



CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY  
*San Diego Chapter Newsletter*

**GARDEN NATIVE  
WORKSHOP**

**Create Beauty with California Native  
Plants - Learn from the Best!**

**Saturday, September 16, 2017**

**9:00 am - 3:30 pm**

The workshop will be held at the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego at 298 WEST Arbor Drive in Hillcrest. The venue is much larger this year than last, so we will have plenty of room for everyone who wants to attend!

**Plants, Seeds & Books for sale, too!**

8:15 - 8:45 am: Registration, Muffins & Coffee

9:00 am - 3:30 pm: Workshop

12:30-1:15 pm: Lunch (included in cost)

**Registration opens July 31, 2017**

**Early bird pricing through August 6.**

Visit [gardennative.org](http://gardennative.org)

The Fall Plant Sale will follow on October 14 at the Casa del Prado Courtyard in Balboa Park (see p.2).

**FIELD TRIP**

**PALOMAR MOUNTAIN STATE PARK  
Doane Creek & French Valley**

**AUGUST 19, 2017** – 9 am to Lunch at Doane Pond Parking Lot. We expect to return to the carpool location by 2:30 pm. Easy to Moderate +/- 3.5 miles. NO dogs, please.

August promises to be very hot this year, so I can think of little better than a beautiful, shade covered walk among the pines and western dogwood (*Cornus nuttallii*) of Palomar Mountain. Given this year's rains so far, there's a very good chance that the Lower Doane and French Valley will still have plenty of late summer blooms. For those who have joined the field trips here Reading into Lower Doane Valley along Doane Creek to the Wier Historical Site and back around the French Valley. We'll be on the hunt for seldom seen mountain perennials like White veined wintergreen (*Pyrola picta*), Western dog violet (*Viola adunca*), and Lemon lily (*Lilium parryi*) along the creeks and hillsides.

**What to bring:** It may be very hot with a 100% chance of gnats and mosquitoes, so as always, please bring plenty of water, hats, sunscreen, **INSECT REPELLANT!**, and good hiking shoes with a change of socks. Pack snacks and a lunch as well. Cell reception is spotty on the mountain.

**For more info:** Additional details can be found at San Diego County Native Plant Discoverer's Meetup, Friends of Palomar State Park, Modern Hiker, Alltrials, and CA Parks websites, or contact [fieldtrips@cnpssd.org](mailto:fieldtrips@cnpssd.org).

To arrange carpools, meet between 7:15 and 7:30 am **behind** the Denny's on Friars Rd in Mission Valley (turn at Frazee Rd & Ralphs Drwy). Please bring a suggested \$5/person for gas & covering the entry

**NO CHAPTER  
MEETING IN AUGUST**  
**SEE YOU ON  
SEPTEMBER 19!**

fee. Day Use at Palomar State Park is \$10/vehicle. Please note that there are **NO gas stations on the mountain.**

~ Justin Daniels, Field Trips



Above: Western dogwood (*Cornus nuttallii*)

Below: Doane Pond

Photos by Justin Daniels



committee, which meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month at various locations. Contact [gardening@cnpsd.org](mailto:gardening@cnpsd.org) for location and time.

## FALL PLANT SALE Saturday, October 14

Mark your calendars, the Fall Native Plant Sale will take place on Saturday, October 14th, in the courtyard next to the Casa del Prado, across from the west entrance to the Natural History Museum, in Balboa Park.

The Plant Sale Committee is always looking for more volunteers. We work throughout the year planning the overall operation of the sale. Some jobs can be done on your own time while others work in groups. Following is a list of how volunteers can help us put on the sale:

- Post plant sale flyers after they have been printed.
- Food: Set up food for the volunteers on plant sale day, solicit donations, etc.
- Package and label seeds.
- Help the Plant Propagation Committee grows plants for the sale.

If you'd like to get involved with one of the chapter's largest fundraisers, please let us know by sending an email to [plantsale@cnpsd.org](mailto:plantsale@cnpsd.org).

**Pre-ordering plants:** CNPS members will be able to preorder plants and have them waiting for you on sale day. Details and information will be posted on the chapter's website by September 1. Don't wait, **pre-ordering will close on September 20th, 2017.**

### BOARD MEETING

**Wednesday, August 2, 6:30 – 9:00 p.m.** 4010 Morena Blvd, Suite 100, San Diego (Thomas Guide 1248 C4). CNPS-SD Executive Board meetings are always the first Wednesday of the month, except when the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday falls on a holiday. Members are welcome to attend as observers. To add an issue to the agenda, please email [president@cnpsd.org](mailto:president@cnpsd.org).

### NATIVE GARDENING

#### Garden Native Meeting

**August 9.** Garden Native is the Chapter's native gardening

### Volunteer Announcement

CNPS San Diego is looking for a volunteer or volunteers to help with some administrative support. Looking for someone proficient with Excel, computers in general and interested and able in working independently as well as collaboratively with others. The amount of time commitment varies but most of the work can be done on your own schedule. If you are interested in getting more involved with the chapter's activities and meeting other people with an interest in California native plants, please send an email to [info@cnpsd.org](mailto:info@cnpsd.org).

# FEATURED COMMITTEE: RESTORATION

The goals of the CNPS-SD Invasive Plant Group include: (1) restoring native open space by controlling competing non-native and invasive species, (2) teaching people the skills and knowledge to be able to carry out restoration, (3) developing a regional network of partners to further our efforts, and (4) sharing and exchanging knowledge to further our purpose.

The chapter has developed a group of volunteers who work to control non-native invasive species through hands-on training as a way of restoring native habitat.

Following is a brief report by **Bob Byrnes** of work completed during June and July 2017 at Lusardi Creek. Perhaps you would like to help. If so, contact Bob Byrnes at [bob.byrnes@cnpssd.org](mailto:bob.byrnes@cnpssd.org).

**Week of June 19:** Last week we treated artichoke thistle and tamarisk. **Melissa**, our newest member, was a great help. The red-tailed hawks in their nest on the pylon supporting the power lines seem to dominate the skies whenever we work underneath. They are quite majestic, flying to and from their nest, and sometimes soaring, just for fun, it seems.

**Week of June 26:** We continue to make inroads against invasive plants at Lusardi Creek. We have finished up nearly all the remaining artichoke thistle that is doable. On Friday, two park rangers, Byron and Rob, teamed up with the Alpha Project and myself to cut down a sizable number of tamarisk. The next day, Melissa and I cleared out many more.

Tamarisk, palms, and acacia remain to be removed. It's interesting to note that one of the large acacias at the plank crossing the creek at the east end has a nest of bees in the base. **Arne Johanson** has been trying to kill this tree for years but there is still some green on it. With the presence of bees, it looks like it will remain alive for a while longer.

Speaking of bees, yesterday Melissa and I were standing at my car at the end of the day when one stung me on the ear. It wasn't very painful, but by the time I got home, my ear had swollen a bit. My wife commented that it made me look like a Vulcan. "Live long and prosper" is my motto.

**Week of July 10:** We had to cut short last week's efforts because of record heat. Nonetheless, we accomplished a considerable reduction in the number of tamarisk trees in the creek. One area, at the gate for the crossing to the other side of the creek, is looking the best I have ever seen it.

This week, our efforts are focused on -- you guessed it -- tamarisk. It should be a bit cooler. I expect to be working on dry land out in the open air, rather than in the water, so there also should be some air movement, at least. As always, we adjust our activity according to the weather.

**Week of July 3:** We continue to make inroads against the tamarisk infesting Lusardi Creek.

We will continue to provide periodic reports of the work Arne and Bob's volunteer team are making to restore native habitat.

## CONSERVATION

### Conservation Committee

**August 1.** Usually the first Tuesday evening of each month. Contact **Frank Landis** at [conservation@cnpssd.org](mailto:conservation@cnpssd.org) for details.

### The Revolution Should Face the Sun

As you read this, I'll be working on a comment letter for the Newland Sierra EIR. That project inspired this essay because one of the things they're doing is trying to make the Newland Sierra development carbon neutral. This is a wonderful aspiration, but I'm not so sure that it shows up in the project design, and that's the subject of this month's essay. Unfortunately, carbon neutral developments aren't as simple as writing a few pages in an EIR and specifying that it should be possible to mount solar panels on otherwise conventional tract houses in a conventional development.

Newland Sierra is the latest development in a tract of land just north of Deer Springs Road and just west of I-15. Two previous development proposals (the last was called Merriam Mountain) have died on that site, and Merriam Mountain was voted down by the Board of Supervisors 4-1 a few years back. In what seems to be a common pattern, the old Merriam Mountain land was sold (presumably) cheaply to a foreign investor, (presumably) under the notion that they'll make so

much money that they can afford the necessary legal battles. Given who's already in opposition to Newland Sierra, I suspect it will also go down to defeat, having made some money in fees to the developer in the meantime. Then the land will be sold to another foreign investor and the cycle will begin again. That seems to be how these bad developments keep popping up over and over and over again, like B-grade movie vampires. If you're moving into a new neighborhood, it's worth getting to know your neighbors, to find out if there's one of these undead properties nearby. Then you can learn from your neighbors how they defeated it, so that when new blood revives it, you can stand beside them to banish it again. But I digress.

The Newland Sierra site is mostly a south-facing little valley, with some grassland in the center and steep slopes covered in fairly old chaparral. It's a critical piece of wildlife corridor in the County's proposed North County MSCP, and the Newland Sierra development would bisect the wildlife corridor. That's why the environmental groups are upset about all this. That, and that Newland is proposing over 2,000 homes in a place that's zoned for 100 homes. And they've got to widen all the roads leading in. And they're going to mess up the I-15, because there's no plan to deal with that massive influx of traffic, because it's not part of the general plan. And so on.

But this all depends on getting solar power. The fundamental problem with solar is that the sun doesn't shine through mountains, since rock is opaque (as is chaparral). Therefore, if a developer depends on putting solar panels on all the houses to meet climate action plan goals, they're missing a good chunk of the horizon, which means there's less sun, which means that the solar panels need to be aimed south to southwest to maximize their energy intake to make the whole thing work.

Unfortunately, Newland Sierra is laid out like any development, all curving streets and small parcels pointed in every compass direction. There's also a block of apartments and condos. While it's nice that they're trying to put in a bit of affordable housing, where are they going to put the solar panels for all this?

Yes, they can put solar panels on any roof, but if they're serious about powering houses entirely by solar, it's better to have all the roofs pointing south, not shading each other, and not being shaded by all those nice street trees they want to put in, to go with that great urban forestry initiatives that is also underway.

It gets worse when you start adding in electric cars. This

spring, we installed 18 panels on our house, one we recently bought because it had a big south-facing roof. So far, we generate 20-40 kWh per day, far more than the house actually needs. The reason we're generating so much is that we're going to get a Chevy Bolt this year. This little car gets 238 miles on a single charge (if you drive like my wife does, probably less if you drive the way I do). The catch is that the Bolt has a 60 kWh battery, so it will take 2-3 days worth of solar power to charge the car. Unfortunately, they don't sell 60 kWh house batteries yet, but by the time they do, we'll be ready for it. That's the kind of planning and investment that needs to go into running a house 100% solar energy. We figure it will take about five years and a kitchen remodel to retrofit our 1980s house for 100% renewable electricity. To reach 100% renewability, every home in San Diego will have to go through this.

That's also the point for Newland Sierra and for every new development. Renewable power is not just about powering homes, it's mostly powering people's vehicles. That takes a lot of solar panels. Then again, the county believes that 55% of greenhouse gases emitted in the County come from cars and trucks, so it's critically important to make this switch.

If any developer, not just Newland, is going to run a development on rooftop solar, it's going to need to design the development around that goal. Streets will need to be laid out so that buildings can have a south or west facing roof, and every roof will need to have big, sun-facing surfaces, even more so when they're on slopes or in valleys, as is Newland Sierra. Most of the solar panels will need to be dedicated to charging vehicles, not powering homes, and trees will have to be planted and maintained in ways that don't shade panels. This last isn't just a good idea, it's the law: to be precise, it's Public Resources Code Division 15, Chapter 12. Solar Shade Control [25980 - 25986], passed in 1974.

The lesson to this point is that we'll know that developers are getting serious about sustainability when new buildings and developments change substantially, as solar will affect everything from the way streets are laid out to the way parcels are delineated, buildings are oriented, rooflines are designed, and where and what trees are planted. None of this is rocket science, but none of it is business as usual, either. Fortunately, it's a challenge that at least some architects have been craving for decades, so we might actually get some good-looking homes out of this, too.

Fortunately or unfortunately, it doesn't end there. To

quote an article by Joshua Emerson Smith in the July 13, 2017 Union Tribune, "SANDAG officials have said that while sprawling, car-centric planning currently has negative environmental impacts, technologies such as electric vehicles may make such concerns largely irrelevant in the future." (<http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/environment/sd-me-sandag-ruling-20170713-story.html>). Yes, it looks like the agency tasked with overseeing transportation development in the County sees only wider roads and increased sprawl, but they're okay with that, because electric vehicles like the Chevy Bolt will magically vanish all problems. Yeah, right. Let me run through the Chevy Bolt's stats again: it's a subcompact that costs about as much as a mid-sized car, and if driven conservatively, it gets 238 miles out of 60 kWh charge that's held in a 960-pound battery. This, above all else, illustrates the trap that gas has put us in: a gallon of gas weighs about 6 pounds, and I could go 238 miles in my 1992 Camry on 54 pounds of gas. Current electric vehicles are much smaller and more short-legged than their gas powered counterparts are, because gas stores more energy per pound than batteries do. SANDAG's assumption that electrified sprawl will be environmentally friendly is as stupid as developers assuming that putting solar panels on conventionally designed homes will be enough to power the cars for those roads.

If we're going to transition successfully to a 100% renewably powered society, everything's going to have to change. Some of it will be cool, some of it will be ugly, some of it will be square miles of solar panels reflecting sunlight into the eyes of every airplane pilot flying in, and some of it will undoubtedly be powered by solar and wind plants elsewhere. If there's an ultimate lesson here, it's that San Diego is designed around petroleum, and rebuilding it around renewable energy is not a trivial task. I applaud every developer who takes steps to make this happen, but they need to realize that what they build to meet this challenge will be revolutionary 21st Century buildings, not more 20th century designs. And their buildings will have to face that perfect sun we live under here.

~ Frank Landis, Conservation Chair

# IN THE FIELD

## Guatay Mountain

I drove out east on I-8 fairly early in the morning. The sky was heavily clouded to the point that mist was falling and it was necessary to use the windshield wipers. However, east of Alpine, the sun burst through and the sky was perfectly clear with no hint of a cloud. I was working on another rare plant survey to identify locations of *Packera ganderi* (Gander's butterweed) and any other rare plants for the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) under their contract with AECOM. I drove east toward the town of Guatay and onto the Old Highway 80, the old concrete slab two lane highway with that characteristic bumpety-bump sound from the tires hitting the tar-filled slab joints across the road. I remember when this was the only road east, before I-8 was constructed. I needed to find a place to park and I first thought about parking at the Lutheran church parking area in the town and then I thought I would try the road through the village of Guatay to where it looked like a trail took off, a trail I had seen on Google Earth. However, a few dozen yards down the road there were signs on both sides of the road that stated unauthorized vehicles will be towed at the owner's expense. Not only that, directly adjacent to that area was a towing service yard with an active tow truck; by active, I mean that the engine was running.

I turned around and thought about asking to park at the small grocery store across the street and pay them, but then I drove down the road, Old Highway 80, to look for a place to park. On the north side of the road, about a quarter mile down, a wide spot existed with some shade from an oak tree.

I parked there and began walking back through the town. So that I would not attract so much attention, I carried the snake guards that I usually wear when hiking to protect myself from snakes and also to protect my legs when passing through chaparral. I didn't think I needed the attention that weird, tan colored leg covers would attract, and walked briskly. South of town, I walked past a graded area and headed east and then south on a trail up the mountain. I continued to walk quickly until I reached the southern trail and began to climb.

The trail climbed steeply. Spotted towhees called with their whine-like cry in the large growth chaparral. The chaparral on Guatay Mountain can be considered the

### Conservation Conference



February 1-3, 2018  
Workshops & Field Trips January 30-31  
Los Angeles, CA  
Los Angeles Airport Marriott

<https://conference.cnps.org/>

definition of climax vegetation. There are no recorded records of a fire over Guatay Mountain though they certainly have burned all around it.

Guatay Mountain is composed of gabbro rock, high in magnesium and iron, with many interesting plants. The first interesting plants I encountered in this area was *Salvia sonomensis* (Creeping Sage) which formed a complete ground cover. *Salvia sonomensis* at this point had become quite dry, and was well past flowering and the leaves were beginning to shrivel. They turn a gray-brown color when they dry out. The odor of *Salvia sonomensis* is not as strong as *Salvia mellifera* (Black Sage) nor the garlicky *Salvia apiana* (White Sage) that has a strong body odor scent. The odor of *Salvia sonomensis* is reminiscent of a cross between *Artemisia californica* (California Sage Brush) and musty mint, somewhat similar to *Lepechinia ganderi* (Gander's pitcher sage). It was not unpleasant but interesting. What was really interesting was how well it covered the ground as an understory for chaparral that consisted of *Arctostaphylos glandulosa* (Eastwood's Manzanita), *Quercus acutidens* (Torrey's Scrub Oak), *Cercocarpus betuloides* (Mountain Mahogany) covered with the silvery fruits that have the appearance of twisted feathers, *Ceanothus perplexans* (Cup-Leaf Ceanothus) and *Adenostoma fasciculata* (Chamise). *Quercus acutidens*, that olive green scrub oak shrub that seems to be of hybrid origin, grew in patches here and there. There were also plenty of the *Stipa coronata* (Giant Stipa) growing with their slender tall wands extending several feet above the open chaparral.



I have mentioned in previous articles how strange it is that *Salvia sonomensis* grows here in this manner. It occurs in Northern California in the coast ranges and the Sierra Nevada foothills from as far north as Siskiyou County and as far south as northern Santa Barbara County in the Sierra Madre Mountains. There is one location in Los Angeles County at a mountain heliport

and then it occurs in San Diego County. However, here it is common on soil derived from gabbro (black granite) and metavolcanic rock. It is too conspicuous to be missed in Riverside, Orange, San Bernardino, Ventura and most of Los Angeles Counties. There is obviously something special about San Diego County for this plant.

*Prunus ilicifolia* (Holly-Leaf Cherry) with its shiny bright green rounded but dentate leaves was also present here. Another typical interior chaparral bird, the California thrasher, sang its slow, deliberate song of different phrases and notes. The *Adenostoma fasciculata* was past flowering so it had a rusty yellow orange color at the tips of the branches where the flowers had dried. The *Arctostaphylos glandulosa* had some leaves that were browning due to the early ending of this year's rainy season.

As I climbed, the vegetation changed a bit. Red-flowered *Silene laciniata* (Indian Pink) was growing along the trail. *Rhus trilobata* (Basketbush), was also growing among the larger shrubs. The white-flowered *Eriogonum fasciculatum* var. *polifolium* (California Buckwheat, gray leaf form) was also growing in openings among the chaparral shrubs. *Calochortus weedii* (Weed's Mariposa Lily) that has been so widespread and prolific this year was flowering along the trail up the mountain. It is the tulip-shaped flower that is yellow and contains a number of small brownish colored hairs. *Cordylanthus rigidus* ssp. *setigerus* (Dark-tipped Bird's Beak) and *Gutierrezia californica* (California Matchweed) also grew along the trail. At some locations, I began to see bright colors of purple and blue *Penstemon spectabilis* (Showy Penstemon) flowers. Walking up the trail, the scarlet red color of *Delphinium cardinale* (Red Larkspur) was also present. In the understory, *Galium andrewsii* (Moss Bedstraw) grew with small pin-like green leaves. *Hesperoyucca whipplei*'s (Chaparral Candle) tall flowering stalks and sharply pointed mound of strap-shaped leaves were also present. The vegetation was a subtle mix of textures and shades of green and tans.

The trail quickly and warmly that morning climbs to the initial ridge east of the highest point of the mountain which is 4,885 feet. From that point, I could see Corte Madera Mountain to the south with its *Pinus coulteri* (Coulter Pine) trees scattered across its highest ridge and down the north slope when viewed through a telephoto lens.

As the trail climbed up onto the ridge, the high span of the I-8 freeway bridge over Pine Valley Creek was briefly

visible and I could hear the sound of the freeway like a backyard rushing sound. A Turkey vulture was beginning to circle overhead. The chaparral was very dense at this location, about 10 feet tall on the east and north side of the ridge. The ground showed evidence of the rain that fell the previous week. The soil surface was smoothed over by the rain rivulets.

*Frasera parryi* (Deer's Ears), an interesting plant with whitish-gray leaves and stems and with flowers with four petals grows up in a stalk. As mentioned, the gray leaf form of *Eriogonum fasciculatum* was growing in open areas as well. Huge *Rhus ovata* (Sugar Bush) shrubs grew across the upper area with their dark green ovoid shaped leaves. *Ceanthus leucodermis* (Chaparral Whitethorn), with whitish, gray green leaves and stems, grew here in the midst of chaparral. Here, the *Delphinium cardinale* grew 6 feet tall. Large green leaves of *Acourtia microcephala* (Sacapellote) were present in the understory of a few of the shrubs.

At one point of the ridge, a somewhat lower saddle like area, a cluster of *Adenostoma sparsifolia* (Red Shank)



*Adenostoma sparsifolia* (Red Shank)

grew with several of the shrubs being 15 feet tall. The *Adenostoma sparsifolia* is significantly brighter green than *Adenostoma fasciculatum*. It has a scent that is not unpleasant; faint piney creosote bush like. *Trichostemma parishii* (Blue Curls) were growing

nearby. They are shrubs in the sage family with narrow leaves and inflorescences of blue-purple flowers. On the south slope a bit farther west, the *Adenostoma fasciculatum* was growing only about 2½ feet tall even though it has been verified that no recorded fire has occurred on the mountain. The low stature is the result of the gabbro effect and the south facing slope. Up on the ridge, I could see that clouds were still visible on the coast and fog would have been present on the coastal hills. The temperature was climbing rapidly and small, incipient cumulus clouds appeared in the blue sky.

The trail kept climbing along the west trending ridge, in some places loose with a gravelly surface. In some locations along the ridge, there were spots that had a completely different vegetative cover, like some sort of blow out or disturbance patch. However, it was due to the south facing aspect and the poor soil that these areas with open shrubs including *Salvia apiana* (White Sage), *Eriogonum fasciculatum* and other subshrubs like *Gutierrezia californica* grew in strong contrast to the surrounding chaparral.

Cliff Swallows flew by gleaning insects from the air. Mountains visible included, in addition to Corte Madera, Long Valley Peak and to its east, Los Pinos Mountain was also very clear.

The billowing clouds were forming over the Laguna Mountains ridge to the east with tremendous expansion; arm like projections of cloud were thrust upward. Up on the ridge, *Ceanothus foliosus* (Wavy-Leaf Ceanothus) grew, the same species as seen from Cuyamaca at the desert over look. It grows a bit taller here, up to 2½ feet or even a bit more. Why does this plant from Northern California skip to San Diego where it grows in a number of locations similar to *Salvia sonomensis*? Both seem to prefer gabbro so maybe they can't compete with regular species on granitic soils.

Looking for *Packera ganderi*, I left the trail. I knew from experience it likes north slope vegetation and can grow in the shade of the chaparral. I encountered clean, unburned, pristine vegetation. It is hard enough to attempt to traverse old Chamise, but *Arctostaphylos* with its stiff, woody stems is impossible to penetrate for any significant distance without a great deal of pain from rigid branches, even when the manzanita was only a few feet tall.

I encountered *Hesperocyparis forbesii* (Tecate Cypress) trees on the ridge. Over the years, I had been led to believe that all the trees visible from down below were oaks. However, a saddle east of the peak contained



cypress trees and a scattering of good sized trees extended down the mountain to the north, down to the urban fringe. The trees were growing in the midst of the chaparral with their green branches standing over the blanket of dense chaparral. The vegetation was beautiful with the even cover of the chaparral shrubs

and scattered trees with nice conifer form. It gave me the impression of some of the really high altitude forest areas I have seen, like the sub-alpine upper slopes of the San Bernardino Mountains.

Not far from the trail, I was looking at the *Salvia sonomensis* when I noticed a Coast Horned Lizard nestled in the leaves of the *Salvia*.



If you think that the plants have had a large number of taxonomic changes recently with changes in names and subspecies and varieties, the Coast Horned Lizard has as well. Still they are fascinating animals with interesting thorns and spikes on their scales.

I finally reached the top of the peak after climbing up an extraordinarily steep slope with little loose gabbro gravel. I sat on top and ate my lunch. Large pale Swallowtail butterflies were battling for air space on the mountain and flew straight up for dozens of feet in little battles while the Cliff Swallows swooped by.

The temperature felt like 90 degrees and the air was humid. I drank a lot of water and two Gatorades I carried with me. Near to the top grew the red tubular flowered *Monardella macrantha* (Scarlet Monardella), just past flowering. It is a prostrate plant with flowers that are apparently adapted to hummingbird pollination. I was surprised to see it there because it usually grows under coniferous forest trees. I saw two *Salvia clevelandii* (Cleveland Sage) plants on the last steep climb. *Rhinotropis cornuta* (Fish's Milkwort) also grew near the top. *Rhinotropis*, which used to be called *Polygala*, has neat flowers with bilateral petals. The clouds continued to build to the east as I sat on the peak. There was a plastic box with an ammo box inside on the top of the peak. I thought it was for holding a sign-in log but it was probably for an emergency cache for people who were lost. Dead beetles and bugs and water were in the outer plastic box since it had rained the week before.

From viewing the mountain on Google Earth, I knew that small trails traveled to the north from the peak. I eventually stepped down that direction, still looking for *Packera*. I found a trail that was very steep, cutting through the red soil with the gabbro black rocks. It eventually intersected an old fire break that traversed the mountain on the north side. The fire break passed alongside the cypress trees that were scattered down the mountain. The slope of the vegetation was a uniform green color chaparral with a uniform texture and diversity except for the occasional cypress trees standing among the shrubs, which themselves were mostly 5 to 8 feet tall on the north side. It was a scene enhanced by the clouds and the blue sky.

I was not sure where the trail was going to end but it approached an old graded unbuilt lot excavated into the red gabbro soil. I walked down farther and the driveway to this lot became a paved lane. I took off the snake guards when I was clear of vegetation. I walked past the town on the north side and then back to my car, thankful that it was still there and had not been towed.

I drove down to the old cypress grove that is known from the area and has the largest cypress trees around. It is roughly 3/4 of a mile west of the town. Over the years, I had been there many times to marvel at the size of these very old cypress trees. I climbed up into the grove and the vegetation was denser than I recalled. Some of the trees were breaking up as well. Two had fallen in the last couple of years. However, the lowermost tree still appeared to be healthy. Its trunk is approximately 2½ to 3 feet in diameter. Without a



coring device to create a small cross section of the rings in a small cylinder of wood, it is difficult to tell how old the tree was, but I would guess that it is at least 100 to 150 years old.

A few seedlings about a meter tall were also growing having germinated in the absence of fire. Tecate Cypress, and cypresses in general, are referred to as closed cone species. The cones, which in the case of cypress are round bumpy balls a little larger than a quarter coin, are sealed with resin while the cones remain on the tree. They stay on the tree for many years. When a fire burns through their stand, the trees are generally killed but the cones are heated and they open and release the small angular seeds by the thousands. Then, they are able to germinate with the rains in the following winter and grow into clean mineral soil since the fire burned off the organic duff. The fire interval needs to be at least 30 or more years or the trees will not replace themselves since at that age they will not have produced a great number of cones yet, and there is a large amount of mortality with the seedlings. Occasionally cones will open while on a tree or be broken off and open to release the seeds even in the absence of fire. That must have happened here.

I looked around beneath the really large tree for a while and unfortunately placed my pack on a nest of ants, the small California Velvety Tree Ant, *Liometopum occidentale*. I thought I cleared them off my pack, but was stung on the neck by one. They don't have a strong sting but they smell weird, kind of a vinegary terpentine odor. This little grove of very old trees is a real wonder in a region that usually has so many fires. Though I have seen the beautiful white and nearly endemic *Calochortus dunnii* (Dunn's Mariposa Lily) there before, it was too late in the season and was no longer visible.

While there is ample habitat for the target of my search on Guatay Mountain, the *Packera ganderi* (Gander's butterweed), I did not find any of it there. Guatay Mountain is just another of the unique features in San Diego County. We have a number of peaks composed of gabbro rock, but each one has its own characteristics. The old growth cypress on Guatay Mountain is really amazing but the upper parts of the mountain provide a character of scenery and cypress vegetation growth that is different than any other place in the area.

~ Tom Oberbauer, Vice President  
(Photos by the author)

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### CNPS-SD Activities Calendar August 2017

- 8/2: Board Meeting, p.2
  - 8/1: Conservation Committee Mtg, p.3
  - 8/9: Garden Native Mtg, p. 2
  - 8/19: Field Trip to Palomar Mountain, p.1
- NO CHAPTER MEETING IN AUGUST**

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