

July-August 2019



The Bay Leaf

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

www.ebcnps.org

www.nativeherenursery.org

THANKS TO SUE DUCKLES

Sue has stepped down from her position as Recording Secretary for the EBCNPS Board. President Judy Schwartz will choose her replacement according to the Chapter bylaws.

Thank you, Sue, for your many contributions to our Chapter! Sue isn't going away - she will stay on the Board until her term expires and we may see her at Native Here Nursery.



Sue Duckles, right, with President Judy Schwartz. Text and photo by Delia Taylor.

SKYLINE GARDENS REPORT

This past month has been full of scouring hill and dale to keep ahead of Italian thistles and wild oats, and we've done a great job of that with our thistlecatchers and our mowing. Although we've just entered Summer for the next month we are still weeding to catch such invaders as rose clover, scattergrass, and spurge before they ripen and throw their seeds. This will save us tons of work come the rains. As to wildflowers, right now the sticky monkey flower and farewell-to-spring are just glorious, as are the big, red cobweb thistles. Soap root flowers, literally by the thousands, open fresh each day as dusk approaches.

We'll be going out twice a week for July: Sunday mornings from 9:30 to 1 and Wednesday afternoon/evenings from 4 pm to sunset. Please let me know if you can make it.

Speaking of evenings, in May we did an early season Moth Night to wrap up our UC Berkeley DeCal class. Moth nights are best on warm, still evenings. We got the opposite - a cold, foggy, windy one. We set up our sheets and UV lights in the lee of the wind in three places along the Skyline Trail between Steam Trains and the old bench at Siesta Nose.

We were visited by over fifteen moth species, but curiously, these were almost all large moths. We guessed this was because the larger ones are stronger fliers and better able to navigate tough moth conditions. The smaller ones were just not out (or able to find us) in the fog and the wind.

Several beautiful ones did find us and here are some photos. First, here is one of the Geometrid moths (photo by Ken Ichi):



This one, *Tetracis cevinaria*, is about two inches across. The golden wings are highlighted by a purple stripe. They are native to western North America. As far as we know, this one does not yet have a common name (any ideas?), but the caterpillars feed on native *Prunus* species.

Next we have the Vestal Tiger Moth (*Spilosoma vestalis*). These are pure snow white and fuzzy. (Vestal Tiger Moths live on the West Coast of North America, mostly in dense forests. Among their larval food plants are alders, and there are many alders growing along the banks of Siesta Creek, down in the valley. The photo is by Ken Ichi.



These moths have black spots on their abdomens, but most strikingly they have a boss of bright scarlet fuzz on each front fore-leg. Here's a close up of that:



The black dots on the abdomen and the scarlet fore-legs are diagnostic for this species. (Photo thanks to Cat.)

Towards the end of the evening we were visited by one large Sphinx Moth, also known as Hawk Moths or Hummingbird Moths. Here is the one (photo by Ken Ichi):



SKYLINE GARDENS REPORT (CONT.)

These are very large moths, sometimes mistaken for Hummingbirds. They resemble hummingbirds in their flight patterns, as they hover over flowers while nectaring. This one, the White-lined Sphinx Moth (*Hyles lineata*) is nearly three inches from head to tail, and makes quite a sound. They occur all across North America.

They are known as “long-tongued nectar foragers.” The very long “tongue” is used for feeding from large thistles and evening-primrose flowers, among others. Here’s a Sphinx Moth in action:

This one is hovering above a big thistle flower head, and you can see the long tongue inserted deep inside. This photo is



from iNaturalist, taken in the Hill Country west of Austin, Texas, and we thank Greg Lasley for a great shot. I’m not sure of this thistle species, perhaps a native Texas one, but I’m willing to bet that these moths also feed on our giant, red Cobweb Thistles up on the ridge at Skyline Gardens.

Although I’ve seen Sphinx Moths elsewhere I did not know they occurred in lowland California. The mystery was deepened by hearing that their larval food plants are primarily in the evening primrose family. Somehow I could not imagine enough *Clarkia*, *Epilobium*, or California fuchsia to sustain them in our local area.

Then, last week a group of us were down in Siesta Valley looking at sedges (*Carex*) and since these are mostly water-loving we visited Siesta Springs along the DeLaviega Trail. Eric Wrubel, a *Carex* expert who works for National Parks over in Marin, was our *Carex* guide for the day. Lo and behold,

he spotted this:

This whopper caterpillar was on a stem of a water-loving



species of *Epilobium*, probably *E. ciliatum*, which grows very profusely at the springs. Look at the size of this one, as big or bigger than your pinkie finger! (Thanks, Eric, for the find and the photo.)

Of course, it all makes sense now, mystery solved; one more link in the web of life.

Happy Trails,
Glen Schneider

BRINGING BACK THE NATIVES GARDEN TOUR REPORT

Click on this link <https://ebcnps.org/wp-content/uploads/BBTN-report.pdf> for a report on the Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour Sunday, May 5, 2019.

Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour
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(510) 236-9558
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Hikes, blitzes, and databases underpin Chapter conservation advocacy

Ongoing conservation of our East Bay native flora entails reading environmental impact reports, waiting to speak on a late night City Council agenda item, and communicating through lots of emails. Recent outdoor events and a valuable database highlight how hikes, bioblitzes, and local field surveys play a vital role in conservation, too.

Exploring the Diablo Range

In April twelve native plant enthusiasts accompanied park naturalist Kevin Dixon on the Coal Canyon Trail in Antioch's Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve, a trail that presents the hiker with a different native plant species at nearly every bend. The walk was organized to orient new field trip aders by taking hikes in the East Bay Chapter's "Botanical Plant Protection Areas," (or "BPPAs"). Chapter President Judy Schwartz initiated the new hike leader orientation program and organized the hike with Field Trip Coordinator, Janet Gawthrop.T

The Chapter's fifteen botanical priority protection areas host



Stopping for native bulbs along Black Diamond Trail.

many rare plants and sensitive native plant communities in Contra Costa and Alameda counties. Chapter members, Heath

Bartosh, Laura Baker, and former Chapter Conservation Analyst Lech Naumovich researched the document. It is available for viewing on the Chapter's website. Each of these botanical areas is threatened with development and needs protection. <https://ebcnps.org/guidebook-to-botanical-priority-protection-areas/>

The Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve abuts the "Four Valleys" Botanical Priority Protection Area, site of Lone Tree, Sand Creek, Horse, and Deer Valleys. In 2017 Conservation Committee member Lesley Hunt recruited Chapter volunteers to help support a citizen's initiative to rezone several square miles of the Sand Creek Valley from suburban sprawl and to less intensive zoning with significantly more open space.

The initiative was successful, but conservation work is long term work and more hoops remain before the Sand Creek area is finally rezoned. The spring hike in Black Diamond Mines illustrated why it is important to continue to work to conserve lands on the remarkable east side of the Diablo range.

Exploring the west Contra Costa shoreline

Another plant hike took place last month in the uplands of Point Molate, part of the "Richmond Shoreline BPPA." Organized by botanists Theo Fitanides and Danny Slakey, the hike was announced to the over 2,800 people that subscribe to the East Bay CNPS "Meetup" site, and it quickly filled up. As guests of the Point San Pablo Harbor, the hike took place at the northern tip of Point Molate. Theo helped everyone to peer into the intricate flower structures of the native perennial grasses, sedges, and rushes that remain abundant in the small valley above the harbor.

The road leading to the harbor crosses property owned by the City of Richmond. The City Council is negotiating with a Los Angeles development company to potentially build



Wading through rushes at Point Molate

over a thousand condominiums against the property's south watershed hills, site of coastal native grasslands, coastal scrub,

CONSERVATION REPORT (CONT.)

and ephemeral streams that feed healthy offshore Bay eelgrass beds. The Chapter supports a citizen-led effort to retain Point Molate's south watershed for hiking and bicycling, sports fields, and family gathering spaces with housing development directed downtown where it could be more affordable and draw upon existing infrastructure.

Also in June, Elizabeth Dougherty of Wholly H2O and local citizens organized a "Bioblitz" in the south watershed beach



Elizabeth Dougherty explains Point Molate Bioblitz.

park. Kids, families, and citizen scientists came out to walk the coastal strand beach and willow riparian area to record sightings of plants, insects, and birds into the online application iNaturalist. KTVU-Channel 2 covered the Bioblitz as well as the controversy over the proposed building of shoreline condos here.

Tucked along the shoreline north of the Richmond-San Rafael bridge, Point Molate is still unknown to many Richmond and Bay Area residents. It's hard to appreciate something you don't know intimately. Many on the hike and Bioblitz

went away knowing why the south watershed needs to be repurposed as a public and environmental resource.

What grows here?

In late February, Cal-Fire announced that the funding of a 14 mile fuel break from Lafayette to Berkeley's Tilden Park had been approved by Governor Newsom. Localities are only given a short time - until December 2019 - to complete the work. Although California Environmental Quality Act review of the projects was suspended, the Moraga-Orinda Fire Department, manager of the local project, hired an environmental firm to help plan and monitor this summer and fall's vegetation fuel reduction work so that rare plants and wildlife habitat are not harmed (note: the project also hopes to enhance some plant communities, such as grasslands, by using prescribed burns).

The Moraga-Orinda Fire Department is meeting with the public to explain the program. Thanks to Dianne Lake and computer expert Gregg Webber there is an online Chapter database of "Rare and Unusual Plants of the East Bay." This database, other data sources, and work site environmental monitors will help protect the habitat of several rare plants that grow within the "shaded fuel break." Also to minimize the risk of weedy growth coming in afterwards, the Chapter is encouraging the project to retain the native plant diversity of the fuel break treatment sites even as the volume of vegetation is reduced.

Protecting local places of rare natural beauty requires a lot of time spent indoors, but it also comes from getting outdoors to know these places, by photographing and recording the plant diversity found in them, and by introducing others to the hidden natural gems of the East Bay. Thank you to all who do this, and may the natural beauty of the East Bay and the State refresh and welcome each of you over this summer. (Photos by author.)

Jim Hanson, Conservation Committee Chair

POINT ISABEL IN JUNE

The events at Point Isabel in June demonstrated once again how fortunate we are to live among such a caring and knowledgeable environmental community.

- At our first work party EBCNPS Field Trip Leader Janet Gawthrop set her sights on a couple of large infestations of valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*) that we had not yet been able to remove. Janet dug down deeply into the soil, eradicating most of the weed and John Kenny followed up and finished the task. It was a relief for us to have it eliminated before it was out of control.
- We spotted a beautiful bright green larva that none of us recognized so we sent the photo to Heath Bartosh of [Nomad Ecology](#) who referred us to [BugGuide](#) where we posted the photo with an inquiry. Within 20 minutes a contributor identified the little creature as a White-lined Sphinx Moth larva (*Hyles lineata*). Our volunteer, Karen Dabrusin, had referred us to naturalist and educator Charlotte Torgovitsky of the “not-for-profit, volunteer-powered nursery” [Home Ground Habitats](#) in Novato. Charlotte also identified the larva, highlighting the beauty and hummingbird-like behavior of the White-lined Sphinx Moth itself.
- At our second work party John Kenny spotted a new (to us) plant alongside Hoffman Marsh. We reached out to Restoration Ecologist & Botanist [Lech Naumovich](#) who viewed our photos and confirmed

the ID we had tentatively surmised as sticky sand spurry (*Spergularia macrotheca*). Based on its distribution, Lech says it has the most likely subspecific ID of *Spergularia macrotheca* var. *macrotheca* which shows a strong perennial form and has notably pink corollas that open in the afternoon/late pm. (We managed to photograph the blooms at 5pm one day.) Lech tells us this is a fantastic taxon with a very interesting distribution - coastal and inland sands, alike - and that it is a locally rare plant.

Point Isabel is in full bloom with many different farewell-to-spring (*Clarkia*) plants in flower amidst the California poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*), the golden deerweeds (*Acmispon glaber*) with their visiting bumblebees, and the narrow-leaf buckwheats (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*) just beginning to show their pink buds.

Our sincere thanks go to all the environmental community members who so generously share their knowledge and their time with us.

Many thanks also to the EBRPD for its steadfast support, to the City of Richmond for its speedy and consistent response to our requests for trash collection, and to all the stewards and volunteers for their dedicated habitat restoration work at multiple sites.

Jane and Tom Kelly



Valerian Haul. Photo by Jane Kelly.

POINT ISABEL IN JUNE (CONT.)



Above: Members of the June 15 Crew. Below left: Clarkia and Poppies. Below right: Clarkia Alone. (Photos by Jane Kelly.)



POINT ISABEL IN JUNE (CONT.)



Above left: White-lined Sphinx Moth Larva.
Above right: Deerweed. Below left: Sticky Sand Spurry – Midday. Below right: Sticky Sand Spurry – 5pm. Photos by Jane Kelly.



JULY, AUGUST RESTORATION PROJECTS

Sunday, July 14, broom pull

We will not be holding a broom pull on Saturday, July 6th because of the holiday weekend, but we will hold our second Sunday pull on July 14th from 9:30-1:30.

We will meet at Redwood Bowl on Skyline Boulevard, next to Chabot Space and Science Center.

We will be pulling broom on the *Baccharis* trail, just off of the Westridge trail. It's an easy twenty minute hike from the parking lot. As always we will be providing delicious snacks and beverages.

This trail really needs some T.L.C.! I hope to see you there! If anyone wants to avoid using their cars, on July 14 they can take AC Transit bus #339 (#39 on weekdays), which runs all the way from Fruitvale BART to the Chabot Space Center parking lot.

Ranger Monica

Redwood Operations

Operations staff | Park Operations

East Bay Regional Park District

7867 Redwood Road, Oakland, CA 94619

510-544-3127

redwood@ebparks.org | www.ebparks.org

Saturday, July 6 and Saturday, August 3

**Point Isabel at end of Rydin Road at Richmond shoreline
9:30 am-1:30 pm**

Jane and Tom Kelly coordinate this ongoing weeding and planting crew, which meets once or twice a month. For details, e-mail kyotousa@sbcglobal.net

Here is a list of restoration 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

510-704-8628 (w)

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

www.skylinegardens.org

Sunday, July 7 and Sunday, August 4

Northshore Basin, end of Schoolhouse Creek at Berkeley shoreline 10 am-1 pm

John Kenny is managing this weeding and planting site just above the shoreline riprap. Some watering may replace planting in this dry month. For details, e-mail johnkenny54@yahoo.com.

Saturday, July 13 and Saturday, August 10

**Sibley Park, Old Tunnel Road staging area (Orinda side)
9:30 am-1 pm**

Join us at the cattle gate, where we will sign in with the park ranger, and pick up loaner gloves, water and snacks to continue denting the notorious wall of broom (*Genista monspessulana*). Let us know if you see any stinkwort (*Dittrichia graveolens*). Contact janetgawthrop47@gmail.com if you have questions.

**Saturday, July 20 and Saturday, August 17, 10 am-noon
Garber Park Claremont Ave. trailhead above Claremont Hotel, north Oakland**

Weeding is steep but shady here. Parking is limited, but you can get as far as the Claremont Hotel by AC Transit buses #79 or 80 (check www.511.org for schedules). For more on Garber Park see <https://www.meetup.com/garberpark/>

Sunday, July 21 and Sunday, August 18

Huckleberry park, meeting at the parking lot 9:30 am-1 pm

First, we will sign in and pick up gloves, tools, and alcohol

Glen Schneider, leader

stinkwort (*Dittrichia graveolens*)
Removal

Barbara Leitner, leader

Walnut Creek Open Space

Lesley Hunt, leader

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

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Sally de Becker
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