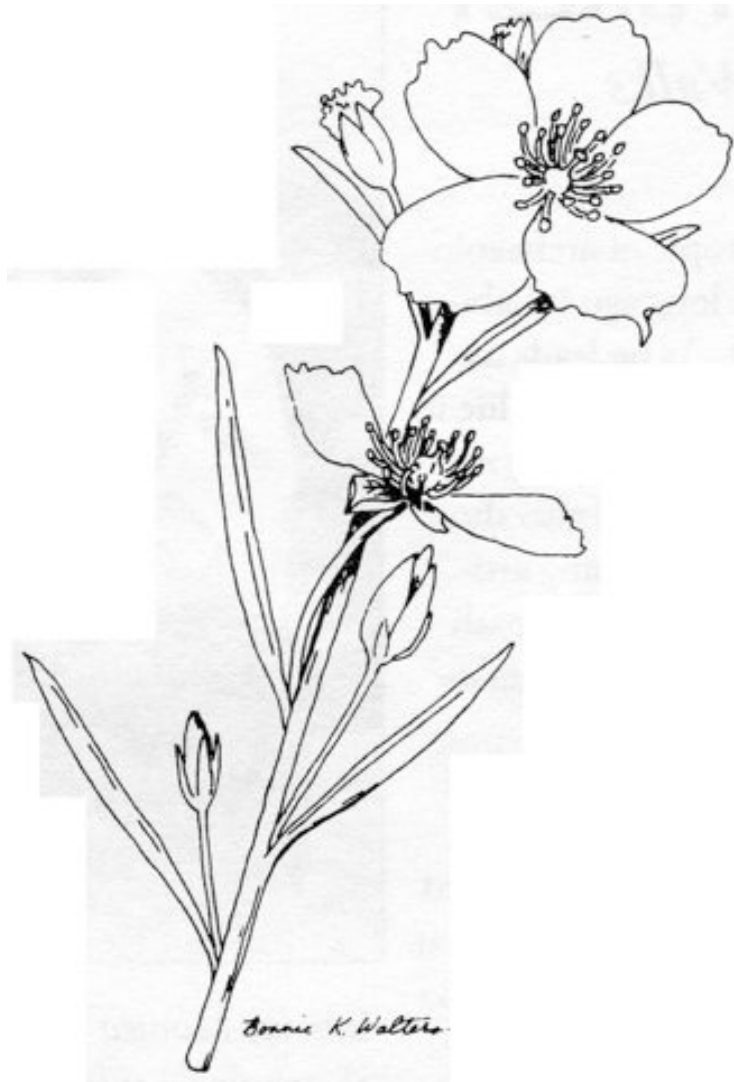


Obispoensis

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



March 2010

California or Peak Rush-rose (*Helianthemum scoparium*)

The cover plant on this issue of the *Opispoensis* is a small (never more than 2 ft. tall) and often over-looked shrub that almost always plays a secondary role to larger, more dominant shrub species wherever it is found. The plant is the California or peak rush-rose (*Helianthemum scoparium*). It is common in chaparral and coastal scrub through much of Central and Southern California from the coast to the southern Sierra Nevada foothills. However, it is much more common near the coast than inland. It prefers where the larger shrubs are spaced far enough apart to allow sunlight to reach it. For this reason it is often seen bordering paths. All of the references I consulted did indicate that rush-roses become very common immediately after fires.

Bonnie's drawing shows a flower in the process of falling apart. This was intentional. The plant appears to be very fragile. First, its leaves are extremely drought deciduous. This means that they form and then at the first sign of water stress they are shed. This results in the green stems doing most of the photosynthesis. Further because the yellow flowers only last for a single day the species doesn't waste resources on their construction. It is practically impossible to collect a bouquet of them without ending up with a bunch of green sticks. The genus name, *Helianthemum*, translates from the Greek as *helios* (sun) and *antheum* (flower) and refers to its only opening during the sunlight hours. Some of you may be familiar with another, more famous, sunflower with the generic name, *Helianthus*. *Helianthus* also means sunflower. But in this latter case it refers to its inflorescence tracking the sun across the sky by always facing it. The specific epithet, *scoparium*, translates as "broom-like." I assume this refers to its naked, many branched stems that resemble a green growing broom or brush.

Plant books indicate that it blooms from April through December, but I think I remember finding at least a few flowers every month of the year along the immediate coast. It is easy to observe that it never produces more than one or two fragile 1-1½ inch yellow flowers on any given branch. H.W. Ricketts in the fourth volume of his *Wild Flowers of the United States* indicates that individual rush-rose plants produce a succession of flowers, with each subsequent generation smaller than the previous. Ultimately the flowers do not open at all. These last produce only a few stamens and are self-pollinated. Seed produced by these "hidden" or cleistogamous flowers are assured of producing seed, but

the seed is nearly genetically identical to that of its parent. On the other hand, the early season open flowers are mostly cross-pollinated and seed produced by these crosses would be genetically extremely variable. The late season cleistogamous derived seed would be able to replace the parent plant whereas the early season open-pollinated derived seed would have the variability to colonize new \pm different habitats.

Dirk Walters, Illustration by Bonnie Walters

President's Notes

Thanks to the large number of volunteers who made our banquet such a great success. I have not heard a single negative comment, with people raving about how much better it is to have both cheaper tickets and better food. We are searching for a relatively inexpensive and larger venue next time, and all suggestions are welcome from all corners of the county. Just as we enjoyed Dr. Bruce Pavlik's thought-provoking talk, we also were treated to an excellent presentation on California's orchids by Christina and Eric Bird-Hollander. I would encourage any of you who have some ideas on potential future speakers to contact Matt Ritter, who is always searching for programs.

We are in Atascadero for the March meeting! It will be held at the Lakeside Pavilion beside Atascadero Lake at the usual time, where we will celebrate the plant photography of Craig Cunningham in a movie made from his slide collection. He is a great photographer, recognized as a perfectionist, and CNPS has long valued his contributions. This is an opportunity for those members who hate the "grade" to come to one of our meetings.

David Chipping

Conservation Notes

CNPS is seeking any literature on the flora of the Carrizo Plain that could be mounted as an informational database for use by botanists and zoologists studying the much hoped-for recovery of the San Joaquin Valley grasslands that were the reason the place was targeted for protection. If you possess "grey literature" materials, photos that record something of interest to future researchers and the like, let me know and we can discuss how to incorporate it into the system.

CNPS is following the progress of proposed changes to the Agricultural Cluster Subdivision and Density Program. The program always seemed a good idea, as it allows houses that "could" be built on the underlying lots of a property to be concentrated as a cluster that might better serve agricultural production and environmental

(continued on next page)

protection. However the program is being “gamed” by developers-cum-agriculturalists who are forcing high density agricultural practices into former grazing lands in order to vastly increase the number of units that can be entered into the cluster, as the minimum parcel size can be decreased for certain forms of high yield agriculture such as grapes. This

can sometimes have a terrible impact on grassland species, especially when the high density of agriculture is unsustainable and the range conversion a fruitless endeavor . We generally support the changes proposed by county staff that will reduce abuses within the program.

David Chipping

Banquet Success

Our First Annual Pot Luck Banquet was a success. Thanks go to everyone who came and brought such good food. We covered the cost and have a little cash left to buy the Chapter President a dinner bell for our future banquets. We are planning on doing this again next year, although we are looking for a little bigger room. Special Thanks go to the following people that helped with planning, shopping, organizing, setting up, breaking down, washing dishes, and everything else that made the evening fun: Heather and Jim Johnson, David Krause, Tina and Jay Salter, Mardi Niles, Janet Swanson and

husband Steve Summi, Laurie and Larry Vierheilg, Pam Tate and husband Henry, Susi Bernstein and husband Chris Rose, Suzette Girouard, George Butterworth, Jeff Prostovich and Sharon Lovejoy, Lynne Peterson, David and Linda Chipping and Dirk and Bonnie Walters for the evening program and name tags. I hope I didn't forget anyone; we had a lot of folks come early to help with the set up and many of you stayed to help us break down. Thank you all, it is a pleasure to work with such an awesome group of people. And again thanks for all the really great food. I'm looking forward to next year.

Lauren Brown

At the Annual Banquet Dr. Neil Havlik received special recognition for originating the idea of a local wildflower guide, Wildflowers of San Luis Obispo, helping to arrange funding and working to see the project through publication. Dr. Dirk Walters (right) presented the award to Dr. Havlik.



Chapter Meeting

We are in Atascadero for the March meeting! It will be held at the Lake Pavilion beside Atascadero Lake, 9315 Pismo Avenue, Atascadero at 7 p.m., where we will celebrate the plant photography of Craig Cunningham in a movie made from his slide collection.

Field Trips

Saturday, February 27, 9 a.m. Late Winter Burton Mesa Chaparral Field trip at the La Purisima Mission: The California Native Plant Society/ Lompoc Valley Botanic and Horticultural Society will hold their annual winter field trip to the Burton Mesa Chaparral on the La Purisima Mission grounds. Meet at the east end of Burton Mesa Boulevard in Mission Hills at 9 a.m. for a chance to see the early bloomers and interesting scenery. To reach Burton Mesa Blvd., Get to SR 1 north of Lompoc. At the signal where SR 1 turns down hill towards Lompoc, take Harris Grade Road north to Burton Mesa Boulevard and turn right (east). For more information call Charlie Blair at 733-3189.

March 20, 2010, Equinox Wildflower Hike At ConocoPhillips (west of railroad tracks). 10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Join Land Conservancy Restoration Ecologist and dune plant specialist, Mark Skinner, in exploring the magnificent wildflowers of the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes. Learn about local plants that specialize in this harsh but beautiful coastal dune scrub plant community. Hikers will enjoy frequent stops to look at plants up close and to ask questions. See progress of veldt grass eradication. Be prepared to hike in uneven sand for up to 2 miles. Water and layered clothing suggested, binoculars and cameras encouraged. Please RSVP at 544-9096.

Driving & Parking Directions:

Meet at Conoco Phillips parking lot located off Highway 1 in Nipomo.

From the north – Take 101 south to the Halcyon exit.

Proceed on Halcyon Road, through Halcyon, to the traffic signals at the intersection of Halcyon Road and Highway 1 (at the top of the hill); turn right on Highway 1. Proceed south on Highway 1 past Callender Road and turn right into the first drive at ConocoPhillips (look for business sign). Stay on long drive until you dead-end at the parking lot. We will cross the tracks on foot from the parking lot.

From the south (Nipomo) proceed on Highway 1 (Willow Road) past the CDF fire station and turn left at ConocoPhillips (look for business sign). Stay on long drive until you dead-end at the parking lot.

Saturday, March 27, Hike to Coreopsis Hill led by Lauren Brown, Dirk Walters, and other local botanists. If

you are in the SLO area or points north, we will meet at 8:30 a.m. at the SLO Vets Hall then head south (see directions below). The hike will begin about 9:30 a.m. and will be a casual walk through the dunes to the top of Coreopsis Hill. This is a moderate hike, about 3 hours round-trip. Dress in layers, bring water and snacks, and have your “Dune Mother’s Wildflower Guide” by Dr. Malcolm McLeod for the trip. For more information call Lauren Brown at 460-6329. Heavy rain cancels this trip (light rain, bring appropriate clothing).

Directions from the north: 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 chain link fence and gate). We will NOT be able to park along the fenced road this year.

We may park at Oso Flaco parking lot for free.

However, each car needs to display a flyer in its window. These will be handed out. We will need to walk or shuttle from the Oso Flaco Lake parking lot.

Directions from the south: Take 101 north to Santa Maria and take the Main Street exit toward the town of Guadalupe. Turn right onto Highway 1 and head north to Oso Flaco Lake Road (about 3 miles north of Guadalupe), turn left onto Oso Flaco Lake Road and proceed to Beigle Road and the State Parking Lot.

Saturday, April 3, Annual Malcolm McLeod Memorial Field Trip Meeting to Shell Creek led by Dirk Walters and David Chipping. Meet at the SLO Vets Hall at 8:30 a.m. and Santa Margarita Park & Ride, on the south side of Hwy 58, just east of Hwy 101 intersection, at 9:00 a.m. Our first stop will be at the Santa Margarita Park to use the bathrooms, there will be no other bathrooms available after that point. We will then drive east on Hwy 58, about 18.5 miles, and make a left hand turn on to Shell Creek Road. Park there and the group will meet somewhere near the windmill. We will walk through the fields along both sides of Shell Creek Road looking at wildflowers. We will visit spots with shell fossils, that gives this area its name. We will meet as a group for lunch somewhere along Shell Creek Road. This will end the morning part of the trip. In the afternoon some people may wish to explore other spots in the area, while others may want to return to town. Consider the afternoon options when making travel arrangements. Bring water, lunch, cameras, 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 Dirk Walters at 543-7051 or Mardi Niles at 489-9274.

Saturday, April 10, 9:00 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 for this annual spring tour of the beauties of the Burton Mesa Chaparral. This wet year may turn out to be a 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.

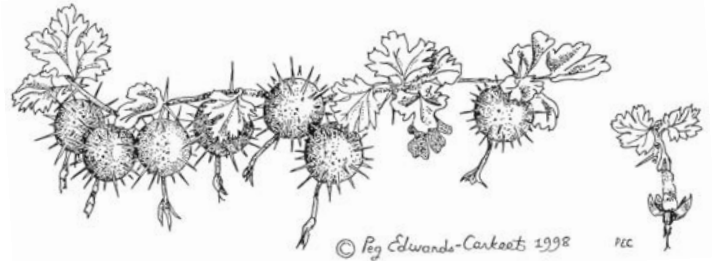
Saturday, April 17, 9:00 a.m. Los Padres National Forest, Santa Lucia District, in conjunction with the California Native Plant Society, holds its annual Wildflower Weekend on Figueroa Mountain.

Meet at 9 a.m. at the Fire Station on Figueroa Mountain Road. Turn left at the SR 154-Figueroa Mountain Road intersection near Los Olivos, and proceed to the Fire Station parking lot. This is 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.

Thank You Renewing Members, and Welcome New Members to Our Chapter

New Members: Polly Cooper, Gar and Elizabeth Salzgeber

Renewing Members: Edythe Ayers, Kathryn Bay, Wendy Brown, Dixie Burnett, Patricia Cullinan, Helen Davie, Chuck French, Cynthia Gaulin, David Gurney, Joy Hanson, Neil and Ann Havlik, Peggy Heathcote, Steve Junak, Jerry Kirkhart, Kelly Kephart, Jenny Langford, Scott Loosley, Sharon Lovejoy and Jeff Prostovich, Nancy Mann, Kathleen McCarey, Wallace McCray, Melissa Mooney, Mardi Niles, Jeanette and Darwin Sainz, Janet Swanson, William Vanherweg, Thomas and Elise Wheeler.



Obisopensis is published October through June except January. Items for submittal to *Obispoensis* should be sent to rhotaling@ charter.net. The deadline is the 10th of each month. Botanical articles, news items, illustrations, photos, events and tidbits are welcome! Visit the websites www.cnps.org and www.cnps-slo.org



Valley Oak at Shell Creek

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



San Luis Obispo Chapter of the California Native Plant Society

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Jepson Workshop - Flora of Pinnacles National Monument

April 29 – May 2, 2010

Tom Leatherman, trip leader

Pinnacles Campground, Pinnacles National Monument

Set aside as a National Monument in 1908, the vegetation at Pinnacles provides a unique glimpse into the chaparral ecosystem of early California. In a time when frequent fires, extensive clearing for agriculture/grazing, and the rapid spread of exotics have significantly reduced native plant distributions, Pinnacles remains a refuge for many native species adapted to the Mediterranean climate of central California. This workshop will include extensive hiking and visiting habitats that include some of the more unusual species in the park.

Thursday night's presentation will introduce the area and species we will see. On Friday, we'll head beyond the caves and reservoir on the Moses Springs Trail, toward North Chalone Peak. Although we may not reach the top of the tallest peak in the park, there will be opportunities to see unusual habitats, including the rock/scree community, with *Lewisia rediviva*, *Allium cratericola*, and *Eriogonum saxatile*, among others. Saturday, we'll botanize the Chalone area, beginning with the Balconies Trail, then onto the North Wilderness Trail – going off the beaten track and passing one of the few perennial water sources in the park. Depending on rainfall and nesting raptor activities, we will head up a side canyon to visit a plant closely related to a *Streptanthus* that is being described. The final day will

focus on the flora of the west side – the North Wilderness Trail and a unique population of *Pentagramma pallida*. Then, onto the Juniper Canyon Trail, which often has one of the best displays of wildflowers in the park. Depending on rainfall we will keep our eyes open for *Eriogonum nortonii*, Pinnacles' buckwheat, a small annual that is often difficult to find. Discussion topics along the way will include adaptations to hot dry climates, micro-habitats and their importance as refugia in rapidly changing climatic conditions, and the importance of minimizing disturbance of native habitats. In addition to the plants, we will likely see a number of unusual animal species, including California condors, red-legged frogs, and nesting prairie falcons. Hikes will be about 6 miles a day (the group can go further if stamina permits) and will include steep and uneven terrain. Registration is limited, available on a first-come, first-served basis until filled.

Course fee (\$460, members/\$485, non-members) includes campground facilities, meals, park entrance fee, and transportation within Pinnacles NM. Campground facilities include: potable water, swimming pool, and flush toilets; showers are located nearby.

Registration information can be found at http://ucjeps.berkeley.edu/workshops/2010/regform_2010.html