



GOLD FIELD NOTES

EL DORADO CHAPTER ☼ CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY ☼ January-February 2012

JANUARY PROGRAM CORN LILIES IN VAN VLECK MEADOW

Changed Location

CALENDAR

January 17 (Tuesday)

Program.
Corn lilies in VanVleck Meadow. See article on this page.

March 17 (Sunday)

Tour.
California Native Plants Spring To Life, 2 p.m., UC Davis Arboretum, Buehler Alumni & Visitors Center. Enjoy two of our favorite California spring bloomers, ceanothus and redbud, in the Mary Watis Brown Garden of California Native Plants. For details call (530) 752-4880.

March 20 (Tuesday)

Program.
Rare Plant Treasure Hunt. See details inside.

April 14 (Saturday)

Plant sale.
3Bs: Birds, Bees, and Beneficials. Public sale 9 am-1 pm. *Focus on attracting and supporting pollinators in the home landscape.* Arboretum Teaching Nursery, Garrod Drive, UC Davis. For details call (530) 752-4880.

April 20 (Friday)

Workshop
CNGA Field Day at Hedgerow Farms, Winters. Join the California Native Grass Association for their 5th annual opportunity for practical, hands-on learning about native grasses and grassland restoration. Enjoy the casual atmosphere for networking, and learn from experienced professionals. For details see: http://www.cnga.org/get_involved/workshops

Evening programs are held on the third Tuesday of January, March, May, July, September, and November, and begin at 6:30 PM, location noted inside.

For updates between newsletters
www.eldoradocnps.org

Jim Alford, CSU Sacramento graduate student, will report on his 2008-2011 research on corn lily autecology in the Van Vleck Meadows of the Crystal Basin, Eldorado National Forest. The following is the introduction to a recent presentation made by Jim at a professional meeting and provides an overview of the work he will present.

One of the goals of ecology is to understand the factors that regulate species abundances and distributions and the emerging patterns of species diversity. For centuries, numerous factors have been identified as being important in plant communities, including abiotic variables (e.g., soil moisture and light), competition, and herbivory. Consequently, the question that must be addressed is: what are the relative effects of these forces in structuring communities?

Sub-alpine meadows make up approximately 10% of California's Sierra Nevada mountain range. Previous work has found that hydrology is important in determining species abundances and

distributions (Allen-Diaz 1991). However, we still know very little about the dynamics of this ecosystem that is vulnerable to forest encroachment and climate change.

Further, sub-alpine meadows are unique in the Sierra Nevada because they are highly productive, producing many times the biomass per acre of the surrounding forest. Subalpine meadows also support high plant species diversity and provide refuge for rare taxa and many endemics.

Sub-alpine meadows are dominated by a vigorous clonal plant, *Veratrum californicum* (Liliaceae), also known as Corn lily. Little information is known about how this species interacts with other meadow species and whether it may limit meadow diversity. Due to poisonous alkaloids, it is predated by a single species of sawfly, *Rhadinoceraea aldrichi*.

This program will be held on January 17 in the at the Placerville Main Library, 345 Fair Lane, Placerville.



Van Vleck meadow, El Dorado National Forest, El Dorado County (Photo: Jim Alford)

RETRACING THE FOOTSTEPS OF GREAT CALIFORNIA BOTANISTS

One of the main objectives of the Rare Plant Treasure Hunt is to search for and update historic occurrences of rare plants. An "occurrence" refers to a population of plants in a single location that could contain a few or hundreds of individual plants. Sometimes searching for historic plant populations involves retracing the footsteps of early intrepid botanists. Most of the early collectors provided very little information about specific locations with their plant collections. GPS (Global Positioning System) units had not yet come on the scene, so it was typical to see only a general location of a recorded collection. Sometimes a short habitat description accompanies the locations in these older collections, but it is certainly not the norm. One of the primary objectives of the Rare Plant Treasure Hunt program is to "re-find" these older rare plant populations, see how they are doing, and return with key information such as the exact GPS location of the population, a thorough habitat description, and population size.

Retracing the footsteps of preceding botanists is not always easy. As an example: Marcus E. Jones was one of California's greatest botanists. He collected tens of thousands of plants, had dozens of plants named after him and personally described many unique plant species. Unfortunately his collection labels are lacking detailed information typically used to track and evaluate plant conservation status in today's world of GPS and GIS (Geographic Information System). Some of his labels simply state "Colorado Desert". In 1924 M. Jones collected Harwood's milkvetch (*Astragalus insularis* var. *harwoodii*) and gave his collection location as "Chocolate-Chuckwalla Mountains, Desert Center". This is better than a simple reference like "Colorado Desert", but an interested plant lover, researcher, or land manager would still have to search thousands of acres to find this rather small plant. As daunting as this sounds, it

is yet not impossible to find the plants referenced in these older collections. In looking for M. Jones recorded population of Harwood's milkvetch, we were able to make a few good guesses that led us to a rather rugged section of the Chuckwalla Mountains. After a bit of searching around, we eventually found our special plant, which was doing quite well!

One of my favorite trips to date was retracing the footsteps of California botanists Annie Alexander & Louise Kellogg. They were adventurous partners who traveled throughout California to collect an abundance of natural history information. In 1941 they collected Fortuna Range suncup (*Camissonia arenaria*) and Argus blazing star (*Mentzelia puberula*) "Among granite boulders" location: "[location withheld], Colorado Desert, Chocolate Mountains". We found [location withheld] on the map, drove down, climbed into the granite boulders of the Chocolate Mountains and within a short amount of time found both our plants which had not been seen in over 50 years. We probably set up our camp that night at the same place they had, and looked up at the same stars they saw when they walked the area years ago.

We don't always find the plant we go "hunting" for, but when we do, it is a great feeling. There are still hundreds of historic California rare plant locations that need to be re-discovered and updated. A great many of our rare plant population data is lacking in detailed informa-



Argus Blazing Star (*Mentzelia puberula*)
Photo: Amber Swanson

tion. If you have a favorite rare plant, or know of a California botanist whose footsteps you would like to retrace, please contact us at treasure-hunt@cnp.org and we will send you out on your own adventure.

Duncan Bell
Rare Plant Treasure Hunt participant

This article by Duncan Bell was taken from the stories posted on the Rare Plant Treasure Hunt website.

WORKSHOP IDENTIFICATION OF BRYOPHYTES

What is a bryophyte? Mosses, liverworts, and hornworts are collectively referred to as bryophytes. The study and identification of bryophytes is technically complex but is rewarding and stimulating. The workshop is to be held on March 10-11 in Holt Hall, room 129 at California State University, Chico, with a field trip on Saturday to Bidwell Park. Registration fee \$160-\$220. For more information about workshop content see the flyer (http://www.csuchico.edu/biol/Herb/workshops/Bryophytes_3_10-11_2012.pdf) or contact Shana Gross at segross@fs.fed.us or (530) 543-2752. For more information about workshop registration contact the Biology office at (530) 898-5356 or jbraden@csuchico.edu.

CNPS RARE PLANT TREASURE HUNT

Eco-caching for conservation! The Rare Plant Treasure Hunt is a statewide effort, initiated by the Rare Plant and Education Programs in 2010, to update data on rare plants and their associated habitats. We will team experienced botanists with amateurs to conduct searches for new and historic rare plant populations. Participants can survey for rare plants in areas with little history of botanical exploration, relocate historic (not documented in over 20 years) rare plant occurrences, and/or update known occurrences of high-priority rare

plants.

Up-to-date information on rare plants and their habitats are needed to inform conservation actions and to aid planning efforts. The current status of many rare plant occurrences is unknown, and thousands have not been documented for decades.

To learn more about the Treasure Hunt, come to the program meeting on March 20 to hear Danny Slakey talk about the program. Additional information can be found on the CNPS website (<http://www.cnps.org/cnps/rareplants/treasurehunt/>).

MARCH PROGRAM HUNTING FOR RARE PLANTS

Changed Location

Danny Slakey, the CNPS Statewide Rare Plant Treasure Hunt Coordinator, will talk about how to set priorities for rare plant surveys by using online resources and how to use GPS to navigate and accurately map rare plants. Filling in these information gaps can keep plant population information current, as well as help land managers to protect rare plants. He will discuss what other Chapters have been able to contribute toward these goals.

This program will be held on March 20 in the at the Placerville Main Library, 345 Fair Lane, Placerville.



NEW FEATURE: PLANT CHECKLISTS FOR YOUR FAVORITE PLACES

Calflora is a website you can use to learn about plants that grow wild in California (both native plants and weeds). Calflora is a non-profit run by a few volunteers and a small staff. Information in Calflora comes from many sources: public agencies, non-profits, scientists, and private donors! If you wish, you can join this group of participants by adding your own observations on plant locations.

Calflora has added a new feature called

“Places to View California Native Plants.” This application lets you view and download plant checklists from a variety of places in California. There are over 20,000 checklists in the Calflora database. You can also add your own checklists to the Calflora database. Check out their website for more information on this new feature (<http://www.calflora.org/entry/places.html>) and consider supporting this organization with a donation (details on donating at their website).

WORKSHOP LIVING WITH OAKS

El Dorado County is graced with handsome and enduring California Oaks. New construction, irrigated lawns and cultivated land can endanger them, and they need proper care to continue to thrive. Join Master Gardener Heidi Napier for a presentation on the various methods to maintain and protect these wonderful trees.

This free workshop is offered by the El Dorado County Master Gardeners on January 21 from 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM at

the Veterans Memorial Building, Placerville. Call to confirm time and location (530) 621-5512.



Black Oak (*Quercus kelloggii*)



Corn lily (*Veratrum californicum*, image above) and its ecology will be the subject of the January program. See front page for details. Photo: © 2009 Barry Breckling)



El Dorado Chapter
 California Native Plant Society
 P.O. Box 1948
 Placerville, CA 95667

January-February 2012



CALIFORNIA
 NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

**DEDICATED TO THE
 PRESERVATION OF
 CALIFORNIA'S NATIVE FLORA**

The California Native Plant Society is a state-wide nonprofit organization of amateurs and professionals with a common interest in California's native plants. The mission of the Society is to increase understanding and appreciation of California's native plants and to preserve them in their natural habitat through scientific activities, education, and conservation. Membership is open to all.

Membership includes the quarterly journal, *Fremontia*, the quarterly *Bulletin*, which gives statewide news and announcements of Society activities and conservation issues, and the chapter newsletter *Gold Field Notes*. To join, call our main office in Sacramento, (916) 447-2677, or visit www.cnps.org to join online.

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Learn more about State CNPS at: www.cnps.org