Obispoensis

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



February 2019

Solanum xanti (Blue, Purple, Chaparral, or San Diego Nightshade)

This is a repeat plant from 1997. At that time, the article was accompanied by a grainy black and white photograph. This time the article is accompanied by a beautiful painting by Los Osos resident and CNPS member, Heather Johnson, who has given permission for us to use it in the OBISPOENSIS. I find it fun to gather tidbits of information about our local plants, especially when it can be accompanied by wonderful art work done by a member of CNPS. Hopefully, others of you, like Heather, will consider giving me a chance to come up with a story about a plant of which you're fond.

Blue nightshade (the name most commonly used around here) is not pushy in its appearance unless it's in bloom. It is up to a yard tall and the stem is half woody or suffrutescent. The ordinary looking, mostly un-lobed leaves are up to 3 inches long and lance-shaped to oval. Blue nightshade even prefers to grow near other plants and just blend in. It is taking advantage of the habitat created by its often more dominant neighbors. The dominant plant can be considered a kind of nurse plant in that it shelters the blue nightshade by creating an environment that is moister due to the shade it casts. The nurse plant also protects the leaves of the blue nightshade from the drying winds by slowing down water loss from evaporation (transpiration) from the plant's leaves. Look for blue nightshade where a little extra moisture might be expected. It is usually seen along paths.

Blue, Purple, Chaparral, or San Diego Nightshade are some of the common names associated with this plant in California. The species extends beyond California into Baja Mexico, Arizona, Nevada and Oregon. Since its flowers are so beautiful, I suspect it has many other names as well. What is the meaning of the common names? There is no problem with the purple or blue names as this refers to the color of the petals or corolla. It's a common component of chaparral and it ranges south to San Diego and beyond so that the meaning of those names is also obvious. The name, nightshade, however is much more interesting. It dates back at least to Medieval Europe or maybe even to Roman times and refers to the pulling down around oneself the blackness of sleep or death. This is quite appropriate as the Eurasian relatives of the blue nightshade, bitter-sweet nightshade (S. dulcamara), black nightshade (S. nigrum), and its close European relatives such as henbane (Hyocyanus), mandrake (Mandagora) and belladonna (Atropa) are all slightly to moderately poisonous. The green parts of all nightshades contain a cornucopia of poisonous alkaloid compounds. Some compounds such as atropine (from belladona), are still used medicinally today. There are, however, a number of nightshades from other parts of the world that produce edible parts. There are the edible fruits of egg plant (S. melongena) from Africa and the pepino (S. muricatum) from Latin America. The most important of the edible nightshades is the white, Idaho, or Irish potato (Solanum tuberosum) which is native to the South American Andes. Another member of this genus needs mentioning as well. It is another nightshade from Latin America. It's the tomato or love apple (Solanum lycopersicon). This plant is sometimes put in its own genus (Lycopersicon). It got the common name, love apple, in Europe shortly after its introduction and its use in their gardens for its intricately lobed greyish leaves and biggish beautiful red fruit. The fruit was NOT eaten at that time because it was thought to be poisonous. If one was sorrowful over the loss of a lover, it was said that eating a tomato would end the suffering. My major professor, Dr. Charles Heiser, told his botany class the story of a jilted Italian lover who wanted to end it all so he ate a number of tomatoes. Of course he didn't die and he found that he really liked their taste. So he started serving them to all his Italian friends and from there comes the association of tomatoes with Italy.

Nowadays *Solanum* is cultivated as an ornamental and is sold where Native California plants are sold. It is especially good as a border plant. It will grow under oaks. It is drought tolerant if shaded and deer resistant due to its toxic qualities. In common with many other members in the Nightshade family, all parts of the plant are toxic, especially the unripe fruit. WikiLeaks reports that the toxicity is from Solanine and glycol-alkaloids, chaconine, and solasodine. There is no antidote for Solanum poisoning! Symptoms include: Cardiovascular system (tachycardia, arrhythmia, and hypotension), central nervous system (delirium, psychomotor, agitation, paralysis, coma, and convulsion), and Gastrointestinal track (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea). **Dirk Walters**

Additional Information on Solanum from Dr. Keil

Keil, D.J. 2018. New combinations and nomenclatural notes in the *Solanum umbelliferum* complex (*Solanaceae*). Phytoneuron 2018-61: 1–4. Published 11 September 2018. ISSN 2153 733X

2019 BANQUET A GREAT SUCCESS

Thanks to all of you who worked to make the 2019 Annual Banquet a total success, particularly Lauren Brown who coordinated things, the volunteers who supplied materials and did set up, the students from Cal Poly who helped set up and takedown, all of you who brought great food, and our speaker Steve Junak, who gave an excellent presentation on the Channel Islands.



Photo: Matt Ritter

CHAPTER MEETING Feb. 7th 2019 - Thursday - 7:00 pm

Veterans Hall, Monterey and Grand, SLO Mixer and Browse Sales Table 7:00 pm, Program 7:30 pm





A Global Serpentine Travelogue

Dr. Robert Boyd

Robert S. Boyd is Alumni Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at Auburn University, Alabama. He received his doctorate in Botany from the University of California, Davis in 1986, and a master's and undergraduate degree from Cal Poly Pomona. He is currently teaching conservation biology and has taught botany and ecology at Auburn University since 1988. His research interests include the management of rare and endangered plants, as well as the ecology and evolution of metal "hyperaccumulator" plants. These are plants that take unusually large amounts of metals into their tissues. In fact, Bob has had an insect species, "Boyd's Black-Haired Bug" (Melanotrichus boydi) named after him for his work in this area. The bug feeds on the milkwort jewelflower (Streptanthus polygaloides), a nickel hyperaccumulator endemic to the Sierra Nevada.



Saturday, Feb. 2nd, 9:00 am, Point Buchon Trail, Montaña de Oro State Park. Meet at the Coon Creek Trailhead parking lot at the south end of Montana de Oro. We will walk to the PG&E kiosk and sign in. The hike is 6.6 miles roundtrip with a 300 ft. elevation change. Come prepared to talk about birds, plants, and discover the picturesque headlands (binoculars recommended). Bring water, snacks, and dress in layers for changing weather. A hat and sturdy shoes are advised. Contact Bill Waycott, bill.waycott@gmail.com 805-459-2103.

Saturday, March 2nd, 2019, Field Trip to Santa Barbara Botanical Garden. CNPS-SLO has organized a daylong visit to SBBG. The Garden's mission is to conserve native plants and habitats with an emphasis on vegetation communities of the Central Coast and the offshore islands. All plants used in the Garden are California natives. Activities during the day will include:

A short hike in one of the neighboring coastal canyons

A visit to a few of the Garden habitat sections

Tour of the Herbarium, Research Labs, Seed Bank, and Propagation Facility

Afternoon lecture and workshop on lichens of the Central Coast

Bus transport to the Garden may be an option. Please mark your calendars and join us for this unique opportunity. For more information, contact bill.waycott@gmail.com or 805-459-2103.

Marlin Harms will give a presentation in the Mind Walk series at the Inn at Morro Bay on Feb. 4. His program is titled, "Armchair Tidepooling: Who's Who in the Tidepools," and will feature his photography as well as aspects of biology and ecology of the organisms that live there. Meetings start at 10:15, but may be standing room only by starting time as there is limited seating. Free to members of Cent. Coast State Parks Ass., \$3 non-members. More info about the series at ccspa.info, then click on "Events" and scroll down to "Events Flyer."

WANT COLOR? The latest edition of our monthly newsletter Obispoensis is available for download as a PDF file from the link below. Find out about upcoming events, field trips, local issues impacting native plants, invasives to be on the watch for, horticulture tips for growing natives, contact info and more in each issue:

http://cnpsslo.org

Having trouble opening the file? You need to have Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on your device. It can be downloaded here: https://get.adobe.com/reader

Ethnobotany Notes: Acorn Flour

By Cathy Chambers

Acorns have been eaten by many cultures on many continents, wherever there are oak trees. They are very nutritious, and have a low glycemic index. They are abundant in several parts of our county and have a variety of flavors.

Today, the acorns we collected in the fall are pretty well dried and ready to make into flour. My favorites are from the Black Oaks (*Quercus kelloggii*) from off of highway 46, but we also gathered some coast live oak acorns as well. We collected them in October, washed them, and discarded the floaters. We dried them in the sun, and then in paper bags in the house, stirring occasionally. Even after tossing the ones with obvious insects, there are always a few larvae that exit the acorns, and end up crawling on your floor, sure to elicit a scream or squeal if discovered by bare feet in the middle of the night. You will want to put it in a sealed container to constrain the larvae, but you might make the acorns mold if you do that. If you just check the bag every day, you can toss the larvae to the birds.

After drying, you need to shell them, take off the paper husk, and then mill them into flour in a coffee mill. Once you have the flour, you need to put it in double cheesecloth, and rinse it with a few gallons of water until the bitterness is gone. If you want to preserve it, you need to dry the flour in a dehydrator or on cookie sheets in the sun and then store until use. Rinsing in cold water is to remove phytic acids and tannins to make it edible. Substitute acorn flour for ½ the flour in your favorite recipe. There is a great YouTube video on acorn processing made by Arthur Haines, which is well worth watching if you are going to try this. Another great resource is Julia Parker's book "It will Live Forever." If you do not want to go to all that trouble, you can buy acorn flour from Sue Chin at buyacornflour.com (925) 372-7177. Enjoy!!

Sweet Acorn Bread:

1 cup acorn flour1 teaspoon baking soda2 large eggs½ cup sugar1 cup all-purpose or gluten-free flour½ teaspoon salt½ cup oil½ cup raisins1 teaspoon baking powder1 cup buttermilk½ cup chopped nuts

Instructions: Place the rack in the center of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°. Coat an 8 1/2- by 4 1/2-inch loaf pan with pan spray. Sift the flours, baking powder, baking soda and salt together. In a separate bowl, whisk together the buttermilk, eggs, oil and sugar; add to dry ingredients and stir until blended. Fold in the raisins and walnuts. Scrape the dough into the prepared baking pan. Bake 40-45 minutes, or until a skewer inserted into the center comes out clean.

Per serving: 271 calories, 5 g protein, 29 g carbohydrate, 16 g fat (2 g saturated), 36 mg cholesterol, 267 mg sodium, 1 g fiber.

Invasive Species Report- Mark Skinner European Beachgrass (Ammophila arenaria)

Ammophila arenaria is in the Poaceae family. It is native to northern Europe and spread from plantings from the late 1800s to the late 1900s. Andrea Pickart has written that European beachgrass is the most pervasive exotic plant species currently threatening coastal dunes on the west coast of the U.S. and is invasive in every major dune system from Santa Barbara County to the northernmost dunes of Washington and has widely displaced a native dune grass, the circumboreal American dune grass (Elymus mollis). In San Luis Obispo County it was planted for sand stabilization and has spread throughout the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes and Morro Bay. It was planted to aid construction of the La Grande Dance Pavilion in the early 1900s south of Arroyo Grande Creek. It is a perennial grass 1 to 4 ft tall, with long, rigid, tough, waxy blades with sharp tips. European beachgrass spreads from rhizomes. Ammophila rhizomes may survive in the ocean and can be redeposited onshore to create new populations. Populations may extend inland to over half a mile. From its ability to trap and stack sand Ammophila may create tall, steep and durable foredunes that excludes other vegetation and eliminates habitat for dune arthropods, California Least Terns and Western Snowy Plovers. It is a threat to rare plant species such as Surf thistle (Cirsium rhothophilum) and Beach spectacle pod (Dithyrea maritima). Interest in controlling Ammophila began about 1980, but success was not encountered until the 1990's. Implementation of control efforts on a large scale are underway throughout the west coast. Digging Ammophila out is labor and cost intensive and may harm archaeological sites. The most successful method yet devised involves spraying Imazapyr. This may be followed with a controlled burn to create space and conditions for native plant restoration.



Photos: Mark Skinner



The Garden Corner

February is pruning month and with all the rain its time to get out the pruning tools. A dull, unsharpened tool can be dangerous to use so it is wise to sharpen them before use. Some general rules about sharpening tools.

First, always wear gloves when sharpening tools. Most of us remember the old sharpening stone used to sharpen steel tools and implements through grinding and honing. My father had a hand driven sharpener and I love to sharpen tools so as to watch all the sparks fly. This type of sharpener has now been replaced with electric motors, but the idea is the same. Electric sharpeners are only to be used for sharpening lawn mower blades, shovels, hoes, and hand held hedge clippers. Again wear gloves and eye protection when sharpening tools.

Never use electric sharpeners to sharpen hand pruners - it's not safe. So now, how does one sharpen hand pruners? There are a few new hand held sharpeners on the market now. One is a small hand held sharpener that has two sharpening blades and has a hand guard. This is a very safe type of sharpener and is available at most garden centers. The second small sharpener is the old 8-inch long sharpening or whetstone. This type of stone requires some motor oil to allow blade-to-stone contact. This is the best way to sharpen hand pruners and branch loppers. There are many YouTube videos on how to use a sharpening stone or whetstone and I would suggest investigating them to hone your sharpening skills.

If anyone needs some extra advice on pruning techniques or what to prune, please contact me at gmail.com. Until next month, Happy Gardening; John Nowak, Plant Sale co-Chairperson.

SO BE FREE 24

Botanical Excursion <u>F</u>oray, <u>R</u>etreat, and <u>E</u>scape to the <u>E</u>nvironment The Twenty-Fourth Annual Spring Outing Brought to you by the Bryophyte Chapter of the California Native Plant Society!

Friday to Monday, 29 March to 1 April 2019, Rancho El Chorro in San Luis Obispo

Founded in 1996, SO BE FREE is a series of West Coast forays started by the Bryolab at UC Berkeley, but open to all botanists. The main focus is on bryophytes, but we also encourage experts on other groups to come along and smell the liverworts. We welcome specialists and generalists, professionals and amateurs, master bryologists and rank beginners. SO BE FREE is held each spring, somewhere in the Western US, associated with spring break at universities. Evening slide shows and informal talks are presented as well as keying sessions with microscopes. In addition to seeing interesting wild areas and learning new plants, important goals for SO BE FREE include keeping West Coast bryologists (and friends) in touch with each other and teaching beginners. To see pictures and information from past outings, visit the SO BE FREE website at: https://bryophyte.cnps.org/index.php/so-be-free

► One important function of this year's SO BE FREE will be to serve as the annual meeting of the Bryophyte Chapter of the California Native Plant Society. See: https://bryophyte.cnps.org/ for details, and to join!

The 2019 SO BE FREE will be held in San Luis Obispo County. San Luis Obispo offers strong moisture gradients, a tremendous diversity of geological substrates and abundant open spaces that have been only lightly explored bryologically. Vegetation types range from moisture-loving closed-cone coniferous forests near the coast to arid desert scrub in interior regions, with a diversity of chaparral and woodlands in between. The region is known floristically as a zone of transition, with representation of northern species in mesic areas, southern species in the drier coastal regions and even Mojave desert species in the eastern part of the county. Foray destinations will include Los Padres National Forest, many of the open spaces surrounding the city of San Luis Obispo, a private ranch in the interior and some of the best wildflower destinations in the state, all of which promise to be very rich in ephemerals, Bryaceae and Pottiaceae.

Beginners are very welcome to SO BE FREE, and this year we will again have a workshop session for beginners at the start of the event. Saturday, Sunday, and Monday morning we will have field trips to satisfy all participants from neophyte to nerd! Field trip details are to follow. Access is being sought for private, State, and Federal lands. **THERE IS A \$20 WORKSHOP FOR BEGINNERS 9-12 AM, MARCH 30 WHICH CAN BE JOINED AS A STAND-ALONE ACTIVITY**.

SIGN UP FORMS AND INFORMATION ON HOUSING, MEALS AND COSTS CAN BE OBTAINED FROM THE FOLLOWING: Please email kiamara@juno.com with registration questions only. We can accept credit cards through PayPal and Xoom. Questions about the foray itself and room assignments will be coordinated by Ken Kellman kkellman@sbcglobal.net. You can also email Jen Yost at jvost@calpoly.edu who can you send you a PDF of information.

Winners and losers under the impact of intense drought

As we have just experienced an intense and prolonged drought, a team of scientists has just published in Nature Climate Change Letters an analysis of impacts in the Carrizo Plain. They quantified the responses of 423 species of plants, arthropods, birds, reptiles and mammals to California's drought of 2012–2015—the driest period in the past 1,200 years for this global biodiversity hotspot. The article by Prugh and others was published in Nature Climate Change Letters "Ecological winners and losers of extreme drought in California" August 20th, 2018

The report states that plants were most responsive to one-year water deficits, whereas vertebrates responded to longer-term deficits, and extended drought had the greatest impact on carnivorous animals. Perhaps surprisingly, locally rare species were more likely to increase in numbers and abundant species were more likely to decline in response to drought, and this effect was remarkably consistent across taxa and drought durations.

Of the mammals, California ground squirrel, San Joaquin kit fox and Giant kangaroo rat fared badly, while Southern grasshopper mouse and Short-nosed kangaroo rat were successful. For birds, barn owls and western meadowlarks declined, while killdeer and roadrunner populations remained stable. The rare Blunt-nosed leopard lizard suffered, but the coast horned lizard and side-blotched lizard were little affected. Spiders and scorpions declined, but certain beetles did well. As was obvious to most people, nearly all plants were impacted, but certain hardy species such as *Calandrinia* were successful in the absence of competition. The study concludes that while extreme droughts can produce substantial short-term declines in the abundance and diversity of species, these disturbances may play a vital role in the long-term maintenance of biodiversity by inducing periodic die-offs of dominant species and subsequent opportunities for rare, yet fast-growing, species.

This study is especially useful as climate change projections indicate that extreme, extended droughts will become more common, as well as the maximum summer temperature, and the duration, intensity and timing of the rainy season.

As far as SLO Chapter is concerned, I am hoping we can work with Cal Poly, BLM, and the Friends of the Carrizo Plain to institute a long term monitoring program in which we can collect photographic and quantitative data on the conditions at different parts of the greater Carrizo Plain. There are already ongoing experiments in which exclosures are used to exclude larger animals and, in an inner fence, rodents from the grasslands, but I don't know of any broad vegetation assessments apart from the CNPS-generated vegetation map which was a snapshot of conditions, and is governed by the dominant plants rather that the complete population.

I would propose that this spring, we get together a group to select a series of areas that will be linked to GPS coordinates, and that the sites would be revisited and photographed (and possibly inventoried) a couple of times per year, and over many years. I am intending to meet with faculty at Cal Poly to see if they would see a way to direct a series of student projects in a similar effort. **David Chipping**

Soils, minerals, fungi and more

The upcoming presentation is on plants that uptake nickel as a biological weapon to combat insect predation, and the insect that is beating the system reinforces the connectedness between plants and other features of the natural world. In the Carrizo Plain there are plants that only grow in salty soils, or gypsum rich soils, or iron-rich friable soils. Some are dependent on the fungal population, some on forced absence of other species generated by the soil chemistry which eliminates competition. The fungi, which have shown up in profusion this year have a completely different roster of species in the Cambria pines (great January field trip by the way), and in the Los Osos Oaks. Without the mushrooms, dead stuff will accumulate on the ground, and the fungi chew into the pine needles and old branches to release the nutrients for the next generation of plants. That is why CNPS, in a resolution made several decades ago, stated that it was 'more than just plants' in considering ecosytem integrity.

There is, of course, always a problem in these days of human activity in the natural environment. As Mark Skinner points out, we have introduced weeds that are great 'generalists', have a rapid and early growth cycle, and abundant seed production. These can cover the substrate, denying the space needed for the fruiting of mushrooms, and eliminating space for natives. Sometimes the soils that are still 'nasty' as far as the aliens are concerned, will become the last stands for important parts of the California flora. **David Chipping**

Book News



Yes Folks... the new SLO Wildflowers book is here!

Also, due to great demand, we are revising and republishing the Malcolm McLeod "Wildflowers of the Carrizo Plain Area". It will have larger photographs and some new wildflowers in a few more pages.

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HELP NEEDED AT THE SALES TABLE

Please open up your calendars!! Isn't that refreshing? I'm NOT asking for money, only a little bit of your time. You may have noticed the book and tee shirt table in the back of the meeting room each month, it not only serves as a free library before the meetings but it also generates quite a bit of the capital we need to keep our group funded. Problem is, this spring Linda, David, and myself are spread too thin. That's where YOU come in. We could use some help behind the counter at some of our meetings and events. You can be as involved as you like: selling and writing receipts, report on the sales after the meeting, even order books. Please consider a few hours to keep us operating! If you're interested send me a note, and I can give some of the dates and details. I'd love to hear from you! It's really a task you'll enjoy- what could be better than talking to other plant enthusiasts and helping them find a suitable book/poster or good looking

THANK YOU to all of you that have helped many a cold evening by setting up or packing up our inventory!!! Many hands really does make light work.

June Krystoff-Jones: Retail Sales Manager

MEMBERSHIP CORNER Holly Sletteland

There is a passage in John Muir's First Summer in the Sierra that has always stuck with me: "In the great Central Valley of California there are only two seasons -- spring and summer. The spring begins with the first rainstorm, which usually falls in November. In a few months the wonderful flowery vegetation is in full bloom, and by the end of May it is dead and dry and crisp, as if every plant had been roasted in an oven". That pretty much describes the seasons in a lot of places in SLO County as well, although I've always thought February marked the advent of spring in the California foothills. In a year like this one with what used to be called "normal" rainfall, you can count on a flush of early blooms - manzanitas, milkmaids, buttercups, fiesta flowers and more. It's the cycle of renewal we count on each year, just like we count on your support to keep our programs going. We have many new and renewing members to thank this month, including all of the following:

Bruce Black Sandra Brull Richard Cong George Janeway Gary & Cherrie Katayama

Kathy O'Brien Grace Romero Jackie Wang

Milly Bruno Anne Robin David Hild Andrew Tupper Gary Ruggerone Margaret Ford Mike Bush

Melinda Elster Maria Page Melissa Mooney **Emily Coombes** Michaela Robbins Margaret Crockett Terre Dunivant

Peggy Burhenn Shelley Billik Cindy Roessler **Sue Cummings** Linda Robertson Karen Kolba Dennis Sheridan **David Gurney**

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WE ALWAYS NEED PEOPLE TO HELP OUT. OUR MISSION IS VITAL AND OUR FLORA IS AT RISK

Protecting California's Native Flora since 1965

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 journal, *Fremontia*; the quarterly *Flora*, which gives statewide news and announcements of the activities and conservation issues, and the chapter newsletter, *Obispoensis*.



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