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# *Obispoensis*

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

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*Bonnie K. Walters*

MAY 2014

## Shell Creek Valley Oak Snag

We are going back into the archives for this cover of the OBISPOENSIS. The landscape is a drawing of the Shell Creek area that Bonnie drew for the December 1991 cover. The inset is an ID drawing of the leaves and acorn of the valley oak. Why would one want to combine these two pictures? What is the relationship between the two images? What follows is a short history of my encounters with the valley oak tree that became that snag. I first encountered what was to become the snag in the spring of 1970. As can be seen from the drawing, it stood all by itself in a grassy pasture field. The field is near the junction of Highway 58 and Shell Creek Road. The base of its trunk is drawn showing that it was surrounded by various grass species while the space beyond its drip line (shown empty in the drawing) contained carpets of wildflowers. The difference in plant species under the tree from that away is due to what has been termed “canopy effect.” Its cause is probably due to the tree, when it was alive, being able to bring water and dissolved minerals up from deep in the soil. Since the tree was somewhat inefficient in using all it brought up, some of these minerals got deposited on the outside of the leaves. This

“waste” was washed or dripped off the leaves onto the ground below. Note that the canopy effect persisted several years after the tree had died, so shade was probably not a major factor. This canopy effect was especially evident when I first encountered the tree in 1970 -- the 2<sup>nd</sup> spring after the record rainfalls of 1968-9. We don't have any record of the living tree except memory. As can be surmised from the drawing, the tree had died and become a standing snag by December 1991. It fell over sometime in the late 1990s or early 2000s. After it fell down, the “smaller” branches were harvested for fire wood. But the trunk and bases of the larger branches were so massive that they were not deemed worth the effort to harvest. Below is a picture of the snag today. I have visited the snag a number of times over the years. It might seem criminal to let all that wood go to “waste,” but I assure everyone that it is not going to waste. In the years just

after it fell over, it was inhabited by termites. These were not in evidence this year probably due to the drought, although I didn't break into it to check. However I did notice that it is being used as a roof by animals burrowing under it.

The inset is Bonnie's drawing of *Quercus lobata* leaves and acorn drawn in 1981. *Quercus lobata* (Fagaceae) is commonly known as valley oak, California white oak or roble. The last name (roble) was used locally in the name of city, Paso Robles or more correct, *Paso de Robles*, which translates valley oak pass. Any one who has traveled north on 101 will note that valley oaks are common around Paso Robles and that the city sits in a valley between two high ridges. I will recite a few notes on valley oaks. They are the largest of our California oak trees. The trunk in the picture above is over five feet in diameter. Valley oak is a true California endemic as its natural

range is restricted to the valleys and low hills surrounding the Central Valley and Inner Coast Ranges. Its acorns mature in one year and were used extensively for food by native Californians. Be-



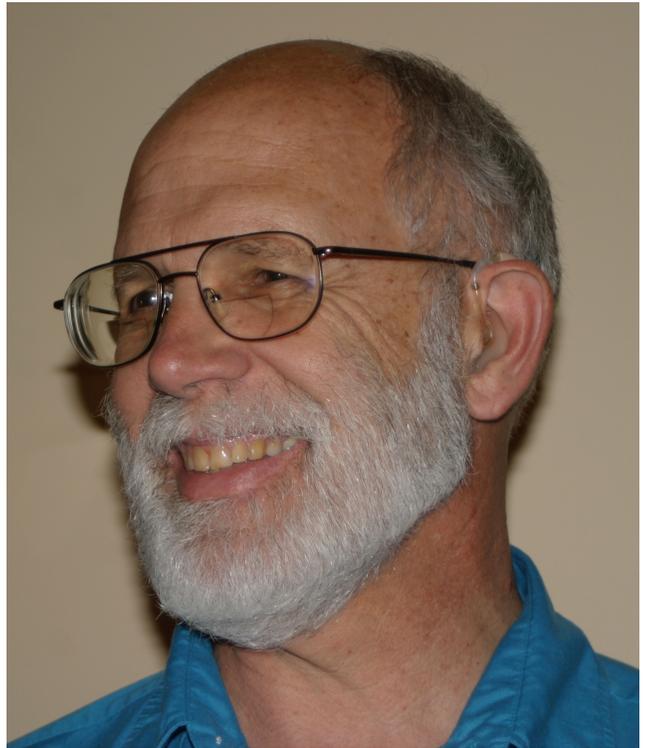
cause the species prefers to grow in deep, fertile valley soils, it has been severely decimated by agriculture. One reason for its current survival numbers for adult trees maybe attributed to its massive size. It was easier to plow or graze around it than to cut it down. Unfortunately acorns and seedlings are eaten by cattle and rodents, so (as was reported in the current issue of *Madrono* Volume 61(1) 1-8), there has been little recruitment of new trees. The cause for this lack of survival (recruitment) to older seedlings and saplings is still controversial. I suspect several causes will be ultimately determined. The paper noted that, in their study, lots of seed and early growth seedlings were found. What ever the cause, it also effects blue oak (*Quercus douglasii*) which is often found up-slope from valley oaks. ❀

Dirk Walters, illustration by Bonnie Walters

## Chapter Meeting

Although the Poaceae (grass family) comprises almost nine percent of California's flora, many people shy away from trying to identify grasses. The evening CNPS meeting on May 1 will be an opportunity to become familiar with the characteristics of grasses and to try out Dr. David Keil's new key to genera of California grasses. Dr. Keil will begin the program with a Power-Point introduction to grass features in which you will be encouraged to ask questions. This will be followed by a hands-on workshop in which you will have the opportunity to begin using the new key. The goal is for workshop participants to begin to develop the knowledge and skills to tackle grass identification using Dr. Keil's key and *The Jepson Manual*. Bring a hand lens and any unidentified grasses.

Dr. Dave Keil is Professor Emeritus of Biology at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo. Dave has had a lifelong interest and enthusiasm for botany. He received his B.S. and M.S. in botany from Arizona State University and his Ph.D. from Ohio State University. He has taught courses in general botany, plant taxonomy, field botany, evolution, and biogeography. He is Curator of the Robert F. Hoover Herbarium at Cal Poly. He has authored scientific papers, textbooks, and study guides, and has been a major contributor to *The Jepson Manual* and the *Flora of North America*. His research interests include Asteraceae systematics and floristics of Western North America. He edited the *Wildflowers of San Luis Obispo* and is preparing the second edition of the *Vascular Plants of San Luis Obispo County*.



Meet at the Veterans Hall, 801 Grand Avenue, San Luis Obispo, Thursday, May 1, 7 p.m.

## President's Notes

The Malcolm McLeod Memorial Field was a great success, with beautiful weather and some impressive flower displays in the Coon Creek watershed. A hillside burned in the 2012 burn was covered by *Phacelia viscid* with its large blue flowers, and the fire-burned ridge on the Rattlesnake Flats trail had dense stands of blue dicks, buttercups and Indian paintbrush. We were happy to see the chaparral recovering from the burn, although we think recovery has been diminished due to the drought. Just to make sure we made the right call in diverting from our usual Shell Creek destination, a couple of us checked it out. No flowers could be seen from the road, but there were a few hiding in the grass once you walked into the meadows. No so in the Carrizo Plain, where there is nothing green to be seen south of the entrance to the monument.

Although it will be hard to replacing the wonderful Heather Johnson at our sales table, I think the job might be broken into manageable pieces if we had a small team of volunteers who would share the job, maybe taking just minding the sales at one or two meetings or events.

As book sales contribute a substantial part of our income stream and activities, any help in this regard would be very greatly appreciated. ☘ David Chipping

## Conservation

We can take a second crack at commenting on the rail spur extension at Nipomo's Phillips Refinery. The Draft EIR is going to be reissued as they received so many comments, but not so much on the local ecosystems. The great fear seems to be the increased railroad traffic and the possibility of exploding tank cars, something that can really spoil your day. The earlier comments are posted on the SLO County Planning Dept. web site, including those from CNPS.

Water conservation continues to be the major issue facing our county over the coming summer, and CNPS can do a little to help. We are collecting photographs of yard landscaping that features native plants in a dominant, but not necessarily exclusive, roll. Send us your pictures and descriptions. Also we welcome hints on water saving technology such as low cost storage of roof runoff. ☘

David Chipping

## Central Coast Biological Society Presentation by Two CNPS Members

Steve Schubert program on fire ecology in SLO County... the 1994 Hwy. 41, 1996 Hwy. 58, and 1997 & 2012 Montana De Oro State Park fires.

Dr. Jenn Yost program on her plant taxonomy research on *Layia*.

Thursday, May 8<sup>th</sup> at 7p.m.  
PG&E Community Center  
6588 Ontario Road  
south of San Luis Obispo

Directions: From Hwy 101, exit at San Luis Bay Drive/Avila Beach off ramp. Turn west, then immediately turn left onto Ontario Road.



SUN-CUPS — *Enothera ovata*.

### Surprisingly Good Display of Spring Annuals at La Purisima Mission

In spite of a very dry year, the March rains brought out a respectable display of spring annuals in some of the meadow areas on the La Purisima Mission grounds. On Sunday the 6th, Connie Geiger and I led our annual early April field trip of around 25 people, this year along "Al's Flower Trail," named for Al Thompson, for many years the main Garden Docent at the mission. This trail runs along a slope on the northeast side of the valley, starting from a cistern by a stand of coast live oaks, and meets the trail running along the creek to the "duck pond," the source on the early water system.

White flowers included white layia, *Layia glandulosa*, popcorn flowers, *Cryptantha* & *Plagiobothrys*, spp., common yarrow, *Achillea millefolium*, honeydew (AKA wedge-leaved *Horkelia*), *Horkelia cuneata*, miner's lettuce, *Claytonia perfoliata*, California croton, *Croton californicus*, and morning-glories, *Calystegia* spp. Yellow flowers included dwarf golden yarrow, *Eriophyllum pringlei*; golden yarrow *E. confertiflorum*, Bigelow's co-

## Field Trips

**Sunday, May 4, 9 a.m.**, Santa Margarita Lake. Join the California Native Plant Society, Morro Coast Audubon Society, and Sierra Club for a field trip at the River Road access of Santa Margarita Lake. Expect to see a variety of spring wildflowers along with spring migrating birds and possibly wood ducks. Participants will be walking on gentle terrain for about 3-4 miles. From Hwy. 101, take Highway 58 and drive roughly 15 miles on Pozo Road (passing the turnoff to Santa Margarita Lake) until crossing a small bridge. Turn left after the bridge onto River Road and continue approximately 2.3 miles to the park entrance on the left side of the road. Allow 40-50 minutes from the San Luis Obispo area. For those wishing to carpool, please meet in the parking lot of Santa Rosa Park in San Luis Obispo at 8:20 a.m. or in front of the Pacific Beverage Co. at 22255 Camino Real in Santa Margarita, at 8:30 a.m. Bring water and snacks, and dress in layers for changing weather. A hat, sunscreen, and sturdy shoes are recommended. For more information, call Bill at (805) 459-2103 or email [bill.waycott@gmail.com](mailto:bill.waycott@gmail.com). Rain cancels.

**Saturday, May 10 at 10 a.m.** Garden tour at the home of Sharon Lovejoy and Jeff Prostovich. Join Sharon and Jeff to see how they have transformed their small property into a marvelous collection of native plants, herbs, vegetables, flowers, and fruit trees. Their house is located on the northwest corner of Loomis and Buena Vista Streets in San Luis Obispo, at 495 Buena Vista Street. Please park along the street. The tour will last about an hour. For more information, contact Bill @ 805-45-2103, [bill.waycott@gmail.com](mailto:bill.waycott@gmail.com).

reopsis, *Coreopsis bigelovii*, and assorted DYCs. Blue to lavender flowers included various *Phacelia* spp. Red to pink flowers included purple owl's clover, *Castilleja exserta*, prickly phlox, *Leptodactylon californiacum*, purple Chinese houses, *Collinsia heterophylla*, among others. There were bush as well as forb lupines, including silver bush lupine, *Lupinus albifrons*, coastal bush lupine, *L. arboreus*, dwarf lupine, *L. bicolor*, and collared lupine, *L. truncatus*. Along the left side of the trail, were several sand almonds, *Prunus fasciculata* var. *punctata*, some in fruit.

At the head of the trail were several stands of cream cups, including the carnival poppy (a color variation alternating white and yellow petals), *Platystemon californicus*. Down the slope towards the creek was a stand of goldfields, *Lasthenia* sp. By the trail up to the cross, were a few black figworts, *Scrophularia atrata*, and some red-berry bushes, *Rhamnus crocea*, with tiny flowers.

All in all, a very rewarding tour. Charlie Blair

# Sudden Oak Death (SOD) Blitz - 2014

## San Luis Obispo – May 16, 17, 18 (Friday, Saturday, Sunday)

What is Sudden Oak Death:

Sudden Oak Death (SOD), a serious exotic disease, is threatening the survival of tanoak and several oak species in California. Currently SOD is found in 14 coastal California counties, from Monterey to Humboldt. Researchers have discovered that *Phytophthora ramorum*, the pathogen that causes SOD, spreads most often on infected California bay laurel leaves. Some management options are available, but they are effective only if implemented before oaks and tanoaks are infected; hence, timely detection of the disease on bay laurel leaves is essential for a successful proactive attempt to slow down the SOD epidemic.

Purpose of SOD BLITZ:

The SOD-blitz is to inform and educate the community about the disease and its effects, get locals involved in detecting the disease, and produce detailed local maps of disease distribution. The map can then be used to identify those areas where the infestation may be mild enough to justify proactive management.

- A community meeting/training session held on a Friday evening; followed by collection of leaf samples by volunteers on Saturday and Sunday.
- Samples and accompanying forms are then turned in at a central location Saturday and Sunday afternoon/evenings.
- We will provide a list of recommended areas for sampling at the meeting.
- We will divide into groups for collecting. Ideally, one person in a group will have a GPS device or tablet or phone with GPS capability.

### San Luis Obispo SOD BLITZ - 2014

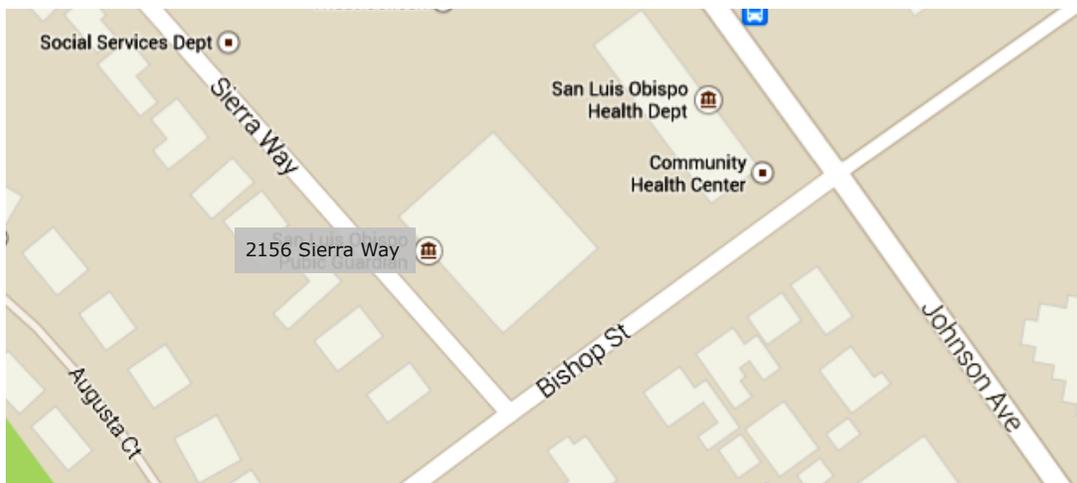
**Training** - Friday, May 16, 7pm to 8:30pm, SLO County Department of Agriculture, 2156 Sierra Way, San Luis Obispo, CA. Map below or [Map Link](#)

**Collecting** – Saturday and Sunday, May 17 and 18 (Locations TBD). All of the materials necessary for the training and the collecting over weekend will be provided.

The training is free although space is limited – If you are interested, please submit your name and contact info to:

**Lauren Brown** [lbrown805@charter.net](mailto:lbrown805@charter.net) , (805)460-6329, **or**  
**Kim Corella** (fmr. Camilli) [kim.camilli@fire.ca.gov](mailto:kim.camilli@fire.ca.gov), (805) 550-8583

For additional information, please visit - <http://www.sodblitz.org>



## Upcoming Rare Plant Treasure Hunt trips on the Central Coast!

**Wednesday, April 16 (Wed.) - Fritillary Day Hike (Ventana Wilderness, Monterey County)**

**April 25 - 27 (Fri.-Sun.) - Indians Ranch Backpack Loop (Ventana, Wilderness, Monterey County)**

Trip Descriptions Follow, or check out the event calendar at <http://www.cnps.org/cnps/rareplants/treasure-hunt/calendar.php>

**Wednesday, April 16 (Wed.) - Fritillary Day Hike (Ventana Wilderness, Monterey County)**

Join us for a weekday search for new and historically-documented populations of rare fritillaries, and use careful observation to try to determine whether it is *Fritillaria viridea* or *Fritillaria ojaiensis* that occurs in the Ventana Wilderness. Both of these plants are very rare and restricted in distribution, and you have to get out at just the right time in the spring to see them.

Depending on where participants are coming from, we will meet either in King City or near the Kirk Creek Campground along Hwy 1, at about 9 a.m. on Wed., April 16. After we meet up we will drive up Nacimiento-Fergusson Road to the South Coast Ridge to visit a known population. Then we'll hike along McKern Road in similar habitats in search of new populations.

South Coast Ridge Road is a dirt road that is in pretty good shape, so any vehicle should be fine. Hikes should be of moderate intensity - about 5-8 miles round trip. McKern Road is pretty flat, but Slick Rock does some moderate climbing. The Slick Rock Trail has a lot of poison oak at the beginning, so long pants and long-sleeve shirts are recommended. We'll camp at an undeveloped site, so no facilities will be available. However, trip leaders will bring along enough water jugs for volunteers to use for the whole trip. Bring your botany gear (gps, camera, hand lens, ruler, floras), camping gear, sun protection, and food for the day.

**April 25 - 27 (Fri.-Sun.) - Indians Ranch Backpack Loop (Ventana, Wilderness, Monterey County)**

Join us for an epic 3-day backpacking trips in the Ventana Wilderness. The trip will start on the morning of Friday, April 25, but those who aren't early risers can car camp near the meeting site the night before. We'll start by trying to relocate a population of the recently-described, extremely rare Santa Lucia monkeyflower (*Erythranthe hardhamiae*), then look for other rarities throughout the hike, such as San Benito pentachaeta (*Pentachaeta exilis* ssp. *aeolica*), and Santa Lucia bush mallow (*Malacothmanus palmeri* var. *lucianus*). The trails we will cover include the Carrizo Trail, North Coast Ridge Trail, Arroyo Seco Trail, and possibly part of the Rodeo Flats Trail. Each day will include somewhere between 5 and 8 miles of hiking. The trails are in good shape, but do include some strenuous uphill sections, and we almost certainly encounter some poison oak and ticks.

Bring with you any botany supplies you have, food and fuel for the trip, 2-3 liters of water (you can borrow our purifiers), and plenty of sun protection. For more details and to sign up, RSVP to: Danny Slakey, California Native Plant Society, 2707 K St, Suite 1, Sacramento, CA 95816 [dslakey@cnps.org](mailto:dslakey@cnps.org)



*Obispoensis* is published October through June except January. Items for submittal to *Obispoensis* should be sent to [rhotaling@charter.net](mailto: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](http://www.cnps.org) & [www.cnpslo.org](http://www.cnpslo.org)



## CNPS 2015

### Conservation Conference

Celebrating 50 Years  
of Progress and Promise

**January 13-17, 2015, in San Jose!**

We are planning the biggest and best of CNPS Conferences to kick off our **50th Anniversary Celebration** in 2015. Help us celebrate with over 250 speakers, a poster session, 15 workshops, banquet, mixers, auctions, artwork, photography, and poetry. We expect more than 1000 attendees, with movers and shakers from the many disciplines and passions related to plant conservation.

We proudly announce the opening of the **CNPS 2015 Call for Abstracts** and encourage you to submit an abstract for an oral or poster presentation. The program will focus on communicating the most recent and effective conservation science. The entire event will celebrate 50 years of progress in plant conservation and work toward mapping a promising future. Go to [cnps.org/2015/abstracts](http://cnps.org/2015/abstracts) for further details.

There are many opportunities to participate, as an attendee, presenter, exhibitor, or sponsor:

- Become a Sponsor to show everyone your support: [cnps.org/2015/sponsor](http://cnps.org/2015/sponsor)
- Reserve an Exhibit space and connect with attendees: [cnps.org/2015/exhibit](http://cnps.org/2015/exhibit)
- Teach a Workshop: [cnps.org/2015/workshops](http://cnps.org/2015/workshops)
- Present a poster or talk: [cnps.org/2015/abstracts](http://cnps.org/2015/abstracts)

Go to [www.cnps.org/2015](http://www.cnps.org/2015) to learn more about art exhibitions, photography, poetry sessions, student participation, and much much more!

Thank you, and we look forward to seeing you at the conference next January!

