

**BRISTLECONE • CHAPTER**

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 4, No. 4

September 1985

NEXT MEETING

December 4 at 7:30 p.m. in the social hall of the Big Pine Methodist Church at the corner of Crocker and School streets, Big Pine. Turn west from Hwy at the yellow light. It will be a joint meeting with the Audubon Chapter, the program a popular film on conservation.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

Along with salt cedar (*Tamarix*), and Russian thistle (*Salsola*), we have countless other imports that crowd out the native plants. We can help eradicate them, starting on the grounds around our homes. Puncture weed (*Tribulus terrestris*) is another bad one. It is misery to bare feet or those in thin sandals and will even go through bike tires. Eradication is no harder than stooping to curl one's fingers around the plant stem, if in sandy soil, and pulling up root and trailing stems, or cutting the main stem at ground level and gingerly lifting the plant. It should be bagged, seeds and all, for disposal. Then one should check after any rains for new plants. Along with enjoying field trips and learning plant identification, let's DO something to help our natives.

It is not too late to write Governor Duekmejian (State Capitol, Sacramento 95814) asking him to sign SB 1165, the bill that would return the California Environmental License Plate Fund to its original purpose. One third of the projects now funded should not be receiving money from this source. Native plant protection programs in the Dept. of Fish and Game is one legitimate use for this fund.

And while you are in the writing mood, ask the Governor to sign the Bottle Bill, AB 2020. Have you ever tried to clean up a roadway of bottles and cans?

.....Doris Fredendall

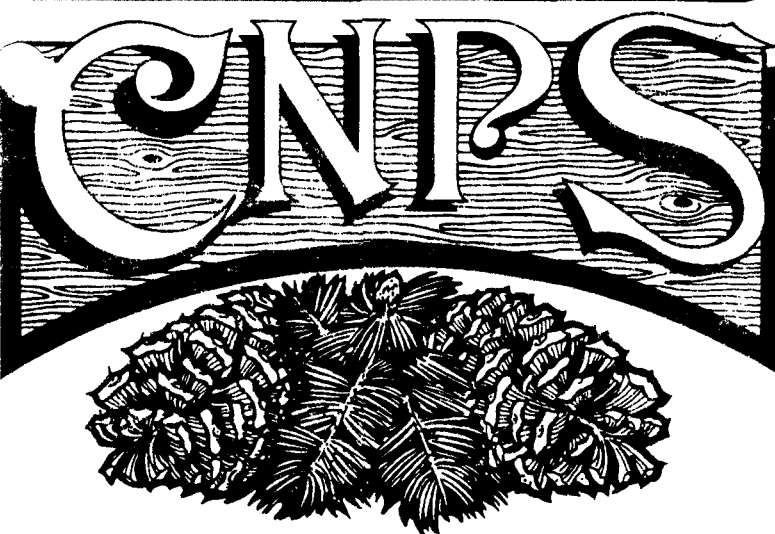
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TRIP REPORTS

BODIE HILLS.

On Saturday, July 27, about two dozen people met in Bridgeport, Mono County, for a trip to Masonic Mountain in the northern Bodie Hills. The group included visitors, some from other chapters.

Masonic Mountain rises to about 9200 feet, giving a great vista of neighboring ranges on into Nevada. Its name came from the nearby town of Masonic, settled



by several Masons prospecting out of Aurora in 1862. The mining excitement was short-lived, but in the mid-1940's the area made its mark on botanical history. Masonic Mountain and its environs provided type specimens for *Arabis bodiensis*, *Draba quadricostata*, *Phacelia monoensis*, and *Streptanthus oliganthus*. Just a few years ago Tim Messick compiled a Flora of the Bodie Hills for his Master's thesis. We were fortunate in having Tim for our leader on this trip.

The mountain has been extremely dry this year so we had to go above 8600 feet to see much in flower. Starting from the pass on the road near New York Hill, we walked through sagebrush scrub to the west summit of the mountain. Lupines, grasses and shrubs attracted the attention of all. On the peak we experienced impressive views of Bridgeport Valley, the Sierra Nevada, the Sweetwaters, and a rapidly growing storm which cooled our descent with a shower.

The group camped Saturday night along Virginia Creek west of Conway Summit. Sunday morning we explored subalpine and alpine flora on the moraines near Virginia and Red lakes. It was an interesting contrast to the flora of Masonic Mountain.

#### WHITE MOUNTAINS.

The August 17-18 trip was a fine experience in the bristlecone forest and the open tundra country of the White Mountains. The weather was pleasant and the late summer botanizing was rewarding. Saturday was spent traveling as far as the Patriarch Grove, with many stops along the way to see unobtrusive plants in rocky outcrops or on what appeared from a distance to be barren slopes. The contrast between vegetation on sandstone and on dolomite was dramatic.

Camping that evening was at Grandview Campground in the pinyon. It was cool enough to enjoy a group campfire. Pat Wells of the U.S. Forest Service came to give an informative talk, sharing information based on many seasons in the White Mountains.

On Sunday we traveled back to the Schulman Grove and hiked the 4½ mile Methuselah Trail. A surprising variety of plants were still in flower so our plant lists were well used. Some of the favorites of the week end were *Draba oligosperma*, *Astragalus platytropis*, *Oxytropis parryi*, *Eriogonum gracilipes*, *Chamaebatiaria millifolium*, *Petrophytum caespitosa*, *Heuchera duranii*, and *Penstemon scapoides*. Leaders were Mary and Paul DeDecker.

#### ONION VALLEY.

The trip to Onion Valley on September 14 was a pleasant experience at a time when the peak of the blooming season was over. The roadside was yellow with mountain rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus nauseosus* ssp. *albicaulis*) and the meadows were old gold. There was a touch of fall color throughout and a hint of Indian summer in the air. Most of the blooms were gone so we sharpened our recognition of vegetation characteristics. The variety of coniferous trees would justify the trip. On a south side hike we found an extensive boggy area supporting a large population of bog winter-green (*Pyrola asarifolia* ssp. *asarifolia*). On a drier slope some made a first acquaintance with the attractive ball buckwheat (*Eriogonum latens*).

At lunch time in the campground, Carolyn Lynch came from her Forest Service station to join us. Her season in Onion Valley was nearing the end, but there were still hikers on the trails.

Then we hiked to the falls on the north fork. An abundance of pink plume

(*Eupatorium occidentale*) had finished blooming in the rocky area below the falls. What a display is must have been. Nearer the cliffs we investigated the site of jewel flower (*Streptanthus gracilis*) and were glad to find, judging from the dry plants, that the species was still thriving. All together we found many of the plants on a list prepared by Vince Yoder, the capable trip leader.

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

The next and final trip for the year will be on October 12. It will be a day up Rock Creek in Mono County. Meet at the entrance station Loop a short distance beyond the turnoff from Highway 395, by Tom's Place. The time is 9:30 a.m. If we are lucky we will find the canyon glowing with fall color. Its aspen display is one of the most beautiful in the region. Bring camera, lunch and water, along with items for personal comfort. It may be jacket weather.

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NOMINATIONS FOR OFFICERS

- President . . . . . Ann Yoder
- Vice-president. . . . . Carolyn Lynch  
and K.C. Wiley
- Secretary . . . . . Frances Cholewa
- Treasurer . . . . . Nancy Prather

Election of officers will take place at the Decmeber 4 meeting.

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TO MEMBERS AND SUBSCRIBERS:

We regret that we have not yet received to latest list of new members from the Sacramento office. Henceforth, we ask that new memberships be sent directly to us at the newsletter address, to be forwarded by us to the state office. (Checks should still be made out to California Native Plant Society.) This will enable us to keep our records current.

In updating our mailing list we note that some memberships and subscriptions have lapsed. The past due memberships are yellow-lined on the address labels, while expired subscription dates are circled in red. Please check your labels for these notices. In case of any error on our part, please notify us. We have valued your interest and support and would like to keep you with us.

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*If I keep a green bough in my heart the singing bird will come.*

...Old Chinese saying

EDITOR'S NOTE: In our last issue, July 1985, we mentioned Fish Slough. It is worthy of much more coverage so we offer the following.

It is located north of Bishop, largely in Mono County but the lower portion reaches into Inyo County. It is shown on the Bishop and White Mountain quadrangles of the U.S. topographic maps. The slough is a 6 mile long trough between the Volcanic Tableland on the west and low, dry hills on the east. Its elevation is approximately 4200 feet. The long stretches of marshes are fed by springs and are bordered by high groundwater alkali flats. The pupfish ponds and larger areas of open water are frequented by birds. It is a low-key naturalist's paradise.

Phil Pister, Associate Fishery Biologist, Department of Fish and Game, and Executive Secretary of the Desert Fishes Council, has contributed the following article. Phil's dedication and persistence have been the main force in achieving protection and a cooperative management plan for Fish Slough.

#### A PLAN FOR THE FISH SLOUGH AREA, INYO AND MONO COUNTIES

Increasing interest in the Owens Valley by both the general public and the academic community obligates related land management agencies to consider this interest and provide for it in regional planning procedures.

There is little question that one of the most important existing and potential recreation areas in the world lies within the Owens Valley and its surrounding mountains. The fact that very little of the valley has been "developed" adds to this value. Further, the potential for recreational development is almost infinite. And, as the demand for recreation increases, with a concurrent increase in the value of water for recreational purposes, the potential of the Owens Valley will become more widely recognized.

However, one fact predominates here. In all of the Owens Valley floor, only the Fish Slough area remains essentially unaffected by water export activities. Because of the extreme importance of the Owens Valley, it is mandatory that at least part of it be retained in a relatively pristine condition.

An important consideration in this matter is the preservation of the native fishes and other components of the fauna and flora of the Owens River System. The type locality of the Owens pupfish (*Cyprinodon radiosus*) lies within the Owens Valley Native Fish Sanctuary, a portion of the Department of Fish and Game's Fish Slough Ecological Reserve. Other refugia for the protection of native fishes lie in other portions of Fish Slough. The three other native fishes of the Owens River System are the Owens chub (*Gila bicolor snyderi*) which, along with the Owens pupfish, is listed as endangered by both the Federal government and the State of California, the Owens sucker (*Catostomus fumeiventris*) and Owens dace (*Rhinichthys osculus ssp.*)

One of the most prevalent non-consumptive resource users in the valley is the naturalist, and an undeveloped "control area" will have an immense value in nearly any ecological study which might be planned. At the present time, students and courses connected with five campuses of the University of California, several state colleges, at least two private institutions, and an unknown number of private researchers are actively involved in the Fish Slough area.

In the Museum of Natural History of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. is the following statement, made over a century ago. The philosophy presented is applicable here:

"The naturalist looks upon every species of animal and plant now living as the individual letters which go to make up one of the volumes of our earth's

history; and, as a few lost letters may make a sentence unintelligible, so the extinction of the numerous forms of life which the progress of cultivation invariably entails will necessarily render obscure this invaluable record of the past. It is therefore an important object to preserve them. If this is not done, future ages will certainly look back upon us as a people so immersed in the pursuit of wealth as to be blind to higher considerations. They will charge us with having culpably allowed the destruction of some of those records of creation which we had it in our power to preserve, and while professing to regard all living things as the direct handiwork and best evidence of a Creator, yet, with a strange inconsistency, seeing many of them perish irrecoverably from the earth, uncared and unknown."

A. R. Wallace, 1863.

Journal of the Royal Geographic Society

It is amazing that the writer had the vision to foresee the current situation 122 years ago. Obviously, along with the necessity of preserving the various species of plants and animals, goes the necessity of preserving certain of the representative habitats where they evolved.

It is this concept that was basic to the development of the BLM Fish Slough Area of Critical Environmental Concern and its attendant management plan, which is now being implemented. This plan provides for the immediate protection and preservation of the biota, while encouraging the research which will strengthen our knowledge of the species involved and upon which their preservation will ultimately depend. The various agencies welcome the comments and participation of the public as the plan is implemented.

The acquisition of the private land parcels within Fish Slough was a tedious and lengthy process, but worth every bit of the effort involved. We are grateful to those who think enough of the Owens Valley to want to preserve at least part of it in its natural condition. Fish Slough is now a living museum and laboratory for the use and enjoyment of all future generations.

.....Phil Pister

#### ADDITIONAL NOTES ON PLANTS:

Fish Slough supports a rich assemblage of marsh plants and alkali tolerant species, many of which have been destroyed by development in other sites. It is the type locality of the Fish Slough milk-vetch (*Astragalus lentiginosus* var. *piscinensis*) recently discovered and named for the site. It is one of three varieties, two of them very rare, confined to alkali sites which are permanently moist near the surface. Since the constant moisture provides a longer growing season, they develop the elongated, trailing stems characteristic of that group. It may be that, like the pupfish, they have developed in isolated remnants of the Pleistocene lake systems. Another milk-vetch (*Astragalus agrophyllus* var. *agrophyllus*), recently discovered there, had not been known in California before. It is a Great Basin species, quite disjunct here. Might it, too, be a fugitive from the Pleistocene?

Other plants of special interest there include:

Fimbristylis (*Fimbristylis spadicea*). Cyperaceae.

Western ladies' tresses (*Spiranthes porrifolia*). Orchidaceae.

Alkali cordgrass (*Spartina gracilis*). Poaceae.

White-flowered rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus albidus*). Asteraceae.

Alkali shooting star (*Dodecatheon pulchellum*). Ericaceae.

Golden goodmania (*Goodmania luteola*, formerly *Oxytheca luteola*). Polygonaceae.

## THE CONSERVATION FRONT

Attention continues to focus on water and air pollution problems in Inyo-Mono. One which has caused much concern has been the threat of hydro-power development on the mountain streams. One wonders how such projects could be feasible on such relatively small flows, but the applications are there.

The California Department of Fish and Game has taken a strong lead in opposing any degradation of the streams. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) consented to make what they call a cumulative impact study which would consider the total effect of developments. They refuse, however, to consider Inyo and Mono counties together as we had requested. Our reasoning was that the two counties are too closely involved in water matters to be separated. FERC also refused to consider streams in the White Mountains in the same study.

Two public meetings have been held by FERC in Bishop. The September meeting was to present the fact finding process and the data thus far. The presentations were impressive, but those familiar with the factors involved felt some misgivings. The Department of Fish and Game claimed that FERC had failed to obtain information from the developer which had been promised to them. There was a feeling that FERC might be moving ahead on assumptions not acceptable to those who have to live with the decisions. We were assured that the Forest Service would properly handle any controls and monitoring. It was evident, though, that the developer felt more confidence in that situation than did the local people. The general feeling was that the FERC staff was doing a conscientious job, but that the top decisions left room for concern.

Inyo-Mono's mountain streams are ribbons of life in this arid country. The developers see dollars in the tumbling waters, subsidized by a law which should never be applied here. The people of Inyo-Mono see it as a cruel threat to our most precious assets. The environmental loss would be serious enough, but it is a threat to the financial well being of an area dependent on recreation and its fine aesthetic values.

A more devious issue, locally, has been the Wilderness Study Areas (WSA's). Only a very small percentage of them have been recommended for wilderness status by the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM). All wilderness proposals have been violently opposed by the Inyo County Supervisors. The latest issue has been WSA CA-010-056. BLM has recommended that 27,420 acres of this WSA in the southern Inyo Mountains be made wilderness. It is actually a very small percentage of the total WSA's. This has had very strong support from those who are truly familiar with the area. In spite of claims to the contrary, there are no significant use values there, and it is a prime candidate for wilderness. (The mineralized Cerro Gordo area was left out.) There has been a determined effort to block the wilderness process in this case. County Supervisors claim that it would put a large percentage of southern Inyo people on welfare. The final decision will be made in congress, based on a broader perspective we hope.

In Death Valley the issue is burros. The removal plan has gone well, resulting in the taking of 4302 animals in the past two years. This third and final year of the program is expected to take 2000 to 2500 more. The impact of so many feral animals which have no natural enemies has been a shocking reality which never should have occurred on National Park lands. Burros are so highly adaptable that they easily crowd out the native species, large and small, which are limited to specialized habitats. But no tears have been shed for these helpless victims by the animal protection groups who profess such concern for animal life.

In Owens Valley slow progress is being made on the mitigation measures called for in the Inyo County-Los Angeles water agreement. Salt cedar remains our chief concern. The estimates of its spread in the ten years since an eradication program was first considered is so alarming that it is an urgent issue. It will have to be a long term program, but the time to start is NOW. It is not a mitigation show-piece, but the problem will not go away.

In the meantime, Death Valley National Monument is on a 3-year eradication program. This is to remove all species of *Tamarix* outside the resort and residential areas. It will allow rapid recovery of springs and ponds along with improved habitats for native plants and wildlife.

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#### FALL MEETING

The September 25 meeting was a good one. New members and guests were there to join in the potluck. A birthday cake honoring CNPS on its 20th year was provided. President Doris Fredendall read the history of the organization written by Mr. Keeler of the San Francisco Bay Chapter. A large birthday candle was lit.

There were good discussions on conservation issues of local and statewide concern. President Doris urged that more of the members participate in any way possible and, above all, to write to the decision makers. The program was a double-screen slide presentation by Mary DeDecker, a showing of rare and/or unusual species of the region.

The usual publications and sales items were displayed, including T-shirts in various designs, colors and styles. The summer shirts in pastel colors and with the simplified bristlecone design by Pat Crowther have been popular during the season. Now Sales Chairman Betty Gilchrist is taking orders for the long-sleeved style in deeper colors for fall and winter. The price is \$10.00. These are done locally so any orders are filled promptly. Call Betty at 876-4517.

For those who were not present at the meeting we print an extraction from the article written by William R. Keeler, President of the San Francisco Bay Chapter. This well done summary appeared in the Kern County Newsletter for September.

#### CNPS IS 20 YEARS OLD

*The California Native Plant Society was organized by a number of individuals following a successful fight to save the Tilden Regional Botanic Garden and Jim Roof's job as a director. A distinguished group of sponsors, each of whom contributed \$20, provided the initial funds. A few months later local chapters were established in Sacramento (Davis) and Monterey. For a number of years the society was a state organization meeting monthly in Berkeley with several satellite chapters elsewhere in the state. The San Francisco Bay Chapter was established in 1973 and the organization became what we know today--a state organization with local chapters throughout the state.*

*The emphasis has always been on saving endangered plant species, but in the early days this was to be done by acquiring the land where they grew and caring for the plants. It turned out that the other organizations can do this better. We are still concerned with the preservation and conservation of native plants and vegetation, but now we have a much broader range of activities including education, legislation, and conservation.*

## CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY - Membership Application

The California Native Plant Society is an organization of lay persons and professionals united by an interest in the plants of California. It is open to all. The Society, working through its local chapters, seeks to increase understanding of California's native flora and to preserve this rich resource for future generations. Varied interests are represented.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ P.O. or Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Category:**

_____ Life, Couple	\$500	I wish to be affiliated with the Bristlecone Chapter _____ Other _____
_____ Life, Individual	450	
_____ Supporting	50	
_____ Household	30	Please make check payable to: California Native Plant Society
_____ Individual or Library	18	
_____ Student or Retired	12	
_____ Retired Couple	15	

GIFT contribution: Where most  
needed \_\_\_\_\_ Conservation \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: Bristlecone Chapter, CNPS  
P.O. Box 506  
Independence, CA 93526

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