**** Evening Presentation ****

Living with Serpentine Soils - A Botanist’s Delight and a Gardener’s Challenge
Cathy Koehler and Paul Aigner, resident Co-Directors of U.C. Davis McLaughlin Reserve, will share knowledge and slides illustrating the unique and wonderful additions that serpentine-adapted flora make to our regional biodiversity as well as their own trial and error experiences with gardening on serpentine. When: 7:00 pm. Where: Rancho De La Fuente, 2290 Soda Bay Road, Lakeport. About ten minutes and 4.5 miles south of Lakeport.

Calendar of Fieldtrips and Events

March 28 - Broom Bash at Montgomery Woods
Broom: Scotch, French, Spanish - line the roadides in many parts of Mendocino County. Their names give the clue- they are not native to this area, but were introduced as horticultural plants and then escaped into the wildlands. Although the blooms are beautiful, these plants are devastating for wildlife and increase wildfire risk because they are very flammable. Along roadsides, they also pose a safety hazard as they reduce visibility and obstruct pedestrian corridors. What can we do about it?

BASH IT! The California Native Plant Society and the Inland Mendocino Cooperative Weed Management Area are hosting this event in our Adopt-A-Road corridor along Orr Springs Road near Montgomery Woods State Reserve. Manual removal of the broom, including the roots, followed by annual monitoring to remove seedlings is a proven effective strategy to be rid of broom on roadides. However, it takes a lot of time and effort. Come help us pull out the broom! Mild to strenuous exertion according to your ability and desire. Meet at the north side of the Mendo Mill parking lot (1870 N. State St.) in Ukiah at 9AM for carpools, at 9:30AM at Montgomery Woods State Reserve parking lot for a mandatory safety training. Tools and gloves are provided.

April 3 – Low Gap Flower Count
Join naturalist Mark Albert on the 29th annual Spring wildflower identification fieldtrip at Low Gap Park in Ukiah. The outing starts at 9:30am, but if you come late the group is easy to find as they will be botanizing close to the parking lot for awhile. Each person will get an updated 8-page checklist of species, which is a very accurate listing of Ukiah Valley’s early Spring wildflowers. Bring your hand lens, your identification guide and a lunch. We pull out some escaped exotic French Broom while we’re at it, monitor the changes in the park, and soak up some sun.

April 17 – Turtle Pond Wildflower Walk at Ridgewood Ranch
This trip is a very easy 1mile jaunt thru oak woodlands and meadows. After lunch those who want to can come on a further hike (3 miles) up a riparian canyon to a rocky point thru madrone forests and oak woodland. It is a fun day! Those interested in attending this trip should call Steve at 707-508-8729 for info about the ranch and parking instructions.

April 24, 25 – Anderson Valley Wildflower Show
The 84th annual Anderson Valley Wildflower Show will be held at the Mendocino County Fairgrounds in Boonville. Many wildflowers are collected and identified; plants and books are for sale; a tearoom offering good food is available; and a raffle which funds scholarships for high school students for college or camp. Admission is free. The Show is open from 9 am to 4 pm right on highway 128 in the middle of town.

Celebrate the 40th anniversary of Earth Day in appreciation of Mendocino County’s diverse flora. Join me on April 22 (Thursday) looking for plants of aesthetic and botanical interest for the Anderson Valley Flower Show in Boonville. If you’re willing to collect plant specimens (rare plants are generally excluded) on April 22 or 23, just let me know so we can coordinate our explorations. Peter Warner: (707) 829-1183; phytopagan@gmail.com
May 8 – Family Wildflower Day
This is a day for the whole family devoted to enjoying and learning about wildflowers and native plants. There will be volunteers ready to take small groups on short and easy wildflower walks, dissecting scopes for a closer look, and activities for children. There will be free magnifying glasses for early arrivals along with cookies and lemonade. This event will take place from 11 am to 2 pm. Meet at the picnic grove behind the Howard Forest CDF Fire Station on Hwy 101 at the top of the ridge.

May 7, 8 - Vegetation Workshop at Pepperwood Preserve
Sponsored by the Pepperwood Foundation, California Native Plant Society (CNPS), and the CNPS Milo Baker Chapter Pepperwood Preserve, Franz Valley Road, 10 miles north of Santa Rosa
Friday, May 7, 2010: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. and Saturday, May 8: 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Instructors: Julie Evens, CNPS Vegetation Program Director and Peter Warner, botanical consultant
Cost: $25
This workshop will review the recently released second edition of A Manual of California Vegetation (Sawyer, Keeler-Wolf, and Evens 2009), and provide initial training in the CNPS rapid assessment and relevé vegetation sampling protocols. Participants will learn about the essential role of vegetation inventories and classification in ecological management and conservation, and will practice compiling data in support of widely adopted classification standards. Access to a copy of A Manual of California Vegetation during the workshop is recommended. For further information, please contact Peter Warner: phytopagan@gmail.com; (707) 829-1183.

May 15, 16 - Cache Creek and Walker Ridge Field Trip
This 2-day adventure will take us into the recently designated Cache Creek Wilderness, a rugged land of oaks, chaparral, and serpentine grasslands. We’ll start on Saturday with a walk along the Cache Creek Ridge Trail – I’m already excited in anticipation of exploring new terrain. This area is renowned for its wildlife diversity, including eagles, elk, and yes, rattlesnakes. Come prepared for several miles of steep trails and potentially, so many degrees of heat (bring lots of water) – we’ll moderate our activity according to conditions. For those who will camp overnight, we’ll head to Walker Ridge later in the day to look for a suitable site along the ridge or near the Indian Valley Reservoir. Camping may be in an unimproved area, so be prepared with all you need: food, water, shelter, etc. On Sunday, meet at 10 a.m. immediately north of Hwy. 20 at the south end of Walker Ridge Road (there are a couple of larger turnouts there). We’ll travel along the ridge during the day, making stops to explore several plant habitats, including serpentine barrens, chaparral, and cypress woodlands. This area is not a showcase like Bear Valley, but botanically much richer and full of surprises. Please contact me if you plan on attending, as plans could change. On Saturday, meet at 9 a.m. at the Judge Davis Trailhead parking area, about 17 miles east of Clearlake Oaks, (about 4 miles west of junction with Hwy. 16) on State Hwy. 20 at mile marker 46.07. Peter: (707) 829-1183; phytopagan@gmail.com

May 22 – Plant Propagation Workshop
This workshop will be held from 10:00 to 2:00 at 1800 Muir Mill Rd in Willits. Bring a bag lunch and beverages will be provided. Also bring hand pruners, gloves, fresh cuttings in plastic bags of plants you are interested in propagating, and your questions! The fee for this workshop is $25. Call Larry at 459-2681 for more information.

May 30 - Salt Point State Park
This park continually astounds me for its rich plant life – even with over 75 years of collecting and observing, we’re still adding species to the list: well over 500 taxa. I’ll likely be doing restoration work there that weekend, but would like to take a break to explore some of the diverse habitats: marshes, pygmy forest, coastal prairie, closed-cone pine forest, and others. Meet at the Woodside campground parking lot, east side of Hwy. 1, at 9 a.m. Peter: (707) 829-1183; phytopagan@gmail.com

June 5 – Indian Springs Hike at Ridgewood Ranch
This is a 6 mile hike through woodland and creek areas up to a view of Eagle peak. There are tiger lilies that could be blooming along the way! This trip requires good hiking shoes along with other necessary gear for an all-day outing. Those interested in attending this trip should call Steve at 707-508-8729 for info about the ranch and parking instructions.

June 13 – Red Mountain and Lost Valley (Cow Mountain)
Like Rickabaugh Glade, a few miles farther south in the Mayacmas, Lost Valley is an expansive open area with abundant native forbs & grasses, with a seasonal stream and a vernal-type pool. Lost Valley has been reserved by BLM and is a wonderful place to know because of its great variety of flora, and relative ease of access. (One can drive to within a few hundred yards.) Red Mt. has been less explored by local botanists but it contains a variety of soil types, including serpentine. This year presents a particularly interesting challenge to plant nerds because Roger Raiche (creator of the original Rickabaugh plant list) has just thrown out the very distinct possibility that we may be able to locate on Red Mt. a small population of a species of Calamagrostis (Reed Grass) that he discovered there over 25 years ago, but never thought to key out. He now believes, as it was found on serpentine, that it likely was Calamagrostis ophitidis. This is a species not reported in the Smith & Wheeler Flora of...
Mendocino County. As it turns out, Kerry Heise has already located C. ophitidis on a serpentine site on the Hopland Field Station, a few miles to the south, but if a population can be found on Red Mt., this would be the farthest north this taxon has ever been located by anyone. For carpooling (Important! as there may be many ORV-types on the mountain), please meet at the CVS parking lot (formerly Long’s) along Orchard Ave. at 8:00 am on Sun. 6/13. Sunscreen, a hat, water, lunch, hand lens, & hiking boots, all will make this outing more pleasant for you. For more information call Kerry (462-4533) or Vishnu (467-1341).

June 25, 26, 27 - Plaskett Meadows, Black Butte, Anthony Peak
This botanically rich area of the Mendocino National Forest has delighted many of us in the past, and the camping and camaraderie are a bonus. We’ll camp at Plaskett Meadows on Friday and Saturday nights, and explore the meadows, peaks, and forests for a broad array of plant life, and indulge a short drive to Mendocino Pass and Anthony Peak for yet more plant diversity. An extensive plant list of the area is available. Anyone interested in attending should contact me for further details.

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Report on the Moss and Lichen Fieldtrip to the Hopland Research and Extension Center, February 20, 2010
Vishnu and Kerry Heise led 18 participants, who came from as far as Santa Clara, in pursuit of specimens to either identify in situ or to gather for an afternoon session using dichotomous keys and microscopes. The group began with a short excursion to the north side of Panther Rock, a large outcrop draped in a lush cover of bryophytes, spike mosses, and ferns lying at 1,100 ft. Along the way yellowish-green foliose lichens (Xanthoparmelia), orange crustose lichens (Caloplaca), and brownish Umbilicaria phaea were observed growing on sunny rocks along with the mosses Pseudobraunia californica, Grimmia laevigata, and the grey-green Hedwigia detonsa with its prominent broad white hair points. Common epiphytic lichens growing on branches of blue oak included Evernia prunastri, Flavopunctelia flaventior, Parmelia sulcata, Pseudocyphellaria anthrapsis, Ramalina farinacea, R. menziesii, and Usnea arizonica, while the main trunks were festooned with mosses such as the feather-like Dendroalsia abietina, yellow-green mats of Antirrichia californica, and the yellowish-snake-like runners of Homalothecium nuttallii. The north side of Panther Rock is a verdant wall rich in plant life where a mosaic of green hues hinted at the diversity of mosses and vascular plants that grow here. Some of the more conspicuous species were the fuzzy red-stemmed Anacolia menziesii, interspersed with Grimmia trichophylla, Homalothecium arenarium, the hairy-cap Polytrichum juniperinum, and the spike-moss, Selaginella wallacei.

Next, the group drove upwards into dense, cloudy conditions finally arriving at a unique serpentine scrub area at 2,650 ft. Here an interesting elfin forest of MacNab cypress and manzanita offered the perfect substrate for a variety of lichens not seen lower down in the Panther Rock area. Some of the more eye-catching ones included the olive-green Kaernefeltia merrillii, the closely related Tuckermannopsis orbata, the beautiful isidiate-margined Platismatia herrei, and the bone white, divaricately-branched Hypogymnia tubulosa. The most common epiphytic moss at this site was the dark green Orthothricum lyalli, with its short-stalked capsules, deeply immersed within the leaf axils. Altogether 20 lichen and a similar number of moss species were identified (with the new list additions of Ramalina subleptocarpha and Platismatia herrei). In terms of lichens, the serpentine site produced the more varied & interesting taxa.

A Prickly Parable - Peter Warner
When is a thistle not a weed? You may say any is a scourge to be sought and destroyed by blade, toxic potion, or carbon-swilling mechanical executioner. But what if the spiny one is as part of natural lore as the quail, or poppy, or oak, here for years ‘ere humans cast long shadows across the land? What if our feathered friends and buzzing ones, too, relied upon these prickly plants for sustenance, shelter, and sociability? That they are well defended is scant reason to regard them with disfavor.

Weeds are simply so in the minds, the eyes, and the oft’ idle hands of the beholder. While many fall prey to righteous zeal, in attempts to repel invaders that squat in forest, glade, or meadow, too many of the vitally indigenous also perish, victims of mistaken identity. Thusly do so many native thistles suffer the indignity I plead you reserve for those oh-so-lovely ochre-blossomed peas from the East – you name the broom – or the hordes of red-berried, black-druped, fleshy fruited, woody-capsuled, parchment-podded, slimy or seedy, pompously plumed, nursery-groomed, creeply rhizomed, strangling, entangling, ecologically mangling, horticulturally-pimped-for-your-conspicuous-consumption garden wretches (Acacia, Arundo, Carpobrotus, Cotoneaster, Cortaderia, Delairea, Eucalyptus, Hedera, Illex, Ligustrum, Pyracantha, Vinca, Watsonia, et al., ad nauseum). But I digress!

Truly, with so many prickly pranksters infiltrating our fabulous thistle flora, the native sticklers can confound the otherwise noble restorationist, leading to their untimely demise (meaning that of the thistles, but who knows the vengeance that might simmer in the hearts of artichokes?). So, by way of telling tales (not tall), I must warn those who weed – one and all – know thy thistles! Seek counsel for taxonomically tantalizing tricksters! Grope and grab with all due caution amongst the spiny thicketts, for the bite may be
worse than the bark, and harbor botanical booty, to boot! Now will I share fair warning, from mountains far and near, of the blight those who vie to do good deeds can deliver, for alas, they know not foe from friend. These are dark fables of woe for thistles that, having peacefully plied verdant slopes for thousands of years, were tragically separated from their earthly heritage.

In Yosemite, the summer past, as I traipsed the slopes of Dana and Lyell, I was beset with the withering corpses of countless Cirsium scariosum (elk thistle), rent asunder and lying wasted along the way. Surely this could not be the work of an evolutionarily wayward deer, time and again mistaking the spiny herbage for more palatable fare? No, for I soon happened upon another traveler, also aghast, who shared with me the spying of the perpetrator's deeds. Apparently, these thistles manifested as a pestilence pirating resources from the more becoming native posies, and thus deserved to die! Yet, in these alpine climes, nary an invader has been known to survive winter's wrath, yet the unenlightened deed-doer didst mistakenly slay the indigenous herbs, whereupon the park’s learned ones did lament by decree, "Let the natives be!"

As the days fell to chill, I returned to the hill called Hood, above Valley of the Moon. My heart did start me in a hurry and with a thrill, along the trail through these peculiar woods, where serpentine mineral and infertile till keep invaders at bay. Had but a few fortnights passed since I last trod these trails, and thence had made the dear acquaintance of Cirsium douglasii, the denizen thistle of western swamp. Soon, and alas, tears doused my cheer, as in the ultramafic muck I fell upon a field of gore – no, neither Al nor Vidal, but a sickening scene of Cirsium -slaying! With haste to sound the alarm of this errant slaughter, I soon learned the terrible truth that I must tell: citizens worthy, if not well informed, wreaked the havoc, fearing an invader had designs for the entire mountainside. So did another native thistle perish, for crimes of encroachment never committed.

Well, fear not – these natives are tough, as well as perennial; in resiliency they will long outlive us! I know well that the weeder had love for habitat in mind, if not in the hand. But, please, take these tales to heart, and spend not your time wrenching from Earth those plants that precede us. Seek twice, nay, thrice, the advice, of a thistly sage, for knowing what weeds to cull from forest and field.

Wanted: Help for our over-committed webmaster! If you are a web developer familiar with xhtml, css and CMS such as Joomla or Drupal, please help us make the CNPS-Sanhedrin website more interactive and accessible. Contact Tara Athan at webmaster@cnps-sanhedrin.org.