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# *Obispoensis*

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

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March 2024



# A Most Peculiar Poppy

Dr. David Keil

I am always delighted to see cream cups (*Platystemon californicus*) on my spring wildflower excursions. This showy member of the poppy family ranges across San Luis Obispo County from the coast to the Carrizo Plain. Cream cups presents a variety of color forms with petal color varying from creamy white to bright yellow with various bicolored intermediates. Cream-colored flowers are common around San Luis Obispo, but the various calico forms predominate in the eastern parts of the County. Though cream cups flowers usually have six petals, I've occasionally seen them with eight petals and even as many as twelve. It sometimes forms conspicuous displays in open areas.

*Platystemon*, the genus name, is derived from two Greek root words that when combined mean flat stamens. The cream-colored filaments of the many stamens that surround the ovary are flattened and wider than the erect anthers at their tips.

What makes cream cups an unusual poppy is in the middle of the flower. Most poppies have a pistil with a hollow ovary that develops into a many-seeded capsule. Some, like California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*) and bush poppy (*Dendromecon rigida*) have elongated capsules that split apart abruptly, flinging out their seeds. The capsules of others, like fire poppy (*Papaver californicum*) and wind poppy (*Papaver heterophyllum*), develop pores near the tip and disperse seeds like salt from a salt shaker as wind blows the capsule to and fro.

But cream cups flowers are different. In the center of the flower, hidden by all those stamens, is a many-ribbed pistil tipped with numerous slender white stigmas. Each stigma-tipped rib represents one of the carpels that collectively form the pistil. As the petals and stamens wither, the ovary swells and the ovary ribs become lumpy with seeds developing within. When the ovary dries out the ribs split apart into delicate, elongated one-carpellate segments (mericarps), each with a stigma remnant at the tip. Thus the fruit is a schizocarp, not a capsule. But the splitting doesn't stop there. The segments are very fragile, and each segment soon fragments into bead-like one-seeded pieces. The dried walls of the segments are very thin and fragile, and seeds are easily released as the fruit breaks apart. No other member of the poppy family makes fruits like this, and I'm not aware of fruits that split and then break apart like this in any other plant family either.

We have another poppy in the County that resembles cream cups. Carnival poppy (*Hesperomecon linearis*), which grows in some of the same places as cream cups, also has cream-colored or sometimes yellow and cream bicolored petals, and has similar, though usually more delicate, foliage. It has fewer stamens than in cream cups flowers, with narrower, though also flattened filaments. In the middle of the flower is a triangular ovary with three stigmas that matures as a small capsule.



(Photos on Front Cover  
and here by David Keil)



# Chapter Monthly Program

## March 7th, Atascadero Library

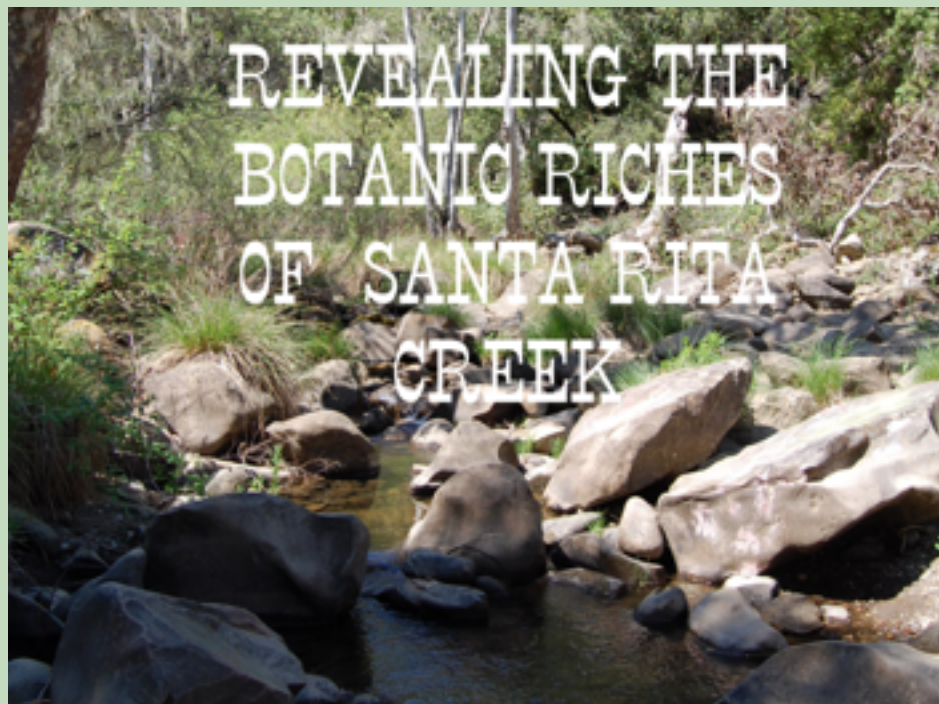
(6555 Capistrano Ave., Atascadero, 35.489215,-120.663914)

*Ceanothus* Workshop 6-7 pm (Open to All), Social Gathering 7pm;

Business and Program Starts 7:30pm.

### David Chipping

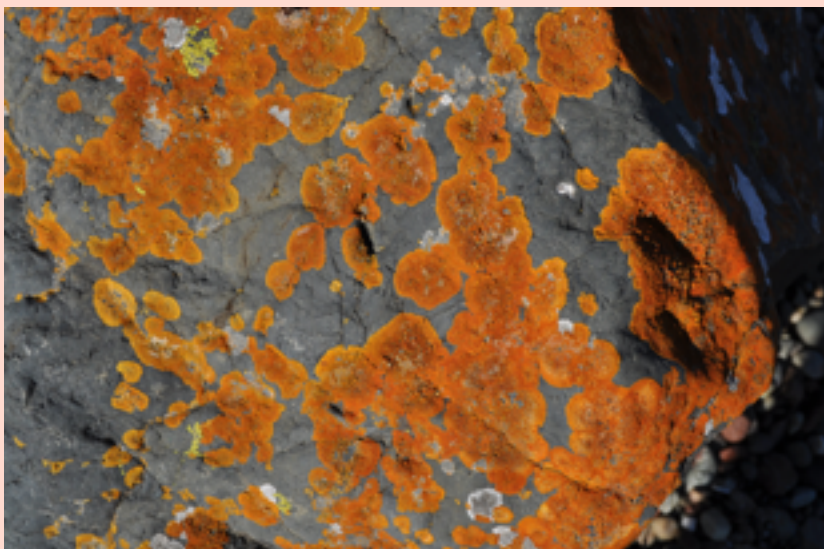
### Revealing the Botanic Riches of Santa Rita Creek



**Dr, David Chipping will examine the dominant plants seen in the riparian corridor of Santa Rita Creek, which runs next to Santa Rita Road at the western end of Templeton. The deeply incised canyon supports a rich flora, including a large number of plants that were used by native people. Some mention will be made of the geology underlying the plants and the habitat types that support the plants.**

*David is a CNPS Fellow and a retired professor of geology from CalPoly, where he taught from 1971 to 2013. He graduated from Cambridge University, and completed a master's in Groundwater Hydrology and a doctorate in Geology at Stanford University. In the late 1980's he became interested in plant conservation through his wife, Linda, who was active in our CNPS chapter. Already active in conservation issues regarding water, he became the chapter's Conservation Chair where he remains to this day. He served for many years as chapter President, was asked to join the state board, and became the last unpaid Conservation Director for the state. He is proud of co-founding Morro Estuary Greenbelt Alliance with John Chesnut to successfully protect the greenbelt around Los Osos, and has served on numerous county and city committees, including the County Water Resources Advisory Committee in which he is currently active. He serves as President for the Friends of the Carrizo Plain. He is currently serving as Acting-President and Newsletter Editor for the chapter.*

### Lichen of the Month- *Xanthoria elegans*



This attractive crustose lichen, photographed on rocks at Estero Bluffs State Park, is also known as *Rusavakia elegans*. Commonly named as Elegant sunburst lichen, it has a circumpolar distribution. It has a lower cortex, distinguishing it from the very similar genus *Caloplaca*.

Photo: D. Chipping





## Sunday, February 25, 2024, 9:30 am, Coon Creek Trail, Montaña de Oro State Park

Join us for a spring walk through Coon Creek Canyon, a lush riparian habitat, for a glimpse of spring fanfare. Total hike distance is 3 miles with an elevation gain of 200 ft., and a duration of 2.5 hours. Meet at the Coon Creek parking area in Montaña de Oro St. Park (35.258084, -120.886969). Bring adequate water, snacks and/or a lunch, and dress in layers for the weather; a hat and sturdy shoes is advised. Contact Bill, 805-459-2103. Rain or the threat of rain cancels. The link to the CNPS plant list for this area is located here <https://cnpslo.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Coon-Creek-2013-Plant-List.pdf>



All Photos: (Left) *Cardamine californica* (CNPS-SLO Collection); (Center); *Ribes sanguineum* var. *glutinosum* (CNPS-SLO Collection)); (Right) *Trillium angustipetalum* (Bill Waycott)

## Saturday, March 23rd, 2024, 10:00 am, Clearwater Color Nursery, Los Osos, CA.

Join us for a tour of this wholesale nursery and learn about their vast selection of CA native plants. The nursery is located at 2335 Jacaranda Lane, Los Osos, CA. Enter the property from the back of the greenhouses and park in the open lot (35.298685, -120.791290). Bring adequate water, snacks, and dress in layers for the weather; a hat and sturdy shoes are advised. The link to the Clearwater Color Nursery website is located here: <https://www.clearwatercolor.com>. Contact Bill, 805-459-2103. Rain or the threat of rain cancels.







## Sunday, Mar. 24, 2024 9:00 am-12:00 am, Hike to Coreopsis Hill (in the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes)

This hike is sponsored by the San Luis Obispo Chapter of CNPS and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and will be led by Jenny Langford, Dirk Walters, and other local botanists and volunteers. The hike will begin at 9:00 AM (please plan to arrive between 8:45 and 9:00), leaving from the south end of Beigle Road at the USFWS access road (fenced road). It 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. Long pants and closed shoes are recommended as the habitat is coastal dune scrub and there is the possibility of poison oak and ticks in the natural dune areas (we will watch for and point these out so they can be avoided, bug repellent recommended). Heavy rain cancels this trip (light rain, bring appropriate clothing).

**SIGN UP TO ATTEND:** This field trip is limited to 30 people. Please sign up on our CNPS website’s All Events Calendar prior to the March 24 event: <https://cnpsslo.org/events/>. Contact Jenny Langford for more information [jlangfordATtrihydroDOTcom](mailto:jlangfordATtrihydroDOTcom).

**NOTE:** Pets, smoking, or alcohol are not allowed on the Refuge, including the parking area, or other properties accessed during the hike (i.e., State Parks and Private Property). Pets may not be left in cars in the parking areas. Remember to please pack out what you pack in.

**Directions from the north:** Take Hwy 101 south from San Luis Obispo. Turn right (west) at the Willow Road off ramp (Exit 180). Proceed west on Willow Road for about 4.3 miles, to Highway 1. Turn left (south) on Highway 1 and proceed for 2.7 miles, to Oso Flaco Lake Road. Turn right (west) on Oso Flaco Lake Road. Proceed west on Oso Flaco Lake Road for 2.5 miles to Beigle Road (on left). Look for a 6’ tall wire mesh fence and steel gate.

**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 2.5 miles to Beigle Road (on left).

**Parking:** We will have people posted at the entrance of the USFWS fenced road to direct parking. The gate will be open around 8:30. Please do not park on Oso Flaco Lake Road near the gate as there is not much room and it could be hazardous. There should be plenty of room to park along the USFWS access road. The Oso Flaco Lake State Park lot is another  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles west of Beigle Road, if you need to use a restroom before the hike (**there are none along the hike route**).



Photo *Leptosyne gigantea* Giant Coreopsis Steve Schubert

### Additional Information:

The Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes-Point Sal Coastal Area contains the largest, relatively undisturbed coastal dune tract in California and was designated a National Natural Landmark in 1974. Five major plant communities are represented including pioneer/foredunes; coastal dune scrub; riparian woodland; coastal dune freshwater marshes, ponds, and swales; and active interior dunes. The flora includes many endemic plant species, and the dune habitats support numerous rare, threatened and endangered plants and animals. **For more information on the history, culture, and biology of the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes, we recommend you check out the Dunes Center website or visit the Dunes Center located at 1065 Guadalupe Street, in the town of Guadalupe.**



## Saturday, Mar. 30, 2024 (weather permitting), 9:30-11:30 am, Native Plants in the Spring-Family Hike with Sketching at Three Bridges

Spring has sprung and everything is different at Three Bridges. The plants are sprouting leaves, flowers are blooming, birds are singing. There are plenty of textures, leaves, lichens and maybe still mushrooms. This is an opportunity to slow down and really look at what's around us. This easy loop hike in Atascadero is stroller-accessible and not too steep (and most likely no water in the creek). We will be stopping to draw and talk about the plants we see. The hike is aimed at kids aged 5-10 years and their families; however, all are welcome. No experience is necessary and all drawing materials are provided. Free! Contact Judy Johnson-Williams with your questions [judy\\_j-wATixDOTnetcomDOTcom](mailto:judy_j-wATixDOTnetcomDOTcom)

### How was the Winter Family Sketch Walk?

It was a beautiful day and a great group. We met at the Three Bridges Preserve in Atascadero on January 27th. There were 11 of us that day, including three kids. Our leader, Judy Johnson-Williams, briefly explained the history of the Preserve, who takes care of it and why it is special. She also gave a little reminder about trail etiquette: stay on the trails and why that's important (and look... this is poison oak but, yes, that vine is also poison oak, and those dead-looking sticks are, too). After receiving our hand-made sketchbook and pencil from Judy, we talked about why it's good to draw (because it's fun, and it helps us look carefully and remember what we saw), and then we set out on our journey.

The first thing we did was cross a (mildly) flooding creek. Some people had boots (some even had surprise holes in their boots), some took their shoes off, and some got wet feet, but everyone made it across. One of the kids (a third grader) was entranced by the mushrooms along the route, filling her whole sketchbook and part of her Mom's with drawings. So then we all got into noticing the variety of mushrooms too! And the different oak trees! And the mushrooms and lichen growing ON the oak trees! There were many requests for another hike, so we plan to meet again in March. Join us!



The exciting prospect of a flowing creek to be crossed (photo J.K-Jones)



Sketchbook in action!  
(photo S.Bernstein)



Studying what grows on the oak bark (photo S.Bernstein)



## The Wet But Wonderful January Mushroom Walk on Fiscalini Ranch

Here are some of the mushrooms encountered on a rainy year at the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve in Cambria. This year we were very well guided by Dennis Sheridan, David Krause, and Al Normandin. Check out all the shapes and colors here – fascinating!



Participants were of all ages,



To the uninformed, there were so many individuals of so different species, one could easily feel like a kid in a candy store. The experience was so tangible. With the help of our guides, we held them in our hands, looked at their amazing undersides (gills, used to release spores), discussed their function as saprophytes in the forest, and of course, stayed away from anything toxic.



The large number of participants who showed up in the mist and light rain were of all ages, including some carried in backpacks. Kids enjoyed a chance to see new critters, like two species of salamanders, mating red beetles, a fungus that attacks other mushrooms, one that grows only on pinecones, and a bright yellow slime mold slowing marching across the wet, downed pine branches. If we have a wet beginning to the next rainy season, be sure to attend the CNPS mushroom walk at Fiscalini Ranch.

**BILL WAYCOTT**



## News from the Seed Side

Hopefully those of you who purchased seeds are seeing little seedlings in your pots or gardens. I often scatter what remains from seed cleaning and packaging sessions into my yard. I rarely have success with that. I have oodles of birds and slugs and I get few survivors. I get excited when I see the fiesta flower germinating, but over the weeks it gets taken out. So I have learned to start most things in pots. The few successes I have had with just scattering are *Clarkia unguiculata* and the *Grindelia*. Perhaps those are not very tasty.

I sow into those 6x12 cell planting trays, usually giving only one 6-spot row per species. But since I try lots of species, I end up with lots of those trays. It is very fun to start checking them almost daily to see what comes up. Not everything does. Perhaps the conditions aren't right. Everything is done outside so these trays are exposed to the rain and the cold. Perhaps I am sowing at the wrong time. Or perhaps the seeds were not viable to begin with. Or they were too old (I try old seed sometimes with variable success). There are so many things that can play a role. And for some seeds it takes many weeks. I have learned though that it is essential to cover these trays to prevent the birds from exploring. I have used old window screens and last year went to the trouble of making some wire cages that will cover two trays worth.



I spent a few hours yesterday transplanting into 4-inch pots. I tend to do this earlier than others would do. But as I transplant sometimes the root is already curling at the bottom of the cell. I think so many of our plants survive in our climate because they focus on getting that root down into the soil quickly. I like to give them a bit more depth, though the pots that I use don't really give them much of that.

As I write this, some of my seeds are still in the refrigerator getting their cold stratification. Some were treated with hot water, some not. I will be taking those out soon to put in more planting trays. But then where do I put the trays?

I end up running out of space. I have six of those Costco 'lifetime' tables full of trays and pots. I'd like more. My husband rolls his eyes. I know I need to cut back. But this part of the process is very fun. And now that we have an active seed exchange and seed sale, I am growing many just to get the seeds.

So, I hope many of you are having fun as well and having some success after obtaining native seeds. And for those of you lucky enough to have things already growing happily on your property, please keep an eye on them for seed formation later on this year. I would love to expand our offerings. **Marti Rutherford**

### Plant Identification In The Field: 2024

◆ Presented by CNPS-SLO

◆ Identify flowering plants using the *Vascular Plants of SLO County*

◆ Improve your plant keying skills

## SAVE THE DATE!

**Sunday, May 5, 2024**

**9:30 am — 2:00 pm**

**Johnson Ranch Open  
Space, San Luis Obispo**

For more Info: [cnps-slo.org](http://cnps-slo.org) (All Calendar Events)

Photo by Brooke Wallasch (used by permission)



# HORTICULTURE NOW

Welcome to Horticulture Now, a column featuring articles about gardening with California native plants. This month's article is inspired by a *Prunus ilicifolia* seedling that came up in my yard, and is for Alice Meyer, who first introduced me to this lovely plant.

Covered with fragrant white hanging flowers, resembling freshly fallen snow. Brightening up an early March morning, buzzing with the sounds of happily working bees, while a California Scrub Jay dances through its branches. Our coastal jewel, the lovely *Prunus ilicifolia* or *Prunus ilicifolia* subsp. *ilicifolia*, is a member of the Rose family, Rosaceae, and is commonly called Hollyleaf Cherry or Islay. It's a distant relative to the cherries (*Prunus avium*) we purchase at the market. The name Hollyleaf Cherry can be traced to European settlers who thought its leaves resembled *Ilex aquifolium*, English Holly. The name Islay can be traced to Spanish during the Mission Period. The Chumash people called it 'axtatapis' and it was prized as a food source as well as for medicinal purposes (<https://www.onceuponawatershed.org/hollyleafcherry>).

Hollyleaf Cherry is found growing within the California coastal zone, ranging from Napa County in the north to northern Baja California in the south, and eastward into desert chaparral areas of the Mojave Desert (per CalScape). The other recognized subspecies is *Prunus ilicifolia* subsp. *lyonia* (Catalina Cherry) which grows on the Channel Islands of California including Catalina Island. Here on the California Central Coast, *Prunus ilicifolia* can be found growing within the Coastal Dune Scrub on southern-facing slopes alongside *Ceanothus cuneatus* (Buck Brush), *Artemisia californica* (California Sagebrush), and *Ericameria ericoides* (Mock Heather). Its white, fragrant flowers are attached to specialized stems called racemes from February to April. In July, its fruits ripen from green to dark purple. When ripe, a thin fleshy edible skin covers a hard seed coat which contains one seed kernel. During its six-month bloom to seed period, Hollyleaf Cherry is an important source of nourishment for birds, mammals, insects, and, once upon a time, humans.

Chumash uses of "axtatapis" are well documented and is easy to research. One fact stands out: the seed (kernel) needs go through a lengthy leaching process (to remove hydrocyanic acid) to make them edible. Afterwards the seeds can be ground and made into soups, cakes, or breads. There are reports of crushing leaves (which have an almond scent) to treat colds and/or respiratory ailments. Lastly, the wood is dense and makes excellent fires, tools, and bows.

Horticultural uses of *Prunus ilicifolia* are many and it is prized for being one of the most adaptable California native plants for the garden setting. It's best located in full to partial sun, well-drained soils, and with protection from direct ocean wind. It requires monthly waterings until established, usually two years. After three years, only summer waterings are needed to keep it looking its best. As mentioned earlier, the leaves and seeds are poisonous to humans and their pets. Caution must be taken, especially around children who may find the fruit fun to chew on. Wildlife, especially deer, are adapted to ingesting Hollyleaf Cherry and their browsing can be a problem. Applying deer repellent is somewhat effective but a six-foot high temporary fence around the plant until it is well established is best. There are a few insects, especially spider mites and aphids, which can damage the flowers and seeds; use a stiff spray water to wash insects off infested areas. Some of my favorite landscape uses include having it as a garden focal point, part of a pollinator garden, or along property line of large parcels, as it can be trained into a formal privacy hedge. *Prunus ilicifolia* can be purchased at native plant nurseries and online retailers. Sometimes it is available at the Fall CNPS Plant Sale or the San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden retail nursery.

In conclusion, *Prunus ilicifolia* subsp. *ilicifolia* stands out amongst its sage brush counterparts as a superior nectar provider through its bloom period. Its seeds supply a much-needed protein source to wildlife and the Chumash people who historically collected them. Suzette and I hope you enjoyed reading about this wonderful plant.

**Until next time, Happy Gardening, John Nowak and Suzette Girouard**



Photos: *Prunus ilicifolia* Craig Cunningham CNPS-SLO Photo Collection





# Kristen Nelson, 2023 Hoover Award Recipient

The CNPS-SLO Hoover Award was first presented to Alice and Bud Meyer in 1974, early mainstays in our Chapter plant sales, conservation efforts, field trips, newsletter and more. Dr V.L Holland, our President at the time, was the impetus behind honoring members like the Meyers in this manner, naming the award after Dr. Robert F. Hoover, who was the founder of our Chapter. The Hoover Award serves to recognize the significant contribution that members have made to the success and well-being of the San Luis Obispo Chapter. Kristen Nelson received the Hoover Award at our February 2024 General Meeting, fifty years after the award was first presented. She is our Chapter's current Rare Plant Coordinator, as well as the Rare Plant Program Manager for the State CNPS.

Some people ease gradually into major roles on the Chapter Board, but Kristen jumped right in to become our Vice President (2020-2023) fairly early in her volunteer effort, providing helpful input and energy to discussions and decisions. Most importantly, Kristen was instrumental in allowing the Chapter to continue connecting with our members during the early days of the COVID-19 Pandemic, creating a sense of normalcy through our monthly speaker programs. Under these unusual conditions, Kristen started off as our new VP by arranging diverse, engaging speakers, and facilitating our unexpected introduction to Zoom virtual program meetings with her technical know-how and welcoming, warm demeanor. The programs were successful in large part to Kristen's efforts and charisma.

In addition to her VP duties, Kristen has been a helpful addition to our plant sales, including those early Pandemic pick-up parties. She has been part of the effort to update our Chapter website and, as one of our younger active members, Kristen's Instagram experience has been an added bonus, advertising CNPS-SLO activities in posts designed in an appealing way to inspire other young people. Our Chapter's first field keying workshop in 2023 was possible thanks to the botanical and teaching skills of Kristen and Dr. Dena Grossenbacher as co-leaders, with more workshops to come. Kristen was one of our early Malcolm McLeod Scholarship recipients (2015); in an interesting circular fashion, she volunteered to address updates to the McLeod Scholarship program after joining the Chapter Board, helping to revise the selection criteria and vet the student applicants as part of the Scholarship Committee. Kristen's interests outside of CNPS (e.g., CCSPA Monarch Butterfly Ball, Western Monarch Trail) have also been useful for improving the synergy of CNPS-SLO and other environmental groups in the area.

We thank Kristen for all her contributions to our Chapter thus far. Please join us in congratulating her on this honor the next time you see her.

SUSI BERNSTEIN



The Award was presented to Kristen by John Chesnut, who also added a jar of his home-made honey to the award. Photo: Marlin Harms

**PAST RECIPIENTS OF THE HOOVER AWARD** Check out our website for a list and short history of all Hoover Award recipients through the years. <https://cnpslo.org/hover-award-recipients/>

1974 \*"Bud" and \*Alice Meyer  
1975 \*Ralph O. Baker  
1976 \*Kathleen and \*Gaylord Jones  
1977 Dirk Walters  
1978 \*Dorothea Rible  
1979 \*Ian McMillan  
1980 \*Louis and \*Christine Wilson  
1981 \*Malcolm McLeod  
1982 \*Margaret and \*Herman Bender  
1983 \*Lela and \*Bernard Burdett  
1984 \*Timothy Gaskin  
1985 \*Bonnie Walters  
1986 \*Bill Deneen  
1987 \*Lee and \*Lilian Wilson  
1988 \*Eileen and \*Craig Cunningham  
1989 David Keil

1990 Eileen Pritchard  
1991 David Fross  
1992 David Krause  
1993 \*Mary Coffeen  
1994 David and Linda Chipping  
1995 John Nowak  
1996 \*Jack and Grace Beigle  
1997 Shirley Sparling  
1998 Eric Greening  
1999 Bob Hotaling  
2000 Eleanor Williams  
2002 Charles Blair  
2003 Susi Bernstein  
2004 \*Larry Vierheilig  
2005 Mardi Lloyd Niles

2006 John Chesnut  
2007 Lauren Brown  
2008 \*Heather and Jim Johnson  
2009 George Butterworth  
2010 Marlin Harms  
2011 Bill Shearer  
2012 Matt Ritter  
2013 Suzette Girouard  
2014 Judi Young  
2015 Neil Havlik  
2016 Bill Waycott  
2017 Marti Rutherford  
2018 Melissa Mooney  
2019 John Doyle  
2022 Cindy Roessler  
2023 Kristen Nelson

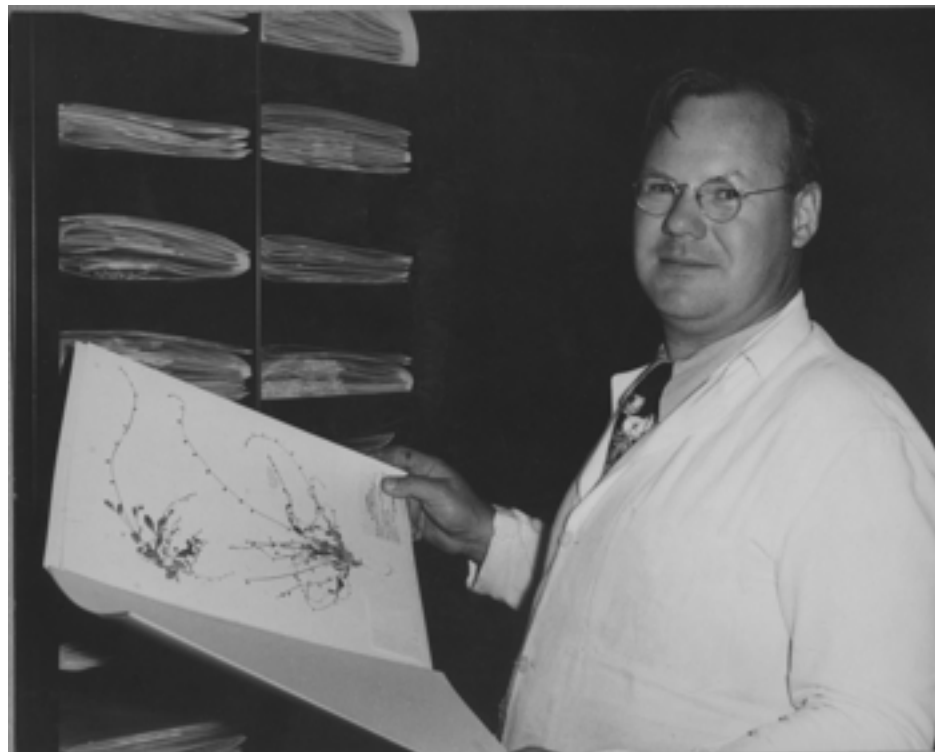
\* Deceased



## Remembering Robert F. Hoover

Kristen Nelson's receipt of the Hoover Award marks fifty years since the award was first presented. Kristen joins a long line of valued members who've made a significant contribution to the SLO Chapter, starting with the first recipients of this award in 1974: Alice and Bud Meyer. On this special anniversary, let's remember the life and important accomplishments of the award's namesake: Dr. Robert F. Hoover. What follows here is a reprint of an article about Dr. Hoover that Dr. Malcolm McLeod prepared for *Obispoensis* in 1994.

Robert Francis Hoover was born August 11, 1913 in Modesto, California. He was the elder of two sons born to Francis Oswald Hoover, an attorney, and Ethel Grace Beard, a member of a prominent pioneer Modesto family. His father received degrees from U.C. Berkeley; his mother obtained a degree from Stanford University with a major in German. By the age of three, Robert showed a continuing interest in flowers which he could name by type. By the age of seven, he started to develop his own rock garden where he planted bulbs of plants native to Central California. He was particularly interested in mariposa lilies and brodiaeas. By the time he left for college, he had a living collection of nearly all the native bulb-producing plants of Central California, plus ones from other places. At this time he also made excursions with his parents into the nearby Sierra Nevada foothills. Here he collected plants which he keyed out with the help of his mother, utilizing Jepson's Flora of Western Middle California.



Robert was a good student as he pursued his education in the Modesto public schools. He played the mellophone (a relative of the French horn) in junior high school, and sang with the Glee Club in high school and junior college. During his spare time, he made ink from oak galls and tested rock samples for mineral content. He graduated from Modesto High School in 1930 and attended Modesto Junior College for the next two years. As a boy he attended summer camps in Tuolumne Meadows. Later, as a Scoutmaster, he led Boy Scouts on excursions to various places in the Sierra Nevada.

Robert entered Stanford University in 1932. Professors under which he studied included the mycologist "Mushroom" Murphy, the algologist G. M. Smith, the plant taxonomists LeRoy Abrams and Ira Wiggins, and the plant physiologist Pierce. He found that all were willing to give personal attention to their students. He maintained a high scholastic record which assured his election to the Phi Beta Kappa honor fraternity. He received his bachelor's degree in botany in 1934. Feeling the necessity of advanced degrees, Robert entered the graduate program at UC Berkeley and began an association with Willis Linn Jepson. Jepson greatly influenced his awareness of the need for critical thinking. Jepson also influenced his botanical interests.

Robert returned to the area of his birth for his field work, spending summers in Modesto. His master's thesis was on the primitive (original) flora of the San Joaquin Valley. His doctoral dissertation was entitled Endemism in the Flora of the Great Valley of California. During this period he collected specimens of several previously unknown plants. Resultant names include *Cryptantha hooveri*, *Euphorbia hooveri*, and *Huegelia hooveri*. He obtained his master's degree at the end of one year of study (1935), and his doctorate after two additional years (1937).

During his second year at Berkeley, Robert stayed at a boarding house where the landlady had a daughter named Betty Louise Brown. This young lady eventually became Mrs. Hoover. There was a surplus of botany teachers when he finished his doctoral program. Dr. Jepson offered Robert a research position for the years 1937 to 1941, which he gladly accepted. Robert wrote much of several volumes of Jepson's Manual and Flora of California. He had brief stints as a substitute teacher in 1938 at Susanville and Modesto Junior Colleges, and, in 1941, taught for a year at Yakima Junior College in Washington state.

The year 1942 was an eventful one. Robert and Betty were married in the summer. He returned to Yakima to teach in the fall, but was drafted into the army after only a month. He was made an instructor in a war department school in Seattle, Washington. Betty stayed in Berkeley where their son Robert Linville ("Lin") was born in spring 1943. When the war department school was closed, Robert was trained as a bacteriology lab worker. He was sent to Wales for a short time and then to England as part of a general hospital unit. At the end of the war he was sent to France. He spent 15 months in England and six months in France.

Back in Berkeley in 1946, Robert frequented the University of California employment service. Tired of hearing that there was no employment for a person with his qualifications, he finally asked "Are you sure there are never any jobs I might fill?" "Well" was the



reply, "there is an opening at California Polytechnic School at San Luis Obispo, but you wouldn't be interested in that." Robert was interested and so began a 23 year association. The school became first a state college, and then a state university, and eventually a highly rated institution.

It was the fall of 1947 before Robert could move his family permanently to San Luis Obispo. He moved the remnants of his Modesto bulb collection to San Luis Obispo and then began to add local ones to it. He became interested in cacti and other succulents, and developed a collection of these from around the world. Some students called him "Cactus Sam". He also grew vegetables as a family project.

The flora of the San Luis Obispo County area proved very interesting to Robert. Vacations and nearly every weekend were spent in one kind of collecting expedition or another. His wife Betty pressed and mounted the specimens and helped in any other way that she could. The new species *Dudleya bettinae* honored his wife's participation in the collecting activities. He worked closely with John Thomas Howell, Rimo Bacigalupi and Wayne Roderick. His son Lin says that his job was to sit on the plant presses while his dad cinched the straps down.

The herbarium at Cal Poly was started in the back of Robert's office and expanded when space became available in a new building. Herbarium specimens numbered 10,000 at the time of his death. The collection was named the Robert F. Hoover Herbarium in his honor in 1969. Duplicate specimens were sent to the California Academy of Sciences Herbarium, the Dudley Herbarium at Stanford, and the herbaria including the Jepson Herbarium at U.C. Berkeley. Of particular interest to him was the flora of the Arroyo de la Cruz area in extreme northwestern San Luis Obispo County. This area is entirely on the Hearst Ranch. He collected specimens on which were based the names *Ceanothus maritimus* and *C. hearstiorum*, as well as *Arctostaphylos hookeri* ssp. *hearstiorum* [*A. hearstiorum*]. One time he had obtained permission to lead a group of people onto the Hearst Ranch, whereupon he was met by a ranch employee who unceremoniously ordered them off. Such is the life of a botanist.

An area which particularly intrigued him was the Santa Lucia [Lopez] Wilderness Area. He became interested in the ridge west of Cuesta Pass. Another area in which he became vitally interested was the Nipomo Dunes in the south county. Robert worked diligently for the establishment of a botanical garden at Cal Poly. His efforts met with some success in 1955 with the designation of an area at the upper end of Poly (Brizziolari) Canyon as a botanical garden. Native plants were planted by Robert, his wife Betty and various students. Bucket brigades involving the same people were pressed into service in the summertime to keep the newly planted plants from dying from lack of water. They lugged buckets up the hill from Brizziolari Creek since there was no established water system. Robert's son Lin constructed many of the trails on weekends during his high school years.

Robert was a charter member and past president of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club. He led the Sierra Club's effort to preserve the Sargent cypress forest on Cuesta Ridge West. He was also a member of the Audubon Society. He was a co-founder of the San Luis Obispo County Chapter of the California Native Plant Society. For this group, Robert led field trips to such places as the Nipomo Dunes. He initiated "Plant of the Month" as a feature of meetings and was instrumental in the development of the annual native plant sale. Students and faculty alike relied upon "Bob" to identify any plant of the area.

Robert was awarded the William Herbert Medal by the American Amaryllis Society for his research on the genera *Brodiaea*, *Dichelostemma* and *Triteleia* in 1955. He was elected a Fellow of the California Academy of Sciences in 1964 for his great contributions to California botany. He was chosen to attend the Summer Institute of Botany at Cornell University in 1956.

Robert published 32 scientific articles. His crowning achievement was the writing of *Vascular Plants of San Luis Obispo County*. Based on the knowledge gained through his many field trips, it was finished in 1969, the year of his death. The actual publication occurred the following year.

#### REMEMBERING MARY ANN 'CORKY' MATTHEWS

May 7, 1930 · November 2, 2023

Many of us know the work and reputation of Corky Matthews, late of the Monterey Chapter of CNPS. For decades a self-trained botanist, Corky thoroughly enjoyed identifying the flowers she encountered, but she came to recognize the need for a comprehensive flora of Monterey County. She felt she needed further education to undertake such a task, so in 1986, while serving as president of the Monterey Bay Chapter of CNPS, she stocked the freezer with meals for her husband and commuted weekly to California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo. Corky excelled in her graduate botany courses, although she stopped short of earning a degree. Instead, she felt confident to embark on a massive project: compiling all known plants lists for sites within Monterey County, plus securing permission from publishers to use existing botanical illustrations. Because of its size and environmental diversity, Monterey County has more plant species - more than 2,300 - than many entire states, so this was a tall order. During this process, Corky was named a 1993 Fellow of CNPS, which at that time was a distinction awarded to fewer than 80 people state-wide. CNPS published *An Illustrated Field Key to the Flowering Plants of Monterey County and Ferns, Fern Allies, and Conifers* in 1998; it was hailed as an important tool for botanists and flower lovers alike. In 2015, the 2nd edition of Corky's magnum opus was updated by a colleague to reflect new species and nomenclature changes, and retitled *The Plants of Monterey County: An Illustrated Field Key*.



# A Big Crowd for February's Lichen Workshop



Michael Mulroy conducts the workshop as Dena Grossenbacher reads from the keying document provided by Michael for the workshop. Photos by Mardi Niles

## Michael Mulroy's List of Lichen Resources

**Lichen Flora of the Sonoran Desert Region Vols. 1-3.** I think the only way to get these books new is to email Tom Nash ([tom.nash@asu.edu](mailto:tom.nash@asu.edu)). When I bought them they were \$133 for all 3 volumes! This is the closest to a comprehensive resource for SLO Co. lichens that we've got. The keys for different genera are written by experts in those genera, so usability of keys varies quite a bit.

**Keys to the Lichens of North America, revised and expanded (2016).** Great supplementary keying resource. Not comprehensive, but still a great resource and user-friendly spiral binding. Plus it's only like \$30 online.

**Macrolichens of the Pacific Northwest, 2nd edition.** Bruce McCune is a pretty legendary lichenologist and this is a nice guide that includes keys, photos, and descriptions.

**Microlichens of the Pacific Northwest, Volumes 1 & 2.** The most user-friendly microlichen keys I've come across! Not quite as comprehensive as Sonoran Flora for our microlichens, but comes close and the user-friendliness is great.

**A Field Guide to California Lichens.** Amazing photos and really nice species descriptions, but no keys. Great resource to have, regardless. The author is one of the best lichen macro photographers out there.

**Bulletin of the California Lichen Society.** - Open-access journal that publishes really high-quality accessible articles on lichens! <https://www.californialichens.org/calsbulletin>

**Consortium of Lichen Herbaria website:** <https://lichenportal.org/portal/>

**Ways of Enlichenment website:** <https://www.waysofenlichenment.net/> Cool info on various lichen species, great resources for high quality photos of lichen species as seen in the field.

**Mushroom Observer website:** <https://mushroomobserver.org/> Folks post lichens on here as well as mushrooms, and one of the people that runs the website, Jason Hollinger, is an amazing lichenologist and will comment on your post if you're lucky!

*"Consider the Lichen. Lichens are just about the hardest visible organisms on Earth, but the least ambitious."*  
— **Bill Bryson, A Short History of Nearly Everything**

*"Of what a strange nature is knowledge! It clings to a mind when it has once seized on it like a lichen on a rock."* - **Mary Shelley, Frankenstein**



## LOOKING BACK: WHAT THE OLD MARCH NEWSLETTERS TELL US

March 2014: The drought was killing Morro manzanitas in Montana de Oro State Park and we noted a very high mortality in the Cambria Monterey pine population. We were commenting on scoping the EIR for the expansion of the oilfield in Price Canyon, in which over 1,600 oaks were to be destroyed. Our monthly program was by Sharon Lovejoy on “*Wild at Heart: Secrets of a Good Natured Gardener (and Garden).*” We had field trips to Lopez Lake and Coreopsis Hill.

March 2004: The Pacey Property was purchased and brought into the Los Osos Greenbelt (now part of the Morro Dunes Ecological Reserve). We were concerned about a threat to close the Conservation Corps HQ on Camp San Luis due to budget issues (they are still there). We were concerned about how the City of Arroyo Grande was handling a project that was failing to do proper surveys for Pismo Clarkia. We were also concerned about progress of the Los Osos Habitat Conservation Plan, and a tentative plan for the California National Guard to use the Cypress forest on West Cuesta Ridge for some sort of undefined operation. Our speaker was Linda Ann Vorobik, the *Fremontia* editor, on “*An Armchair Botanic Journey Over the Sierra Nevada.*”

March 1994: We were trying (without success) to control Cape Ivy infestation in the Chorro Willows and other locations. The cleanup of the massive Unocal crude oil diluent spills in the Nipomo Dunes was causing concern. Jack and Grace Beigle were planting native plants at the Oceano Campground. We had field trips to Cone Peak, 7X Ranch, and the Carrizo Plain (with Santa Clara Valley Chapter). Malcolm McLeod presented on “*Yosemite Through the Years- Flowers and Discoveries.*”

March 1984: The chapter was supporting wilderness status for Machesna and Garcia Mountains. The chapter was launching the third annual photographs contest. The meeting featured Alice Meyer on how to take plant cuttings.

### VASCULAR PLANTS OF SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA — EBOOK NOW AVAILABLE

THE HARD COPY RELEASED IN 2023 HAS YET TO BE REPRINTED,  
BUT THIS ELECTRONIC VERSION HAS JUST BEEN RELEASED BY  
PACIFIC STREET PUBLISHING IN PDF FORM

<https://pacificstreetpublishing.com/shop/vascular-plants-of-san-luis-obispo-california-e-book>

\$40.00

Building on the earlier work of Robert Hoover, botanist Dr. David Keil created an updated second edition of Vascular Plants of San Luis Obispo County, California, now with over 2,000 plant species described and 600 color photos of plant communities and native plant species. This complete botanical reference book covers over 3,600 square miles of San Luis Obispo County, California—a biodiversity hotspot with complex geology, varied topography, and nearly one hundred miles of coastline. The county is home to a remarkable diversity of plant life, now all referenced in the user-friendly identification keys, botanical descriptions, and detailed range statements found in Vascular Plants of San Luis Obispo County, California.



### ***Icaricia icarioides moroensis* (Sternitzky, 1930)(Boisduval's Blue)**

Pictured is one example of a native insect species, the Morro Bay Blue Butterfly (*Icaricia icarioides moroensis*), that depends on native plant species such as dune lupine (*Lupinus chamissonis*).

Photos: Butterflies of America





THE GOOD PEOPLE WHO MAKE THE CHAPTER ‘HAPPEN’ AND HOW TO FIND THEM

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

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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, *Artemisia*; the quarterly *Flora*, 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  
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