General Meeting:
California’s Prairies and Grasslands
With Glen Holstein, Ph.D

May 19, 2015 7:30 pm

Abstract: Ever wondered what makes grassland a prairie or marveled over the stunning display of wildflowers across a rangeland? How important are prairies as an eco-system? What once was a vast expanse across California of native prairie is now represented as remnant patches. What is being done to enhance our native prairies? Where are they and how well are they understood? Can they be restored?

Speaker Bio: Glen Holstein has been studying and advocating for the protection of California deserts, chaparral, riparian systems and prairies for decades. He participated in the creation of many California reserves-Carrizo Plains, Nipomo Dunes, Cold Canyon and others. Among his most recent projects were guest editing and writing three articles for a special Fremontia issue on California’s prairies and grasslands. Glen was also elected to the CNPS State Board of Directors and named Environmentalist of the Year by the Environmental Council of Sacramento. Don’t miss this wonderful opportunity to learn about this important and diverse ecosystem.

You see the plants blooming but the names are unclear? No need to fret, Plant I.D. Hour is here! Arrive at 6:45 pm before the General Meeting, and bring specimens of plants you want to identify. At Plant I.D. Hour you can see plants up close and key them to species, while getting to know fellow Milo Baker Chapter members. Plants that you key out or learn with friends are easily remembered! Bring in some mystery plants to challenge us.

Join us for Dinner before the Meeting:
We’ll gather for dinner at 6 pm at Kirin Restaurant, 2700 Yulupa Ave. We hope our speaker will join us, but we always have an enjoyable group of fellow members and a delicious Northern Chinese meal in any case. Please contact Liz Parsons at 833-2063 or lizpar8993@aol.com by May 18th, if you plan to attend.

Calendar
- 5/10 Lost Valley Hike
- 5/12 Board Meeting
- 5/15 Submissions deadline: June Newsletter
- 5/19 General Meeting
- 5/30 Salt Point Hike
Chapter News

Meet Our Conservation Chair

The Conservation Chair is a vital and important role for our chapter. This board position ideally relies upon a team of volunteers to work on conservation in our county. The Milo Baker Chapter is pleased to welcome April Owens as our new Conservation Chair.

April Owens is a Landscape Designer and owner of SUN- Sustainable Urban Natives, a garden design and build company. She found her love of California native plants when she was in landscape architecture school. Seeking something better than the typical shrubs and plants from far away places, she began taking hikes with Glenn Keator, a botanist, and discovered a rich new palette of plants to use in landscapes. Fifteen years later she is still enjoying these plants both in their natural setting and in the designed garden. April first joined Milo Baker as the Programs Director and served in that position for two years. However, conservation is one of her passions and now that she is out of graduate school she is excited to bring a fresh eye to this position. Please feel free to contact her with any ideas or projects that need attention. aprilleeowens@gmail.com

Follow Us on Facebook

We will be posting updates about field trips, events, volunteer opportunities, and other important information there. It’s a good place to get up-to-date information about what’s going on with the Milo Baker Chapter. Find us at: https://www.facebook.com/CNPSMiloBaker

Gardening with Natives

Photo by Saxon Holt

One of the sponsors for the San Francisco Garden Show in March was the National Wildlife Federation and, at the last minute, April Owens, Charlotte Torgovitsky (president of the Marin CNPS chapter), and I joined up to create their backyard wildlife habitat exhibit.

On a 20 x 30-foot space, we put together a native habitat garden replete with bubbling stream, hedgerow and meadow, and called it “Bring Nature Home”. April, our garden designer, also put together (with the help of a friend) our show-stopping twig façade made from recycled fence posts and manzanita and oak branches.
Our hedgerow, edged with a rock wall, was a diversity of trees and shrubs that would bloom in different seasons and provide food sources for birds and pollinators. Several large live oaks in 36-inch boxes anchored the hedgerow area: oak leaves, gathered from the oak woodlands that border Charlotte’s property in Novato, were scattered underneath. Trees and shrubs such as California buckeye, Ceanothus ‘Blue Ray’, Catalina cherry (Prunus lyonii), toyon (Heteromeles arbutifolia), pink-flowering currant (Ribes sanguineum) and fuchsia-flowered gooseberry (R. speciosum ‘Rana Creek’) were densely planted together to create our hedgerow habitat.

Among the understory plants were several manzanita species (A. ‘Sentinel’ and ‘Emerald Carpet’); quail bush (Atriplex lentiformis) and low-growing, mounding groundcover such as coyote brush (Baccharis ‘Pigeon Pt’) and Ceanothus maritimus ‘Valley Violet’ and C. gloriosus v. ‘Emily Brown’). Nested among the trees and shrubs were several bird nests and nest boxes for chickadees and western bluebirds. A native bee nest box hung from a branch on our twig façade.

Downslope from the hedgerow we planted various native salvias — Salvia ‘Bee’s Bliss’, S. clevelandii ‘Allen Chickering’, S. leucophylla ‘Amethyst Bluff’, and black sage (S. mellifera). Scattered within a small meadow of grasses (Calamagrostis foliosa and Festuca rubra ‘Molate’) and perennials (Penstemon heterophyllus and (Eriogonum latifolium) were various wildflowers, such as tufted California poppies, white tidytips, and buttercups. Pots of Juncus patens and horsetail (Equisetum) were placed among the rocks in the stream where water clover floated on top. Probably the garden’s most wildly popular plants were two blooming fremontias (Fremontodendron ‘Ken Taylor’). They got everyone’s attention. This cultivar has beautiful, deep golden yellow flowers and grows up to 6 feet tall and 10 feet wide, much smaller than other forms. Though deeply rewarding when happy, fremontias can be difficult to grow; certainly not a good option for heavy clay soils. I had good luck with ‘Pacific Sunset’, which is growing in sandy soil in an area that receives no supplemental water.

However, its roots have most likely tapped into a naturally moist area about five yards away. Over the years it has shot up to possibly 20 feet, always reaching for the sun, much taller than it is wide. It started blooming in late March with deep golden flowers from top to bottom; a dazzling display in spring!

Another plant that fascinated garden show attendees was slender hair grass (Deschampsia elongata). The very thin leaves and stems are surprisingly soft — when walking by these plants few of us could resist touching them. This bunchgrass needs a shady, moist place to grow; otherwise, it will die back in the hot months. In the wild it is found in many native plant communities: coastal sage scrub, mixed evergreen forest, mountain meadows, for example.

In our small garden exhibit we managed to represent at least 14 species of butterflies and their host plants. Feedback from garden show attendees was enthusiastic, and judging from the number of CNPS brochures that were picked up from our table, we may have some new converts.
Oh, yes… we’re pleased to announce that our native plant habitat garden won Sunset’s Western Living Garden Award!

Nbcyoteridge@gmail.com

Nancy Bauer

Plant Sale News

Volunteers Needed!

Sunday, May 17, 10 AM is potting workshop at Cal Flora Nursery. We will meet at Cal Flora Nursery to pot up Arctostaphylos, Ceanothus, Myrica, and other plants. We will be planting liners from Shooting Star Nursery. Please come and help us with this very important event, we need many members to help out. No experience necessary, training provided as needed.

We need members to take these plants home to grow on until the October 10 plant sale. This is the third of four workshops that get us ready for the plant sale. The fourth will be in August at Casa Grande High School. John Shribbs, a teacher at the school, has volunteered growing space at a nursery at the high school. Call Liz at 833-2063 with any questions. See you there.

Liz Parson

Events

Cunningham Marsh and Marcia Johnson's Garden

Sunday, May 3, 2015. 9:30am carpool from Hwy 12, 9:50 meet west county folks at Hardcore Coffee-Bloomfield and Highway 116. 10am at Johnson's residence (very limited parking)

We hope the Pitkin lilies and California azaleas will be blooming, but we will still see this unique and ecologically valuable marsh preserved and stewarded by Milo Baker members. We will also see the Johnson's beautiful mostly natives garden. Their property borders the marsh and we access it from there.

Limit to 15. Please reserve a place with Betty, youngb0721@msn.com, 595-1463. Ground is very uneven, wear long pants, boots, hat.

Modini-Mayacamas Preserve Orientation and Hike

Saturday, May 9th - 8:15 carpool, 9:30 AM ‘til 11 at Schoolhouse Flat. Optional Wildflower
Hike 11-3. Please pre-register thru the Meetup, link below.
Trip leader: David Self (ACR Resource Ecologist)
MEETS AT SCHOOLHOUSE FLAT, 30 minutes up Pine Flat Rd from Jimpstown.
We hope many will join this orientation, so that in the future, we can plan field trips to the Preserve independently. Only those with orientation will be able to visit this spectacular botanically rich area. Join Dave Self on a brief hike and introduction to preserve. You will receive guidelines and resources for enjoying all the preserve has to offer. Agree to preserve rules and you will be given access for independent hiking. The public is not allowed to explore the area around Pine Flat Road. After the orientation, stay for a Wildflower hike from 11-3. Bring water, lunch and appropriate layers.
We will carpool from the east end of the Park and Ride lot under Highway 12, between the Vet's Hall and Fairgrounds, Santa Rosa.
Note that pre-register is required through the Meetup http://www.meetup.com/Friends-of-the-Modini-Mayacamas/.

Lost Valley (BLM South Cow Mtn. OHV Recreation Area)
May 10, 2015 – Sunday, 7:45 a.m. carpool, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. on Cow Mountain.
Trip leader: Peter Warner: (707) 666-9071; phytopagan@sonic.net
We’ll spend the day traversing this upland, ultramafic (serpentine) soil-influenced grassland and adjacent chaparral and woodlands. Many unique botanical wonders await us. This is a relatively short walk at a slow pace. Be prepared for lots of sun and perhaps heat and wind. Bring lunch, hat, layers, water, and sunscreen.
Meet at park and Ride on River Rd. 500’ west of 101 at 7:45 a.m. We’ll carpool directly to the site. A plant list has been posted on the Milo Baker and Sanhedrin Chapters’ websites. A map of the South Cow Mtn. BLM OHV Recreation Area is available athttp://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/ukiah/cowmtn.html. Contact Peter with questions - (707) 666-9071, (707) 328-8251 (mobile), phytopagan@sonic.net.

May 30 -- Saturday
Salt Point State Park – North Trail to pygmy forest and upper prairie
Leader: Peter Warner: (707) 666-9071; phytopagan@sonic.net

We’ll meet along Hwy. 1 at the North Trail access at 10:30 a.m., about 1 mile N of the Gerstle Cove park entrance, and about ½ mile S of Stump Beach parking lot, along the east side of the highway. This walk will take us inland, through forest, climbing marine terraces in search of saprophytic plants in the heath family (Ericaceae). We’ll spend some time searching the redwood-tanoak forest for these delightful non-photosynthetic plants, then move along through the pygmy forest to spend some time in the upper coastal prairie to find a few wildflowers before heading downslope later in the afternoon. Expect about a 7-mile round-trip over 6 hours.

If you would like to carpool from Santa Rosa, contact Betty Young, youngb0721@msn.com, 595-1463.

Upcoming Summer Field trips – save the date
6/5 – Santa Rosa Junior College Native Plant gardens and oaks. Wendy Born, Horticulturist emerita
6/14 – Oceansong Prairie, Kathleen Kraft, ecologist
6/20 – Harrison Grade Serpentine, Gene Cooley, CA F&W botanist
7/15 – 7/18 – Eastern Sierras camping trip, Ann Howald, botanist

Betty Young
Lilium pardalinum ssp. pitkinense

Pitkin lily

Newsletter & Web Site Info:
Send newsletter submissions to:
Editor, cnpsmbnewsletter@yahoo.com
Deadline for inclusion in the June Newsletter is May 15.
The chapter web site milobaker.cnps.org contains a wealth of information plus current and archived newsletters.
For newsletter mailing/membership issues, contact: Suzanne Harmon at cnpsmbmembership@gmail.com