



March, 2020

The Bay Leaf

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

www.ebcnps.org

www.nativeherenursery.org

MEMBERS' MEETING

Why Should We Care About Native Bees?

Speaker: Gordon Frankie

March 25, 7:30 pm

Location: Garden Room, Orinda Public Library

Did you know there are 1,600 different bee species in California? That amounts to 40% of all bee species in North America. The reason for the high number can be realized by looking at the incredibly diverse landscapes of California and their representative plant species. We have more than 5,100 flowering plant species (angiosperms) in the state, and most provide pollen and nectar resources for the bees. We have modified California landscapes over years of use for human needs, but still we can find bees in these areas; not as many as before, of course. One of the landscapes where we can often find rich collections of bee species is the urban environment, and in California these areas continue to grow, and residents continue to unknowingly install bee plants in their gardens. The Urban Bee Lab at UC Berkeley specializes in researching bee-flower relationships in these gardens and

adjacent agricultural and wild areas. Dr. Frankie's talk will focus on the diversity of projects his lab is working on, and how the lab also shares its findings with several audiences.

Gordon Frankie is a professor and research entomologist at the University of California, Berkeley. His specialty is behavioral ecology of solitary bees in wildland, agricultural, and urban environments of California and Costa Rica, and he is particularly involved with questions of how people relate to bees and their plants in these environments, and how to raise human awareness about bee-plant relationships. Dr. Frankie also teaches conservation and environmental problem solving at UC Berkeley. More information on his projects can be found at www.helpabee.org.

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.

Upcoming Programs

April 22, 7:30 pm, Garden Room, Orinda Public Library
Speaker and topic TBA

May 27, 7:30 pm, Garden Room, Orinda Public Library
Speaker: Michael Moran, Supervising Naturalist at Big Break Regional Shoreline

Left: Dr. Gordon Frankie, photo by Kathy Keatley Garvey.



In the February *Bay Leaf*, we inadvertently left out the credit for the picture of *Tetrapteron graciliflorum* (hill sun cup) and for the map of its occurrence in California in the Skyline Gardens article. The picture is by Keir Morse (c) 2009, and the map is (c) 2020 by CalFlora.

LETTER FROM THE CHAPTER PRESIDENT

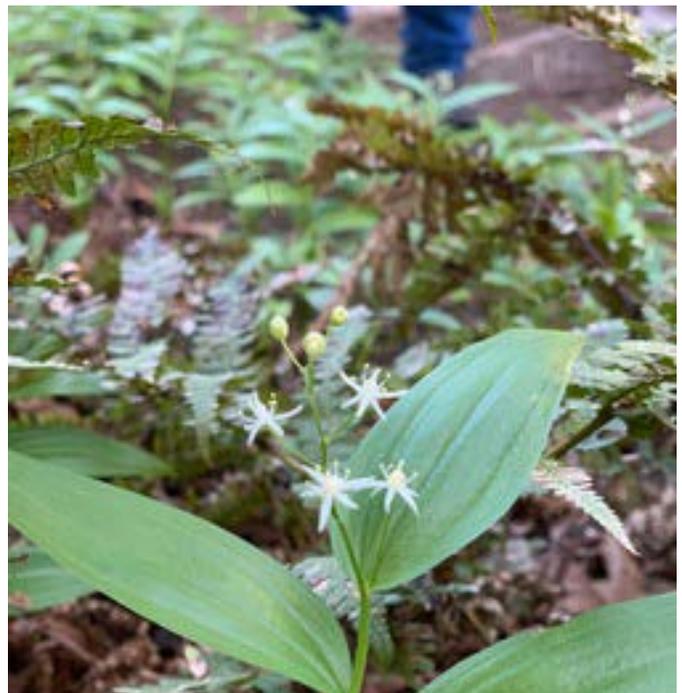
Volunteering with a restoration group is a great way to improve conditions for our native plants and habitats. To learn about restorations associated with our chapter visit our website at <https://ebcnps.org/volunteer/>.

On Saturday, February 15th, I joined the Garber Park Stewards at Garber Park to learn about Best Management Practices recommended by the California Invasive Plant Council (Cal-IPC) for removing invasive plants. We were joined by Jutta Burger, Director of Science from Cal-IPC <https://www.cal-ipc.org/>, who gave us an overview of the tremendous work Cal-IPC is doing throughout the state to document the spread of invasive plants and the most effective ways of removing them. They are

teaching seminars this year on 26 non-chemical techniques of plant removal. (See the restoration article for more information on Garber Park Stewards seminars and projects.)

Golden Hour Restoration Institute has been guiding the volunteers at Garber Park for ten years and Saturday's session demonstrated how to remove invasive plants such as cape ivy, broom, and poison hemlock. After the winter rains it is satisfying to remove invasive plants while the ground is still moist.

Judy Schwartz, East Bay Chapter CNPS president



Top left: Garber Park is an oak woodland park in Claremont Canyon owned by the City of Oakland, with a self-guiding nature trail map. Top right: Mark Seaborn demonstrates that to remove poison hemlock you need to cut the stem below the soil. Below left: Bob Strayor is pulling up small ivy shoots by the roots where there used to be a dense understory of ivy, Himalayan blackberry and other non-native plants. Below right: False Solomon's seal (*Maianthemum stellatum*). Photos by Judy Schwartz.

NATIVE HERE NURSERY NEWS

Our project to update the soil pile and potting area is now in its second phase – rebuilding the potting area to make it more compliant with phytophthora standards and include some new storage and efficiency features. We have moved the potting tables aside and torn down the volunteer shed which was falling apart. Our next steps will be to replace the shed with an improved design and to rearrange the potting tables around it. We appreciate the potters' patience with the disruption while we make improvements.

Tara has resigned as our nursery assistant effective February 29 and we wish her well in her new endeavors. Since this position is essential to the smooth functioning of the nursery, we are beginning the search for a new employee immediately.

Crystal Leanza, our volunteer phytosanitation and plant disease expert, says she can no longer continue in that role.

PHYTOSANITATION AT THE NURSERY

Several volunteers at Native Here Nursery are implementing measures to keep the nursery safe and disease-free.

Master gardener Crystal Leanza has been performing regular inspections of all our Nursery stock, noting minor pests and treating them. She is training Kimberly Moses on this interesting and varied work – a bit like detective work, with a lot of finesse. The treatments are very low-toxicity fixes; they just shift the balance of power from the pest to the plant.

Sometimes Native Here needs to test plants for phytophthora to be sure our plants are healthy. The current best practice is called “pear baiting” – a firm green pear is soaked in water collected from flow-through irrigation of test plants, then incubated for several days. If a pear shows a characteristic type of lesion (surface damage), it may be infested with phytophthora. To find out what kind of phytophthora, the pear needs to be cultured by the California Department of

We will miss her and she will be hard to replace. She has done a lot to help the nursery. If you or anyone you know would be interested in doing this job or either of the two main tasks that comprise it (plant disease in general or phytophthora in particular), please write to Ruth Ann (see below). We will be posting a detailed description for this position soon.

The dry winter has caused us to start watering already. We appreciate help from any and all who are willing to assist with this task. Please write to Ruth Ann at <mailto:rapearsons1@mac.com> to let us know when you can come, or if you can't plan in advance, just show up and we'll be glad to see you.

Lesley Hunt
Nursery Committee Chair

Food and Agriculture. Reliable results depend on very careful technique.

Several people have been instrumental in getting pear baiting underway at Native Here. First, Crystal Leanza and Lesley Hunt attended a CNPS-sponsored pear baiting training last summer. Crystal has overseen several episodes of testing. Then Per Brashears, our local technology and construction expert, has built some special testing tables that hold just the right number of plant containers and are easy to clean. Thanks to the efforts of these people, we have had several successful testing days!

Speaking of testing, over the past several months we have identified excess inventory – plants we have a lot of, often good subjects for restoration more than for gardens. We offered these to a number of non-profit restoration projects. And to make sure they were healthy, we tested them all – a big job, overseen by Crystal, and an important one. About a thousand plants, mostly grasses, rushes, and wetland species, found new homes, and now we have a lot more room in the Nursery for fresh, beautiful new plants.

Come by and see what we have growing!

Barbara Leitner



Left: Pear baiting test tables made by construction expert Per Brashears. Metal tables can be easily sanitized. Plants to be tested are placed on the tables, irrigated to create flow-through, and the water is collected in the vessels below. Unblemished pears are incubated in the effluent and inspected daily for characteristic phytophthora lesions.

RESTORATION EVENTS

Saturday, March 7 at 9:00 am. and Sunday, March 8 at 9:30 am. at the Wayside parking lot in Redwood Regional Park. From there we will hike a short distance along the Golden Spike Trail and will work towards the West Ridge Trail. Tools, gloves, and some light snacks will be provided. Remember, if rain is scheduled the pull is cancelled.

Saturday, March 7 and Saturday, March 21, restoration work at Point Isabel. 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, March 14 at 9 am, Sibley Park starting from the Old Tunnel Road staging area. If you are coming from west of the hills, go through Caldecott Tunnel and exit 24 at Fish Ranch Road, almost immediately east of the tunnel. Volunteers from Orinda and points southeast can exit westbound 24 at Fish Ranch Road just before the tunnel and follow the signs to Sibley Park. Bring your own water, but gloves and tools are provided.

The 3rd and final workshop in our 2020 winter series is Saturday, March 21 from 9:30 to 10 titled Fascinating Fascines and

Creek Restoration. You will learn about hillside erosion control and restoration. We will cover the use of fascines and on-site vegetation to stabilize steep slopes in restoration sites. You will have the opportunity to help install fascines alongside restoration experts and volunteers in Garber Park. Meet at the Claremont Avenue entrance to Garber Park 0.4 miles up Claremont Avenue from the intersection of Ashby and Claremont Avenues.

Shelagh Broderson and the Garber Park Stewards

Join Janet Gawthrop and other volunteers restoring Huckleberry Regional Botanic Preserve in the Oakland hills. We meet year-round at 9:30 am on the 3rd Sunday every month to remove invasive plants by hand from Huckleberry Regional Botanic Preserve, which is one of the very few botanic preserves in the East Bay Regional Park system. Several plant communities thrive in Huckleberry Park, including live oak-bay woodland and maritime chaparral, which has several species of unusual plants now threatened by development. For more information click on this link:

<https://www.meetup.com/ebcnps/events/fwswjrybcfbtb/>

BRINGING BACK THE NATIVES GARDEN TOUR

Registration for the Sunday, May 3, 2020 [Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour: Gardens of Natural Delights](#) is now open! [Forty two](#) beautiful, bird- and butterfly-friendly, pesticide-free, water conserving gardens that contain 60% or more native plants will be open on Sunday, May 3, 2020 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at various locations throughout Alameda and Contra Costa counties. More than fifty garden talks will be offered throughout the weekend of the Tour.

[Check out this year's series of workshops](#) - In addition to the Tour and plant sales, nine workshops will be offered this spring. Several new offerings, such as a "A Hands On Tour of the [Skyline Gardens Restoration Project](#)," lead by garden tour host Glen Schneider, whose garden is on this year's Tour; "Garden As If Life Depended On It: Gardening for Birds, Butterflies and Moths", - and even a Gold Rush Walking Tour, which will be lead by history fan and long-time Tour host Steve Wiley, from San Lorenzo High School's Native Plant Garden and Nursery, will be offered. In addition, as usual, there will be workshops on how to propagate native plants, design a native plant garden for color and interest throughout the year, and garden for wildlife. These workshops will fill; register early to avoid being disappointed.

Join the California Native Plant Society when you register for the Tour and receive a special Natives Garden Tour registrant discount! Become a California Native Plant Society (CNPS) member for just \$30 (normally \$50) when you register

for the Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour. That's 40% off the regular membership price. Members receive the beautiful *Flora* magazine, filled with native gardening tips, inspiring interviews, and photo essays. You'll also be put in touch with your local chapter for field trip, volunteer, and other event information. Simply complete your online registration for the Tour, and in your registration confirmation email you'll find a discount code for a one-year membership. Don't miss this rare discounted opportunity to join CNPS in its mission to restore nature one garden at a time and save California's native plants and places. *Offer good through midnight, May 4 and does not apply to current CNPS members.*

- Doug Tallamy, *Why it Matters and What We Can Do*: <https://youtu.be/bF5e-vyKLw0>

Tallamy's list of SF Bay Area native plants and the number of species of butterflies and moths that will lay eggs on them is on the Tour's home page; check it out!

I hope you enjoy this year's Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour.

Kathy Kramer

Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour Coordinator
(510) 236-9558

kathy@kathykramerconsulting.net
www.bringingbackthenatives.net
[Visit the Garden Tour on Facebook](#)

FIELD TRIPS

The Rare Plant Committee welcomes you to sign up for the March 7 field trip to view the fragrant fritillaries. Below is a description of this field trip, which will start at 1 pm. This hike is limited to 20 people, and you need to RSVP to me at adkisson1@aol.com and receive confirmation to attend.

Cynthia Adkisson East Bay Chapter Rare Plant Chair

Saturday, March 7; 1 - 5 pm. Lilies of the Foothills. Saturday, March 7; 1 - 5 pm. Lilies of the Foothills. Meet at Borges Ranch upper parking lot at the trailhead (directions below). Limit 20 people (participants must sign up by emailing adkisson1@aol.com prior to the field trip; this trip is not listed on meetup.com/ebcnps/events).

We will explore and document one of the last local populations of the rare fragrant fritillary (*F. liliacea*), which should be in glorious full bloom at this time. This is a large, off-trail population in Diablo Foothills Park, fenced and managed by parks staff.

Fragrant fritillaries are dry-growing bulbs of the meadows of the greater Bay Area. They are pure white in flower, and can bloom by the hundreds. California Rare Plant Rank: **1B.2** (*rare, threatened, or endangered in CA and elsewhere*)

Once more widely occurring in the East Bay, these are now reduced to two major populations. The site also includes a rich mix of other native species, and we will document a plant list. Time permitting, we will fan out and scour the nearby ridges to document any other overlooked Frit colonies in the area.

This field trip is led by naturalist Glen Schneider, an East Bay native, and organizer of the Skyline Gardens Alliance restoration project. He grew up in a local nursery family and has been a native plant garden landscape designer/builder for over 40 years. His own garden in Berkeley is on the *Bringing*



Fragrant fritillary, Diablo location

Back the Natives Garden Tour.

Directions to Borges Ranch Entrance From downtown Walnut Creek at the intersection of Ygnacio Valley Road and N.

Main, drive out Ygnacio Valley Road approximately 2.0 miles to Bancroft / Walnut Avenue (NOT Walnut Boulevard which is much closer to downtown). Turn right on Walnut Avenue and drive approximately 1.6 miles to the intersection with Oak Grove/Castle Rock Road. Turn right on Castle Rock Road and drive about 1.1 miles to Borges Ranch Road. (Look for a small sign on the right side of the road.) Turn right onto Borges Ranch Road and drive slowly 0.7 miles to the upper parking lot.

Field trip to Kennedy Grove/Seafoam Loop Trail Sunday March 8 at 1pm. Rain/high wind date Saturday March 28 at 1 pm.

Janet Gawthrop will lead this field trip in search of early spring flowers, starting from the trailhead at the end of Patra Drive in El Sobrante. With luck, somewhere on this 2.5 mile walk we may find bearded clover (*Trifolium barbigerum*), either species of *Trillium*, pine reed grass (*Calamagrostis rubescens*) cream cups, fritillaries, and maybe shooting stars. For a much more complete plant list, see Gregg Weber's description from April 2018 in past Meetup events.

Bring water and be prepared for some vertical gain and mud (OK, I'm being optimistic). If you are using Google maps you can use 2579 Patra Drive in El Sobrante to locate the trailhead. Street parking is legal and usually abundant.

From I-80, exit at San Pablo Dam Road and follow it all the way to the intersection of San Pablo Dam & Castro Ranch roads. Turn left (and uphill) on Castro Ranch, and follow it several blocks to the intersection with Hillside. Turn right onto Hillside and follow it to the intersection of Patra Drive and Hillside. Turn left onto Patra Drive and look for parking. From Orinda, go west on San Pablo Dam Road until you reach Castro Ranch Road, where you'll turn right. The rest of the directions are identical.

For hard-core mass transit folks, you can catch AC Transit bus #74 around the corner from the Richmond BART station at 21st & MacDonald, and then take it to the last stop at Hillside & Sherwood Forest. You will need to walk or bike 0.8 miles further east on Hillside until you reach the trailhead at Patra.

Saturday, March 21, 10 am-12:00 pm - botanical hike in Leona Canyon. Join us for a hike through an expansive wooded canyon protected in a 290-acre parkland near Merritt College in Oakland. We will see early blooming species in the oak and bay woodlands and riparian vegetation on the banks of the shaded creek.

Meet at the Leona Canyon staging area in Oakland. From the Leona Canyon staging area we will follow Leona Trail downhill to the Artemisia Trail.

POINT ISABEL AND BEYOND IN FEBRUARY

On January 30 a small group of volunteers completed a three mile roundtrip hike starting at Point Isabel in the company of Cynthia Powell, Executive Director of [Calflora](#). We viewed the areas where we have removed invasive plants and planted California native plants, and where we are removing Algerian lavender (*Limonium ramossisimum* aka LIRA) infestations. We started at the South Shore of Point Isabel along the Bay Trail, and went to Hoffman Marsh, East and West Stege Marsh, and Marina Bay. Along the way we spotted blooming western morning glory (*Calystegia occidentalis*) and island mallow (*Malva assurgentiflora*). A beautiful Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) greeted us as we headed back from Marina Bay.

EBCNPS member Janet Gawthrop created a comprehensive plant list for Point Isabel and, following the hike, Calflora added that 2016 list ([Point Isabel EBCNPS plant checklist](#)) to its database so that progress in controlling invasive weeds in the area can be tracked. We will update this list later this month.

Calflora is a fantastic resource that we highly recommend. If you're interested in adding your plant lists and/or your plant photos to [Calflora](#), please contact them and they will be happy to assist you.

On the South Shore of Point Isabel we spent six mornings removing LIRA, weed wrenching about 350 French broom shrubs, and picking up eleven garbage bags of trash. We

count the LIRA seedlings as we remove them and from late January to February 16, we pulled out a total of 15,990 seedlings from this small area that was sprayed with herbicides by Cal-IPC in 2019. These seedlings are the product of the 68 garbage bags full of mature Algerian lavender that we removed from the South Shore between August and December 2019.

This dry February compelled us to irrigate the new plantings to ensure their survival. At our last work party on February 16 a tireless and dedicated volunteer crew also picked up trash and pulled out radish, mallow, and oat grass from around the California native shrubs. We were rewarded at the end of the work party when we beheld the young buckeye (*Aesculus californica*), grown from seed harvested on site, that volunteer Randy so carefully planted close to the marsh. California buckeyes are the first California native trees to leaf out each year, they provide shade (until their leaves drop in July), and their fragrant flowers provide rich pollen and nectar for native bees, hummingbirds, and butterflies. It was the picture-perfect way to close a terrific work party day alongside Hoffman Marsh.

Our thanks to the EBRPD and to our Ranger, Bruce. And thanks as always to all the great volunteers.

Jane and Tom Kelly



Calflora Hike to Marina Bay. Photo by Jane Kelly.

POINT ISABEL PHOTOS



Above: Randy, Miranda, Kumail, and the buckeye. Below: Feb. 1st Crew. Photos by Jane Kelly.



WATSON LAETSCH, CNPS FOUNDER, DIES AT 86

Watson McMillan “Mac” Laetsch, a distinguished professor emeritus of plant biology and former Vice Chancellor (Undergraduate Affairs & Development) at the University of California at Berkeley, passed away at his home on January 5th. He was 86.

Laetsch was a member of the group that founded the California Native Plant Society and served as its first president. CNPS grew out of an *ad hoc* effort to save the Regional Parks Botanic Garden, which involved other Berkeley faculty, including prominent chemists Leo Brewer and Melvin Calvin. When the garden was saved, Laetsch asked, “Well, why don’t we form a society to protect native plants?” Laetsch credits Mary Wallers, Helen Mar Beard and Leonora Strohmaier as key players in starting CNPS, along with Jim Roof, then director of the Tilden Botanical Garden, and Jepson Herbarium staff, Drs. Remo Bacigalupi and Larry Heckard. The first meetings were in Laetsch’s and Helen Mar Beard’s homes and the group persuaded Mac to become the first president. Mac got to see what he had spawned about a decade ago when Delia and I brought him to speak at a meeting of Santa Clara Chapter. He was a lifelong member of the East Bay Chapter.

Mac Laetsch was born in Bellingham, Washington in 1931. His father was a Protestant minister and his mother an avid reader. Ministers and their families travel, explaining why Mac spent his high school years in Indiana. He was both an outstanding athlete and scholar in high school, and was offered opportunities for the former at Purdue University and the latter at Wabash College. He chose Wabash, where he majored in botany, zoology and history. At graduation, in 1956, he won a Fulbright scholarship to study in India, where he met his future wife, Sita Priyadarshini Capildeo. Sita was the daughter in a prominent Indian family in Trinidad and Tobago and her parents had sent her to India to find a suitable, Brahman, husband – after a first kiss at the Taj Mahal, Mac and Sita eloped to Canada where they married. Mac and Sita lived and raised a family in Berkeley.

Laetsch earned his PhD at Stanford in 1961, won a National Science Foundation Senior Fellowship to do postdoctoral studies at University College London, and taught briefly at SUNY Stony Brook before joining the Botany Department at UC Berkeley in 1963.

Laetsch, the scientist, made seminal contributions to the understanding of C4 photosynthesis. His studies of leaf anatomy and chloroplast ultrastructure rounded out the biochemical studies of two Australian plant physiologists, and let Laetsch write, in 1968, “A hypothesis is presented stating that the unique morphological and biochemical characters of these plants represent adaptations for efficient and rapid carbon fixation in environments where water stress frequently limits photosynthesis.” Laetsch’s hypothesis was spot-on and C4 grasses, such as sorghum, have become the subjects of intense study owing to their ability to withstand drought.

Leadership is the rarest quality at any university and, here, Laetsch excelled. He led the UC Botanical Garden, the Lawrence Hall of Science and was Vice Chancellor for Undergraduates and then Vice Chancellor for Development. Years before Mac became VC for Development, his colleague in botany, the mycologist Ralph Emerson, wrote to a committee considering Laetsch’s promotion, “Mac Laetsch walks with ease in the halls of wealth and power.” Clearly, Emerson wasn’t the only one to notice Mac’s talent for fund raising. Laetsch, and Chancellor Ira Michael Heyman led the record setting, “Keeping the Promise” campaign and later, as an emeritus professor, Mac again worked with Heyman to raise more than \$30 million to rebuild the Bancroft Library

Mac is survived by his elder brother, Bruce Laetsch of Indianapolis; his sons, Krishen and John Laetsch; his daughter-in-law, Jenny Hanson; and his grandson, Charlie Hanson. Mac’s wife, Sita, preceded him in death in 2019, after 61 years of marriage.

Donations in the professor’s name may be made to the Friends of the Bancroft Library or the UC Berkeley Botanical Garden. A celebration of his life will be held April 26 at the UC Berkeley campus.

Krishen Laetsch, Mac’s son, planted a dogwood grove in memory of his parents. Five of the plants came from the East Bay CNPS Nursery.

Mac and Sita Laetsch have been the subject of other obituaries:

Mac Laetsch, San Francisco Chronicle : <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Watson-McMillan-Mac-Laetsch-UC-Berkeley-15022524.php>

Mac Laetsch, College of Natural Resources, UC Berkeley: <https://nature.berkeley.edu/news/2020/01/obituary-watson-mac-laetsch-0>

Sita Laetsch, San Francisco Chronicle: <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/sfgate/obituary.aspx?n=sita-laetsch&pid=191332486>

Mac Laetsch’s oral history is available from the Bancroft Library: https://digitalassets.lib.berkeley.edu/roho/ucb/text/laetsch_mac.pdf

The scientific publication quoted above is: Laetsch, W. M. (1968). Chloroplast specialization in dicotyledons possessing the C4-dicarboxylic acid pathway of photosynthetic CO₂ fixation. *American Journal of Botany*, 55(8), 875-883.

John Taylor

EBCNPS UNUSUAL PLANT DATABASE AND CALFLORA

East Bay CNPS Unusual Plants Committee Chair Dianne Lake has been documenting rare and unusual plants in the East Bay since the mid-1980s! This February 2, she and Calflora led a field training session to revitalize this important program.



Dianne Lake

Beginning in the mid-1980s, Dianne and other members of the East Bay CNPS Rare Plants Committee conducted field surveys every Sunday for almost 15 years, rain or shine. While monitoring statewide rare plant populations, this intrepid and dedicated group also observed many native species that were locally rare – occurring in only a few places in Alameda and Contra Costa counties – but more common in other parts of California and therefore not classified as rare statewide. To recognize the importance of species that were rare or threatened locally but not statewide, East Bay CNPS designated these species “unusual plants.” This was a brand new concept, and the chapter chose the term “unusual” because at the time the term “locally rare” was generally interpreted to mean statewide rare plants that occurred locally.

Native plants in our chapter area may be “unusual” – locally rare – for a number of reasons. Many locally rare species reach the geographic limit (edge) of their natural range in Alameda or Contra Costa County. Others grow in habitats that are very limited, isolated, or threatened here. Still others are in severe decline due to habitat loss, weed and insect invasions, changes in land use, altered water courses, or other detrimental factors. Native plants in isolated populations, especially at the limit of their range, are important because they may be genetically distinct from populations occurring where the species is more common. This genetic variation may allow them to better survive catastrophic events that could extirpate the species where it is common.

But studying our local unusual plants is not just about preserving individual species. It is also a way to determine local

areas of native plant diversity, define places with threatened habitats or suites of endangered plants, define patterns and trends that cause local rarity, and identify areas in need of study or conservation due to other special environmental factors.

Monitoring unusual plants is essential to identify where their populations exist and how they progress over time, and then to take the necessary steps to ensure their survival. The East Bay CNPS Unusual Plants Program encourages trained volunteers to go out on their own or form a group to survey either a specific area for several plants or several areas for a specific plant while documenting their observations in Calflora.

To help track the locations of and changes in locally rare plant populations, a team of new volunteers met at Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve on February 2, 2020 to practice collecting data with botanists Dianne Lake, Heath Bartosh, and David Gowen, and Calflora Executive Director Cynthia Powell. Each team member signed up to monitor one or more plant populations in 2020. The goal is to ensure the survival of these sensitive, unusual plant populations in perpetuity. Dianne Lake noted that for many of our chapter area’s unusual plants, the most recent observation records are from long ago. “I want to get as many people out to as many places as possible to see if these plants are still there,” she said.

In the early 1990s, Dianne compiled a list of all the unusual plants the committee had observed during their surveys over the years. Surprised at how long the list was (865 plants), she did more extensive research and interviewed many local botanists. She determined that some plants were more common, but the list remained long (660 plants). As field research continued over the years, surveyors found more populations, and the list is now 466 plants. A database was set up to track these unusual plants, and in the mid-1990s it was transferred into another, more powerful and capable database with the help of Calflora, the nonprofit online database that provides information about California plant diversity. Later East Bay CNPS’s Gregg Weber created an online version of the unusual plants database, which the Unusual Plants Program uses now.

To streamline collection of plant information, Calflora developed Observer Pro, a data collection phone application that enables surveyors to record their observations electronically while in the field. Dianne, Gregg Weber, and Calflora created a customized Observer Pro data collection form for unusual plants including the fields Dianne would like the unusual plants team to collect. On this customized data collection form, Dianne decided to include habitat description, population size and any threats, phenology, and multiple photos. Observations collected through this group will be added to the East Bay CNPS unusual plants database.

Calflora groups like this one may share unpublished and/or private observations amongst themselves, one of the main

UNUSUAL DATABASE AND CALFLORA (CONT.)

advantages of a Calflora group. While many Calflora groups are open, e.g. Plant ID Help group is an open group available to anyone, the East Bay CNPS unusual plants group is private. Calflora is a free and publicly available database. You may start your own special interest group and collect data, too!

If you would like to help East Bay CNPS survey unusual plants in our chapter area, contact Dianne Lake

(diannelake@yahoo.com). Dianne encourages beginners as well as those with experience—knowledge of taxonomy and East Bay plants, and familiarity with using plant keys—to join the program. By forming teams, those with less experience can participate and learn from more experienced leaders.

Cynthia Powell, Sue Rosenthal, and Robin Hunter



The Black Diamond Mines ID group.

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
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.

Officers

President

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