CO-PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE
By Snowdy Dodson
No lie, we are living through some interesting times and coping as best we can to keep ourselves and others safe and virus free. I am a “glass half full” person. That is the way I am wired. This message will focus on some good, even great news, and since this is the California Native Plant Society, it will zero in mostly on floristics.

At the CNPS statewide level Liv O’Keeffe (Senior Director, Communications and Engagement) and her team have developed a three-year strategic plan for CNPS Horticulture starting in 2020. Newly hired Andrea Williams (Director of Plant Science) will head up the effort. She will be assisted by the new Horticulture Outreach Coordinator, Maya Argaman, and the new Horticulture Outreach Manager, Ann-Marie Benz. The plan was developed in response to the need for a “habitat revolution” in our own gardens and in public spaces. In response to the extinction crisis, citizens are more motivated to get on board, and water districts and state agencies are eager to promote CA native plants as the primary recommended plant palette for their habitat value and utility. CNPS is the proper entity to recommend the right plants for the right place. All this starts with the plants we as an organization are choosing and recommending; we need to have confidence in plant choices with the primary criteria being: 1. Plants that grow easily with minimum resources; 2. Have high habitat value; 3. Are safe for wildlands. The Horticulture Team is pursing grant opportunities and reviewing accumulated plant lists state-wide. Executive Director, Dan Gluesenkamp, and Development Director, Christine Pieper, have worked to secure the significant funding required for this effort.

Liv and Andrea are involved with pipeline building with nurseries doing training, outreach, recruitment; MWD of SoCal in the OC area is the model. Armstrong and Home Depot nurseries are interested in joining the effort. An upgraded Calscape will be leveraged as an online marketplace for finding and ordering appropriate CA native plants. Maya and Ann-Marie will be emphasizing: 1. Horticulture science – developing plant lists, nursery and gardening BMPs, designing a CA native plant certification label for nurseries; 2. Creating an online native plant marketplace through upgrades in Calscape that will link gardeners to the nearest nursery. 3. Consumer education through Flora, garden tours, garden ambassadors, plant sales; 4. Partnerships with K-12 education, NGOs, cities, water districts; 5. Promoting professional training by rolling out the CA native landscaper certification (in English & Spanish); the aim is to train professionals concerning planting & care of CA native plants. Through this effort CNPS and its partners will create a California native plant habitat revolution to preserve our unique flora by energizing the public, removing obstacles to getting the right native plant in the ground everywhere. Together we can make a lasting difference. Stay tuned as this plan evolves. If you wish to be involved in native plant horticulture at the local level please contact Mary Montes who co-chairs our Chapter’s Horticulture and Plant Sale Committees.

Conservation has some very positive news – the CNPS litigation concerning the City of Agoura Hill’s Cornerstone Development which was initiated by our Chapter was successful (see page 3 for further details); and the Hidden Creeks Development in Chatsworth morphed from a gated community for the elite equestrian community into open space to be enjoyed by all (see page 4).

On the local scene, we have had March and April rains. I am up to nearly 17 inches measured in my own yard with the possibility of more rain over the next few days. We seem to have had our January rain in March and the usual February downpour in April. These CA native plants are so resilient – they are glass half-full beings. Give them any amount of moisture that is reasonably “average,” and they burst with greenery and flowers. Each evening, I go out and see what has happened. I trust that you are having a similar experience.

Our Chapter Board has welcomed some new members. Susan Klenner is our acting Secretary and Louise Ratliff is our Webmaster. Susan is a long-time CNPS and Theodore Payne Foundation supporter. Louise is a CNPS member who enjoys hiking and native plant gardening. We thank them for their volunteerism!

As I mentioned in previous Toyons, our Chapter is considering transitioning to an electronic newsletter. Of those who weighed in on the issue, the vote is 2 to 1 in favor of the electronic version. In preparation for such a move, it is important for you to provide an email address in your CNPS membership record and to also opt to receive local chapter news. To access that information, you need to go to the cnps.org website and select the “My Profile” at the top right-hand corner of the page and follow instructions on setting up and accessing your membership record and preferences. The Interests and Subscriptions page allows you to manage your email preferences. At a minimum, please select the “Local Chapter News” option to continue to receive notices from our Chapter. Call the CNPS state office at 916-447-2677 for further assistance.
RESTORATION

NOTE: The events below have been canceled by directives from public health authorities per the coronavirus/covid-19 pandemic. Please check with below contacts to find out if these restoration activities have been reinstated.

The N/E/X/T/Garden in Pacific Palisades
The Native Plant Garden in the City of L.A.’s Temescal Canyon Park
Last Saturday of the Month 9am-4pm
We’re just a few steps east of ~700 Temescal Canyon Road, Pacific Palisades, 90272 (between the PCH and Sunset Blvd., below Bowdoin St.). Community Service Credit. Contact Michael G. Terry at michaelgterry@hotmail.com.

Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve
Van Nuys
Tuesdays and Thursdays Dawn - 9:30am
Help remove non-native plants. Contact Steve Hartman at naturebase@aol.com to sign up and get meeting place details. www.sepulvedabasinwildlife.org

THEODORE PAYNE GARDEN TOUR GOES ONLINE

To support the social isolation needed to prevent Covid-19 virus spread, the annual and much revered TPF Garden Tour went online on March 28 & 29.

Chapter Webmaster, Louise Ratliff, reports “Over the weekend I attended the online Theodore Payne Garden Tour, and it was fabulous! They organized and connected all the garden owners by Zoom, and even had an online happy hour at the end of the day on Saturday! We got to see everyone's gardens!! Such a fabulous esprit de corps, and we could see Evan and DJ and lots of other TPF staffers and volunteers.”

YouTube videos of the entire tour are available on https://www.nativeplantgardentour.org/

NATIVE PLANT NURSERIES
CUSTOMER PLANT PICKUP

Both Matilija (Moorpark) and Theodore Payne Foundation (Sun Valley) native plant nurseries have instituted procedures for customers to preorder, pay for and pick up native plants for spring planting.


and for Theodore Payne Foundation: http://theodorepayne.org/plants-and-seeds/nursery/inventory/

and the TPF Store has online ordering for seeds, clothing, books, etc.: https://store.theodorepayne.org/

RE-IMAGINING LOWER TOPANGA BEACH, CREEK, LAGOON MEETING REPORT

On Feb. 29, concerned citizens, environmentalists, and other stakeholders met with the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains (RCD) and California State Parks to hear a presentation and provide input into the design process for the restoration of lower Topanga Beach, Creek and Lagoon.

Approximately 100 people divided into small groups and brainstormed on how the property might be improved for the environment and for the user experience. Attendees contributed many great ideas both on the site plans and on the comment sheets. The RCD has posted the presentation, the minutes, as well as the site plan and comment sheet on their website: http://www.rcdsmm.org/RESOURCES/TOPANGA-LAGOON-RESTORATION/

With these suggestions in hand, the project engineers will complete the hydrologic and hydraulic modeling to help guide alternative design development to integrate sea level rise and other physical constraints. RCD/State Parks anticipate having the next iteration of ideas to share by Fall 2020 and will keep us posted when the next public meeting is scheduled. Our CNPS Chapter Board was represented at the meeting by Snowdy Dodson and Susan and Ed Klenner.

SAVE THE DATE - FALL PLANT SALE - OCT. 17

Our annual Chapter California native plant sale is scheduled for Sat. Oct. 17 at the Sepulveda Garden Center in Encino.

SANTA MONICA NATURE CLUB

Do you have information, publications of notes on the Santa Monica Nature Club? Do you have copies of any of the newsletters The Naturalist? Grace Heintz was a key member of the group for many years. Information and material can be sent to Gary Wallace at gwallace@rsabg.org or Gary Wallace Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden 1500 N. College Ave. Claremont, CA 91711.
CORNERSTONE APPEAL FAILS - CNPS WINS ROUND 2

The Cornerstone Multi-use Development proposed on a hillside along Agoura Road in Agoura Hills would be an urban-style cluster of multi-story buildings hosting commercial and residential tenants. As planned, the project would require cutting and re-engineering 80-90% of a steep hillside causing harm to special resources on the site. The proposed project runs counter to the low-impact restaurant called out for the property in the Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for Agoura Village.

The property is replete with city-protected old growth oaks and scrub oaks, an iconic viewscape because of the oaks and hillside can be seen for miles along the US101 corridor. It hosts three listed sensitive plant species, with much of the acreage likely to be a rare plant alliance. Additional resources at the site include a Chumash cultural resource site.

CNPS, local grassroots organizations and co-litigant Save the Agoura Cornell Knoll filed suit against the City of Agoura Hills and the developer that alleged failings under the California Environmental Quality Act, particularly with regard to inadequate environmental review of the impacts. The trial court (Los Angeles Superior Court) heard the case in 2018 and determined the Mitigated Negative Declaration for the project to be deficient. Should the project proceed, research for a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will have to be conducted, along with the public review process.

The developer filed an appeal of the trial court decision. The California Appellate Court heard the case in January 2020. The Appellate Court upheld the lower court decision in February. The ruling states, in part, that an EIR and analyses is required for the proposed development for many significant reasons, including:
- It will take out at least 35% of the oaks.
- There is little to no scientific proof that an oak woodland, as proposed, can be recreated and sustained over time due to multiple biotic requirements.
- Removal of the oaks will harm aesthetics.
- De-watering and compacting the hillside will threaten remaining vegetation.
- Proposed in-lieu fee mitigation lacks scientific support.
- Proposed management measures are a violation of CEQA, as they fail onsite protections for the state and federally protected plant species on site.

We hope to soon learn and report to our chapter readership about the developer's intentions for the property and whether an EIR will be conducted.

SHEILA BJORNolie IN MEMORIAM

Long-time CNPS supporter and Topanga Docent, Sheila Bjornlie, passed away on March 23. For many years she chaired our Chapter's annual wildflower show when it was held in Malibu. Her husband, Harvey, was her able assistant. They were also very active participants in the Topanga Docents. Sheila will be remembered for her cheerful, can-do approach. She loved and promoted the beauty of the Santa Monica Mountains and was an avid hiker. Sheila is survived by her husband, Harvey, her children and grandchildren.

Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden Becomes California Botanic Garden!

Proud to be the largest botanic garden dedicated to California native plants and of their work to ensure a future where the plants that define our home are enjoyed by generations to come, RSABG has been renamed California Botanic Garden. They honor and celebrate the nearly 100-year legacy that began with the foresight and dedication of a visionary woman, Susanna Bixby Bryant, on a ranch in Santa Ana Canyon in 1927. Her dream to “bring together in a comparatively small area as complete a collection of the rich native California plants as can be grown... thereby promoting the general welfare of the people of the state...” becomes ever more a reality as RSABG enters the next chapter as California Botanic Garden.
HIDDEN CREEKS BECOMES PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

Since 2005 environmental groups have fought the development of the property known as Hidden Creeks Estates which would have built 188 homes abutting and adversely impacting Brown's Canyon and Mormon Canyon Creeks both of which are year-round flowing blueline streams providing vital habitat for native plants and animals in the Santa Susana Mountains. The area is located to the west of Porter Ranch and is next to the Aliso Canyon Gas Storage Facility. Our CNPS Chapter wrote numerous comment letters and attended and testified at hearings to block the annexation of the property by the City of Los Angeles. In Dec. 2015, our Chapter filed an appeal to LA City Planning asking that their decision to annex the property be reversed due to an inadequate Environmental Impact Report. Other organizations such San Fernando Valley Audubon and the Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority (MRCA) also filed appeals. Years elapsed and we received no word from City Planning concerning the matter despite several inquiries on its status. Long story short, the property was sold to another owner who decided the property should not be developed but be ideally used as open space. With a willing seller in 2019, the County of Los Angeles (with Kathryn Barger's leadership), the State of California (the Wildlife Conservation Board), and the MRCA and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy combined their resources to purchase the 257-acre property for $6.7 million. On Feb. 21, 2020, the Hidden Creeks property was formally dedicated as fully protected parkland that belongs to the Santa Susana Pass intermountain range habitat linkage that connects the Simi Hills to the Santa Susana Mountains.
**Halli Mason Remembrance**

1937-2020

CNPS lost an irreplaceable treasure when Halli Mason passed away on April 5. When Halli was voted in as a Fellow (CNPS's highest honor) in 2007, the write-up in Fremontia began: “Writing, hiking, guiding, teaching, fundraising, organizing, plant-selling, weedwhacking, phoning, emailing, educating, and advocating, since 1987, Halli Mason’s contributions have advanced the protection of natural areas, appreciation of native plants by the public, and the efficiency and financial fitness of the California Native Plant Society both locally and at the state level.”

Rather than restating all the things that Halli did for our Chapter and the statewide organization (you can read it here: https://cnps.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Fremontia_Vol35-No3.pdf), please enjoy a very descriptive field trip report that she wrote:

So on June 16, 2007 I presented myself at the appointed time – mind you: 7:30 am – at Camp Mount Crags. Have you ever been there? No? Well, nor had I. Entering Tapia Park off Malibu Canyon Road you hang a right instead of going to the Tapia parking lot on the left, go thru a gate which was opened for us, drive in for a while and arrive at a conference center, pool, rec areas, big dining hall, all hunkered down in a spectacular site.

The morning started out being cool and foggy. By the time we got underway for our walk it was nearly 9 o'clock and the sun was blazing down on us. Joining me were 3 young families with babies in their respective strollers, an English couple, and an assorted group of individuals. I suffered a very high rate of attrition. By the time we got back an hour and forty-five minutes later, only the English couple remained. The kids got restless, the mothers were bothered by the poison oak, and the rest just wanted to get back after 30 minutes.

Nevertheless, it was a glorious walk along Malibu Creek; almost totally level, shaded by tall coast live oaks, a couple of valley oaks, lots of sycamores, bay laurels; walnuts and elderberries dotting the hillsides. While the group was still complete, we talked about poison oak of which there is an awful lot to either side of the trail, hanging in the trees and clambering over shrubs, some of it in bloom, some of it with berries and most of it showing off beautiful fall color. One of the little girls, Dakota, picked up a Sycamore leaf, which presented an opportunity to talk about how some birds scrape the underside of the leaf and use the soft fuzzy stuff for padding their nests. In one almost totally shaded cove on a northwest facing slope we spotted sticky monkey flower, elegant clarkia, golden yarrow, buckwheat, red larkspur (no flower, just the foliage) and a totally shriveled-up dudleya in a rock crevice. It also looked as if there was a big patch of Matilija poppies way up high on the slope, but it was in such poor shape that it was hard to tell from our distance.

Upon our return to camp, we were treated to fresh fruit, and nice cold drinks. Not a bad way to spend a Saturday morning.

Halli was a co-chair and helped at every plant sale, ordering plants, taking cash, and lifting spirits!
Great Basin sage (*Salvia dorrii*) has a lovely flower that attracts painted lady butterflies and hummingbirds.