

THE CYPRESS CONE

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY CHAPTER



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chapters.cnps.org/santacruz

April 2026

Bird Nests as Botanical Time Capsules

Chapter Public Program

Monday, April 13, 2026

Speaker: Justen Whittall, Ph.D.

UCSC Arboretum Horticulture Building
Plant ID Session 5:30 p.m. Meeting/Presentation 7 p.m.
Native plant door prizes!

Come early for the plant identification session and follow along with a botanist. Learn how to use a plant key to identify selected plants or plant families, and be able to identify plants on your next nature adventure.

Museum nest specimens are botanical time capsules containing invaluable historical information about the plants from a specific place and time when they were built. Plants identified from historical nests can unlock new information about the ecology of extinct habitats.

For example, surrounding the San Francisco Bay estuary were transitional habitats, the ecological gradient between the tidal marsh and the upland. Transitional habitats were lost during the 1900's due to human-caused land use changes, and consequently, very little is known about this former native plant community.

In attempts to improve understanding of this endangered habitat and inform restoration efforts, Justen Whittall and a team of researchers sampled 100-year old song sparrow and savannah sparrow nests from natural history collections across the country. These nests were initially collected along the margins of the San Francisco Bay estuary. Co-authors in the study include Alex Rinkert, Ben Carter, Tracy Misiewicz, Katie LaBarbera, and Dan Wenny.

(continued on page 4)



Plant material was sampled from the structure (coarse outer material) and lining (fine inner material) of this Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia maxillaris*) nest specimen. Image provided by Justen Whittall.

Spring is Here! Plant Sale April 11

Saturday, April 11, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Location: Cabrillo Horticulture Center

Springtime gardening is right around the corner! The chapter will be holding its annual Spring Plant Sale on Saturday, April 11 in conjunction with the Cabrillo Horticulture Plant Sale and Spring Festival, which features plants as well as local vendors.

Our colorful sale showcases a wide variety of water-wise native perennials, shrubs, wildflowers, grasses, and ferns, many locally sourced. This year we have spring blooming annuals and bulbs sold only at the spring sale, including a wide variety of cool-season grasses. All our plants are propagated and grown at the Horticulture Department facilities at Cabrillo College, and we thank them for their support throughout the year.



Flowering currant (*Ribes sanguineum* var. *glutinosum*) available at the Spring Plant Sale. Photo: Kari Olsen



Oenothera (*Dichelostemma congestum*), a colorful perennial flower available at the Spring Plant Sale. Photo: Kari Olsen

Check the website (chapters.cnps.org/santacruz) for the full plant availability list posted approximately one week prior to the sale. Bring your plant list and arrive early for best selection!

Parking is free. A free shuttle will be available from upper campus parking near the bottom of Sanders Road up to the Horticulture Center.

— Jill Baldwinson, Plant Sale Chair

Chapter Happenings

—Laurie Kiguchi, Chapter President

Spring arrived early this year, even if it retreated to winter again as February settled in. January sunshine following heavy fall rains prompted extra-early blooms. Andy Werner added a field trip date to view fetid adder's tongue (*Scoliopus bigelovii*) at Mt. Madonna, hoping to catch the flowers that were quickly slinking to their seedpod stage.



Happy hikers at Mt. Madonna saw hillsides of fetid adder's tongue (*Scoliopus bigelovii*). Photo: Linda Brodman

Hikers on Dan Antonaccio's field trips to East Glenwood were rewarded with all that he'd promised and more. Linda Brodman's habitat restoration crew managed a jump on the weeds at Quail Hollow Ranch County Park as well as the Sempervirens property in the Lompico watershed in conjunction with the City of Santa Cruz Water Department and Sempervirens Fund (see photo page 5).

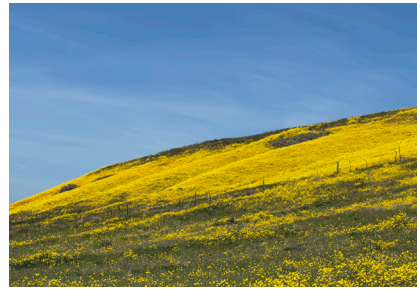
February's program added to dreams of spring. Led by Maia Perry and Max Parsons, the plant ID session focused on California lilac (*Ceanothus* spp.), with southern California plant material collected by Maia and Max as well as central California specimens (thanks to Jeremy Silberman). Participants were led through the key and had to be pried away from their hand lenses as the meeting started. Announcements included an inspiring account by CNPS Conference scholarship winner Fern Ortiz, who shared what she learned and experienced. After a call for nominations from the floor (none made, but we are open to suggestions!), the slate of officers for 2026-27 was voted in.

The crowd overflowing the museum was swept into the world of a field botanist as Alex Hubner shared



Maia Perry and Max Parsons leading the plant ID session at the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History during the February public meeting. Photo: Laurie Kiguchi

his adventures surveying plants and natural communities across California. We were treated to floristic insights from areas some had never even heard of—much less visited—such as the San Joaquin desert, Clear Creek, and New



Hillsides along the southern entrance to Carrizo Plain National Monument in February. Photo: Laurie Kiguchi.

Idria. Questions bubbled up as people pondered exploring areas beyond the trail. The prospect of winning Queen Fabiola Ithuriel's spear (*Triteleia laxa* 'Queen Fabiola') kept folks in their seats for the door prize

drawing, which also featured a plant press donated by Linda Brodman and free chapter t-shirts. Winners and losers stuck around to chat and snack, ready for spring even though winter rains were lurking once again.

Looking forward, the chapter will be hosting more activities to meet spring wildflower fever. Field trip coordinator Dan Antonaccio will expand our horizons to the other side of the hill as well as take advantage of Andy Werner's knowledge of special places near and dear on our coastal slopes.

People looking to get their hands dirty will be able to help restore habitats with Linda Brodman and spring planting fever will be rewarded with the April 11 Spring Plant Sale at Cabrillo College Horticulture Center (big



Marsh triteleia (*Triteleia peduncularis*) (l.) and farewell to spring (*Clarkia rubicunda*) (r.) will be available at Spring Plant Sale. Photos: Kari Olsen

thanks for our wonderful partnership!). Kari Olsen has been guiding the propagation group through the trials and tribulations (and mice) as well as rewards of growing plants from seed, cuttings, and divisions. Kari loves the challenge of propagating new taxa for the sale—don't miss seeing what she has in store this time. Plant sale coordinator Jill Baldwinson will be managing the sale itself, and we'll have t-shirts, posters, and aprons for sale.

Mark your calendars for the regular bi-monthly public program on Monday, April 13. This will offer a great chance to feast on the sights, sounds, and aromas of the UCSC Arboretum gardens. Pack a picnic dinner, settle in to ponder plant identification keys, and then be transported to the world of bird nests as time capsules to the botanical past. Hope to see you!

Field Trips

The chapter offers field trips to learn and appreciate our local flora and natural areas. Trips are open to all, from beginners to experts, youthful to young-at-heart, and are led at a slow pace to appreciate plants. You will be asked to sign a waiver before our field trips; you can review it ahead of time at our website (chapters.cnps.org/santacruz). We will have a copy for you to sign when we meet.

You may also visit our website for tips on trail etiquette: *Pocket Guide—Every Step Counts* and *Cleanliness Tips for Hikers*.

Some of the upcoming field trips are still being planned.

News flash: Online signups coming soon! Check our website for field trip updates and signup procedures. Meanwhile, you can email field trip coordinator Daniel Antonaccio (daniel.antonaccio@gmail.com) for questions and check the website for latest updates.

Guided Wildflower Hike at Edgewood Preserve

Date TBD, somewhere between March and May

Serpentine soils with a mixture of coast live oak and bay forests as well as extensive serpentine grasslands. Special instructions and contact information TBD. Limited to 16 participants.

Lucille's Court (Boulder Creek)

Saturday, April 18.

Carpooling necessary, check website for details.



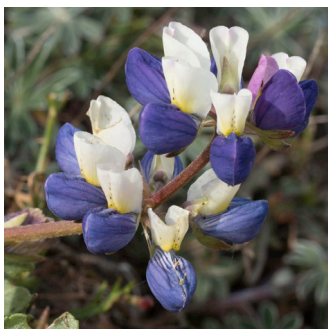
Large flowered star tulip (*Calochortus uniflorus*)
Photo: Daniel Antonaccio

Coastal Grasslands of Twin Gates, Wilder Ranch, and UCSC upper campus

Late April or May. Trip highlights *Calochortus uniflorus* and other coastal grassland plants. Limited to 15 participants. Contact daniel.antonaccio@gmail.com.

Spring Flowers in the Sandhills: Quail Hollow Ranch County Park

April or early May. We'll see lots of wildflowers, a mixed hardwood/Douglas fir forest, a pond, as well as beautiful views of the Santa Cruz Mountains. Bring lunch, water, and walking poles. Limited to 15 participants. Contact daniel.antonaccio@gmail.com.



Manycolor lupine (*Lupinus variicolor*) found at Bean Hollow State Beach.
Photo: Daniel Antonaccio

Fifty Kinds of Ceanothus?

— Suzanne Schettler, Member-at-Large

Ceanothus range from low-growing groundcovers to shrubs of all sizes. Most are blue-flowered but a few are white. The genus is divided into two broad categories. Some have relatively small, hard leaves with one central vein (the *Cerastes* group) and others have larger, softer leaves with three parallel veins (*Euceanothus*).



A low form of blue blossom (*Ceanothus thyrsiflorus*), a selection from Steve McCabe.

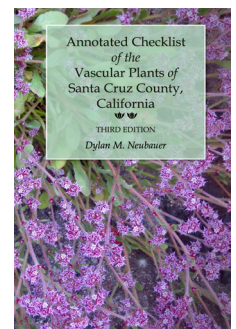
Around here we mostly see four kinds. Blue blossom (*C. thyrsiflorus*) is a common large shrub. In sunny locations the flowers are a medium blue but paler blue where they light up the shade of the mixed evergreen forest. In chaparral we find the beautiful buckbrush (*C. cuneatus*). Its white flowers are sweetly fragrant. We also have coast whitethorn (*C. incanus*), a bit taller than buckbrush, growing in non-shaded areas. The deepest blue kind in our area is warty-leaved ceanothus (*C. papillosus*), typically growing 5 to 7 feet tall.

Ceanothus usually live to around 20 years or so. They fix nitrogen that nourishes successional species that follow. Rubbing the flowers with water on a spring hike makes a soap that is useful for washing skin accidentally touched by poison oak. Ceanothus should not be pruned in the rainy season because that can cause fungus infection.

The great variety among this genus has given rise to many named forms for horticultural use. The darkest blue cultivar is C. 'Dark Star', a hybrid discovered by Ken Taylor in 1968 in his garden in Aromas. Blue is a less common garden color than others, so lovers of blue flowers are grateful for ceanothus.

Plant Checklist

A third edition of the *Annotated Checklist of the Vascular Plants of Santa Cruz County* is in preparation! Donate to the chapter to support this effort. See website for details.



Thank You to Donors

The chapter would like to express our sincere appreciation for generous donations from James Engelman as well as Linda and Kelley Skeff. Their support represents a valuable contribution to our mission of protecting California's native plants and their natural habitats through science, education, stewardship, gardening, and advocacy. A big thank you to James, Linda, and Kelley!

Fun, Flora, and Food at the 2026 CNPS Conference

February's 2026 CNPS Conference: Growing the Movement Together for Native Plants was a huge success, drawing over 1,000 attendees from across the state and beyond. Keynote speakers ranging from Zöe Schlanger (author of *The Light Eaters*) to Geneva Thompson (Deputy Secretary for Tribal Affairs, California Natural Resources Agency) to Dr. Hugh Safford (fire and vegetation ecologist, Dept. of Environmental Science, UC Davis) anchored each day. The celebration dinner hosted an interview with the Director of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Meghan Hertel, who had been appointed to this post just a week prior after serving as Deputy Secretary of Biodiversity and Habitat.



Over 30 Santa Cruz CNPS chapter members attended the February conference. Photo: Laurie Kiguchi

Speaker presentations, poster sessions, and workshops mixed in with field trips, an exhibit hall (with lots of native plant merchandise), an art and photography exhibit, raffle, concert, karaoke, botanical tattoo contest, and food

made for a productive and fun time. The chapter was well represented with over 30 members attending as speakers, poster presenters, and participants.

The chapter's conference scholarship winners had much to share.

Fern Ortiz shared her experiences in person at the February meeting at the Museum, highlighting what she learned as well as the connections she made. Fern wrote: As an early professional in the conservation field, this conference provided me with the opportunity to see all of the different career paths I could pursue. I had the opportunity to network with various professionals and one of the main commonalities between all of their stories and journeys was the passion that drives their work. Though they all had passions for very different topics, I was reminded of my own passion that drives my determination to restore the ecosystems around me. I was also reminded of the importance of connecting with individuals across all sectors to grow and strengthen our work towards the common goal of protecting and increasing climate resiliency of our natural spaces!

Jasper Lusson wrote: Attending the conference not only showed me the sheer amount of passionate professionals and enthusiasts in my field, but also inspired me to dive deeper into habitats, species, and

ecosystems I was unfamiliar with. Some of my favorite talks were ones I expected to enjoy, and others were about topics I had no previous idea about. I knew I would enjoy learning about the Delhi Sands ecosystem but had no idea that I would be so fascinated by bioremediation of toxins via endophyte-enhanced cottonwood trees. The conference was a fantastic opportunity for me to network and learn about the amazing world of botany in my home state.



Conference scholarship recipients (l. to r.) Maia Perry (UCSC Norris Center recipient) and CNPS recipients Jasper Lusson, Cecilia Girvin, Max Parsons, Fernanda Ortiz. Photo: Laurie Kiguchi

Cecilia Girvin wrote: This was my first time attending the CNPS conference, and I was really blown away by it! It was such a rewarding experience, both intellectually and personally. I learned a great deal. In particular, I was excited to learn about emerging species designations for several Channel Islands plants—a place I love, and it made me think about how taxonomy, conservation, and evolutionary history intersect. I was also especially interested in the talk on evolutionary rescue, which offered a compelling framework for thinking about how plant populations respond to rapid environmental change. Though California plants face many challenges right now, it was inspiring to see all the work that is being done to protect them, and the ways they may be more resilient than we may have thought.

Max Parsons wrote: The conference was the ideal setting for my abundant excitement about natural history, and it was incredible to have the opportunity to learn from such a diverse group of presenters. Topics included tribal representation, rare plant conservation, systematics, land management, citizen science, community engagement, pollinators, education, and landscaping, among others — people from all walks of life shared their time and knowledge with us. As an early-career professional working in the restoration industry, I got a closer look at a variety of plant-related fields, including consulting and community education. This confluence of differing perspectives underscored



Gilbert Hubner, youngest chapter CNPS member, with dad Alex at the CNPS Conference. Photo: Laurie Kiguchi

the value of collaboration across disciplines, regions, and ecosystems. Having the scope of the conference stretch beyond western botanical science to include the voices of Indigenous stewards, community activists, and pollinators was one of the most impactful parts of the experience.



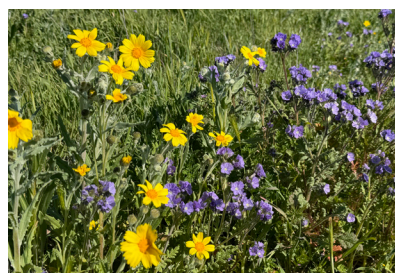
Workers at the January 21, 2026 Sempervirens property in the Lompico watershed. CNPS participated in conjunction with the City of Santa Cruz. Photo: Chris Berry, City of Santa Cruz Water Department.

Habitat Restoration

Saturday, April 4, 2026, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Quail Hollow Ranch County Park

Saturday, April 18, 2026, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Location to be determined

We are a volunteer group working to restore native habitat in the parks and protected lands in Santa Cruz County. Our program provides an opportunity for people to learn about the natural systems that surround them while helping to restore special and wild places. No prior work experience is necessary; just show up at the event. We welcome individual volunteers from 8 to 80 years, as well as special group projects. Wear comfortable layered clothing; bring something to drink and lots of enthusiasm! We work rain or shine, but if things get particularly unpleasant, we call it a day. Tools provided; bring gloves. Contact Restoration Program Leader Linda Brodman (831) 334-3858 or redwdrn@pacbell.net.



Hilltop daisies (*Monolopia lanceolata*) and Great Valley phacelia (*Phacelia ciliata*) at Carrizo Plain in February. Photo: Laurie Kiguchi

And Now Aprons Too!



We have chapter t-shirts, sweatshirts, and now lovely dark green aprons featuring artwork by Liza Ferneyhough.

These items and posters of native plants organized by habitat are available at our public programs and plant sales. Embrace your body, living space, and garden with natives!

Bird Nests Talk (continued from page 1)

Although most plant materials in the 20 nests they studied were visually unidentifiable, the team was able to successfully extract DNA, perform PCR and conduct next-generation DNA sequence analysis on over 200 total nest samples. From this, they confirmed the identity of some previous plant species from the transitional habitat and added several new residents to this list. They also had several unexpected insights into the history of the San Francisco Bay estuary from their results. From these investigations, it is clear that historical nest materials can be used to reconstruct lost habitats thereby contributing essential historical information to help guide ongoing restoration efforts.



Justen Whittall, Ph.D., Professor of Biology at Santa Clara University. Contributed photo.

Justen Whittall was born and raised in the blossom valley (San Jose, CA), skateboarding, surfing, and running in the Santa Teresa Hills. Justen took a field botany course at Santa Clara University and discovered that learning could be done outside the classroom. He studied conservation genetics of endangered monkeyflowers in Oregon, receiving his M.S. at Oregon State University before moving to Santa Barbara and studying columbines, receiving his Ph.D. at UCSB. Justen is currently a professor at Santa Clara University where alongside undergraduate research assistants studies plants—flower color, conservation, restoration, genomics, and more.

Chapter Board of Directors 2026-27

The slate of officers for 2026-27 was approved at the February 2026 meeting. We welcome involvement from the membership, whether in a formal or informal role. There are opportunities for Board positions as well as committee participation. If interested in becoming more involved, please email the chapter at santacruzcounty@cnps.org.

President	Laurie Kiguchi
Vice President	Open
Treasurer	Linda Brodman
Corresponding Secretary	Steve McCabe, Mona McCabe
Chapter Council Delegate	Lucy Ferneyhough
Conservation/Rare Plants	Mark Bibbo
Event Support/Hospitality	Jeremy Silberman
Field Trips	Daniel Antonaccio
Leadership Development	Linda Brodman, Julia Davenport, Laurie Kiguchi
Newsletter	Julia Davenport
Plant ID Specialist	Grace Brieger
Plant Sales	Jill Baldwinson
Propagation	Kari Olsen
Publicity	Mona McCabe, Steve McCabe
Habitat Restoration	Linda Brodman
Website	Judith Connor
Members-at-Large	Suzanne Schettler, Nicky Hughes

California Native Plant Society
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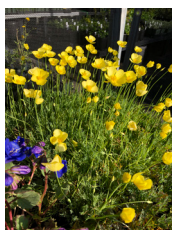


Hiking • Propagation • Plant Keying • Conservation • Habitat Restoration • Field Trips • Herbarium Work • Talks

April Events

April is Native Plant Month!

Join CNPS in celebrating California's incredible biodiversity throughout April. With more than 6,500 types of native plants, California is one of the most biodiverse places on Earth — and your support helps protect the plants, habitats, and communities that make this state so special.



Eschscholiza lobbia

Check the state website ([CNPS.org /california-native-plant-month](http://CNPS.org/california-native-plant-month)) for more events, educational resources, and actions you can take across the state to support California's native plants.

April is a busy month for our chapter!

Check our chapter website (chapters.cnps.org/santacruz) for updates on local event locations and dates.

April 11, Spring Plant Sale, Cabrillo Horticulture

April 13, Public program at UCSC Arboretum (see page 1)

April 29, Co-sponsored talk with Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History, Georgia Vasey, Prescribed Fires in California Coastal Prairies.

Field trips and habitat restoration activities throughout the month, check our website for more details.

Mark Your Calendars!

June 8, Public Program. Garden Allies: The Insects, Birds, and Other Animals That Keep Your Garden Beautiful and Thriving. Author Frédérique Lavoipierre will share how soil microorganisms, insects, bees, bacteria, and bats are natural allies in the garden, forming a thriving and balanced community.

August 10, Bart O'Brien, Director, Tilden Regional Parks Botanic Garden, Favorite Native Plants for Gardens.

October 12, Rick Flores, UCSC Arboretum Director, Uses of California Native Plants at the UCSC Arboretum and Botanic Garden.

December 14, Bill Henry, Groundswell Coastal Ecology, Building Living shorelines on the Central California Coast.

CNPS Membership Benefits

Benefits included are *Artemisia* scientific journal filled with articles on all aspects of native plants, *Flora* magazine presenting statewide activities and schedules, and *The Cypress Cone* Santa Cruz County Chapter newsletter (paper and/or digital).

Individual and organizational membership levels are available. Join online at the state website (cnps.org/membership). Select Santa Cruz County Chapter as your affiliated chapter.

Find Us on Facebook

Contribute to our group! Search for "Santa Cruz County Chapter-California Native Plant Society." Ask questions about natives or post native plant photos from your yard or from your hikes.

Newsletter Preference

When you update your online CNPS profile or renew your membership at cnps.org **the default choice is digital newsletter**. If you prefer a paper newsletter, be sure to check the right box! You may also contact the state office (membership@cnps.org), or call them at 916-447-2677 to change your preference.

Members who choose the paper newsletter will still receive other chapter announcements (reminders and new events) via email. If members opt out of email communications altogether, they will not receive announcements of new events not included in the newsletter.

California Native Flora Preservation

CNPS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with 35 chapters throughout the state. Chapter donations are tax-deductible and may be earmarked for specific areas. Please make donation checks payable to CNPS. Send to: Santa Cruz County Chapter CNPS, P.O. Box 1622, Santa Cruz, CA 95061.