

Annual Report

Las Cruces Chapter, Native Plant Society of New Mexico
December 2023

Officers

President, Gordon Berman
Vice-President, Ken Steigman
Treasurer, Mary Steigman
Recording Secretary, Cheryl Beymer
Membership Secretary, John Freyermuth
State Board Representative, Joan Woodward

Council Chairs

Field Trips, Programs and Conservation Councils, Ken Steigman
Communications Council Co-chairs, Lyn Hoffmann and John Freyermuth
Hospitality Council: Julie Sorensen-Groth
Conference Co-Chairs, Mary Steigman and Joan Woodward
Scholarship Council, Joan Woodward

Activities

Challenged but undeterred by another drought-stricken year, the Las Cruces Chapter of the Native Plant Society of New Mexico successfully pursued a diverse set of activities and goals, including:

- Energetic, informative, and colorful field trips to UTEP's Desert Garden, Rock Hound State Park, the Organ Mountains, the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park, trails on the East Mesa, a hands-on deep taxonomic dive into Asteraceae led by Professors Extraordinaire Naida Zucker and Richard Spellenberg, NMSU's Herbarium, and the Black Range. As new plants were discovered, John Freyermuth catalogued them to his comprehensive, trail-specific inventory.
- Repairing old and installing new irrigation equipment to the Dripping Springs Visitor Center Garden while removing invasives, adding a variety of natives, and setting sturdy signage, to the delight of an ever increasing and far-flung public awed by our popular, recently consecrated National Monument.
- Maintaining Facebook and Instagram accounts filled with public announcements, news of planned events, and annotated photographs showcasing the beauty of native flora in bloom.
- As a stakeholder in the stewardship of Southern New Mexico's public lands, submitting detailed observations and recommendations to the Bureau of Land Management as it develops its Resource Management Plan, which will impact our environment for decades to come. The Board acted as a team to research, write, and send two well-documented letters to BLM.

- Submitting a strongly worded endorsement of NMSU's Herbarium as it applies for a federal grant to upgrade its WWII-era infrastructure urgently needed to preserve, safeguard, and make readily available to the public its 100,000+ treasure trove of statewide and regional native plants, a collection begun in Territorial days.
- Holding live and zoom monthly membership meetings at NMSU's Biology Annex, graciously made available by Herbarium Director and Animal and Range Science Asst. Professor Sara Fuentes-Soriano and Herbarium Curator Zachary Rogers, featuring uniquely qualified presenters of renown. Topics ranged from microscopic mosses (Dr. Kelly Allred, Karen Blisard, and Dr. Russ Kleinman) to the restoration of cienegas (A.T. Cole) to native and adapted plant landscape design and habitat gardening (Jackye Meinecke) to the pioneering discoveries of desert flora along the coasts of Chile and Argentina (Dr. Michael Dillon). Other talks included NMSU student and Las Cruces Chapter Native Plant Grant award winner Alicia Marmolejo's research on a NM native plant now invasive in the Holy Land, Dr. Kelly Allred's talk Bloom Where You are Planted, Dr. Joanie King's talk on beneficial insects of New Mexico, Miranda Kersten's talk on milkweeds and insects, and Richard Spellenberg's Asteraceae identification lecture.
- Doubling our grants to NMSU students--\$500 to a graduate student and \$500 to the undergraduate Range Club as they pursue cutting-edge research and eco-friendly work aligned with our mission.
- Finally, we have started planning and have worked on preliminary tasks for our Chapter's hosting of the 2025 Native Plant Society Annual Conference.