

El Paso Chapter – Native Plant Society of New Mexico

2023 Annual report

2023 Chapter officers

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Programs:

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Publicity:

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Field Trips:

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State Representative:

Kevin Floyd

Chapter activities

Jan 12, 6:30 pm at St. Albans Church

The Soil Connection: What can soils tell us about plants?

Description: Soils support plants in so many ways, but did you know that many soil properties are also indicators of plant health? Join us for a presentation on how we as soil researchers look at the earth beneath us to understand what makes plants in nature thrive!

Speakers: Kathleen Schaeffer, Talver Singh, and Dylan Stover are Ph.D. students in the Ecology and Evolutionary Biology program at the University of Texas at El Paso. They work in the Chihuahuan Desert studying various aspects of soils, including restoration and nutrient cycles.

February: No meeting.

March 11, 10 am at the Chihuahuan Desert Gardens at UTEP.

Note that this meeting is on Saturday instead of Thursday. Spring brings lots of beautiful flowers to the desert. Join us for a special tour of the Chihuahuan Desert Gardens with Botanical Curator Dr. Kevin Floyd. We will learn about the plants in the gardens and see which ones should be available for the spring FloraFest Native Plant Sale, tentatively scheduled for April 1st starting at 9 am. (www.utep.edu/florafest). Parking is available in the lot behind the Centennial Museum, University 2 (UN2). Wear comfortable shoes.

April 13, 6:30 pm

Identifying Native Plants with iNaturalist and the 2023 City Nature Challenge

Plant identification can be challenging, but luckily technology is here to help! iNaturalist is a network of naturalists and citizen scientists built on the goal of mapping observations of biodiversity worldwide. Although not perfect, iNaturalist uses computer vision to do an amazing job at narrowing the observation into a narrow group if it can't suggest a species identification. This interactive presentation lead by Dr. Kevin Floyd will help guests become more confident about using iNaturalist. This will get everyone ready to participate in the 2023 City Nature Challenge April 28 – May 1. The CNC is a friendly competition among cities across the globe to see who can submit the most observations.

To get the most out of this presentation, consider installing iNaturalist on your smartphone and signing up for an account prior to the meeting. It is all free! We will practice what we learn about iNaturalist on a field trip Saturday April 15. Location will be announced via Facebook and email.

May – No meeting.

June 8, 6:30 pm

Plants of Indio Mountains Research Station (IMRS), a UTEP property in far West Texas

Indio Mountains Research Station is a 41,200 acre property located in far west Texas and administered by the University of Texas at El Paso. The landscape at the station is represented mostly by pristine Chihuahuan Desert scrubland encompassing the Indio Mountains which run from north to south with primarily east- and west-facing slopes. With recent acquisition of additional land, IMRS now reaches the Rio Grande increasing the role of this station on the protection and conservation of diversity. This presentation by Dr. Vicente Mata-Silva will be about plant species and their associations found at IMRS, including rare species and how snakes interact with plants.

Thursday July 13th, 6:30 pm

The importance of moths

Moths are among the most diverse organisms, yet because most are nocturnal we rarely appreciate them. Their colors and patterns can be bright and colorful, or so well camouflaged that it is rare to see them. One effort to increase our knowledge about moths is National Moth Week, July 22-30, 2023. During Moth Week everyone is encouraged to learn about, observe, and document moths. Dr. Paul Hyder will share about moths and some of the events he is planning for El Paso's Moth Week.

Thursday August 10th , 6:30

Great things happening at Keystone Heritage Park

Keystone Heritage Park is a 52-acre park in El Paso's Upper Valley that includes an archeological site, wetlands, and a botanical garden. The team there has been working hard to maintain the park and improve the visitor experience. This program will feature short presentations from several of the people involved with the park.

Demirti Linggi worked as an intern at the park this summer. He learned a lot about rainwater harvesting. Why treat rain as a nuisance when it can be utilized within our desert landscape? He will share about how we can redirect precipitation into our landscapes and reduce the risk of flooding throughout our city. Demitri is an undergraduate student at El Paso Community College majoring in Horticultural Science.

Joshua Johnson, a UTEP student, will showcase his passion for environmental restoration at Keystone Heritage Park. He'll delve into various projects focused on restoring native flora and fauna in the wildlife preserve, highlighting how these natural spaces offer a refuge for diverse wildlife. The discussion will also touch upon the historical changes in the city's landscape and the impactful work done by Joshua and others over the past 50 years to preserve the natural beauty of the area.

RubyAnn Gaglio is the event coordinator at the park. She has helped grow many outreach events to all age groups, and works tirelessly to promote Keystone. She is a long time nature lover and a Texas Master Naturalist. Prior to becoming the event coordinator, she was a board member and a volunteer. She has a lot of energy and a lot of hope for the world and humankind.

Saturday September 9th. 9:00-11:00 am

Exploring the Chihuahuan Desert Gardens at UTEP

Come see what flowers were triggered by the monsoon rains. Join us for a special tour of the Chihuahuan Desert Gardens with Botanical Curator Dr. Kevin Floyd. We will learn about the plants in the gardens and see which ones should be available for the fall FloraFest Native Plant Sale, tentatively scheduled for September 16th starting at 9 am. (www.utep.edu/florafest). Parking is available in the lot behind the Centennial Museum, University 2 (UN2). Wear comfortable shoes.

October: no meeting

November 4th, 10:00-11:30 am

If you plant it, they will come: meet the bees in your neighborhood and their favorite native plants!

A brief overview of the native bees of El Paso and their life histories, floral preferences, and nesting behaviors, as well as strategies that thoughtful gardeners can use to create useful bee habitat.

Presented by Oliver Neria. Oliver is a PhD student at the University of Texas at El Paso researching the visual ecology, floral preferences, and behavior of native bees in the Chihuahuan Desert.

December 2nd, 10:00-11:30 am

Cactus Appreciation Month

There will be three presentations, with Steven Brack of Mesa Gardens, Martine Kristen & Julia Etter of the Autonomous Mexican National University, and Kevin Floyd of the University of Texas at El Paso. There should be cacti and succulents for sale, and cactus experts to answer questions.

Special events for 2023:

Hosted the 2023 Annual Conference Sept 21-23 in Alpine, TX. Around 90 attendees enjoyed learning about the ecosystems of west Texas through a day of presentations and a day of field trips.

Volunteer at the spring and fall FloraFest Native Plant Sales at the University of Texas at El Paso. These 2 one-day events are an opportunity for the El Paso Community to buy and learn about the Chihuahuan Desert Plants.

Other news:

The El Paso Chapter started combining meetings with the El Paso Cactus and Rock Club in November. The meetings will be the first Saturday of the month at 10 am, and will take place at the Garden Center at Memorial Park (3105 Grant Ave, El Paso, TX 79930).

The chapter sponsored five UTEP students who presented at the Chihuahuan Desert Education Conference November 15 and 16.

The chapter made two donations to the Judy Ackerman Memorial Fund to support scholarships to UTEP environmental science students.