



# California Native Plant Society

## Orange County Chapter

March/April 2010

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### CALENDAR

Mar 6 .....	Field Trip-San Mateo Marsh
Mar 11 .....	Board Meeting
Mar 13-14..	Chapter Council meeting at RSABG
Mar 18 .....	Chapter Meeting
Apr 1 .....	Board Meeting
Apr 10.....	Field Trip-tentative date
Apr 15.....	Chapter Meeting
Apr 17-18 .....	Green Scene
Apr 22-25 .....	South Coast Plaza Garden Show

### WEED AND SEED:

#### Location, Time, Contact

Golden West College; Tuesday & Thursday, 10 – 1; Dan Songster, 949-768-0431

Fullerton Arboretum; any day, 8:30-12; Chris Barnhill

Irvine Open Space; irvineranchwildlands.org  
Bolsa Chica; 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday; 714-846-1114

Upper Newport Back Bay; 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday; contact  
Matt Yurko murko@coastal.ca.gov

Orange County River Park; Tuesdays 10 – 1; call  
714-393-3976

**Chapter meetings** are held at the Duck Club in Irvine on the third Thursday of the month, September through June.

#### Directions to the Duck Club:

**Driving south** on the 405, exit on **Jamboree**, turn right. Left on **Michelson** to 3<sup>rd</sup> signal. Right on **Riparian View**. Pass the IRWD water treatment plant. Follow signs to Audubon House and the Duck Club.

**Driving north** on the 405, exit on **Culver** and turn left. At the second signal, **Michelson**, turn right. Continue on Michelson to third signal, **Riparian View**, turn left toward the IRWD treatment plant and follow signs to The Duck Club. [Thomas Guide to Orange County, page 859 J-7]

Renew online at  
[cnps.org](http://cnps.org)

### CHAPTER MEETINGS

#### March 18, 2010--Restoration, Past and Future at the Bolsa Chica Mesa\*

6:45 PM doors open

7:15 PM Planting Natives feature and Plant ID

7:30 PM Main Program: **Kim Kolpin, Director, Bolsa Chica Stewards**

Focusing on the Mesa portion of the Reserve, Kim will give an overview of the history of Bolsa Chica, the issues and circumstances that have resulted from the property's former uses and the restoration plan currently being designed, which will involve the establishment of multiple habitats with help from the community. Kim will discuss the future nursery design and the challenges faced by the project. The presentation will include historical photos, maps, current photos and conceptual design drawings.

For more information on Bolsa Chica and the restoration plans that Kim will present to us in person, please see the article on page 4, another in the chapter's "Orange County is Special" series.

Kim Kolpin is one of the founding members and director of the Bolsa Chica Stewards, the restoration team of the Bolsa Chica Land Trust. For eleven of the past fourteen years of the organization's history, Mrs. Kolpin has led all of the group's activities. As director, she and landscape architect Guy Stivers are currently designing the Lower Bench restoration project for the Bolsa Chica Mesa. Mrs. Kolpin is also actively engaged in other Bolsa Chica Land Trust projects and issues. As a result of her work at Bolsa Chica, Mrs. Kolpin began a California native plant garden design firm in spring of 2008. Sage Landscape Designs now brings drought tolerant native gardens to homeowners in Southern California. She lives with her husband and three children in Huntington Beach.

\*This talk was postponed from January 21 when IRWD closed the road in to the Duck Club due to potential flooding.

#### Thursday, April 15, 2010—Wildflower Hotspots of Orange County

6:45 PM: Doors open

7:15 PM: Planting Natives feature and Plant ID

7:30 PM Main Program: **Bob Allen**

Our county may be known for Disneyland, shopping malls and freeways, but thankfully we also have some of the loveliest wildflower spots in southern California! With these rains what a year this should! Let's get away from it all and take a tour of some of Orange County's wildflower hotspots (some popular and some more "secret") to see what is in bloom. And who better to lead us on this virtual field trip than Bob Allen who has spent countless hours documenting and photographing our local flora! Whatever you're level of interest and knowledge, with Bob we always learn something new. Throw in that special dash of Bob Allen humor and it will be an enjoyable night for all.

**Bob Allen** is a nature photographer, author, instructor, and consulting biologist. Raised in San Juan Capistrano, he studied insects from a very early age. In high school, he was introduced to plants, became hooked, and bought his first copy of Philip Munz's *Flora of Southern California* at age 15. He is currently preparing his eagerly awaited second book, *A Field Guide to Wildflowers of Orange County and the Santa Ana Mountains*.

Visit our website at [ocnps.org](http://ocnps.org)

## President's Message

One of the most important ways that CNPS attracts new enthusiasts is through native plant gardening. Many people are introduced to our native ecosystems through living daily with the beautiful plants that call California home. In December, I was in attendance at the quarterly chapter council meeting, and during a discussion about our mission statement, one after another CNPS leaders from all over the state described how they came to their native plant interest through native gardens.

To support native plant gardening efforts, dedicated volunteers and staff at CNPS have revamped the state website to gather information and links about the subject. On the main "cnps.org" webpage, you will find the "Growing Natives" subject in the top menu bar, along with other important CNPS program areas such as "Conservation", "Education", "Rare Plant Science", etc. Here, experienced and potential new gardeners may access articles about habitat gardening, links to hummingbird and butterfly gardening tips, locations to buy and view native plant collections, school garden information, and much more.

The newest feature, just introduced at the end of February, is the "Growing Natives Blog". Contributing authors from around the state are posting short features about all aspects of native gardening, and you are encouraged to visit and to share your own insights through comments. The internet is such an important communications tool, and we are fortunate to have a staff in Sacramento that continues to move forward with important content and continuous updates. Your financial

support of CNPS, including your membership, is contributing to these efforts every day.

The state horticulture committee, including Orange County board members Nancy Heuler, Dan Songster (and myself), is working on the website and many other projects. If sharing native plant gardening is an interest of yours, there are many fun opportunities at both the state and local level to get involved. Please talk with any board member about your interests.

Locally, on May 8, 2010, the Orange County chapter will host a Garden Tour featuring a dozen gardens. What a great opportunity we will have to see what local people are doing to successfully garden with native plants and to bring new friends for ideas and fun. Sarah Jayne, Brad Jenkins, and Jennifer Mabley are organizing the effort. You can help by volunteering a few hours in one of the gardens as host, spreading the word about the garden tour to your neighbors and friends, and coming out to the gardens. Thanks to all of you who have agreed to host tours at your homes.

You made an important statement in support of native plants by joining CNPS. Your fees for membership in CNPS go directly to the state organization. Someday, with growing membership, other sponsorship and your important support, we will have a statewide director of the horticulture program on staff to direct our continuing efforts towards introducing new members to California natives.

—Laura Camp, President

## Native Gardeners' Corner—Members' Tips, Tricks, and Techniques

This column offers chapter members a chance to briefly share information on many things related to gardening with natives. The question for this issue was; **"What Tool do you find most useful in your garden?" (Include information on where hard-to-find implements might be purchased.)** *The answers are arranged as received and may be edited for space.*

*Christiane Shannon*—The tool that I find most useful in my garden is a small shovel. The handle is 18 inches long, the blade 8 inches high by 6 inches wide. I find it perfect for working in tight places, e.g. between established plants and on my knees, which is a common position for me because it allows me to save my back. I had bought it at the Home Depot, quite a few years ago. It has been well used in my garden.

*Thea Gavin*—My favorite garden tool often shoots rocks at me as it tries to swallow my arm; nevertheless, this gas-powered relic from 1995 makes it possible for me to recycle 99 percent of what some folks call "green waste." It may be green, but it's not waste—it's the key ingredient of the compost I make to mulch and/or feed the soil that grows my natives and veggies. I have a complicated relationship with my loud and dangerous shredder, but it beats the alternative—chopping up all my yard's leaves, clippings and branches with a machete. (This stuff is much too valuable to put in a bin and let someone else have.)

*Greg Rubin*—Long handled shears: you can dead-head just about anything without bending over (too much).

*Sarah Jayne*—A recent discovery—a really cheap knee pad for weeding. Any trash-size plastic bag will do. Kneel on it with open end toward the area to be weeded. Put weeds into the open end. Every now and then, stand up (knees need that!) and shake weeds down into the bottom of the bag. The more you weed, the softer your knee pad gets! This works best for small weeds that require close-up attention such as grasses lurking among wild strawberry.

*Lili Singer*—My favorite garden tool is my right hand. The left is pretty good, too.

*Carol Bornstein*—I can't help it, but my answer is—my eyes.

*Alan Lindsay*—I call my favorite tool a mulcher, but I think it's sold as a chipper. It does a good job on leaves and branches up to one inch. The manufacturer, McCulloch, says inch and a half but that is pushing it. (It is rated at 14 amps and cost \$200 at Lowe's). I bought the last one they had for the season about 3 years ago. It clogs easily if over loaded but I am very happy with the mulch it produces which I spread for drying before moving to where it is needed. Birds and lizards love to forage in it, wet or dry. It's probably paid for itself by not having to buy the pine bark I was buying for mulch.

*Ron Vanderhoff*—Currently my favorite is a good shuffle hoe, sometimes also called a "hula-hoe". I planted a California meadow recently and until it fills in, weed control is a major

chore. This kind of a hoe has a blade at the end that does a really good job chopping off weeds before they get too big, a twice a week chore right now.

*Celia Kutcher*—My favorite garden tool is a kama, a Japanese-style sickle w/ fine teeth. A few swipes with one easily trims bunchgrasses (of which I have lots) back to 3" or so during fall cleanup. Works well on other fine-textured plants too. Orange County Farm Supply, in Orange, carries them; local hardware/garden stores may have them too.

*Dori Ito*—My favorite tool is the often unheralded and taken-for-granted common garden leaf rake. For gathering, tidying up and putting a garden in order I can't think of a better tool (that doesn't require earplugs).

*Dan Songster*—Two things come instantly to mind. First are the Felco #2 Pruners. Whatever I am doing in the garden I often have a pair of these either in my scabbard or incorrectly placed in my rear pocket. Whether removing an odd branch here or there, tipping back small shrubs, incidental dead head-

ing, or doing serious pruning on a shrub or small tree, these pruners make the cleanest cuts, require the least pressure, and its parts, even it's cutting blade, are replaceable. They cost much more than cheapies at warehouse stores, but they are simply the best—a pleasure to work with—and they last 'forever.' Orange County Farm Supply carries them as do a number of better nurseries.

Second, I must at least mention that useful and well-written book *California Native Plants for the Garden* by Carol Bornstein, David Fross, and Bart O'Brien. I have gone through it again and again and always find something new to help the garden!

**Next Newsletter's Question: "What native plant is your favorite for habitat, and which birds, bugs, and/or butterflies does it attract?"**

Email your responses to Dan Songster. [Songster@cox.net](mailto:Songster@cox.net) and please remember to keep replies brief so we can include most of the responses!

## CONSERVATION REPORT

**CEQA ENDANGERED:** CNPS has joined with conservation organizations statewide to strongly oppose proposed legislation that would immunize at least 125 "favored" projects from CEQA enforcement. (See <http://www.pcl.org/projects/ceqa.html>)

The bills and their sponsors are:

- [ABx8 37](#) (Calderon (D) & Nestande (R))
- [AB 1805](#) (Calderon (D) & Nestande (R))
- [SBx8 42](#) (Correa (D) & Cogdill (R))
- [SB 1010](#) (Correa (D) & Cogdill (R))

Descriptions of the bills are at <http://ct2k2.capitoltrack.com/report.asp?rptid=U27790>.

The four bills are aimed to create the *CEQA Litigation Protection Pilot Program*. The proponents' stated purpose is to expedite an increase in both jobs and investment throughout California during a great recession. The language of all four bills is the same, with regular and fast-tracked versions heading through both the Assembly and the Senate.

However, as pointed out during the Feb. 24 debate on SBx8 42 by the Senate Committee on Environmental Quality, the relationship between the effect of the bill(s) and actual job creation is limited and anecdotal, if not completely absent. After some candid debate, the Committee pushed the legislative "pause button" on SBx8 42. (See more on the hearing in *PCL Insider* for Feb. 26.)

*If any version of these bills passes, selected projects would be granted judicial immunity long before any environmental review is done.* This means that California citizens would have no means to enforce CEQA's environmental review process in court for any of the projects—no matter their size or their impact on native flora and fauna, or on people's lives.

**ACTION NOW:** Tell your State Assemblyman and Senator that CEQA must not be bypassed in the name of short-term economic solutions, or for any other cause. Find your legislators at <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/yourleg.html>.

**SAVE OUR STATE PARKS INITIATIVE:** A drive is underway to gather signatures to qualify the *State Parks and Wildlife Conservation Trust Fund Act* (aka the *State Park Access Pass*) for the November ballot. See [calparks.org/takeaction/](http://calparks.org/takeaction/). The initiative would create an \$18 vehicle license fee to fund state parks, and allow California vehicle owners to receive free day use access to all State Parks. The drive is headed by California State Parks Foundation, Sierra Club, and Audubon California; state CNPS is a supporter. **ACTION NOW:** Contact Save Our State Parks Initiative Orange County Coordinator Elizabeth Lambe, [ejlambe@verizon.com](mailto:ejlambe@verizon.com), to help gather signatures.

**NORTHERN OC WATERSHEDS:** If you live in northern OC, you have a new opportunity to have input re native plants and habitat restoration. The Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) wants community input as part of its Master Plan analysis of Brea, Carbon Canyon and Fullerton Dams. ACOE recently held a Master Plan Community Workshop to review and recommend appropriate locations for habitat preservation and recreation, as well as provide guidance for future management of ACOE lands. See <http://www.ocwatersheds.com/watersheds.asp> for maps of the watersheds. **ACTION NOW:** contact Priyanka Wadhawan, ACOE Lead Planner, (213) 452-3828, to learn how to have input on the habitat restoration associated with these dams.

**CNPS' NATIVE PLANTS & FIRE SAFETY POLICY:** The final draft of the formal policy will be presented to CNPS' Chapter Council at its March 13 meeting. If the policy is approved, information on fuel management, fire-safe landscaping and local fire-safe guidelines will be available on CNPS' hort website in coming months. Contact [celia552@cox.net](mailto:celia552@cox.net) for policy details.

—Celia Kutcher, Conservation Chair

Visit our website at [occnps.org](http://occnps.org).

## Biodiversity under a magnifying glass: exploring biological soil crusts in southern California shrublands.

—**Rebecca R. Hernandez**, recipient of the 2009 **Charlie O’Neill Grant**

Many aficionados of California native ecosystems are unaware of the diminutive and important collection of organisms, called biological soil crusts (BSCs), occupying the upper layer of the soil surface in arid and semiarid habitats. Indeed, our phyto-centric eyes drawn to conspicuously visible plants may overlook these ecological structures requiring the use of a hand lens to identify. BSCs are comprised of soil particles; macroscopic bryophytes (i.e., mosses and liverworts) and lichens; and microscopic bacteria, cyanobacteria, fungi, and green algae. They develop as successional seres—early-, mid-, and late successional—and late successional BSCs can be visually ascertained by the presence of terricolous (soil-dwelling) lichens or bryophytes. Despite their small stature, they have received increasing attention in California aridlands, due to their many beneficial ecosystem services including stabilizing the soil surface preventing wind and water erosion, influencing water infiltration rates and retention, augmenting soil fertility, and affecting vascular plant germination and establishment.

In southern California shrublands, BSCs are both a permanent and successional component of chaparral and coastal sage scrub plant communities. Where microenvironment conditions are favorable, rugose BSCs form in the interspaces of vascular plants and under shrub canopies. This type of BSC is characterized by scattered clumps of mosses, liverworts, and lichens and a low microtopography (i.e., soil surface roughness) of less than 3 cm. When BSCs are disturbed (e.g., by grazing or human traffic), mortality of BSC constituents often occurs and recovery to pre-disturbed conditions may take decades or longer. A recent study showed that disturbance of BSCs increases emergence of exotic vascular plants in coastal sage scrub communities underscoring their critical role in California native plant conservation.



Late-successional and rugose biological soil crust in a coastal sage scrub stand, Caspers Wilderness Park, CA. Macroscopic BSC components include mosses and lichens (white, in foreground).

Unfortunately, studies of BSC biodiversity in southern California are relatively unknown. In surveys conducted in Ventura County, Kerry Knudsen hypothesized that BSCs in California shrublands support high levels of lichen biodiversity and rare lichen species. As other BSC components may also show high levels of species richness, the Orange County chapter of the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) awarded the Charlie O'Neill Grant to support my research describing species diversity of macroscopic BSC components—bryophytes and lichens—along a southern California climatic gradient. Surveys were conducted in summer 2009 at six sites (400 m<sup>2</sup>) including San Clemente Beach State Beach, Aliso and Woods Canyon Wilderness Park, Caspers Wilderness Park, Elsinore Peak (Cleveland National Forest), and Hidden Valley (Wildomar, California). Preliminary results from this study show high biodiversity levels of BSC-forming lichens—over 30 individual species—and one species new to science named *Sarcogyne janae* by Kerry Knudsen, a collaborating scientist. Over half (59.4%) of these terricolous lichen species observed were found at a single site or climate zone and therefore may be classified as specialists. Biodiversity of BSC-forming bryophytes may also be relatively high and include species such as *Anacolia baueri*, *Didymodon vinealis*, *Riccia trichocarpa*, and *Tortula atrovirens*.

When completed, the authors will submit their results for publication in a local peer-reviewed journal. It is our hope that this study will increase BSC awareness among CNPS members and stimulate local conservation efforts to protect the fragmented habitats where BSC communities are found. The authors thank the Orange County CNPS for financial support that made this study possible.

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## Nature Walks and Field Trips 2010

Joan Hampton and Richard Schilk, Field Trip Committee

Visit our chapter website at <http://www.occnps.org/> for updates.

**Prepare for field trips:** Fill your gas tank, wear appropriate clothing and sturdy shoes, bring water, snack or lunch (depending on the length of the trip), hat, and sunscreen. Other suggested equipment: hand lens, note pad, camera, and perhaps a walking stick.

There are no fees for nature walks or field trips. Pre-registrater, at <http://www.occnps.org/>. If you have questions, email Rich Schilk, [birdguy@naturalista.net](mailto:birdguy@naturalista.net).

Rain within 24 hours cancels the event.

### Nature Walks

New this year, our nature walks are designed as an introduction to common plants in our area, and their relationship to the rest of our natural environment. Leaders are members of the California Native Plant Society or sister organizations.

#### Saturday, March 6: San Mateo Marsh, 10:00 AM

This fresh-water marsh is a now-rare habitat at the mouth of one of Southern California's very few remaining free-running watersheds. We will amble around the marsh's perimeter on mostly-level trail (some along the beach), looking at the riparian, estuarine and other vegetation types, as well as early wildflowers. We'll take a snack/lunch break along the way.

**MEET:** 10 AM at junction of Cristianitos Rd. & El Camino Real (old Hwy 101)

**DIRECTIONS:** I-5 south to Cristianitos Rd, left on Cristianitos to El Camino Real.

**PARK:** free along El Camino Real or Cristianitos Rd, or \$15 day-use fee in Trestles (surfers') parking lot, next to 3929 S. El Camino Real, San Clemente [this is actually the address of Carl's Jr; Trestles lot is just outside San Clemente city limit so street #?]. CARPOOLING ADVISED! Parking can be tight if surf is up. Do NOT park in adjacent Carl's Jr. or city streets.

Porta-potties in parking lot & along the beach.

NOTE: there's no "h" in "Cristianitos"

### Field Trips

**Trout Journey I, II, and III with Joel Robinson, Naturalist for You.** Unfortunately, since the first of these three related outings was canceled due to rain, the remaining two were also canceled. Perhaps we will be able to reschedule this for next year.

#### Saturday, April 10 (tentative date): Irvine Ranch Conservancy Auto Tour

The date for this driving tour is still unconfirmed. Please check our website periodically for the latest information.

The **Santa Ana Mountains Natural History Association** (SAMNHA) in association with the Trabuco Ranger District offers a guided trip in the Santa Ana Mountains each month. They also staff the **Maple Springs Visitor Center** in Silverado Canyon on weekends when volunteers are available. For more information, contact **Debra Clarke, (951) 736-1811 x3227, [drclarke@fs.fed.us](mailto:drclarke@fs.fed.us)**

The following field trips are offered by the **Natural Science Section, Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club:**

#### Sunday, Mar 21: Fire Recovery Hike in the San Gabriel Mountains: location to be determined

**Leaders: Cliff and Gabi McLean**

Visit an area of the San Gabriel Mountains that was burned in the Station or Morris Fires of September, 2009. We will look at resprouting of shrubs and trees, see what fire-following wildflowers show up, and look for the return of wildlife. This is a slow-paced nature hike with naturalists. Bring hand lens, field guides, binoculars and/or camera. Bring water, and lunch. Wear lug soled shoes.

Visit our website at [www.occnps.org](http://www.occnps.org)

**Sunday, Apr 11, 10:00 AM: Plant ID Walk, Cucamonga Canyon****Leaders: Bob Muns, Liana Argento, Michael Hecht**

Slow paced, 3-4 hour walk to identify plants and learn about the unique geology and geography of Cucamonga Canyon. Take State Rte. 57 north, Interstate 210 east to Upland, (or State Route 91 east and Interstate 15 north to Interstate 10 west). Exit Campus Blvd, south to 19th Street, east on 19th to Sapphire, north on Sapphire to Almond, west on Almond to the parking area where dirt road begins. (See Thomas Guide, San Bernardino, p. 572). Bring water, lunch, hand lens, and binoculars. (Optional \$1 for plant list and \$1 for hand lens) Rain cancels.

**Sunday, May 2, 9:30 AM: Plant ID Walk, Azusa River Wilderness Park, Pasadena****Leaders: Bob Muns, Liana Argento, Michael Hecht**

Slow paced, 3-4 hour walk along El Encanto Trail to identify spring wildflowers. From Interstate 210, exit on Azusa. Continue north on Azusa Ave (State Route 39) 3.5 miles. Turn right into the parking lot. (See Thomas Guide, Los Angeles, p. 568). Bring water, binoculars, lunch, hand lens, (optional \$1 for plant list and \$1 for hand lens). Rain cancels.

**Saturday, May 8: Fire Recovery Hike in the San Gabriel Mountains: location to be determined****Leaders: Cliff and Gabi McLean**

Visit an area of the San Gabriel Mountains that was burned in the Station or Morris fires of September, 2009. We will look at resprouting of shrubs and trees, see what fire-following wildflowers show up, and look for the return of wildlife. This is a slow-paced nature hike with naturalists. Bring hand lens, field

guides, binoculars and/or camera. Wear lug-soled shoes. Bring water and lunch.

**Sunday, June 6, 9:00 AM: Plant ID Walk, Little Dalton Canyon, Pasadena****Leaders: Bob Muns, Liana Argento, Michael Hecht**

Slow paced 3-4 hour walk to identify plants and talk about fire ecology in a fire recovered canyon. From Interstate 210 E, exit Lone Hill Ave. Go north on S. Lone Hill Ave, east on E. Foot-hill Blvd, north on N Valley Center Ave. Take the first left onto E Sierra Madre Ave, then the first right onto Glendora Mountain Road and the third left to the parking area. (See Thomas Guide, Los Angeles, p. 569). Bring water, lunch, and hand lens (optional \$1 plant list and \$1 hand lens.) Rain cancels.

The **Jepson Herbarium** at UC Berkeley offers an exciting series of workshops on botanical and ecological subjects. While many of these are held on the university campus, others take place in the field in a wide variety of locations. The list is too extensive to include here, but tempt yourself by going to the website at <http://ucjeps.berkeley.edu/workshops> and clicking on **Registration information for 2010 workshops is available**.

As other field trip opportunities arise, we will keep you informed at <http://www.ocnps.org/>, chapter meetings, and through the newsletter. Many CNPS chapters post their newsletters at [cnps.org](http://cnps.org). Be sure to consult these for listings of field trips when traveling in other parts of the state.

**Upcoming events and workshops at Tree of Life Nursery—Visit [www.californianativeplants](http://www.californianativeplants) for details**

Saturday, March 06: Plant Selection and Nursery Tour

Saturday, March 13: Design your garden to attract hummingbirds and butterflies.

Saturday, March 13: Benefit sale for the San Diego chapter, CNPS

Saturday, March 20: Design your Garden to Attract Hummingbirds with Native Plants

**Field Trip Report: Anza Borrego (February 13)**

By Joan R. Hampton (with Tom Chester)

In an email that he sent us before this outing, Field Trip Leader Tom Chester made a crack about “famous CNPS ‘Parking Lot’ tours, in which the tour group never leaves the area of the parking lot.” Honesty forces us to admit that there was more than a ring of truth to his allegation.

Accompanied by members of the Anza Borrego Desert Botanical Society, our field trip could be divided into three legs. After the long drive from Orange County, we began our outing at the first leg, the junction of SR-22 with Fonts Point Wash. This arid expanse of sand, perhaps 100’ wide, serves as the entry point for a stream of 4WD vehicle enthusiasts, eager to begin their arid recreations. Bordering this river of sand were sparse clumps of grayish-green Burro-Weed, Dyeweed and similar knee-high shrubs. Along with parked vehicles and a few struggling Smoke Trees, that was the extent of the vista that greeted us. True to Tom’s prediction, we never strayed more than about 200’ from our vehicles.

Our quest at this location was specialized, and it sparked the curiosity of at least one member of the 4WD set, who approached me as I stooped over “my” Dyeweed.

“May I ask you a question?”

“Sure!”

“I just have to ask; what the heck are all you people doing out here bent over those weeds?”

I explained that we were all looking for very, very tiny dead flowers.

“That’s all I wanted to know. Thankyouverymuch.” With that, he immediately took off.

Tom describes those tiny, dead flowers: “*Pilostyles thurberi* has been called Southern California’s most unusual wildflower. It is a parasite that is only visible when it produces its tiny blooms, which appear as tiny warts on the stem of its host plant. The human eye can just barely tell an open fresh flower

from a dead flower, but a hand lens or macro camera reveals the difference clearly.”

More on Pilostyles from Wayne Armstrong (Wayne’s Word, at <http://waynesword.palomar.edu/ploct98.htm>): “It is rarely seen because it lives completely embedded within the stems of a small, leguminous desert shrub called Dyeweed (*Psoralethamnus emoryi*). In fact, you could walk right by a dyeweed shrub without ever knowing that a Pilostyles plant is living inside the stems. Once a year, tiny buds appear on the host stem that resemble small reddish pimples; however, unlike a severe case of acne, the "pimples" burst open into minute reddish blossoms about 2-3 millimeters in diameter.”



Thurber's Pilostyles, *Pilostyles thurberi*

Dr. Peter Bryant

Back to Tom: “The Pilostyles tour went as well as it could, given that none of the darn plants had any fresh blooms. Everyone got to see what Pilostyles looked like. As Rich said, with a smile on his face: ‘We traveled *four hours* for a 1 mm dead flower??’ (or something like that).”

## Field Trip Report – Caspers Wilderness Park

February 20, 2010

The night before our scheduled field trip it was pouring rain, but luckily Caspers did not close down their trails, and Sarah Jayne, Rich Schilk, Mary Olander and I ventured out on the East Ridge Trail on a fresh, clean morning. We were soon greeted by beautiful coastal sage scrub and an early Indian Paintbrush, *Castilleja* sp. Rich and Sarah were confidently identifying butterflies, including Bramble Hairstreak, Sara’s Orangetip and a mating pair of Common Buckeye. We saw Deerweed (*Lotus scoparius*), just starting to bloom, a great Clematis plant in full bloom climbing over plants near the path, a single Johnny jump up plant (*Viola pedunculata*) and Lemonade berry (*Rhus integrifolia*) and Wild cucumber vine (*Marah macrocarpus*) in full bloom everywhere.

Just as we were about to reach the Quail Run intersection, we reached a meadow full of Shooting stars, *Dodecatheon clevelandii*. They are a petite flower, and so unusual and striking with the purple/black pointed face of the flower pointed downward and the mostly white (a few light pink) petals shooting up to the sky. At the edge of this meadow we had beautiful views of the red cliffs of Casper’s east ridge in wonderful light, and over the edge of the cliff a huge grouping of California polypody fern, *Polypodium californicum*.

It was also a good birding day, with Cactus Wren calling in the distance and White-throated Swifts flying overhead, and a great day to see a variety of mushrooms while avoiding the mud! When we return to Caspers on March 27<sup>th</sup> we should expect to see more flowers in peak bloom, and probably more butterflies, too. We know that many of you were deterred by the iffy weather, and we hope you’ll circle your calendar for our next try. This walk is meant to be for beginner and intermediate introduction, and it should be a great spring to bring a friend to see some spectacular wildflowers.

Go to Laura’s gallery to see her pictures.

<http://gallery.me.com/campsjc#100119&view=grid&bgcolor=black&sel=9>

One of the thrills of a desert field trip is the opportunity to enjoy the desert in bloom, and to photograph the masses of colorful Brittlebush, Fleabane, Tidy-Tips, Fairyduster, Lupine, Blazing Star, Apricot Mallow, Cream-Cups and other signature flowers of the region. Actually, we did not see any of those. For the second leg of our field trip, we botanized along the roadside in the Coyote Mountain area. We did see Desert Spanish-Needles (*Palafoxia arida*) and Chuparosa (*Justicia californica*) long with various minute flowers with obscure names that were only visible to those of us who were willing (and able) to get down on the ground and peer through a hand lens. We *did* see two horned lizards, however.

Despite its beauty, the desert is a place of menace. Dehydration, hyperthermia, and the danger of getting lost in the trackless wilderness were dangers that we contemplated during the final leg of our field trip. Tom, with his intimate knowledge of the Anza-Borrego region, was able to expertly guide us through this area, appearing to know our exact location at all times.

His basis for choosing this particular location? Tom again: “After we ‘used up’ the [Coyote Mountain] area, a request was made to go to an area with ‘good bathrooms.’” Once that challenging demand was satisfied, “we had a ‘parking lot tour’ at the Visitor Center, until 4 p.m.” My personal favorite

there was Pygmyweed (*Crassula Connata*), a minute, wispy, dead-looking flowering plant that was abundant underfoot.



*Crassula Connata*

Joan Hampton

## NATURE WRITINGS

Please send your nature writings to [theagavin@sbcglobal.net](mailto:theagavin@sbcglobal.net). Visit Thea's website at [www.theagavin.com](http://www.theagavin.com).

02-26-10	barely an inch long toad/frog	thanks to octrackers
eight february poems by chuck wright Orange County, CA	crosses road o not a h p to be seen	
02-16-10	toad/frog stops & rests in mid-morning sun	02-24-10
like a flying saucer glistening in the sun poised for take-off poised for landing mushroom top shines in the sun	junction of gravel road & barbara's lake road James Dilley Preserve Laguna Coast Wilderness Park Orange County, CA	they are waiting for you they need you to survive really they prefer coyote & deer but pass their way they'll hitch a ride climb high & hide ignore them & you become their meal
walk to barbara's lake James Dilley Preserve Laguna Coast Wilderness Park Orange County, CA	02-24-10	TICKS -- 'tis the season proceed with caution or be a host to more than just a tick
	bouncing over hill & dale ruts from recent rains jerks & bangs ups & downs side to side	deer tick <i>Ixodes scapularis</i> dog tick <i>Dermacentor variabilis</i> see <a href="#">Outwitting Ticks</a> , by Susan Carol Hauser
02-19-10	wilderness now yesterday's cattle drive track for early man deer coyote bobcat mountain lion, bunny & like today's animal caught on image not by snare spear arrow or such records made of nature's fauna orange county's preserved open spaces	02-24-10
lurching from side to side	riding with octrackers dick newell & don millar irvine ranch conservancy and laguna coast wilder- ness	there's a flurry in our backyard yellow black & white as well as tannish-grey & olive green you provide the niger seed & the flurry arrives along with chirps & tweets there's a flurry in our backyard
a drunk a cell phone driver an exhausted runner noooooooooo driven seeking sara orange-tip seeking mate protecting turf hardly sipping barely resting	02-24-10	Lesser Goldfinch <i>Carduelis psaltria</i> American Goldfinch <i>Carduelis tristis</i> Irvine CA
lurching from side to side	he's not your domestic cat yet he looks docile laid back & very cat-like	02-24-10
THE SARA ORANGE-TIP <i>Anthocaris sara sara</i> Lucas Larry J. Orsak, <a href="#">The Butterflies of Orange County, California</a> road by barbara's lake James Dilley Preserve Laguna Coast Wilderness Park Orange County, CA	he's territorial he knows what's his what you think of as yours was his & his ancestors since time began you're his guest so who's the intruder admire, respect & let him be don't tempt him with those cute pets he sees food where you see fondness	they're hitchhikers you know not with thumbs but with claws you can go fast or slow not even stop they know you're passing your breath gave you away they've got you quick questing is their game they're hitchhiking you know
02-24-10	you need not fear but you must be smart you are his guest lance, bob cat, <i>Lynx rufus</i> territorial cat in your backyard	ticks
lumbering along in mid-morning sun inch by inch stop and rest hunker down		deer ticks <i>Ixodes scapularis</i> dog ticks <i>Dermacentor variabilis</i>