

January, 2020



The Bay Leaf

California Native Plant Society • East Bay Chapter
Alameda & Contra Costa Counties

www.ebcnps.org

www.nativeherenursery.org

MEMBERS' MEETING

The East Bay Unusual Plants Program – Past, Present, and Future

Speaker: Dianne Lake

Wednesday, January 22, 7:30 pm

Location: Garden Room, Orinda Public Library (location information below)

Although the chapter's Unusual Plants Program has been going on for almost 30 years, many members, especially newer ones, may not be familiar with it. We were the first chapter to notice and address our locally rare or "unusual" plants (native plants that are rare in our two counties, but not statewide).

Our speaker Dianne Lake, who has coordinated our chapter's Unusual Plants Program since its inception, will present a short history of how and why our program started and how it has progressed. She will also discuss the chapter's online database, "Rare and Unusual Plants of Alameda and Contra Costa Counties", and demonstrate some of its search capabilities. Finally, she will present future plans and goals for the program, including how members can get involved and help the chapter track these sensitive species.

A follow-up training program on monitoring local populations and adding observations to the database will be offered

on Sunday, February 2, at Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve near Antioch. Contact Dianne for more information at diannelake@yahoo.com.

Dianne Lake has been a CNPS member since the mid-1970s and became Rare Plant Committee Co-Chair with Brad Olson in the late 1980s. In the early 1990s she began to focus exclusively on locally rare plants, and the Unusual Plants Program was established. Dianne has hiked and botanized extensively in the East Bay for many years, becoming familiar with the flora of almost every nook and cranny in the two counties. In the 1980s she taught wildflower identification classes before becoming a botanical consultant in 1989. In 2016, Dianne was named a CNPS Fellow, the highest honor CNPS awards its members, in recognition of her extraordinary accomplishments towards understanding, appreciation, and preservation of California native plants.

East Bay CNPS members' meetings are free of charge and open to everyone. This month's meeting takes place in the Garden Room of the Orinda Public Library at 26 Orinda Way, Orinda 94563, a few blocks from the Orinda BART station. The Garden Room is on the second floor of the building, accessible by stairs or an elevator. Email programs@ebcnps.org if you have questions.



Dianne Lake,
photo by William
Michael Lake.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAPTER PRESIDENT

Welcome to 2020, the beginning of a new decade and the year we will begin implementing our Strategic Plan, which should be completed in the beginning of the year. This plan will be discussed in a future *Bay Leaf* article and it will also be available for you to read on our website.

We have many exciting developments this year. First of all, we will be interviewing candidates for the Conservation Analyst position. We increased the salary in order to attract applicants with a minimum of two years of related job experience.

Please come to our members' meeting on January 22 by Dianne Lake, our chapter's Unusual Plants Chair, on the history of the Unusual Plants program and its importance. After a brief demonstration of its database, Dianne will discuss future plans for the program.

Two weeks later there will be a field training on using the Unusual Plants app to monitor plants. This skill can be used to help monitor our rare and unusual plants, including at the three BioBlitzes scheduled next year at Springtown Preserve in Livermore. Springtown is one of our 15 Botanical Priority Protection Areas and a thorough monitoring of the entire preserve has not been conducted for many years.

We hope to have a number of chapter members with botany skills helping us at the BioBlitzes and with our new field trips. I was at Springtown earlier this year and here are a few photos I took.

Judy Schwartz
East Bay CNPS Chapter President



Above: Springtown, April 17, 2019. Below: Close up of the landscape photo, *Downingia pulchella*. Photos by Judy Schwartz.



JANUARY FIELD TRIP

Saturday, January 4, 2:00 pm: Field trip to Huddart County Park to see Fetid Adder's Tongue. <https://www.meetup.com/ebcnps/events/266415312/> (Changed from the usual Sunday to Saturday because the leader will be out of town on Sunday.)

Meet in the parking lot just past the pay station. David Margolies will lead a hike on the Crystal Springs Trail where fetid adder's tongue (*Scolioopus bigelovii*, Liliaceae) usually blooms in early January. (In most locations outside botanical gardens it blooms in late January or early February. We have seen it here most every year except 2013 and 2016.) This is a gentle trail, losing about 200 feet over about 1/2 mile to the creek. We will walk to the creek and then return the same way. It is unlikely that there will be any other flowers out this early, but the fetid adder's tongue's presence tells us that the new flower season has started. (Plants out of flower will also be identified.) The area is second growth redwood and mixed evergreen forest.

MILKWEED RESTORATION

Partners Plant Early Season Milkweed for Monarchs

The Western monarch butterfly population has dropped to an all-time low and the reduction in caterpillar host plant milkweed (*Asclepias* sp.) is a factor in the decline. A grant from the Alameda County Fish and Game Commission is funding a cooperative effort of federal, state, and local agencies to team up with local private ranchers to help restore populations of California milkweed (*Asclepias californica*) to the East Bay. More details of the project can be found at <https://ebcnps.org/news/monarch-milkweed/>.

In California, monarchs overwinter in tree groves along the coast, then fly east searching for milkweed to lay eggs on. However, monarchs now are leaving their overwintering sites earlier in the year, possibly because of climate change or altered microhabitat conditions. Because of this behavioral change, early-season milkweed is increasingly critical to support the breeding butterflies.

The earliest blooming milkweed species in Alameda County is California milkweed (*A. californica*). It is the least widespread and has likely declined the most in abundance. It is also the only milkweed species that is not commercially available from local native plant nurseries, so the grant enables partners to collect seed in the field.

To identify seed collection locations in the East Bay, the partners used Calflora historic sightings, recent iNaturalist posts, and local knowledge from EBCNPS chapter members. In 2020 the collected *A. californica* seeds will be cultivated by a local nursery, and then the Alameda County Resource Conservation District (ACRCD) and Natural Resources Conservation Service will outplant the milkweed on five private ranches in the Tri-Valley area.

In response to rancher concerns over milkweed toxicity to livestock, ACRCD has explained that California milkweed contains fewer toxic compounds than the late season species (lucky fact!) and that there are no known cases of mortality in cattle due to milkweed consumption. With this information, the ranchers involved are willing partners in the quest to help revitalize the Western monarch population to preserve the iconic butterfly for future generations.

If you see California milkweed – or any milkweed – while out hiking in the East Bay, please post it to [iNaturalist](#) where you will be contributing to the milkweed project data. For more information on monarchs and what you can do to help, check out the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation's [Monarch Butterfly Conservation](#) website.

Hillary Sardiñas

Biologist, Alameda County Resource Conservation District



Left: California milkweed in bloom. Right: Milkweed seeds.

RESTORATION PROJECTS

Saturday, January 4, at 9:30 am, Point Isabel restoration. Join the Kellys and Greens at Work on the San Francisco Bay Trail side of Pt. Isabel, just to the west of the Central Avenue exit from the 580 freeway in El Cerrito. For more information email tkelly@kyotousa.org.

Saturday, January 11 at 9 am, Sibley Park Meet at the Old Tunnel Road staging area, with water bottles and mud-jumping clothes. If the trail is very muddy, we can return to the upper access road (from the end of the parking lot) and start in where the December volunteers took out some huge plants.

Sunday, January 19 at 9:30 am, Huckleberry Regional Botanic Preserve Join us at the parking lot where we will decide what to pull and where depending on soil conditions. If time and weather permit, we might want to look at the pallid manzanita in bloom on the upper side of the loop trail. As at Sibley Park, bring your water bottle and dress for mud, but also remember we will need to clean shoes and tools at this park. Janet Gawthrop will lead.

POINT ISABEL AND BEYOND AT THE CLOSE OF 2019

Thanksgiving has been our favorite holiday forever. Celebrating with family and friends, partaking of good food, and reflecting with gentle memories on the people who have shared their love and enthusiasm for nature with us throughout the year. For them we are genuinely grateful. Here's a recap of the most recent efforts that demonstrate their commitment: On November 19, we worked with a delightful crew from Friends of Five Creeks (F5C) removing Algerian lavender (*Limonium ramosissimum* aka LIRA) at Marina Bay. A lot of work was accomplished amidst the laughter and surprise at the extent of the infestation. Rest assured that we will return to remove what we missed.

On Black Friday, November 29, we held another work party at Marina Bay, this time with Core Volunteers Miriam and Lewis and a charming Berkeley family of six who were volunteering with us for the first time. It was a beautiful sunny day with the waves lapping quietly along the beach and many sea birds, including a large flock of elegant American avocets (*Recurvirostra americana*) by our work area. We removed LIRA and an entire stretch of ice plant (*Carpobrotus edulis*) that was encroaching upon the pickleweed (*Salicornia pacifica*) and a number of other California native wetland plants. The ice plant crew (Harold, Julian, Lewis, and Tom) rescued all the wetland plants that were struggling within the ice plant. LIRA crew members (Phyllis, Mathew, Nicholas, and Katie Rose) were not deterred by the incoming tide but simply continued pulling up the LIRA rosettes as the water surrounded the four of them.

Then the rains came. This inspired us on December 3rd to head for the Adopt-a-Spot at Central Ave./Rydin Road to plant three soap plants (*Chlorogalum pomeridianum*) and five pots of one leaf onion (*Allium unifolium*) grown by Native Here Nursery (NHN) in Tilden and paid for by a grant from the Contra Costa County 2019 Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund. These plants enjoyed the rains brought by the arriving storm.

On December 7 we held a brief but very productive work party along the Bay Trail with the volunteer crew succeeding in clearing an area to receive new plants just before the next rains fell.

On December 8 we planted California everlasting (*Pseudognaphalium californicum*) and sowed Heermann's tarweed (*Holocarpha heermannii*) seeds on the Adopt-a-Spot.

December 10 arrived and we picked up the remaining plants from NHN in Tilden and planted an Arroyo Willow (*Salix lasiolepis*) alongside a small channel and one of the deerweeds (*Acmispon glaber*) on the main Adopt-a-Spot site.

On December 15 a small but enthusiastic group tackled French broom, giant reed (*Arundo donax*), and pampas grass at the El Cerrito Recycling Center, where staff member Carrie is planting a native butterfly garden with plants from Native Here Nursery. Our Core Volunteer Rob K. also managed to capture the trash that had escaped the recycling area.

On December 16, we planted three California roses (*Rosa californica*), the remaining two deerweeds, and a honeysuckle (*Lonicera hispidula*). We also met Pt. Isabel Stewards Nina Barton and Sue Schoening at The Watershed Nursery in Richmond and picked up the plants from there that were funded by the East Bay Regional Parks District (EBRPD).

Thanks to the Contra County Fish & Wildlife Propagation Fund for the Richmond Adopt-a-Spot grant and to EBRPD for their plant grant for Pt. Isabel. Our thanks also go to Bryan M. from EBMUD for his support in shielding the Adopt-a-Spot from vehicle incursions.

Best wishes for a Peaceful New Year.
Jane and Tom Kelly



Shorebirds in Flight (photo by Jane Kelly).

POINT ISABEL DECEMBER PHOTOS



Above: F5C LIRA Crew. Below: Marina Bay LIRA Crew. (Photos by Jane Kelly.)



POINT ISABEL PHOTOS (CONT.)



Above: Marina Bay Iceplant Crew. Below: Marina Bay Crew Members. (Photos by Jane Kelly.)



POINT ISABEL PHOTOS (CONT.)



Above: The Point Isabel Crew. Below: The ECRC Crew. (Photos by Jane Kelly.)





Left: The Arroyo Willow + Tom Kelly (photo by Jane Kelly). Below: Pickleweed's Struggle for Survival (photo by Lewis Payne).



Here is a list of projects associated with the Chapter. We give website and contact information when available:

Albany Hill
www.tendancienthill.org
 Margot Cunningham, leader
 tashorehill@gmail.com

Garber Park Stewards
 garberparkstewards@gmail.com

Huckleberry Botanic Regional Preserve
 Janet Gawthrop, leader
 janetgawthrop47@gmail.com

John Muir NHS (Martinez)
 Elaine Jackson, leader
 925-372-0687
 elainejx@att.net

Marsh Creek
 Heath Bartosh, leader
 925-957-0069
 hbartosh@nomadecology.com

Point Isabel
 El Cerrito Recycling Center
 Tom and Jane Kelly, leaders
 510-684-6484 (c)
 kyotousa@sbcglobal.net

McLaughlin Eastshore State Park (Berkeley)
 John Kenny, leader
 johnkenny54@yahoo.com

Sibley Regional Park
 Janet Gawthrop, leader
 janetgawthrop47@gmail.com

Skyline Gardens
 Glen Schneider, leader
www.skylinegardens.org

stinkwort (*Dittrichia graveolens*) Removal
 Barbara Leitner, leader

Walnut Creek Open Space
 Lesley Hunt, leader
 ldhunt@astound.net

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Committees are formed based on chapter needs and the interests of volunteers. Proposals for committees and projects are welcome and will be considered by the Board.

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