook, scotch tape, and any field guides to grasses you may have. Recommended texts are *The Jepson Manual*, the *Hitchcock Manual*, and Beecher Crampton's *Grasses in California* (U.C. Press). Information and directions will be sent with paid registration.

Instructors: David Amme, Wildland Vegetation Program Manager, East Bay Regional Park District

Wade Belew, Restorationist, Cotati Creek Critters

Sign up early. Workshop is limited to 30 people. Deadline: May 8, 2007

#### Registration Form - Complete and return as soon as possible.

Mail to: CNGA, P.O. Box 8327, Woodland, CA 95776 Fax to: (530) 661-2280

Participant's name (type or print) \_\_\_\_\_ Vegetarian? \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address: Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

How shall CNGA contact you to confirm your registration?

☐ Fax to \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ mail to above mailing address ☐ E-mail to above e-mail address

Registration fee: ☐ \$220/members ☐ \$260 nonmembers

☐ Payment by check, payable to California Native Grasslands Association

☐ Payment by credit card (please check type) ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Authorized signature \_\_\_\_\_

Questions? Contact Judy G-Scott, CNGA Director, phone/Fax (530) 661-2280 or E-mail admin@cnga.org.



## 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.

### SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

\*8:00-11:00 AM BIRDING with Roger Zachary at RIVER ROAD: An easy 3 mile walk along the Salinas River before it flows into the lake. Appropriate for all experience levels.

\*MEET AT RIVER ROAD ACCESS (directions below)

STAGING area for ALL other activities will be WHITE OAK PICNIC area (handicap accessible)

9:00 AM BIRDING with Mike Stiles and Alan Schmierer (ALL experience levels)

9:00 AM DESTINATION HIKE with Ken Kils (explore seldom-seen portions of the park)

10:00 AM KAYAK / CANOE launch with Jack Beigle (bring PFDs, sunscreen, binoculars)

10:00 AM PLANT WALKS with David Chipping and CNPS members

10:30-NOON: MINI BIO BLITZ with Rouvaishyana and friends(ALL AGES count ALL species of living things found in the vicinity of the picnic area)

11:00-12:00 AM MOUNTAIN BIKING with Ken Kils (participants must be at least 10 years of age, helmets required)

11:00-1:30 PACIFIC WILDLIFE CARE on site with live birds giving informal 15-20 minute "visits" with feathered friends

12 NOON LUNCH BREAK Join us for on old fashioned new fangled PICNIC. Bring your own sandwich (or something to grill), a side dish, snack, or dessert to share and your own (preferably reusable) place setting and beverage container. Throw in your picnic tablecloth if possible. Assorted drinks provided by MCAS.

1:00-2:00 PM CREATING WITH PASTELS (wildflowers and plants)with Janine Kirkpatrick ( materials provided)

### ONGOING THROUGHOUT THE DAY

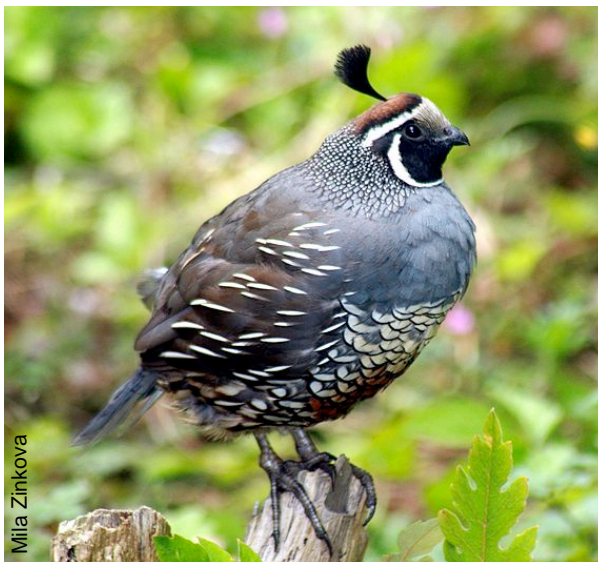
WATERFOWL AND WOODPECKER WATCH: Birdwatching around the picnic area

FISHING: Kid's Cove (for kid's only) and shore fishing around picnic area

HIKING: Grey Pine Trailhead located at picnic area

JUNIOR RANGER PROGRAM: Self-directed activities for school-age children

BRING any kayaks, canoes, spotting scopes, binoculars, cameras, field guides, bikes, fishing gear etc. for enjoying the day at the lake. (The marina store stocks supplies and rents boats.)



Mila Zinkova

**DIRECTIONS to Santa Margarita Lake White Oak Picnic area:**  
From Hwy. 101, take the Santa Margarita (Highway 58) exit and drive through the town of Santa Margarita. Turn right on Highway 58. At the junction with Pozo Road (in approximately 2 miles), stay on Pozo Road for approximately 7 miles and follow the signs to the Santa Margarita Lake turnoff. Turn left and drive one mile to the park entrance. Turn right after entering the gate and follow the road for one mile to the White Oak Picnic area. (Allow 30-40 minutes from the SLO area)

#### \*DIRECTIONS to RIVER ROAD ACCESS

Follow the above directions until the Santa Margarita Lake turnoff. Instead of turning, continue driving straight on Pozo Road for approximately 7.8 miles. Immediately after the bridge, turn left on RIVER ROAD and continue another 2.2 miles to the staging area on the left side of the road. ( Allow 45-50 minutes from the SLO area).

For additional information contact Al Schmierer, aaschmierer@yahoo.com or 772-2026, MCAS Field Trip chair, or Mardi Niles, mlniles@slonet.org or 489-9274, CNPS Field Trip chair.



*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*.



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

P.O. Box 784

San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Nonprofit Organization

U.S. Postage Paid

San Luis Obispo, CA

Permit No. 114

