Field Research in the Marble Mountain Wilderness

General Meeting Speaker: Dr Rob Fernau

Dr. Rob Fernau will give a talk about his long-term field research project in the Marble Mountain Wilderness in northwestern California where he has been researching the interactions between butterflies, plants, and relevant facets of their environments since 1984.

Dr. Fernau is an ecological Biogeographer with degrees in Biology, Ecology, and Geography, but despite all that formal schooling, his real teacher is the Marble Mountain Wilderness. He will introduce his case history of this extraordinarily diverse wilderness and assess its environmental health.

Because the Chapter is still observing the COVID-19 directives to avoid large gatherings of people, we’ll have a presentation using Zoom in lieu of a regular chapter meeting at the Pacific Grove Museum. You can watch the lecture at home on your computer. The Zoom link will be posted on the website, https://chapters.cnps.org/montereybay/ and sent a day or two in advance in an eblast. The Zoom presentation will start at 7:30 and you’ll need to login to the web link with the instructions that will be available on the Chapter website and sent in the eblast. As there is a waiting room at our Zoom meeting, please come early!

Presentation will be Thursday, March 11th at 7:30pm
The Habitat Reserve in Del Rey Oaks that our Chapter refers to as Fort Ord "Plant Reserve 1 North", was defined and memorialized as a CEQA mitigation in early 2000. The 4.63-acre conservation area has been threatened by the proposed realignment of South Boundary Road, which connects General Jim Moore Blvd with the Laguna Seca raceway. Since late spring 2020, the Chapter has been in litigation to stop the relocation of South Boundary Road through the Habitat Reserve in an effort to honor the CEQA designation of the protected area. Our second mediation session with the City of Del Rey Oaks is tentatively scheduled for mid-March 2021. The Del Rey Oaks Habitat Reserve is a living natural history museum that protects several endemic manzanita species and Eastwood's goldenbush.

Firescaping: Horticulture in Fire Country - Short course to be offered by MPC in April

Authors Douglas Kent, Cheryl Miller and Carol Rice will be featured presenters in MPC's 8-hour course, Firescaping: Horticulture in Fire Country, to be held on April 17 and April 24 (Saturdays). Creating defensible space and hardening homes will be reviewed but the main theme of the course is horticulture. A fire-resilient home's landscape can feature color, texture, function, fragrance, food and habitat when appropriate design principles, plant selection and maintenance practices are followed. Additional presenters include contractors Seth Parker and Phil Dundas, consulting arborist Peter Quintanilla, native plant expert Rebecca Schoenenberger, rainwater storage specialist Dan Finklea, CalFire forester Jonathan Pangburn, and executive director of the UCSC Arboretum Martin Quigley. This course will be valuable for homeowners, garden designers, employees of landscape and tree service companies, and horticulture students at MPC. Register at MPC.edu. Approx. cost: $50. For more info: John Kern jkern@mpc.edu
Common names or nicknames can be funny things. They can make direct pathways into our memory connecting colors or fragrances or shapes, or they can elicit furrowed brows and more questions than answers. When my daughter was little, we would walk the woods around our house looking for leaves and flowers that she could press and make into bookmarks and other “art”. The first time she saw the creamy white berries of the snowberry she confidently named it herself as “mini-marshmallow plant”. It lives in my memory database today by that name and it brings a smile to my face when I tell others why we call it that. In March and April, it is not so much the berries but the cheerful emerald green foliage that brings a smile as well …a sign of spring very much needed.

**Plant of the month, by Patrick Regan**

*Symphoricarpos albus var. laevigatus*

Common Snowberry

Snowberry, *Symphoricarpos albus* variety *laevigatus* in the Honeysuckle Family (Caprifoliaceae) is a large (to 6’ height and spread) shrub native to much of California and the northern and western U.S. It has opposite, orbicular, blue-green leaves and almost insignificant purplish flowers that attract butterflies and hummingbirds. It bears an abundance of two-seeded white berries that are very attractive (don't eat them, unless you really need to vomit).

Snowberry is an important wildlife plant, the branches and leaves for browse and the berries for food. It will grow in sun or partial shade, in a variety of habitats, from stream banks to forest understory. It was popular in landscaping a century ago but is less used now, except for restoration work. I notice it gets a lot more use in urban and suburban commercial landscapes in the Pacific northwest than it does here in California. It really ought to be used more as it is a multiple season plant providing subtle beauty and utilitarian soil stabilization on shaded slopes and completely drought proof understory companionship to Oak and other evergreen trees. The berries alone add artistic and habitat elements to the garden, dangling at the tips of long wispy (frequently leafless) branches and bridging the gap between the lush growth of summer and the autumn rest before the cycle begins anew. The berries can be important forage for birds and mammals including quail, jays and squirrels. Snowberry stems provide food for rabbits and mice, its vegetation provides browse for deer and its leaves are the food source for a variety of interesting insects such as Lorquin’s admiral butterfly, chalcedon checkerspot butterfly, western sheep moth, snowberry sphinx moth, snowberry clearwing or bumble-bee moth, and honeysuckle sawfly. These shrubs also provide hiding places for bird nests in spring and summer after fully leafing out.

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Snowberry bushes are attractive in spring and summer, having green leaf rounds that break filtered sunlight into emerald nickels and quarters that dapple the shade. In early spring as they are just starting new growth on the naked stems they appear to float in mid space between the leaf covered ground and the oak tree canopy above.

Horticulturally, snowberry is easy to work with. It can be grown from seed which is benefitted by a few months of cold stratification. Clean the small seeds from the berries in fall, place the seed and a small amount of moist peat moss or coconut coir in a sealed container and place it in a refrigerator and keep it there for at least 8 weeks. Remove from the cold and sow it on a seed flat or smaller container and cover lightly. Keep moist until germination occurs. Transplant to individual containers when third set of leaves form.

Dormant hardwood cuttings can produce mature plants more quickly. Take 6-10”, completely leafless cuttings in November to January, dip the bottom in a rooting hormone and put the cuttings into potting soil filled pots or leach tubes (stubby cones) with most of the cutting under the soil. Plants will begin to sprout roots at the leaf or branch nodes during the cool rainy season and should have enough new growth to plant out by April. If you already have Symphoricarpos in your garden, cutting it to the ground every few years can renew vibrant growth and cause the rhizomes to spread, increasing your plant coverage and providing a ready source of divisions that can easily be dug up and moved to new locations or containers in early winter. There is also the lazy, passive method: leave the container of Snowberry on the ground long enough that the rhizomes start creeping out of the drain holes at the bottom of the can and taking up residence in the surrounding soil and make it painfully difficult to pick up and move the can. This is not a recommendation as much as a caution, from my personal experience…… to not do what I did…

Here’s to more mini-marshmallows and checkerspot butterflies in our gardens and landscapes!

*Lepechinia calycina* 'Carmel Highlands' Anybody out there, buy this at our fall sale in the past few years? I inadvertently sold all that I had, including the 5-gallon stock plant, before planting one in my own garden, thinking I could go back to the source in the High highlands to get more cuttings. I went back and the place where I took the original cuttings is now… a driveway… the mother plant is gone.

If anyone out there has a healthy plant of this selection and would be willing to share a few cuttings of it I promise to come to get them and make sure to keep a good supply going in the future. Please email me at patrick@reganbhc.com. Thanks
Helpful CNPS Information Page

CNPS is dedicated to Preserving and Protecting California Native Plants and Their Habitats

You must register for field trips online at:
www.meetup.com/The-Monterey-Bay-Area-Hiking-Group
Meeting times, locations, and more details are on Meetup.
DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND LACK OF A FIELD TRIP
CHAIR, MEETUP EVENTS ARE LIMITED.

The Next Publication of The Wallflower
Newsletter: May/June
Deadline: 4/22
Articles submitted after deadline will NOT be published!

Check Out Our Websites
Monterey Bay Chapter:
https://chapters.cnps.org/montereybay/
State Organization: www.cnps.org

CHAPTER LEADERSHIP

Book Sales: *Carol LeNeve, ccleneve@att.net, 624-8497
Conservation: Donna Burych, dburych@comcast.net, 646-9357
Field Trips: Help Needed!
Horticulture: *Patrick Regan, Co-chair,
patrick@reganbhc.com, 747-7756 and
*Peigi Duvall, Co-chair, 650-704-3926,
peig dov@indigdesign.com
Hospitality: *Rosemary Foster, rf4mcbcnps@att.net, 277-8081
Local Flora: *Jim Pittman, jimpittman22@gmail.com, 726-1768
19180, El Cerrito Way, Aromas, CA 95004
Membership: *Brian LeNeve, brian@brianleneve.com, 624-8497
Newsletter Editor: *Chris Stearns cnpsmwallflower@gmail.com
Past President: *Nikki Nedeff, nikki@ventanaview.net,
320-9463
Plant Sale: *Patrick Regan (see Horticulture)
President: * Brian LeNeve, brian@brianleneve.com, 624-8497
Programs: Daian Hennington, daian.hennington@gmail.com,
747-4529
Secretary: *Robert Hale, hale@nps.edu, 656-3108
Stewardship: Bruce Delgado, bdelgado62@gmail.com,
C 277-7690, W 394-8314
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Dues and gifts to CNPS are tax deductible.

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