



California Native Plant Society
Santa Clara Valley Chapter

THE BLAZING STAR

May-June 2008

GENERAL MEETING AND PROGRAM

Friday, May 16th - San Carlos Library
610 Elm Street, San Carlos (at Elm & Chestnut)
Community Room A&B (upstairs)

6:30 pm, pre-meeting: Keying with Natives

7:30 pm, main meeting and program:

Parks for the Future and the GGNRA
Endangered Species Big Year: Conserving
Natural Treasures on the SF Peninsula.

Speakers: **Julia Bott**, Executive Director, San Mateo County Parks & Rec. Foundation; and **Brent Plater**, Director, GGNRA Endangered Species Big Year

San Mateo County is 1/4 of our Chapter's area, and home to a broad array of habitats, a wealth of plant and animal species, and over 75,000 acres of open space. These natural resources make the San Francisco Peninsula a very special place, but protecting them takes another resource too often in short supply: funding. Unlike other portions of the Bay Area, San Mateo County lacks dedicated funding for local and regional parks and open space departments. Parks for the Future aims to change that on June 3rd with Measure O. Join us to learn how Measure O will increase funding for our treasured parks and open spaces.

When people think of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) they often think of Marin or the Presidio. But GGNRA actually extends well into San Mateo County, spanning treasured open spaces like Crystal Springs Watershed and half of Edgewood Park. Just as surprising, GGNRA hosts 33 federally threatened or endangered species--more than any other National Park in continental North America! Join us to learn how the GGNRA Endangered Species Big Year is raising awareness and support for these rare treasures living right in our proverbial back yard. If you need reasons why Parks for the Future is important, the Big Year will provide 33 good ones!

Via Caltrain: Detrain at San Carlos; walk 3 blocks west on San Carlos Ave; turn left on Elm and walk one block; the library is on the right.

From Hwy 101: Take Holly St 3/4 miles west 'til it ends; turn left on Elm and go 2 blocks; the library is on the right.

From I-280: Take Edgewood Rd 2.5 miles east; turn left on Alameda de las Pulgas and go 1.6 miles; turn right on San Carlos Ave and go 1/2 mile; turn right on Elm and go 1 block; the library is on the right.

Parking: Surface lot off Elm, underground lot off Chestnut, or on street.

CNPS general meetings are free and open to the public. For more information, contact Chapter President Kevin Bryant at mtngreen17@verizon.net or (408)353-8824.

Keying with Natives Pre-Meeting at 6:30pm

Want to identify a specific plant, learn more about natives, or chat with like-minded individuals? Come to our Keying with Natives pre-meeting! See page 3 for more details.

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

Help CNPS/Big Year at Edgewood May 17

In conjunction with our May program, our Chapter and the GGNRA Endangered Species Big Year will co-host a habitat restoration outing at Edgewood Park on **Saturday, May 17**. We'll help protect rare species, and see lots of the wildflowers that make Edgewood so special! All are welcome; no need to be a Big Year contestant.

Meet at Edgewood Rd. & Cañada Rd. at **9am**. For more info visit edgewood.thinkersrus.net, or contact Paul Heiple at (650)854-7125 or pheiple@gmail.com.

On June 3, Vote YES on Measure O!

Our Chapter officially endorses Parks for the Future, which appears as Measure O on the June 3 ballot in San Mateo County. Be sure to vote in support of our parks and open spaces! Visit www.parksforthefuture.net for more info.

Native Plant Nursery

Thanks to many visitors and volunteers, our April Native Plant Sale was another success! If you missed out on the sale, plants can be purchased at the nursery during our work sessions **through May** (checks only please; no cash).

Help us to make our fall sale turn out just as well, by volunteering at one of our regular nursery work sessions, which take place **every Wednesday, from 10am-2pm**. Bring garden gloves, sunhat, clippers, and your lunch. Other tools will be provided at the nursery. Knowledge of plants is not necessary: your willingness to help is all that's required.

For more information, contact Jean Struthers at (650)941-2586 or JeanStruthers@aol.com; or Ray Deutsch at (650)365-6136 or henrymarsh@yahoo.com.

Directions: Hidden Villa is located on Moody Road west of Foothill College. From Hwy 280 in Los Altos Hills, take the Moody Road exit and head west. Two miles west of Foothill College, look for the Hidden Villa sign and driveway on the left. Proceed over the bridge and park in the visitor (Dana) center parking lot to your right. The Native Plant Nursery greenhouse is just beyond the visitor center.

Gardening with Natives

Gardening with Natives (GWN) is a special interest group within the Chapter which meets on the first Thursday of each month, usually at the Peninsula Conservation Center (PCC) in Palo Alto (directions below). The group is open to all, and includes a mix of seasoned native plant gardeners as well as beginners. Newcomers are always welcome.

Movie Night/Member Mixer

Thursday, May 1, 7-9pm. at the PCC

For our May meeting we will be viewing two short videos: First is "LadyBugz" by John Kehoe, a CNPS member, which shows the life cycle of a ladybird beetle as well as some nice native plants. Second is "California Gold" by Huell Howser which explores the ecology and conservation of vernal pools in a down-to-earth travelog fashion. This episode was videotaped at Mather Field vernal pools in Sacramento County in April 2001...

Landscaping on Slopes, slide show by Paul Furman

Thursday, June 5, 7-9pm at the PCC

During our June meeting, we will enjoy a slide presentation by Paul Furman from Bay Natives Nursery in San

Francisco. Paul is a landscape architect, with expertise in native plants and working with steep slopes. Paul is a lifelong gardener, naturalist, and avid photographer who has been enamored with California native plants since 1990. Visit his extensive website at www.edgehill.net.

Directions to the PCC: PCC (Peninsula Conservation Center), 3921 E. Bayshore Road, Palo Alto. From Highway 101, take the "San Antonio North" exit, get immediately into the left-hand turn lane, and turn LEFT onto East Bayshore. This will curve around to the left, then right. Turn right on Corporation Way. Then turn into the first driveway on your left, which leads to the PCC parking lot. The meeting is in the Raptor Suite on the first floor, accessible from the parking lot.

For more information on the Gardening with Natives group, visit its website at www.GardeningWithNatives.com. GWN maintains a Yahoo group with over 500 members, a true resource for native plant gardeners in this area. To join the Yahoo group, visit groups.yahoo.com/group/GardeningWithNatives. To contact the GWN Steering Committee, email info@gardeningwithnatives.com or call Arvind Kumar at (408) 715-7020.

Native Hill - Weeding and Blooms

Weeding has been a priority at Native Hill, our garden at Foothill College, as always at this time of the year. However, with ceanothus, flannelbush, California poppies, sages, yarrow, gum plants, woolly blue-curls and many others in full bloom it makes the experience all the more worthwhile.

As always, if you would like to volunteer at the garden or be added to the email list to be notified of upcoming workdays, contact Phil Higgins at phidor@juno.com or (650)941-4752.

Photo Group

Our Chapter Photo Group is a special interest group which meets on the third **Monday of even-numbered months** at the Peninsula Conservation Center (PCC) in Palo Alto. The Group is open to all, and includes both beginning and experienced photographers.

Our next meeting date will be **Monday, June 16**. In addition to the featured program of each meeting, attendees are encouraged to bring recent favorite photos. Up to 20 slides, digital images, or prints per photographer are welcome. Also, interesting off-topic images can be shared. For more information, please contact Patrick Gallagher, at (408)483-9366 or drrust@greenisles.com.

Keying with Natives

Join other native plant enthusiasts in a fun and educational atmosphere, as we hone our skills at plant identification (aka. "keying"). We meet **6:30pm-8:30pm**, last **Friday** of each month, and **1 hour before** Chapter general meetings.

Upcoming meetings are **April 25, May 30, and June 27**, at the PCC building in Palo Alto, and before the **May 16** Chapter General Meeting in San Carlos (see page 1). For details, contact David "Tex" Houston at tex009@sbcglobal.net or Sally Casey at (408)377-0989.

NATIVE PLANT GARDENING

Container Gardening with Desert Bluebells

By *Kate Griffin, Chapter member*

There are many California native plants, particularly annuals, which make willing and attractive container subjects. One of the most striking annuals I've grown in a container is Desert Bluebell (*Phacelia campanularia*), which requires nothing more than a sunny spot, fast-draining soil, and a sparing hand with the watering can.

I didn't plan to grow Desert Bluebells, but on a trip to the hardware store one gray, drizzly day, I passed a wire rack filled with drooping packets of garden seeds and an envelope featuring brilliant, blue flowers and the words, "California Native!" in bold type, jumped out at me. It was a package of Desert Bluebell seeds and the back of the envelope promised an "easily-grown and bountiful display of true blue" flowers, all for the reasonable price of \$1.39. "A deal!" I thought. And it was.

Kept in a warm, dark spot in a closet, the seeds germinated quickly. As they grew, I transplanted them to larger containers. I planted one of the most vigorous plants into a large (10" diameter) terra cotta urn, using soil that was nearly half perlite, so that water would drain through it quickly. The Desert Bluebell seemed to love being in the larger pot and it quickly shot up several inches in height before tumbling out over the edge of the pot. It continued to grow, its branches cascading up and out in a network of succulent, reddish stems and dark green leaves that nearly hid the front of the pot. Thick, rounded, and slightly furry, Desert Bluebell's leaves strongly resemble those of the longtime houseplant favorite, African violet.

I placed the container just outside my front door where it received full morning sun. True to the seed packet's promises, small curls of buds at the tip of each stem opened into outward-facing, bell-shaped, deep blue flowers. What

sets these flowers apart from so many other blue-flowered plants is that the color is not purple, nor lavender, nor violet, but really and truly *blue* -- the deep, clear blue of a sunny desert sky.

The charming curls of buds that precede its bloom are one of the distinguishing characteristics of Phacelias, another trait being blue, nectar-filled flowers that are irresistible to bees. My container was unceasingly abuzz with bumblebees, honeybees, smaller native bees, and bee-like hoverflies. It was the most popular nectar plant in the vicinity, luring bees away even from their previous favorite, a huge clot of ivy growing over the next-door fence.

Rather surprisingly, the plant continued to stretch upward and outward and the flowers continued to open over a long, four-month period, from late spring into early autumn, probably because I continued giving it a regular (though sparing) supply of water.

With relatively little care, Desert Bluebells brought a generous supply of color and life to my container garden, and I highly recommend it for potted gardens. I've grown it successfully in both a six-inch pot and a large tub, with afternoon sun and morning sun respectively, and in both cases it flourished and bloomed contentedly. It would be stunning planted together with California poppies. As its name implies, Desert Bluebells are native to California's southeastern deserts.

Editor's note: Kate started the seeds indoors in spring several years ago, probably around late Feb/early March as she recalls. Kate may be reached at kegret@gmail.com.

CHAPTER SERVICE OUTINGS

Habitat Restoration at Edgewood Park

Come enjoy the spring and early summer wildflowers, while protecting sensitive habitats at Edgewood Park.

Friday morning habitat restoration sessions occur year-round, and start at **9am**. Our **Wednesday evening** sessions, starting at **5:30pm**, continue throughout the summer, until the end of Daylight Savings Time.

We will again be having summer **Saturday sessions starting at 9am** on the **3rd Saturday of the month**:

| Date | Meeting Place |
|---------|---------------|
| May 17 | West Kiosk |
| June 21 | West Kiosk |
| July 19 | Day Camp |

For details, including schedules and meeting places, see our Weed Warriors website at wedgewood.thinkersrus.net, contact Paul Heiple at (650)854-7125 or pheiple@gmail.com, or email John Allen at jcakwa@earthlink.net.

Watershed Weeding Party Saturday June 14

On June 14, a weeding party will be allowed into the San Francisco Watershed to help control yellow star-thistle that is growing in rare plant habitat. This is a unique opportunity to see rare plants and to explore within the Watershed, which is normally closed to the public. There are three rare plants in the area: fountain thistle (*Cirsium fontinale* var. *fontinale*), Crystal Springs lessingia (*Lessingia arachnoidea*), and San Francisco wallflower (*Erysimum franciscanum*). The weeding will help these plants by pushing back the invaders.

Weeders will meet at **9am** along Cañada Road just south of the junction with Route 92. For those coming from the south, we will **meet at the I-280 Woodside Park & Ride at 8:45am** to consolidate cars.

For more information, contact Paul Heiple, at pheiple@gmail.com or (650)854-7125.

CHAPTER FIELD TRIPS

Chapter field trips are free and open to the public. They are oriented to conservation, protection and enjoyment of California native plants and wildlife, and we adhere to all rules and guidelines for the lands on which we are visiting.

In our region it is very important to be prepared for hiking on rugged & steep terrain, wide temperature ranges and rapidly changing conditions at any time of year. All participants should wear sturdy footwear and carry sufficient water, sun protection, food, clothing layers, personal first aid and other supplies you may need. If you have any questions about your ability to participate in a particular field trip, please contact the trip leader in advance.

May 3 Sat 10am Rancho Cañada del Oro OSP

Judy Fenerty and Stella Yang will lead a walk to a remarkable habitat in the lovely Rancho Cañada del Oro Open Space Preserve in Morgan Hill. Managed by the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority, this lightly-visited park contains serpentine endemics such as *Streptanthus albidus* ssp. *peramoenus* and *Dudleya setchellii*.

Total distance will be 3-4 miles, with an elevation gain of 500-600 feet. The walk is expected to last until **2pm**.

Reservations required. For reservations and directions, contact Judy at (408) 655-3493 or judy@fenerty.com.

May 3-4 Sat-Sun Alamere Falls at Point Reyes

Join Kevin Bryant and Matt Teel at 11am on **Sunday, May 4**, for an easy 9 mile round trip hike to Alamere Falls in Point Reyes National Seashore.

The gently graded trail passes sweeping ocean vistas, shady coastal forests, and several lakes before emerging again at the coast, where Alamere Falls spills onto the sand. Botanical highlights include nice patches of *Festuca californica*, at least one specimen of *Piperia elegans*, lots of annual wildflower species, rocky outcrops draped with *Sedum* and *Dudleya*, and what may be California's largest *Eucalyptus*.

Bring layers: May is usually clear and windy though fog is always a possibility at Pt. Reyes. Most of the hike is on a well graded dirt road, though there are a few rocky patches and a steep scramble is required for the last hundred yards or so of the hike. Bring water sufficient for a 9 mile walk, and lunch to have at the waterfall. This will be an all day trip; estimated **end time is some time before dark**.

For those wishing to make it an overnight trip, we have reserved ten beds for **the night before the trip, Saturday May 3**, in a co-ed dormitory at the Pt. Reyes Hostel. Cost is \$20 - email Matt at matt-teel@yahoo.com or call him at (650)851-4691 to reserve a space or for more information.

Directions: The Palomarin trailhead is roughly an hour's drive north of the Golden Gate. Allow at least an hour and 45 min. from the Palo Alto area-- traffic along Hwy 1 can be bad, particularly around Muir Woods. It can be a little tricky to find the first time, so bring a map with you!

From the Peninsula, take US 101 across the Golden Gate bridge from San Francisco. About 6 miles later, take the Highway 1 exit towards Mill Valley/Stinson Beach. Follow 1 N out to the coast. Set your trip meter at the stop sign in Downtown Stinson Beach. In 4.4 miles you will reach the (unsigned) cutoff to Olema Bolinas Rd., at the end of the lagoon. Make a left here, and another left in 100 yards onto Olema-Bolinas Rd.

After 1.2 miles you will reach a stop sign; make a left to continue on Olema-Bolinas Rd. Follow Olema-Bolinas Rd. another 0.5 miles to the intersection with Mesa Rd. Make a right on Mesa and follow it 4.8 miles until it ends at the Palomarin trailhead. Mesa Rd. will turn to dirt about halfway down.

May 10 Sat 9am Mount Hamilton

Enjoy a day of roadside botanizing with short hikes at some of the stops on Mount Hamilton. The west side, with several elevation changes, explores different plant communities with many wildflowers. The east slope, steep and dry, has its own interesting flora. Expect to see service berry, silk tassel, virgin's bower, gooseberries, lupines, Penstemon, Clarkia, and many more.

The trip will last all day, with approximately 65 driving miles round trip. No gas is available along the route, so come with a full tank. The Mount Hamilton Road is a steep, narrow, twisting mountain road. Meet in the OSH parking lot at 3000 Alum Rock Ave. at **9am**. The trip will be mostly driving. Bring lunch, snacks, and plenty of water. Carpooling is strongly encouraged. Riders will share gasoline costs with drivers.

For more information contact trip leader Joe Cernac, at (408)292-5465 or JoeCernac@sbcglobal.net.

May 17 Sat 10am Grass Walk at Edgewood Park

Come see our native grasses at Edgewood, known for its unique and beautiful diversity of grasses. This will be an easy walk led by our own grass expert Sally Casey.

We'll meet at **10am** at the Park and Ride Lot at the intersection of Edgewood Road and Hwy 280. Pack water, lunch, comfortable walking shoes and an interest in grasses.

The hike distance will be about 2 miles with gentle slopes. The walk should be completed by **2pm**. For more information contact Sally at (408)377-0989.

May 23-26 Fri-Mon Shasta-Trinity NF

Join Ken Himes for botanizing in the Scott Mountain Area of the Shasta-Trinity National Forest.

Some of you may remember the wonderful *Darlingtonia* meadows near Scott Mt. campground along State Highway 3 that we visited last July at the end of our State of Jefferson field trip. We return a month earlier this year to see early flowering species such as the endemic Scott Mt. phacelia, *Phacelia dalesiana*, and the Scott Valley phacelia, *Phacelia greenei*.

Call Ken at (650)591-8560 for information and to **reserve a space** on this trip, as space at the campground is limited to seven campsites. There are vault toilets but no piped water. Motels are available in Weed, Yreka or Weaverville.

May 31 Sat 10am Crystal Springs Fountain Thistle Walk

Join co-leaders Ken Himes and Jake Sigg on Pulgas Ridge, within the Crystal Springs Watershed, on a walk to view the endangered fountain thistle, *Cirsium fontinale* var. *fontinale*. We'll also see an excellent serpentine seep. The serpentine terrain is gently undulating and replete with native bunchgrasses and forbs.

The trip is co-sponsored by our Chapter and the CNPS Yerba Buena Chapter. We'll have an easy half mile walk over relatively level ground, and expect to finish at **Noon**. These lands belong to the San Francisco Watershed, and are normally closed to the public.

This field trip is part of the 2008 GGNRA Endangered Species Big Year (www.ggnrabitbigyear.org). For contest participants, they must see the fountain thistle and then attend a fountain thistle work party (dates TBD). You need not be a contestant to attend this field trip.

To **reserve your spot** and receive directions to the field trip site, or for more information including about the work parties, contact Jake at jakesigg@earthlink.net (preferred) or (415)731-3028. Ken may be reached at (650)591-8560.

June 6-7 Fri-Sat Lava Cap Areas at Peavine Ridge in El Dorado County

Join botanist Joanne Geggatt to visit the eroded lava cap soils that derived from Miocene mudflow. These soils are found at elevations between 2,000 and 6,000 feet in central El Dorado County. The climax montane chaparral series of lava cap is particularly interesting during late spring and early summer with many annual and perennial wildflowers. Some endemics you may see are yellow burr navarretia (*Navarretia prolifera* ssp. *lutea*), Pleasant Valley mariposa lily (*Calochortus clavatus* var. *avius*) and a subshrub, *Eriogonum prattenianum* var. *prattenianum*. This will be an easy to moderate hike.

You may travel to meet Joanne on Friday evening at her home in El Dorado Hills and stay there overnight. Or join her at her home the morning of the hike. Allow about 3 hours from Santa Clara Valley or more time if traffic is heavy. High clearance vehicle recommended.

Space is limited. Contact Ken Himes, (650)591-8560 to **reserve your spot** and for location and more details.

**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT *BLAZING STAR*
Saturday, June 7, 2008**

**Email: mattsson@surfpix.net
Phone: (408)255-3767**

CALENDAR OF EVENTS**(page # in parentheses)****May 1 Thu** Gardening with Natives (2)**May 3 Sat** Rancho Cañada del Oro Walk (4)**May 3-4 Sat-Sun** Alamere Falls Pt. Reyes Trip (4)**May 10 Sat** Mount Hamilton Trip (5)**May 16 Fri** Keying with Natives (1)**May 16 Fri** **General Meeting** (1)**May 17 Sat** Big Year Edgewood Weeding (1)**May 17 Sat** Edgewood Saturday Weeding (3)**May 17 Sat** Grass Walk at Edgewood (5)**May 23-26 Fri-Mon** Scott Mt. Shasta-Trinity Trip (5)**May 30 Fri** Keying with Natives (3)**May 31 Sat** Fountain Thistle Walk (5)**Jun 5 Thu** Gardening with Natives (2)**Jun 6-7 Fri-Sat** Peavine Ridge El Dorado County Trip (5)**Jun 7 Sat** Newsletter Submittal Deadline (5)**Jun 12 Thu** **Chapter Board meeting****Jun 14 Sat** SF Watershed Weeding (4)**Jun 16 Mon** Photo Group (2)**Jun 21 Sat** Edgewood Saturday Weeding (3)**Jun 27 Fri** Keying with Natives (3)**Wed afts** Nursery work sessions (2)**Wed pm., Fri am.** Edgewood weeding (3)**Via Email List** Native Hill work sessions (2)

The next Chapter Board meeting will be **Thursday, June 12 at 7pm**
 at the PCC, 3921 E. Bayshore Road in Palo Alto
 Chapter Board meetings are open to all Chapter members and their guests.

The California Native Plant Society is a statewide non-profit organization of amateurs and professionals with a common interest in California's native plants. The Society, working with its local chapters, seeks to increase understanding and to preserve the rich heritage of the native flora for future generations. Membership is open to all. Individual memberships are \$45.00 per year. If you have questions concerning a new membership, renewal of a current membership, or if you wish to report a change of address, please contact the Membership Chairperson, CNPS, 3921 East Bayshore Road, Palo Alto, CA 94303.

The *Blazing Star* web address: www.cnps-scv.org
 Acknowledgement: Anne Warren for the *Blazing Star* logo. Printed on recycled paper.
