

ABDSP BOTANY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

MARCH/APRIL 2015

Upcoming Events

April General Meeting – April 13, 10am – Speaker Jeff Price
(see details below) at Visitor Center

Botany Study Group – April 6, 9 am to noon at Visitor Center

Annual Botany Potluck – April 6, Noon at Kate Harper's House

A Note About Our Publication Schedule: Due to the change in editors and going to web-based publication of the newsletter, we have fallen off of our monthly schedule. However, we're getting back on track and will be back to monthly publication soon.

APRIL GENERAL MEETING

Invertebrate specialist Jeff Price will describe the vital role his desert friends play in a presentation at 10:00 am Monday, April 13 in the Visitor Center.

Price, with 10 years' experience as a California State Park interpreter, will talk about "The Beetles and The Bees: A look into the hidden lives of those who pollinate, protect and pilfer from our desert plants." Price will explore the often over-looked lives of our native desert pollinators and their fascinating life cycles.

His presentation will be at the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park's Visitor Center, 200 Palm Canyon Drive, 92004. There is no charge for admission, and the public is invited. Price has worked at Seacliff State Beach in Aptos, Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park at Scotts Valley and is now employed at Ocotillo Wells SVRA. He has had an interest in the lives of small and curious creatures since childhood.



Jeff Price and fuzzy friend

Botany Study Group

All certified Botany Society members are invited to participate in the Botany Study Group, a self-directed series of classes designed to expand our knowledge of botany and make us better able to fulfill our teaching mission. Classes are held in the District Classroom every Monday in November, December and April ("bookends" to the Certification Course taught January through March). Members lead the discussion of various topics using books, videos and field trips as learning tools. Plans for our four April sessions are now taking form. Please send YOUR suggestions for topics to Joanne Ingwall today!

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| April 6 | 9 am to noon at Visitor Center
<i>How geology shapes plant life</i> , led by John Strong
<i>The life story of botanist Frank Gander</i> , led by Mike Bigelow |
| April 13 | 11:30 am to 2 pm (right after the monthly lecture, bring your lunch)
<i>Pollination</i> , led by Mike Strandberg |
| April 20 | 9 am to noon
<i>Nitrogen fixation</i> , led by Judy Ramirez
Second topic to be determined |
| April 27 | 9 am to noon
Topics to be determined |

Botany members interested in making a weekend trip in April to visit the Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Garden (RSABG), the Huntington Gardens and the LA Arboretum in April (weekend date to be determined) should contact Joanne Ingwall ASAP so we can arrange for tours of the gardens.

Joanne Ingwall
Botany Study Group Leader
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Botany Certification Course

By Judy Ramirez

The Botany Certification Course continued the study of desert flora in its environment as volunteers learned about the living (biotic) and non-living (abiotic) factors in the desert ecosystem that influence plants. Judy Ramírez presented a "What Makes a Desert a Desert" PowerPoint to give a broad view of the desert's abiotic factors to which plants must adapt to survive.

Ari Korporaal followed with his plate tectonics and mountain building lecture with a focus on landforms and soils, factors that determine where plant communities are found and Kate Harper detailed plant adaptations to the desert's harsh conditions.



A presentation by guest lecturer Pat Flanagan taught that plants can be classified according to how they respond to their environment. Some examples are various subcategories of succulents, shrubs, and trees. Fieldwork provided practice in learning the concept, which was new to many of the study group. Pollination was the second topic of this day's session as which discussed the relationship between plants and their pollinators.

Kate Harper led an all-day field trip to learn more about the abiotic factors that influence where different plants grow: temperature, precipitation, which direction a slope faces, as well as its steepness, and content and particle size of the soil. The fieldtrip began on Montezuma Grade, proceeded to the San Felipe Valley for a view of the headwaters of the San Felipe watershed, a lunch stop at Yaqui Well, and returned via the Texas Dip.

Having laid this groundwork, there were a series of presentations about common plant families of the Anza-Borrego Desert. Plant families considered so far include the Mint, Mallow, Mustard and Evening-primrose Families. These were presented by volunteers Don Rideout and Marilyn Dickson and by Judy Ramirez. Mornings were spent in the field and are led by small group leaders, Kathy Bussey, Marilyn Dickson, and Karin Vickars who gave plenty of individual attention to our volunteers as they carefully observed our beautiful (and deeply appreciated) wildflowers.

With the focus on desert annuals, Botany Society members have made field trips to Little Surprise, Glorietta, and Borrego-Palm Canyons. At the mouth of Little Surprise Canyon, rather than simply name plants, the study group made detailed observations resulting in a more in depth knowledge about each species. In Glorietta Canyon we used a key that helped us to identify the plants' family simply by closely observing the corolla, and we put it all together along the Borrego-Palm Canyon Alternate Trail. Marilyn Dickson entertained us with a lively presentation about the Mustard family that included a mustard quiche. Don Rideout amazed us with his in-depth knowledge about our cactus, and Mike Bigelow enlightened us about the Pea family. Judy Ramirez completed this month's plant family studies with the Evening-primrose, Borage, and Sunflower families. Thanks to a rainy year, an abundance of plant material collected from road shoulders and yards provided hands-on observation and dissection

opportunities to deepen our understanding of what we learned in PowerPoint presentations. Many, many thanks go to all those who make the Botany Certification Course a success and such a joy.



Pat and Vern inspect a specimen. *Camissonia claviformis* ssp. *claviformis*, Brown-eyed Evening Primrose. Photos by Judy Ramirez

NEW STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

At the March General Meeting President Kate Harper announced that three Steering Committee members would not be running for re-election. These were Jary Riolo, John Strong and Paul Larson. On behalf of the Botany Society, Kate thanked all three for their service and leadership. Three members had entered their names in nomination to fill the three vacancies. These were Marilyn Dickson, Joanne Ingwall, and Don Rideout. After a written ballot of the members in attendance, the above three were elected. They will join continuing Steering Committee members Kate Harper, Julie Taylor, Kathy Bussey and Arie Korporaal. Thanks to all who help keep the Botany Society moving forward.

SUCCESSFUL SPRING PLANT WALKS

By now everyone knows that it has been a good (though not spectacular) flower year. And with the flowers come the crowds hoping to see acres of Sand Verbena and Dune Evening Primrose, or perhaps the fascinating duo of Blazing Star and Ghost Flower, or the elusive Desert Five-Spot.

Once again, the Botany Society has partnered with the Anza-Borrego Foundation to provide guided spring plant hikes for the public. The flower season is not yet done. We have six planned hikes remaining. But we have already served well over 200 people on 26 separate hikes. Let's thank our hike leaders – Mike Bigelow, Nate Capehart, Joanne Ingwall, Paul Larson, Don Rideout, and of course, our Hike Coordinator, Karin Vickers. We also thank ABF staff who have been instrumental in this effort – Briana Puzo, Ashley Kvitek and Christina St. John.



Mammillaria dioica photo by Don Rideout

BOOK REVIEW

Parry's California Notebooks, 1849-51, With Letters to John Torrey.

Transcribed, edited and annotated by James Lightner. San Diego Flora, 2014.

Reviewed by Don Rideout

This slim volume is a fun and educational read for anyone that loves California botany and history. But even more amazing is the story of how this book ever came to be published. Charles Parry was a naturalist on the Boundary Commission that surveyed the new border between the U.S. and Mexico. His plant specimens went to John Torrey at the Lyceum of Natural History in New York. He kept his notebooks with him as he traveled. When his work with the Boundary Commission was done, Parry left California, spending much of his later life in Iowa. Sometime after 1880 his notebooks entered the library collection of Iowa State University where they remained, virtually unnoticed, for the next 163 years. They were, for all practical purposes, lost.

Enter James Lightner, author of *San Diego County Native Plants*. During research on the early California botanists he became aware of the possible existence of Parry's notebooks at Iowa State. After some phone calls, he confirmed that these were, in fact, the original notebooks of Charles Parry. He obtained copies, transcribed the notebooks, added clarifying comments, and included some of Parry's more significant letters to his friend and mentor, John Torrey.

The book is full of references to people, places and plants that all readers will recognize, such as July 14, 1849: "First day at San Diego and delightfully pleasant one. The air is bracing and agreeably tempered by sea breezes." However, the moment of discovery is often conveyed in a matter-of-fact manner. For example, on June 26, 1850,

Parry reports that he went to the vicinity of current Del Mar to look for a reported coal deposit. Parry states: "Near the digging, in sheltered places on the bluff, I was surprised to meet with a new species of Pine. It is small-sized and often depressed from exposure to the sea breezes. It is 5-leaved, leaves long in sheaths...I propose if new to name this the *Pinus torreyana*." Not a whole lot of emotion here, but it is an exciting moment to read about. These notebooks revealed other species that Parry discovered but for which he did not receive credit until the notebooks were found by Lightner, including Tecate Cypress, Englemann Oak and Shaw Agave.

I highly recommend this little book to anyone seeking insight into the work of Charles Parry, and the unique flora of Southern California.



The newsletter editors, Don and Sheila Rideout, invite contributions from Botany Society, Park staff, and any interested member of the community. Please email your contributions to don@rideouts.net. If you have single photos or short contributions, try Tweeting to @Botany Society.