



SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS

CHAPTER OF THE CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

MAY & JUNE 1999

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DATES TO REMEMBER

May 1, Sat., 10-4: CNPS Plant Sale at Eaton Canyon Open House

May 9, Sun., 9:00 am: Eaton Canyon Plant Walk with Rick Fisher.

May 20, Thurs., 7:30 pm: *The Lonely (but not empty) Carrizo Plain* by Paula Schiffman.

June 5, Sat. am: Wildflower Garden Maintenance at Eaton Canyon NC

June 13, Sun., 9:00 am: Eaton Canyon Plant Walk with Rick Fisher.

June 17, Thurs., 7:30 pm: *Saving Sierra Forests* by Bob Brister.

July 3, Sat. am: Wildflower Garden Maintenance at Eaton Canyon NC

Aug 7, Sat. am: Wildflower Garden Maintenance at Eaton Canyon NC

WELCOME!

New members

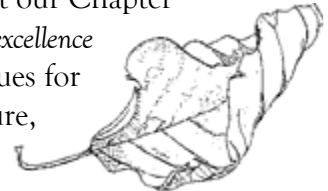
- Pat Chapman
- Ginger Gelber
- Marianne & Gary Wallace
- Arleen Webster
- Lenore Wruck

THE LURE OF THE OUTDOORS (A.K.A. PROCRASTINATION)

Sometimes good intentions are not enough. I got up this morning knowing that I needed to finish my work on this issue of the newsletter so that it would reach you before May 1, the day of our Chapter's Plant Sale at Eaton Canyon. But first I had to check on my newly planted herb garden and the pots of salad greens that I'd planted with seeds last Friday. It gave me a real lift to see new little green leaves poking through the compost mulch. I was glad we'd gotten our unruly carrot-wood tree pruned so that there's enough light to grow edibles again. Then I noticed that the spent wisteria blossoms needed to be swept from the deck. It was a struggle *not* to go into another part of the yard—I knew I'd find other jobs that would eat up the morning. So I came back inside to the computer and finished the calendar events.

But I could see that the front entry outside my office needed sweeping, so out I went again. When I opened the front gate, my resolve to work at the computer began to ebb away. Who can resist the lure of spring? The front garden beckoned with irises that hadn't bloomed in years, weeds I'd missed on my clean-up day last week, the scented leaves of lavender, salvia and monardella. But I pulled just a handful of weeds before forcing myself back inside.

Many writers, good ones at that, will tell you that their craft does not come easily, that some days it doesn't come at all. And writing about the natural world has its own difficulties. One has to spend time outside observing in order to have something to write about. And while out, it's important to make some kind of record. At our Chapter program last Thursday, botanical illustrator *par excellence* Marianne Wallace shared some of her techniques for looking at plants carefully, noting their structure, details, and environment, and then making a sketch with notes. This kind of observation allows one to go out into the field unencumbered by bulky, heavy field guides like the mighty *Jepson*. Notes and sketches allow you to use reference books at home or at the library. It takes



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THE LURE (cont.)

some discipline however. Your materials can be simple—a small, ruled notebook and an automatic pencil, but you have to take the time to practice your drawing regularly.

Naturalist/author Ann Zwinger says that she has no patience with the “Oh, I can’t draw!” school. For her “drawing is a state of mind—how much you want to do it, how much time you’re willing to put into it.” If you’d like some inspiration for sharpening your observation skills, pick up her latest collection of essays, *The Nearsighted Naturalist* (University of Arizona Press) and read the pieces on drawing and wandering (what I call “poking about”). Then try some of the stories of her travels: to Aravaipa Canyon in Arizona, a riparian wilderness in the desert; down the San Juan River in Utah, one of the tributaries of the Colorado; exploring an island off the Chilean coast that was the home of Alexander Selkirk, the inspiration for Robinson Crusoe.

Even if you never plan to write about plants or the natural world or show your field sketches to anyone else, you’ll find that the time you take to look at the world carefully will increase your own knowledge and enjoyment. Whether you’re puttering around in your front yard, puffing up to a 12,000 foot Sierra pass, or squinting in the bright desert sun, taking note of the sights, sounds, and scents around you can have immeasurable benefits for your physical and mental wellbeing.

So my forays outside today were not just procrastination. Hopefully, in some small way I’m better in tune with the great outdoors.

CHAPTER EVENTS

Meetings are held at Eaton Canyon Nature Center (map on back cover) on the third Thursday of the month.

PROGRAMS

May 20, Thurs., 7:30 pm: *The Lonely (but not empty) Carrizo Plain* by Paula Schiffman, Professor of Biology, Calif. State Univ. Northridge. The largest remaining Calif. prairie fragment is at the Carrizo Plain Natural Area, a 250,000-acre preserve in southeastern San Luis Obispo County. This type of vegetation was once extremely widespread in southern and central California (including the much of the Great Central Valley, San Fernando Valley, San Gabriel Valley and Los Angeles Plain). Now, because of conversion to agriculture and urbanization, less than 1% of the land area once occupied by California prairie remains. Paula will share her ecological research into how native animals (particularly burrowing mammals like gophers, kangaroo rats, ground squirrels, badgers and kit foxes) affect the plant community species composition. And she’ll show how these animals’ activities affect native and alien plant species in some strange, interesting and quite unexpected ways. The presentation will conclude with a brief discussion of a few important conservation issues: grazing, prescribed burning and the control of invasive alien plants.

June 17, Thurs., 7:30 pm: *Saving Sierra Forests* by Bob Brister, Outreach Coordinator for the Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign, a coalition of 50 local, regional and national groups working to permanently protect the remaining wild lands, wild rivers, and other biologically important areas of the Sierra Nevada. This slide presentation will examine the problems facing the “Range of Light” and present possible new management practices to protect this magnificent 400 mile long mountain range. If you’re planning to camp or hike in the Sierra this summer, come learn about the issues facing this popular vacation destination. *Note: This is the last Chapter program until next fall.*

OUTINGS

May 9, Sun., 9:00 am: *Eaton Canyon Plant Walk* with Gabi & Cliff McLean. Bring your mother to Eaton Canyon to see how the surprising April showers affected the plants.

June 13, Sun., 9:00 am: *Eaton Canyon Plant Walk* with Eva Morgan. How are the plants getting ready for the long rain-less summer? *Note: this will be the last Plant Walk until fall.*

SPECIAL EVENTS

May 1, Sat., 10-4: *CNPS Plant Sale at Eaton Canyon Open House*. See opposite page for details. Help is needed, especially with taking money. Call Rick Fisher at 626-335-9304 to volunteer.

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Dedicated to the Preservation of the California Native Flora

The California Native Plant Society is a statewide nonprofit organization of amateurs & professionals with a common interest in California's native plants. The mission of the Society is to increase understanding & appreciation of California's native plants & to preserve them in their natural habitat through scientific activities, education, & conservation. Membership is open to all.

Membership includes the quarterly journal Fremontia, the quarterly Bulletin which gives statewide news & announcements of Society activities & conservation issues, & the chapter newsletter.



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