Road-Tripping, Fall 2021:
Three Serendipitous Discoveries
by Nancy Nies

The beauty of a road trip is that, in addition to taking you to places you’ve planned to go, it can lead you to make wonderful, unexpected discoveries. This past fall, Paul and I had three such experiences, happening upon places that CNPS members may find of special interest.

Discovery #1 — In a Mountain Community

On a sunny morning in early September, we set off from Bakersfield with fellow Kern CNPS member Suzanne Weller to spend a few hours botanizing along Cerro Noroeste Road, just west of Pine Mountain Club (PMC). Finding that road closed due to the fire danger, we headed back to PMC. Along the road, Paul spotted a sign saying “Native Plant Garden.” That sign piqued our curiosity, of course, and changed our plans for the day.

Come to find out, the garden has been there for twenty years, maintained during most of that time by community volunteers supervised by Mary Ann and Jim Lockhart, and has been recently renamed “Lockhart
back in the spring, to see what’s blooming then!

Native Plant Garden” in their honor. Susan Amon writes in the October 2020 issue of The Mountain Enterprise, “Intrepid hikers and passionate educators, [the Lockharts] loved to tell people about the hardy native plants that need little water, attract pollinators like butterflies and produce intriguing blossoms.”

Located on Mil Potrero Highway, opposite the PMC Clubhouse entrance, the garden is home to more than thirty different native species, according to Pam De Vries, author of A Field Guide to the Plants of the San Emigdio Mountains Region of California. We saw chaparral yucca, golden leaf currant, giant wild rye, sulfur flower, nude buckwheat, deer grass, desert paintbrush, and many others. The native-plant garden is attractively laid out, with a path winding through it and signs identifying the plants.

Since the above-mentioned article appeared, funds were raised to acquire new plants, new plant identification signs, new garden signs, and new fencing material, and much has been accomplished by volunteers. The day we were there, splashes of color brightened the garden — the yellows of rabbitbrush and sunflowers, and the bright red of California fuchsia. To see photos posted over the past year on the garden’s Facebook page, go to: https://www.facebook.com/pg/Lockhart-Native-Plant-Garden-104144508119395/posts/?ref=page_internal. We look forward to going

Discovery #2 — On the North Coast

Before leaving home on our longest trip of the year — twelve days in northern California and southern Oregon — Paul happened to mention our travel plans to a colleague during a business call. The gentleman, from the Fort Bragg area, recommended a visit to the Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens, which the website www.gardenbythesea.org describes as “47 acres of botanical bliss fronting the Pacific Ocean.”

The property comprises canyons, wetlands, coastal bluffs, and a pine forest. Its mission: “to engage and enrich lives by displaying and conserving plants in harmony with our Northern California coastal ecosystems and to preserve public access to the coast.” We were pleased to learn that another of its goals is to educate the public on the subjects of ecology and stewardship, that about one-third of the property is devoted to ecological restoration, and that native plants are featured not only there but throughout the collections.

The mild coastal climate and acidic soils are well