



May 2006

The Bay Leaf

California Native Plant Society • East Bay Chapter • Alameda & Contra Costa Counties
www.ebcnps.org

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Board of Directors Meeting

Wednesday, May 3, 7:30 pm, home of Joe Willingham, 2512 Etna St., Berkeley

Native Here p. 6

Fridays, May 5, 12, 19, 26 Native Here Nursery open 9 am - noon

Saturdays, May 6, 13, 20, 27 nursery open 10 am - 1 pm

Field Trips p. 4

Saturday May 6, 2 pm, **Hillside Natural Area in El Cerrito**

Sunday, May 14, 10 am, **Briones Regional Park, Blue Oak Trail, Spengler Trail**

Sunday, May 21, 9:30 am, **Mount Diablo**

Plant Sale Activities p. 4

Sunday, May 7, 10 am - 5 pm, CNPS will be selling plants and/or books at six gardens on the **Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour**.

MEMBERSHIP MEETING

California Kelps: Native and Not

Speaker: **Kathy Ann Miller**

Wednesday, May 24, 2006, 7:30 pm

Conference Center, University of California Botanical Garden at Berkeley (directions below)

The north Pacific Ocean is the center of diversity for kelps—large brown seaweeds in the order Laminariales. California has a large share of these important and beautiful creatures that create habitat for entire communities of organisms. This month's speaker, Kathy Ann Miller, will provide an overview of some of our native kelp species and then focus on the new kelp in town—an Asian kelp, *Undaria pinnatifida* (wakame), that arrived on our coast about six years ago. She will address what we know now, and what we need to study to understand the impact of this newcomer on native kelps as well as the potential for its spread to other sites in California.

Kathy Ann Miller is a research associate at the University Herbarium at UC Berkeley, working with Paul Silva, a world-renowned algal taxonomist. She specializes in California seaweeds, particularly those of the California Channel Islands. She's also studying the

seaweeds of the Galapagos Islands. She received both her BA and PhD degrees from UC Berkeley, then taught at the University of Puget Sound in Washington for ten years. More recently, she worked at USC's marine lab on Santa Catalina Island for four years. She delights in field collections and natural history, and is proud to have received the Western Society of Naturalists' "Naturalist of the Year" award in 2005.

East Bay Chapter CNPS membership meetings are free of charge and open to everyone. This month's meeting will take place in the Conference Center of the University of California Botanical Garden on Centennial Drive, east of Memorial Stadium and west of the Lawrence Hall of Science, above the main campus of the University of California in Berkeley. The Garden gate will open at 7:00 pm; the meeting begins at 7:30 pm. Refreshments will be served after the meeting. Please contact Sue Rosenthal, 510-496-6016 or rosacalifornica@earthlink.net, if you have questions.

Directions to the UC Botanical Garden

From Interstate 80, take the University Avenue exit. Take University Avenue toward the hills until it dead ends at Oxford Street. Turn left on Oxford Street and

continued on page 2

MEMBERSHIP MEETING

continued from page 1

continue to the second stoplight. Turn right on Hearst Avenue and continue to the second stoplight. Turn right on Gayley Road and continue to the first stop sign. Turn left on Stadium Rimway to the first stop sign. Turn left on Centennial Drive. The Garden entrance is 3/4 mile up Centennial Drive on the right. Parking is past the Garden on the left (across the street from the Garden).

From Dwight Way in Berkeley, take Dwight Way east, two blocks past Piedmont. Turn left on Prospect. Turn right on Centennial Drive. The Garden entrance is 3/4 mile up Centennial Drive on the right. Parking is past the Garden on the left (across the street from the Garden).

From Walnut Creek, take the Fish Ranch Road exit from Highway 24 (just before the Caldecott Tunnel). Turn right onto Fish Ranch Road at the end of the

long off ramp. Continue up Fish Ranch Road about 3/4 mile. At the stop sign, turn right on Grizzly Peak Boulevard. Continue 3.1 miles on Grizzly Peak Boulevard to the next stop sign (Centennial Drive/Golf Course Road). Turn left on Centennial Drive. Travel 3/4 mile down Centennial Drive, past the Lawrence Hall of Science. The parking lot is on the right-hand side just before the Garden, which is on the left.

Future Meetings

After May, the membership meetings will be on summer recess until September 27. Watch for the announcement of the September program, as well as the chapter picnic, in the July/August and September issues of the *Bay Leaf*.

SKYLINE SERPENTINE PRAIRIE: A BOTANIST'S PERSPECTIVE

The following article is based on a presentation by Steve Edwards at the March 24 East Bay Regional Park District Board Operations Committee meeting addressing Serpentine Prairie resource protection strategies.

In the Oakland-Berkeley Hills there are just a few small hotspots of native plant diversity. Two of these are pre-eminent, not only because they support great diversity, including many beautiful wildflowers, but also because plants that are globally endangered depend on these sites for survival. One of the two sites is the Huckleberry Botanical Preserve; the other is the Skyline Serpentine Prairie.

The great treasure that this prairie preserves is serpentine grassland. Serpentine is California's official state rock. Statewide, serpentine is critically important for the survival of many endangered species. It also supports many of the state's most spectacular wildflower displays as well as some of the most pristine remaining native grasslands. Although serpentine accounts for only 1.5 percent of the state's area, it supports 13 percent of California's endemic species—those found only in California.

This is because serpentine is very low in calcium and other essential plant nutrients, including nitrogen, and exotic annual grasses are not well-adapted to this environment. Thus, exotic competition is limited on serpentine, leaving space for California native plants—often very rare ones—that have evolved serpentine tolerance over thousands to millions of years. The Serpentine Prairie is thus able to preserve a remarkable array of native plants that cannot be found anywhere else in the Oakland-Berkeley Hills, and in some cases anywhere else in the East Bay.

The array of native grasses on the Prairie is astonish-

ing. At last count there were 17 species plus one or possibly two wild hybrids—thus 18 or 19 kinds of native grasses. Owing to its position close to the bay, the Serpentine Prairie is able to support a unique mixture of coastal prairie and foothill prairie, so it is enriched from two sources. That kind of diversity in a space as small as the Serpentine Prairie has few rivals anywhere else in California. There are a few places in the Coast Ranges that come close or may even equal it in numbers of grasses, but they, too, are isolated, precious, and unique preserves that require protection. The John Thomas Howell Botanical Preserve on Ring Mountain in Marin County is an example.

In addition to grasses, the Serpentine Prairie supports the best displays of field wildflowers in the Oakland-Berkeley Hills. This is just a vanishingly small remnant of the floral splendor that covered the entire range—all the East Bay hills—into the 1850s, and it exists only because of the protection serpentine affords from exotic annual grasses by virtue of its low nutrient levels.

The most famous endangered plant on the prairie is the Presidio clarkia (*Clarkia franciscana*). This population was the focus of some fascinating genetic detective work in the early 1990s, which demonstrated that the clarkia population of the Prairie is very distinct from the only other population of the species in the Presidio of San Francisco. In research conducted from the 1950s into the 1990s, especially at U.C. Davis, Presidio clarkia played a significant part in shedding light on processes of evolution in plants, and it is famous in that respect.

The Presidio Clarkia is recognized as endangered by both the state Department of Fish and Game and the federal Fish and Wildlife Service. In fact, it is extremely

endangered. There are probably significantly fewer than 10,000 plants total for the entire species, a very small number for any annual, especially one growing exclusively in cities. Another endangered plant on the prairie is the Tiburon buckwheat (*Eriogonum luteolum* var. *caninum*), a delicate and charming annual with red stems and pink flowers.

In addition to endangered plants, there are others that occur also on Mount Diablo, but in the Oakland-Berkeley Hills only on this small patch of serpentine. Among these are the falcate-leaved onion (*Allium falcifolium*) and Douglas' coyote mint (*Monardella douglasii*). Unfortunately, the coyote mint has not made an appearance for the last ten years. Either it has already been eliminated—it grew only in one patch on a steep slope where people regularly walk off-trail—or perhaps its seed is waiting in the soil for a fire.

The Serpentine Prairie has long been admired for its soft, sumptuous meadows of Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*). This is an elegant and beautiful bunchgrass that is very rare in the East Bay. The Idaho fescue meadows on the Serpentine Prairie were once the most impressive in the East Bay. Unfortunately, they have deteriorated dramatically in the last ten years, and they

now occupy no more than half the area they covered in 1990. More than any other feature in the Regional Parks, these meadows gave a sense of what the perennial grassland of the Outer Coast Ranges looked like before it was replaced by exotic annual grasses.

A serious threat to the prairie is, in fact, invasion by exotic annual grasses. This is linked to another serious threat, the planting and proliferation of trees, most of them exotic to the East Bay. The trees shade out native grasses and wildflowers. They enrich the soil with their litter, which is deadly for serpentine natives. And they concentrate fog drip, thus dramatically increasing yearly precipitation. These effects conspire to favor exotic annual grasses.

The Skyline Serpentine Prairie was, before the early 1960s, much more than twice as large as it is now. But at that time the west half of the prairie was turned into housing and whatever botanical riches it preserved were lost forever. The remnant that remains is an exceedingly precious part of the biological heritage of California, but it has been deteriorating. Our window of opportunity for protecting it may be closing.

SKYLINE SERPENTINE PRAIRIE: A NEIGHBOR'S PERSPECTIVE

The Serpentine Prairie of Redwood Regional Park is a little-known jewel in the East Bay. From the stark beauty of the serpentine (serpentinite) rock to the diversity of plant life, including over sixteen native bunch grasses and a mosaic of springtime flowers, to the quiet of the open prairie, it is a treasure of multiple dimensions. I moved to a property adjacent to the Prairie about five years ago. At the time I knew nothing about it other than it was a beautiful place. I started learning about its significance, hiking on it, enjoying the spring flower display, trying to identify the native grasses, pulling invasive weeds like yellow star thistle, and taking our dog on walks. I have felt privileged to live so close to this unique open space.

However, as beautiful as the Prairie is, I have noticed changes in it over the past few years. Because of more and more concentrated use by dogs and to some extent horses, it has begun to look worn. In the spring, the flowers provide a lovely display, but diminished from previous years. During the dry season, it looks like a dust bowl at the central part of the Prairie. Little can survive under the constant and heavy use. In the winter, it's muddy, and with the spring, fewer flowers. There is more and more animal poop, bagged and unbagged, left on and off the trails. The official trails are getting wider and there are more unofficial trails

crisscrossing the delicate prairie. Things are out of balance.

In an effort to stem further degradation, interested neighbors got together last fall and drafted a petition asking the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) to preserve this precious resource. Nearly a hundred signatures and letters were received, giving the Park District much-needed public support to develop a master management plan.

On March 24, 2006, there was an EBRPD Board Operations Committee meeting that included public comment. It was informational and the first step in a process that will lead to a final plan. Steve Edwards, an expert on the Prairie ecosystem, spoke eloquently about the uniqueness of the Prairie. Joe DiDonato, EBRPD Stewardship Manager, gave a PowerPoint presentation that included proposals for overall management. These include taking an inventory of flora and fauna, removing exotic plant species, doing a controlled burn, closing certain unofficial trails, and fencing off sensitive areas. Many spoke at the meeting, most in favor of the Park District's proposal. There was an understanding among most of the participants that finding a solution for the dog use is integral to the entire plan.

continued on page 4

The next step is to find a less ecologically sensitive area where dogs can run off leash. One possible place is Joaquin Miller Park. Jean Quan, Oakland City Council member for that part of the district, is involved in helping secure a place. There was general agreement that whatever resolution there is, it must involve a coalition of all interested parties.

In the meantime, spring is slowly arriving on the Prairie. It's a great time to visit and discover this jewel for yourself.

Louise Miller

PLANT SALE ACTIVITIES



We're now moving forward with the goal of relocating our plant sale to the Dunsmuir Estate in Oakland and working with a representative from the Dunsmuir House and Gardens, Inc. board to develop a contract. This process could take a few months, but if all goes well, we'll have an agreement in place this summer.

The public is welcome to visit the Dunsmuir Estate grounds for free between 10 am and 4 pm on any Tuesday through Friday year-round. On Wednesdays from April 5 through September 27, you can take a docent-led tour of the grounds and mansion for \$5 (no high heels allowed in the mansion). The grounds are also open for strolling and picnicking on three Sundays—May 7, June 4, and August 6—from 10 am to 3 pm, with tours of the mansion at 1 and 2 pm (\$5). The Dunsmuir Estate is located at 2960 Peralta Oaks Court in Oakland. On weekends, parking is easy; on weekdays, parking may be a bit limited at the north end of the estate (Peralta Oaks Court), but it is more plentiful at the south end (Covington Street). You can also visit the Dunsmuir Estate online at www.dunsmuir.org.

CNPS will be selling plants and/or books at six gardens on the Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour on Sunday, May 7, 10 am - 5 pm. The tour is free, but you must register to attend and receive the garden addresses (www.bringingbackthenatives.net).

Berkeley: Jenny and Scott Fleming's garden—books, T-shirts, posters only

Berkeley: Roy and Carolyn West's garden—plants, books, etc.

El Sobrante: Sobrante Estates gardens—plants, books, etc.

El Cerrito: John Latto's garden—plants, books, etc.

Richmond: Rick and Monica Alatorre's garden—plants, books, etc.

Walnut Creek: Rich McDrew's garden—plants, books, etc.

Feel free to contact me if you have questions or comments about our plant sale: rosacalifornica@earthlink.net or 510-496-6016.

Sue Rosenthal

FIELD TRIPS

Saturday May 6, 2 pm, **Hillside Natural Area in El Cerrito**

Join Rudi Schmid on the tour of several remnant plant communities, including coastal prairie, northern coastal scrub, riparian and oak woodlands. Indigenous species compete with a number of prevalent weeds, including French broom, pampas grass, and Eucalyptus. On this early May field trip in an odd spring, we may find Oakland star tulip (*Calochortus umbellatus*) in flower, along with the more common May blooms of blue elderberry, toyon, and possibly late snowberry. Be prepared for steep paths on short elevation gains, and take precautions for poison oak.

Directions: From UC campus and nearby, go north on Oxford Street to the stop sign at Los Angeles Avenue and turn left, going downhill to the traffic circle. Turn right at the traffic circle and go left onto Arlington

Avenue about 1.3 miles into Kensington. Turn left at the intersection of Arlington and Moeser Lane (large, divided road at the top of the hill), and follow Moeser Lane downhill past three streets before turning right onto King Drive. Continue on King Drive until it intersects with Shevlin Court to the left and follow King Court ahead instead of turning right to continue on King Drive. Park at the end of the cul-de-sac on King Court and meet the field trip group here.

Sunday, May 14, 10 am, **Briones Regional Park, Blue Oak Trail, Spengler Trail**

We will walk the route we walked on the August 2005 field trip. In May we will see different plants in flower, and the weather will be much cooler. There should be many *Calochortus pulchellus*, *Calochortus luteus*, *Dichelostemma*, *Sisyrinchium bellum*, *Calandrinia ciliata*, *Wyethia helenoides*, *Helianthella castanea*, *Collinsia*

heterophylla, *Scutellaria tuberosa*. We will see some unusual plants: *Myrica californica*, *Pickeringia montana*. This loop has a 700 ft elevation gain on the way out and is mostly downhill coming back. Round trip is about 5 miles. Meet at the Reliez Valley staging area (no parking or other fees) in Briones Park at 10 am. Gregg Weber will be leading this trip. If you have any questions, call him at 510-223-3310.

Directions: Take 24 East and exit at Pleasant Hill Road North in Lafayette. Go about one mile north on Pleasant Hill Road and make a left on Reliez Valley Road. Stay on Reliez Valley Road about 3-5 miles to the parking lot on the left, shortly after Withers Avenue.

Sunday, May 21, 9:30 am, **Mount Diablo**
Meet at the Mitchell Canyon parking lot at 9:30 am. We should see a large variety of native plants in flower as we walk through some botanically rich areas of Mount Diablo. We will start at the bottom of Mitchell Canyon, go up to Deer Flat, then take Meridian Ridge Road to

Murchio Gap, then take Eagle Peak Trail and Mitchell Rock Trail back. This walk has a 1600 ft elevation gain and is about 6 miles long. For those who would like a less difficult walk, the first mile of the walk up Mitchell Canyon is very easy and has quite a variety of plants that will be in flower. You can go back whenever you like. Bring lunch and water. We should arrive back at the parking lot around 4-5 pm. Gray sky or light rain will not cancel. Trip leader is Gregg Weber; call Gregg at 510- 223-3310 if you have any questions.

Directions: Take 24 or 680 to Ignacio Valley Road. Continue on Ignacio Valley Road into City of Clayton, turn right on Clayton Road. Turn right on Mitchell Canyon Road. Go to the end of the road. There is a \$4 parking fee for this lot. Do not park in the horse parking area on the left.

Janet Gawthrop

NATIVE PLANT POSTERS

CNPS produces beautiful and educational wildflower posters to further the mission of the Society and as a way to help local chapters raise funds for their work. Our posters are full color, scientifically accurate reproductions of watercolor originals by California artists. Color depictions are available at www.cnps.org.

The following posters are currently available:

Grass Poster by artist Kristin Jakob
The grass poster is available in two forms:
Laminated placemats (set of four, 12" X 18") \$20.00 (member price \$15)
Unlaminated art prints suitable for framing (set of four) \$15.00 (member price \$12)

One sheet displays the anatomy of a grass including roots, shoots and spikelets; another contains grass facts, two other sheets describe the difference between cool- and warm-season grasses and the story of the invasion of California's native grasslands.

Other CNPS posters (not available as placements):
Spring Wildflowers
Wildflowers of the Coast
Wildflowers of the Desert
Shrubs of the Coast Ranges
Wildflowers of the Redwood Forest
Wildflowers of the Sierra Nevada
These posters are \$15 (member price \$10) for unlaminated; \$19 (member price \$13) for laminated.

Prices do not include tax, shipping or handling.

Contact Holly Forbes, 510-234-2913, to purchase from the East Bay Chapter, or visit www.cnps.org to order online. You can also phone in your order to the state office at 916-447-2677.

MEMBERSHIP

Pittsburg-Antioch Community Environmental Faire at Dow Wetlands

CNPS has been invited to join in the Dow and Delta Diablo Sanitation Host Community Environmental Faire on Saturday, May 6. Please consider helping out at our table and joining in the fun. Children are welcome. To help contact Delia Taylor (510-527 3912, deliataylor@mac.com).

The Dow Chemical Company will host its 8th annual event at the Dow Wetlands Preserve with the help of 32 exhibitors who will share their displays, and interact with more than 1,000 visitors. Pontoon boat rides, horse-drawn wagons, and live wild animal shows will be provided for family entertainment. The local sanitary district partnered with Dow, providing event funding to offset expenses.

The wetlands preserve, just south of Dow's Pittsburg plant, is now home to three endangered species, more than 120 bird species and a range of habitats. It is a major stopover on the Pacific Flyway migratory bird route that originates in the Arctic. The site was formerly a dump and has now been restored by Dow.

continued on page 6

MEMBERSHIP

continued from page 5

Oakland Museum Wildflower Show - Helpers Needed

Flowers from the North Coast of California will be featured on May 20 and 21 at the Oakland Museum Wildflower Show. Hours are 10 to 5 on Saturday and 12 to 5 on Sunday. Our chapter will have a table of CNPS information, reference books, and handouts.

Helpers will receive free admission and parking. No experience necessary. Please contact Delia Taylor at 510-527-3912 or deliataylor@mac.com to volunteer.

Delia Taylor

NATIVE HERE NURSERY

Fridays, May 5, 12, 19, 26 Native Here Nursery open 9 am - noon

Saturdays, May 6, 13, 20, 27 nursery open 10 am - 1 pm

By the time you read this I hope the days will finally be getting warmer. In the March *Bay Leaf* I wrote the same thing and it proceeded to rain almost every day of the month, with temperatures mainly in the 40's and 50's. The swale under the big leaf maple tree filled with water seeping from the south end of the nursery and from the hill above. Good thing we had the arborist, who trimmed one of our Monterey pine trees and converted the tree trimmings into wood chips, which make a great mulch. John had also spread wood chips everywhere last year. Without them we might have been slipping and sliding.

The rain and cold weather delayed spring, and plants at the nursery stayed dormant longer. Flowering and seeding is occurring later than it did last year.

It's not the best time of year to plant shrubs or trees, but you can plant annuals and make plans for your fall planting. The banana slugs loved the wet weather and had a field day on our first crop of annuals, but we have put our second crop in slug-proof cages, so get them while they last. We have *Clarkia rubicunda* and others.

This month we start our seed collecting forays on Tuesdays. Meet at the bottom gate of Native Here across from the Tilden Golf Course parking lot exit at 9 am. We usually return by about 1 pm, but sometimes later if we go farther afield. On May 2 we will probably go to Mt. Diablo for grass seeds. If you want to meet us later closer to the mountain, please email Charli, charlid@pacbell.net.

We can also use help at the nursery transplanting, labeling, weeding, and watering. Stop by Fridays 9 am-noon or early Saturdays (before 11 am preferably, as we tend to get busy with customers after that time) and we'll put you to work.

Volunteers are welcome either day we are open, no need to call ahead. We are located in Tilden Park at 101 Golf Course Drive (across the street from the entrance to the Tilden Golf Course), 510-549-0211.

Margot Cunningham, Native Here Nursery

ACTIVITIES OF OTHERS

Wednesday, May 17 and Thursday, May 18, **Antioch Dunes Evening Primrose** surveys and a small amount of weeding. Survey information: A van will leave the Fremont parking lot at 8:30 and will return by 4 pm. Please bring water, lunch, hat, sunscreen, and your favorite pair of garden gloves (we'll have gloves available too). Meet time at Antioch is 10 am for those not carpooling. Surveys take place on steep and uneven sandy terrain. No experience is needed. Volunteers needed for surveys: 3-5 each day. Contact information: Rachel Hurt, rachel_hurt@fws.gov or 510-521-9624. Please reply with specific date, if carpool is needed, and phone number.

Saturday, May 13, **Docent led walk at Antioch**, 10 am, no reservations. Antioch Dunes evening primrose and wallflower in bloom. Rachel Hurt, United States Fish and Wildlife Service Biologist Alameda and Antioch Dunes National Wildlife Reserve, rachel_hurt@fws.gov, 510-521-9624

CHAPTER INTERSHIP

The East Bay Chapter of the California Native Plant Society is please to announce an internship opportunity under the direction of the Conservation Committee. This position will immerse the intern in the researching, organization, and presentation of information that relates to native plant and reptile conservation at the Carnegie State Recreation Area. Please see www.ebcnps.org for more information.

In the assemblies of the enlightened ones there have been many cases of mastering the Way bringing forth the heart of plants and trees; this is what awakening the mind for enlightenment is like. The fifth patriarch of Zen was once a pine-planting wayfarer; Rinza worked on planting cedars and pines on Mount Obaku. . . . Working with plants, trees, fences and walls, if they practice sincerely they will attain enlightenment.

Dogen Zenji

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Open

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www.ebcnps.org

Recorded Chapter Information
510-464-4977

State CNPS web site
www.cnps.org

Membership Application

Name _____

Address _____

Zip _____ Telephone _____

I wish to affiliate with:

____ East Bay Chapter (Alameda and Contra Costa Counties)

____ Other _____

E-mail _____
(optional)

Membership category:

____ Student, Retired, Limited income, \$20

____ Individual, Library, \$35

____ Household, Family, or Group, \$45

____ Supporting, \$75

____ Plant lover, \$100

____ Patron, \$250

____ Benefactor, \$500

____ Mariposa Lily, \$1000

Mail application and check to: California Native Plant Society, 2707 K Street, Suite 1, Sacramento CA 95816

**California Native Plant Society
East Bay Chapter
P.O. Box 5597, Elmwood Station
Berkeley CA 94705**

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**Time Value
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