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November - December 2026

California Native Plant Society

Los Angeles / Santa Monica Mountains Chapter

## Vice President's Message By Snowdy Dodson

I am sad to report that our dedicated and long-serving Board member, **Mary Montes**, is leaving Los Angeles for Santa Cruz County. Mary has worked tirelessly in numerous capacities for CNPS and our Chapter. She has been our Treasurer and our Horticulture and Scholarship Committee Chair. For many years, she headed up our native plant sales both online and in person. She managed our bookstore and sold books at our events. She has been the face of CNPS and our Chapter at outreach events – the Natural History Museum Nature Fest, the Tarzana Community Cultural Center Native Plant Fest, the LA Times Book Fest, the P-22 Festival, the Shifting Our Ways Collective Native Plant Sale, the Chatsworth Preserve Open House – you name it, and she'd attend and educate the public about California native plants. Her own garden is almost 100% native and is a mecca for native wildlife. She attended the past three CNPS Conferences and vetted our student attendee grants for the events. Mary also has been the person who answers our Chapter email inquiries from the public. She has liaised with local schools to get native plants into their curricula. We will miss her level-headed contributions to our Chapter Board meetings and her can-do approach to our Chapter's numerous needs but wish her luck and happiness in her new home up north. Mary, many thanks!

## Tuesday Evening Monthly Programs

### November 10, 2026 – 7:00 - 9:30pm

Virtual Program via Zoom

### The Ecology and Evolution of Manzanita Mutualisms

#### Presenter: Chris Moore

Manzanitas are iconic members of the California flora. Concomitant with their taxonomic diversity as the most species-rich genus of plants in the California Floristic Province, manzanitas have great diversity in their ecologies as they respond to fire, their geographic range sizes, their local abundance, and growth form, among other ecological characteristics. Chris will speak about the diversity of manzanitas' interactions with other species; specifically focusing on mutualistic interactions,

*continued on page 2*

### December 8, 2026 – 7:00 - 9:30pm

Virtual Program via Zoom

### The State of Nature in California: The Importance of Ecocentrism

#### Presenter: Richard Halsey

Richard Halsey, the director of the California Chaparral Institute, will offer a presentation/discussion on the State of Nature in California. Over the past decade there has been a steady shift within the environmental community and the state's political leadership to view nature in terms of how it can serve human needs rather than by its own intrinsic value. Fostered by the fear of wildfire and the desires of vested interests (e.g., biomass and logging companies, foresters, tribal

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**Information for logging onto the Zoom presentation will be posted on our website twenty hours ahead of the event and announced via email blast.**

## RESTORATION

**Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve,** *Van Nuys*
**Thursdays 6:00am - 9:30am**
**Saturday, Nov. 28 7am - 10am**
**Saturday, Dec. 26 7am - 10am**
Help remove non-native plants. To sign up and get meeting place details, contact George Waddell at moiraw@earthlink.net.

**All Hikes and Restoration Activities - Rain Cancels**

## CHAPTER BOARD MEETING

**December 1, 7pm (Tuesday)**
By Zoom conference. All chapter members are welcome. Contact Bill Neill for link.

**(bgneill@earthlink.net)**

## MONTHLY PROGRAMS

### Manzanita Mutualisms

*continued from page 1*

like seed dispersal by vertebrate animals, pollination by animal floral visitors, and mycorrhizal interactions with fungi. Chris will showcase the fascinating ecology of this group, the most pressing scientific questions about them, and, as a researcher just starting his lab, the research that he plans on doing to better understand mutualisms of manzanitas.

Chris is a second-year Assistant Professor at Cal State Northridge. His degrees are in biology from Cal Poly Pomona and ecology, evolution, and conservation biology from the University of Nevada, Reno. Chris' dissertation included a study of seed dispersal of greenleaf manzanita (*Arctostaphylos patula*) to determine that it's dispersed by scatter-hoarding rodents, like chipmunks. The research that he's starting up includes looking at manzanitas' interactions with pollinators, seed dispersers, and mycorrhizal fungi.

### State of Nature in California

*continued from page 1*

groups, Cal Fire, Cal Parks, USFS, local fire districts, some environmental non-profits and fire research grantees), nature is seen as unhealthy, requiring the clearance of habitat rather than its preservation. We will discuss successful efforts in holding back this tide of anthropocentric self-interest and the challenges ahead.

## CHAPTER OFFICERS/ELECTIONS

Three of our current CNPS Chapter officers are willing and able to continue in their rolls for 2027: Bill Neill, President; Snowdy Dodson, Vice President; Mary Herr, Secretary. We will need a Treasurer as Mary Montes is leaving the area. If you are interested, please contact Bill Neill at bgneill@earthlink.net. We will hold an informal Chapter Board election at the Dec. 8 Chapter Zoom meeting.

## RESILIENT PALISADES – REMOVAL OF INVASIVE PLANTS (RIP)

This west side group is helping the landscape recover from the Palisades Fire while working to reduce the conditions that can contribute to the next one. They are striving to reduce invasive vegetation that threatens native ecosystems and contributes to wildfire risk in our community. For more information:
–Removal of Invasive Plants (RIP) Ecological Restoration in Pacific Palisades

## HALLI MASON STUDENT RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIPS 2026

Our CNPS Chapter is pleased to announce the 2026 recipients of our Halli Mason Student Research Scholarships. Wesley Moore is at CSUN earning a Master's Degree in Biology and is studying the Eastwood Manzanita and whether mycorrhizal fungi can survive fire. He is working in the Eaton Canyon area. Maia Supple is an Ecology and Evolutionary Biology PhD candidate at UCLA. She is researching native annual plants at the Sedgwick Reserve and their response to drought and climate change.

Dr. Chris Moore looks at manzanita mutualism

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BOTANISTS SYMPOSIUM

**Nov. 7 – California Botanic Garden, Claremont**
"Where Cities Bloom: the Future of Urban Botany in Southern California" is the theme of this 52nd annual event. Save the date. Registration & programming info coming soon on the event website: https://socalbot.org/save-the-date-scb-52nd-annual-symposium/

## SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS CHAPTER PLANT SALE

Nov. 14 – 9 am to 2 pm
Monrovia Historical Museum, 742 E. Lemon Ave.
Help support our neighboring CNPS Chapter.

## NATIVE PLANT RESTORATION @ UCLA STUNT RANCH RESERVE

November 7, 2026, 1pm
Description: UCLA Stunt Ranch Reserve has been growing native grasses onsite since last November and needs help to get them transplanted into their new home. Led by restoration professional, Katherine Pakradouni, during the event we will transplant over 150 grasses and sowing seed that will grow over the into new year. Please lend a hand to make short work of this exciting restoration effort!
Location: UCLA Stunt Ranch Santa Monica Mountains Reserve - 1201 Stunt Rd Calabasas, CA 91302
RSVP (link): https://www.eventbrite.com/e/ucla-stunt-ranch-reserve-native-plant-planting-110726-tickets-1999705607302

## SHIFTING OUR WAYS COLLECTIVE NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

The Shift Our Ways Collective/Reseda Backyard Farm now has a California native plant nursery with 4-inch plants for sale at $5. The site is open for the public **Nov. 14 & 15** and **Dec. 12 & 13** from 10 am to 2 pm. The address is 7625 Wilbur Ave. in Reseda. Parking is on the street. The Collective will host family-friendly activities & native plant centric workshops on those dates as well. See the SOW website: Shift Our Ways Collective for more info.

## GOLD-SPOTTED OAK BORER BLITZ

The **goldspotted oak borer (GSOB)** is a tiny beetle causing a big problem for Southern California's oak trees. Its larvae tunnel beneath the bark and feed on the tissues that transport water and nutrients, slowly starving the tree from the inside out. After several years of repeated infestations, the damage becomes too much, and the tree dies. GSOB has already killed **tens of thousands of mature oaks** across the region. You can help by joining the community-powered effort to detect and map goldspotted oak borer infestations. Participants will survey oak trees across Southern California to identify where this pest is spreading, and how bad the damage is. These surveys help scientists and land managers decide where to take action to save our trees. There are numerous dates & locations available. Visit the Fire Safe Council at https://www.smmfsc.org/ for further information & to sign up.

## CALSCAPE POLLINATOR HUB

A pollinator-centric hub has been added to calscape.org to focus attention on the importance of California native plants to the continued health of our state's native pollinators which in turn are so important to nourish birds, bats, and other animals. The new link is at the top of the webpage. Also, remember that a Spanish language version of Calscape is available via the little "globe" icon at the top of the website.

## NATIVE PLANT COLORING BOOK

The UCLA Matthias Botanical Garden has published a Native Plant Coloring Book. They are for sale here at the Garden and a pdf is free online through the Garden website at https://www.botgard.ucla.edu/ .
The books are for K-6 and fully bilingual English/Spanish. Each plate is a letter A-Z telling a story about the relationship between the plant and animals or indigenous peoples. The authors worked with members of both the Chumash and Tongva to complete the project. The coloring book is an offshoot of the Santa Monica Mountains Flora Project. For more info see https://www.botgard.ucla.edu/santa-monica-mountains-flora-project/ .

## SAVE THESE DATES

**COUNCIL FOR WATERSHED HEALTH 30 YEAR ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION –**
**SAVE THE DATE: Feb. 18, 2027**
**3:00 to 6:30 pm**

**SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS PLANT BIODIVERSITY PROGRAM –**
**SAVE THE DATE Feb. 24, 2027**
UCLA Matthias Botanical Garden
For more info: Santa Monica Mountains Flora Project - Mathias Botanical Garden

# Field Trip Offering

**Westwood Greenway**
**Saturday, November 7, 10:00 AM**

On Saturday morning, Nov. 7, come to the Westwood Greenway at 10 am for some stewardship (invasives removal and pruning), followed by a tour at 11:30 of this ecological oasis. The Greenway (westwoodgreenway.org) will be about 6 years old and the biodiversity is increasing every year. A constructed stream provides a nature-based solution to urban runoff pollution with water pumped up from the storm drain year round. Locally native plants are habitat for over 550 species (see the iNaturalist page "Westwood Neighborhood Greenway").

We will meet at the west gate of the Greenway, close to Westwood Blvd. Permit Parking is in effect on Ashby and other streets but not generally enforced. Walking is level with a total distance about 3⁄4 mile, depending on where you park. Shade is limited; please bring your own water! We will provide gloves and tools or bring your own.
The Greenway is also available from the E (Expo) Line (Westwood /Rancho Park station) and the #12 and #8 Santa Monica Big Blue Bus and #3 Culver City bus. A Throne restroom is available at the Metro station.

## Restoration Project in Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area
## by Alan Starbuck

At the southeast corner of Kenneth Hahn SRA near the intersection of La Brea and Stocker lies a wedge of land between the park's walking path and the oil fields just to the West. This area had been planted, probably around 2012, with a mix of coastal live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), valley oak (*Quercus lobata*), sycamores (*Platanus racemosa*), holly-leaf cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia*), toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), lemonade berry (*Rhus integrifolia*), and arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepis*). Naturally present natives included coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*) and California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*). However for the most part, non-native invasive plants filled in and dominated the spaces between the planted bushes and trees. The invasives tightly hemmed in the natives, retarding their growth.

About ten years ago, a habitat restoration project was started by Eleanor Osgood, through the Audubon Society, in this area. The goal was the removal of the invasive plants and making the habitat more suitable for our native birds.

I started on the project in 2018. Our main weed we were tackling then was mustard (*Brassica* sp.). And there was a lot of it! Most days we usually had 4 or more people working. Part of the year, Eleanor also was able to draw volunteers from a program at Santa Monica College.

At first we focused on clearing the areas around the existing natives, giving them some breathing room. Once we cleared around the plants in one area, we worked on the mustard still standing in-between the natives. Of course, once the rains came again, a new crop of weeds popped up. We would just start again. This continued year after year, and each year less and less invasive plants popped up. We also begun to notice new native plants sprouting. Mostly coyote brush and California sagebrush, but also occasionally we come upon a toyon sapling or a tiny oak growing the shade of a coyote brush.

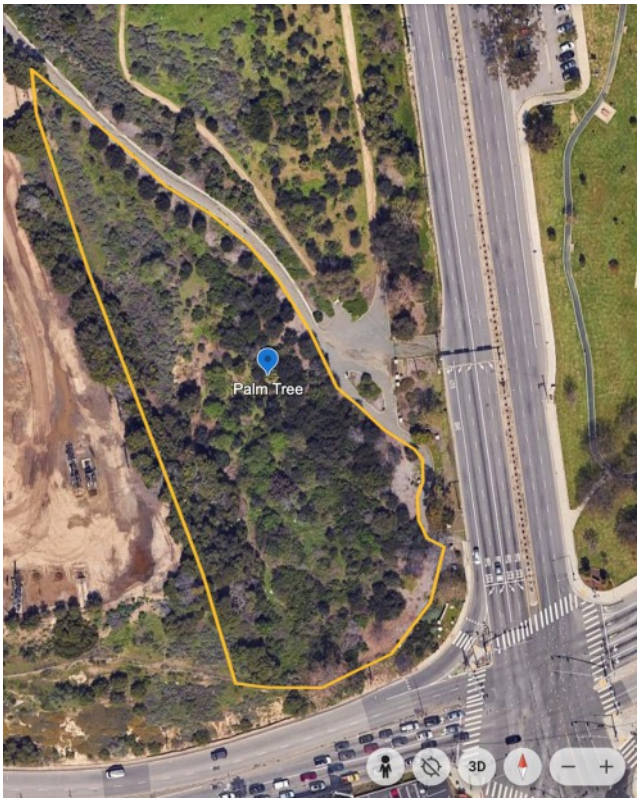
Unfortunately, with the COVID pandemic in 2020, work stopped at the site till near the end of summer. We missed a whole growing season for the mustard and other invasive plants. By the time we started up again, the invasive plants had finished their growth cycle and replenished the seedbed.

We got back to work, but sadly around 2022 our leader, Eleanor, passed away. We miss her greatly and affectionately refer to our site as Eleanor's Patch. Our work continued, yet without Eleanor organizing, our number of volunteers have slowly dropped till it was just a couple of us.

With only two now working on the project we've been limited in how much we could get done each year. Another limitation we had to deal with was homeless encampments in the southern half of the work area preventing us from working there.

But progress was still being made. In 2023 several of the spaces by the palm tree (not native, but it makes a useful landmark to orient yourself), had gotten to a point they are mostly weed free and many native plants started filling in the open areas. Greenspot nightshade (*Solanum douglasii*), California everlasting (*Pseudognaphalium californicum*), mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*), and western vervain (*Verbena lasiostachys*) appeared, along with California bush sunflower (*Encelia californica*) that we seeded. After working year after year pulling out invasive plants that come back each winter, seeing these new patches of natives free of weeds let us know what we are doing is paying off.

But our work is not done. To fully restore our little wedge of land, it is more than the two of us can do. If you are interested in helping, please reach out — I can be reached at alan.j.starbuck@gmail.com. Currently we work Friday mornings, 8:30 am to 10:30 am.



(Above)Site Map - Overhead image of work site taken from Google Earth.
(Top Left) From 2019 - Mustard crowding a coyote brush.
(Middle) From 2023 - Natives returning to cleared area.
(Bottom) From 2024 - Cleared area filled in with natives

## Restoration Project in Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area

If you are interested in helping, please reach out — **alan.j.starbuck@gmail.com**
Currently we work Friday mornings, 8:30 am to 10:30 am.

UCLA | MATHIAS BOTANICAL GARDEN

# SAVE THE DATE:

## SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS PLANT BIODIVERSITY AND CONSERVATION SYMPOSIUM

## Wednesday February 24th, 2027

**Spread the word! This free event held at the UCLA Mathias Botanic Garden features four themed sessions related to living in the Santa Monica Mountains: Place, Fire, Botany writ Large, and Conservation in Action. Each session will host four invited speakers. Snacks, lunch, and dinner will be provided.**

Speakers:
Anawakalmekak, Anthony Baniaga, Julia Cordero, Rosi Dagit, Devlin Gandy, Dave Jacobs, Jon Keeley, Glen MacDonald, NPS SAMO Botany, Alyssa Morgan, Ken Niessen, Bill Neill, Henri Searles, Victoria Sork, Nicoletta Stork, Alyssa Walker

*Stay tuned for Presentation Titles, Abstracts, and RSVPs. For more information, please contact Anthony Baniaga (abaniaga@ucla.edu)*

THE SEAVER INSTITUTE

: Oct. 17 hike at Deukmejian Wilderness Park in Glendale, led by Dennis Arguelles with the National Parks Conservation Association.

# Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Area Restoration Activity

At top, George Waddell, CNPS Leader teaches a group of volunteers how to make native plant seedballs that are used for distributing wildflower seeds. Below, at left are UCLA volunteers and at right are volunteers from Van Nuys Troop 77. Photos courtesy of Marlene Schmitt, Park Ranger, US Army Corps of Engineers.


## Chapter Officers

**President**
Bill Neill
(818) 769-0678
bgneill@earthlink.net

**Vice President**
Snowdy Dodson
(818) 782-9346
snowdy.dodson@csun.edu

**Secretary**
Mary Herr
marcher98mh@gmail.com

**Treasurer**
Mary Montes
(747) 282-6540
mcmontes100@hotmail.com

Rare Plant Chair: David Strauch
strauch@hawaii.edu

Chapter Message Phone:
(818) 782-9346

Chapter Website:
www.lasmmcnps.org

Chapter email:
lasmm@cnps.org

Webmaster: Louise Ratliff
louise_ratliff@yahoo.com

TOYON Edited by Steven L. Hartman

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