



New Mexico's Voice for Native Plants

NEWSLETTER

of the
Native Plant Society
of New Mexico

January, February, March 2009 Volume XXXIV Number 1



September scenery

Field trip participants spread out among the yuccas in the landscape south of the beautiful Organ Mountains during the Peña Blanca field trip at the annual state meeting in Las Cruces in September. See more coverage of the September meeting inside on pages 8 and 9.

Editorship Available

NPSNM is seeking a new editor for this quarterly state newsletter. Duties include page layout of new material and regularly scheduled items and maintaining contact with advertisers, chapters, and the board. The position is paid a \$500 annual honorarium. The job can be accomplished from any location with a computer and internet access. To apply, send your resume to: Tom Antonio, PO Box 782, Cerrillos, NM 87010. For more information on the position, contact Renée West (see page 5 for email and phone number).

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From the President

Tom Antonio

The society's new slogan is "New Mexico's Voice for Native Plants." As your new president, I would like to thank the volunteer board members of the NPSNM for helping to keep our voice strong. All of us give much of our time simply because we believe in the society's mission "to conserve the native flora of New Mexico."

I want to personally thank some of our hard-working members in this and upcoming issues of the newsletter. Lolly Jones has graciously become our new membership secretary, having formerly managed our website successfully. Her new job of coordinating memberships requires an enormous amount of time. Recording new memberships, mailing renewals, sending thank you notes, and depositing checks is nearly a full-time job. In addition, she keeps track of all these daunting details for each of the eight chapters. Lucky for us, John Freyermuth will continue to assist Lolly in this very important role.

If you have not visited our website recently, you will be pleasantly surprised. Our new website editor, Jane Mygatt, has expanded nearly every category within the site. There are many new articles, plant family identification hints, and links

to many other useful plant sites. If you or your chapter have news items for the website, please contact Jane.

We are hoping that in the not-too-distant future we will be able to accept memberships, renewals, and donations online. We are also working with a graphic artist who has volunteered his time to redesign many of our printed materials, beginning with our membership brochure. Look for these and other exciting changes in the months ahead.

Our very capable newsletter editor, Renee West, is now our vice-president. She continues to do a tremendous job with the newsletter but we really need a member to step forward and help. If you know of someone you think would be interested in working on the newsletter, please send us the name.

Finally, I want to remind all members that they are invited to attend the annual board meeting at Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge (20 miles north of Socorro) January 30-February 1. Check the website near the end of January for agenda items. Please join us and have your voices heard as we discuss many important issues facing our society. For information on logistics, please contact our Administrative Coordinator Sandra Lynn.

NPSNM officers for 2009-10 (l-r): Renée West, vice president; Steve Robertson, treasurer; Lolly Jones, membership secretary; Pam McBride, recording secretary; and Tom Antonio, president.



NPSNM position still available:

Newsletter Editor

This NEWSLETTER is published quarterly by the Native Plant Society of New Mexico, a nonprofit organization, and is free to members. The NPSNM is composed of professional and amateur botanists and others with an interest in the flora of New Mexico. Original articles from the Newsletter may be reprinted if attributed to the author and to this Newsletter. Views expressed are the opinions of the individual authors and not necessarily those of NPSNM.

Manuscripts and artwork are welcome and should be submitted to the editor, Renée West, at keywestern@hotmail.com
OR: 1105 Ocotillo Canyon Dr., Carlsbad NM 88220

Next Deadline is March 1, 2009

Membership in the NPSNM is open to anyone supporting our goals of promoting a greater appreciation of native plants and their environment and the preservation of endangered species. We encourage the use of suitable native plants in landscaping to preserve our State's unique character and as a water conservation measure. Members benefit from chapter meetings, field trips, publications, plant and seed exchanges, and educational forums. A wide selection of books dealing with plants, landscaping, and other environmental issues are available at discount prices. The Society has also produced two New Mexico wildflower posters by artist Niki Threlkeld and a cactus poster designed by Lisa Mandelkern. These can be ordered from our Poster Chair or Book Sales representative.

Proofreaders: Sandra Lynn and Hope Woodward

Mailing: Carolyn Gressitt.

Web site: <http://npsnm.unm.edu/>

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Grants for Scientific Literacy in the Chihuahuan Desert

By Sandra Lynn

Asombro Institute for Science Education in Las Cruces (formerly known as Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park) has received five grants from the NPSNM — in 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006, and 2008. In addition to funding from the state board, Asombro Institute has received both funding and volunteer support from the Las Cruces Chapter. Clearly, the Native Plant Society believes that its money is well-spent in support of the mission of the institute: *increasing scientific literacy by fostering an understanding of the Chihuahuan Desert.*

A couple of the grants were intended specifically for botanical projects, such as establishing a xeriscape exhibit and teaching students about transpiration in desert plants, but all were intended to provide science education, including but not limited to learning about native plants.

According to Stephanie Bestelmeyer, Asombro's executive director, New Mexico students are performing poorly on standardized measures of science understanding. They are also not getting much time outdoors or the chance to learn about the environment from their own observations and experience (educators refer to this as inquiry-based science education). Asombro Institute programs address these issues by reaching more than 12,000 K-12 students (as well as 4,000 adults) each year with field trips, schoolyard ecology projects, teacher workshops, public events, and programs delivered directly to students in their classrooms. The costs of direct delivery of programs to classrooms are supported by the NPSNM's 2008 grant to Asombro.

The institute's classroom programs are available to any student in the region, but as Dr. Bestelmeyer explains, much of the demand comes from schools with PTAs that have money for the fees, \$120 for three hour-long programs. The NPSNM grant was for funding to expand the classroom programs into 45 less affluent classrooms, in schools where as many as 91% of the children are classified by the state as "economically disadvantaged." The grant was for \$600, about a third of the total cost of the 45 classroom programs.



Stephanie Bestelmeyer speaks at the NPSNM annual meeting in Las Cruces.

What happens when an Asombro Institute staff member (and there are only three!) goes into a classroom to teach science? Below is their website [www.asombro.org] description of one of the programs they offer:

Vegetation Measurement

This program allows students to conduct a full scientific investigation in the schoolyard to learn about plant composition (what kind of plants are present), plant cover (how much of the ground is covered in plants), and plant size. We use vegetation monitoring protocols to measure plants in two different sites (e.g., edge vs. center of area, arroyo vs. non-arroyo). The sites we choose will depend on the characteristics of the land near your school.

You can imagine that the kids enjoy the chance to get outdoors and learn by being actively involved. They not only acquire facts about native plants, but they *learn how to learn* about native plants by categorizing, counting, observing, and measuring actual plants growing near their schools.

Because the NPSNM has been providing some funding for Asombro Institute for years, we now have a stake in the future of science education in southern New Mexico.

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**Send Membership Dues & Changes of Address to:
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P.O. Box 35388, Albuquerque NM 87176**

A Note of Appreciation

To those who so freely offered their support during our difficult time, we offer our sincere gratitude. Tragedy must be held as transitory, recovery as continuous. Chick and Yvonne Keller, who know the essence of such loss, taught us the concept of passing gifts forward, not giving back. We shall follow that course, and continue our love and concern for our native plants and the people who care about them. Thank you all.

—Gene and Betty Jercinovic

NPSNM Address Change!

Please note our official address has changed to:

NPSNM

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Albuquerque, NM 87176

Since more than one person will be checking the mailbox, a clear indication of your business on the envelope will help ensure that mail quickly gets to the right person.

If you are sending a membership application, renewal, change of address, or any other business concerning your membership, please address the envelope to **MEMBERSHIP, NPSNM**.

If sending a donation to the Carter Conservation Fund, please address the envelope to **CARTER FUND, NPSNM**.

If sending any other general society business, please address it to **Sandra Lynn, Administrative Coordinator, NPSNM**.

However, if you are sending mail directly to a particular officer or committee chair, please send that mail to the intended recipient at his or her home address. Use the phone numbers and email addresses provided in the newsletter (see box to the left) and on the website to find out the person's mailing address. Sending such specific mail to the post office box will only delay it and cost the society postage, as it will have to be mailed again.

Chapter Activities & Events

Albuquerque

All meetings are first Wednesdays at 7 pm in the multi-purpose room of the Museum of Natural History, 1801 Mountain Rd. NW. For further information contact Pam McBride, 343-9472, ebotpam@msn.com; or Jim McGrath, 286-8745, sedges@swcp.com.

January 7 talk—“Exploring Salvia for New Mexico Gardens – Native Salvias of Western Texas and New Mexico” will be discussed by John Rembetski, Salvia aficionado.

February 4 talk—“Landscaping with Native Plants: Creating Urban Desertscape” by George Miller, environmental photojournalist, third-generation nurseryman and author of *Landscaping with Native Plants of the Southwest*. A discussion of the best plants and plans for water-wise urban landscapes.

March 4 talk—“Riparian Recovery in Drought: the Gift of a Fence” by Becky Schnelker, President of the Intermountain Conservation Trust (ICT), and Carl White, ICT board member and research associate professor in the Department of Biology at UNM. A discussion of the management of San Pedro Creek in the mountains east of Albuquerque following the fencing out of cattle more than 10 years ago.

El Paso

All programs are second Thursdays at 7 pm at El Paso Garden Center, 3105 Grant. All society events are free unless otherwise noted. Non-members are always welcome.

Gila (Silver City)

All programs and hikes are free and open to the public. Meetings are third Fridays at 7 pm at WNMU’s Harlan Hall. Hikers meet at 8 am in south parking lot of WNMU Fine Arts Theatre the morning of the hike to arrange carpooling. Participants must sign a release-of-liability form at that time, and will receive a list of native plants in the hiking area For more information,

call Deming Gustafson, 575-388-5192. For hikes, bring water, food, hat, sunscreen, hiking shoes.

January 16 talk—“Trees of the Gila, from the Mountains to the Sea” by Richard Felger. Felger will follow the evolution of trees from subarctic mountain peaks, tumbling down streams and once-mighty rivers and out to the sea. In particular he will trace the morphologies of familiar species of willows and cottonwoods, oaks and conifers, through time and space, ice ages and global warmings, ultimately meeting along the borderlands of the Gila River. Currently residing in Silver City, Felger is research associate at the San Diego National History Museum and senior research scientist at the Environmental Research Laboratory at the University of Arizona. His research and publications center on botany, ethnobiology, new food crops, and relationships of global populations.

February 20 talk—“The Past and Present Flora and Physiography of New Mexico, from the Colorado Plateau to the Great Plains” by Patrick Alexander. Alexander will give a photographic overview of the current major plant communities and physiographic regions of New Mexico. He will also discuss what we know about how the modern flora of the state arose from the climate and ecology of the past, speculating as to how the Silver City area looked 10,000 years ago. He is a graduate student in botany at New Mexico State University, where his research focuses primarily on mustards and on developing an online flora guide to the Organ Mountains.

March 20 talk—“Xeric-Adapted Trees in Mesic Landscapes” by Kathy Whiteman. She will discuss patterns of distribution and water use of riparian-established juniper in the Gila and Mimbres river watersheds. A doctoral candidate in biology at NMSU, Whiteman will present a powerpoint of her PhD research into woody plant encroachment, with a focus on junipers, and potential impacts to riparian ecosystem biodiversity and functioning.

(Continued on page 7)

Chapter Activities & Events, continued

(Continued from page 6)

She is a 1999 graduate of WNMU with a BS in botany and worked for Jack and Martha Carter in Silver City. She has also worked as a biological services contractor for the USDA Forest Service and has received awards and fellowships in support of her research from the Audubon Society, NMSU, National Science Foundation, and NPSNM.

Las Cruces

Meetings and programs are Wednesdays at 7 pm in the conference room of the Social Center at the University Terrace Good Samaritan Village, 3011 Buena Vida Circle, Las Cruces. (On the right, while traveling east on Buena Vida from Telshor.) Field trips are Saturdays. Most field trips extend into the afternoon. Bring lunch, water, sun protection, plant field guides, and wear good walking shoes. Participants must sign a release of liability form. Children must be accompanied by their parents. Programs and field trips are free, and non-members are always welcome. Contacts: president Ray Bowers 575-541-1877; vice-president Carolyn Gressitt 575-523-8413; state rep. Al Krueger 575-532-1036.

January 7 meeting—Sharing photos from 2008.

February 11 meeting—“Shifting Vegetation Patterns in the Chihuahuan Desert” by Heather Throop.

February 14 walk—Field trip to visit plant research on the Jornada Range with Heather Throop.

March 11 meeting—Lisa Mendelkern’s plant images.

March 14 walk—Field trip to see the early spring flowers in Valles Canyon.

April 8 meeting—Camino Real by Dan Scurlock.

April 11 walk—Don Scurlock will lead a field trip to Camino Real.

Otero (Alamogordo)

For field trip information, contact Eric Metzler,

metzler@msu.edu, 575-443-6250; or William Herndon, laluzlobo@gmail.com, 575-437-2555. Information available by the beginning of each month.

January 20 talk—“Food Plants from Mexico” by Dr. Donovan Bailey of NMSU. At the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Hall, 1010 16th Street, Alamogordo, at 7 pm.

February 21 walk—Field trip to NMSU Herbarium in Las Cruces. Meet at 8:30 am at the old WalMart parking lot, intersection of Hwys. 54 and 70.

March 28 walk—Field trip to White Sands National Monument. Meet at 8:30 am at old WalMart, intersection of Hwys. 54 & 70.

San Juan (Farmington)

Meetings are third Thursdays at 7 pm at San Juan Community College. For more information call Les Lundquist at 505-326-7194.

Santa Fe

Meetings are third Wednesdays at 7 pm at College of Santa Fe, 1600 St. Michael's Dr., Luke Hall, Room 303. For more information, contact Tom Antonio, tantonio@csf.edu, 505-473-6465; or Carol Johnson, gcjohnson@comcast.net, 505-466-1303.

Taos

Meetings are second Wednesdays at 7 pm at San Geronimo Lodge. For more information on field trips and other activities, contact David Witt, 575-758-0619, or davidlwitt@cybermesa.com. Check web link for this chapter to get updates. Chapter members will get e-mail or USPS mail notification.

March 11 talk—“Creating a Winning Garden with Natives” by Jan Enright, landscaper and owner of El Prado Gardens, to kick off the season.

August 6-9—The NPSNM annual state meeting in Taos: “Mountain Peaks to River Valleys.” See details in the next issue .

At The Crossroads

2008 Annual



Keynote speaker Eric Metzler (above, left) employs the services of audience members Lanze Hibler, Liam Hurlburt, and Pam McBride in a demonstration of the differences between head adornments (antennae) of Lepidopterans (moths and butterflies). The talk was titled “eHarmony.com” to illustrate the importance of insect pollinators to the sex lives (reproduction) of native plants. Even so, the talk was “G-rated”!

Patrick Alexander (right) points out flower details while leading a field trip on Sierra Vista Trail. Summer rains had been abundant before the meeting, including a good dousing from Hurricane Donna, leaving the desert green and decorated with many wildflowers.



September in Las Cruces

State Meeting



Peña Blanca field trip co-leader Carolyn Gressitt photographs a native vine wound through the base of a yucca.

Photos by Renée West



Desert marigold and beebrush (oreganillo) were among the many plants flowering on Sierra Vista Trail.



Participants organize around various field trip leaders in the parking lot of the Farm and Ranch Museum in preparation for a warm autumn day in the desert.

Reflections on Aldo Leopold and *A Sand County Almanac*

By Jack L. Carter

Recently, a visiting friend, looking over the books that line the walls of my study, asked me, "If I wanted to read only one of these books, which one would you suggest?" That was an interesting challenge, and I stumbled somewhat in my answer. Names such as Charles Darwin, Aldo Leopold, Garrett Harden, E.O. Wilson, Rachel Carson, John Dewey, and John Muir all came to mind. And I suddenly realized how long these authors have been around and that, with the exception of E.O. Wilson, they are all dead. (He and I are the same age, 79.)

Other than being old myself and having enjoyed such a long friendship with these authors' works (from first read through several rereadings), why are they still so important to me? My only answer is that the ideas they present continue to be extremely important in my life, and I still have great respect for the professors who first challenged me to become familiar with them. Also, these works are still available in the marketplace. Their publication is as important today as ever; they have stood the test of time.

But back to the original question. Could I pick one book for my friend to read? I was compelled to select Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*, including the associated essays on conservation from *Round River* and "The Upshot" ("The Land Ethic") [1966, Oxford University Press]. I admit that this book was on every suggested or required reading list I ever distributed to my students in over 40 years of teaching botany. This was not because at first read it is easy to comprehend Leopold's every meaning, but because as you read and reread these essays you come to know him as a person who could grow and change throughout his lifetime. He evolved from hunter and fisherman to naturalist (ornithologist and botanist), then forester, protector of game, and distinguished ecologist, and finally was a recognized philosopher and ethicist.

As we examine the life of Aldo Leopold and study his writings, we see ourselves as we move through several stages of transition. We are slowly confronting the eternal turmoil that requires us to feed on other life forms and at the same time protect them. We struggle to decide if we should save or destroy the lobo and a wide range of other

species. We are beginning to recognize earth's limits, the variation among species, and the science and beauty of the natural world that surrounds us. Can we use, and at the same time protect, our forests and prairies, and through studies in ecology and evolution be prepared to defend our decisions?

Gradually we have come to recognize the most difficult scientific information we must confront. We now know humankind is not above looking down on the other living and nonliving forms, but is an organism like every other, caught in the midst of a rapidly changing world. Can we accept the fact that our DNA identifies us as part of every other living thing? Does humankind comprehend that as we touch the planet we can never do just one thing, and that there are limits to growth? What we do to the least of other living organisms we do unto ourselves.

For all these reasons I encourage each and every one of you to read and study the life of Aldo Leopold, starting with *A Sand County Almanac*.

Las Cruces Chapter honored at state park ribbon-cutting

The Las Cruces Chapter of NPSNM was honored December 13 at the grand opening of the Mesilla Bosque State Park, our newest state park. The chapter had done a plant survey and created a plant list for the park. The park's 7,500-square-foot visitor center includes classrooms, an amphitheater, a native plant garden, and room for a gift shop. Present at the opening were Joanna Prukop, NM Secretary of Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources, and Dave Simon, director of State Parks, along with state representatives, senators, and Las Cruces city and Mesilla town leaders.

Chapter president Ray Bowers was presented with a special trowel (to help plant natives in the butterfly garden) and a large "diamond" commemorating the diamond jubilee year of the state park system. Carolyn Gressitt, vice-president, had the honor of standing next to Secretary Prukop as she cut the ribbon.

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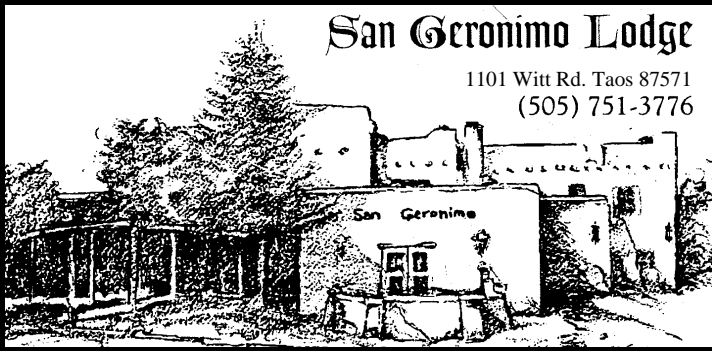
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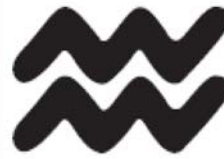
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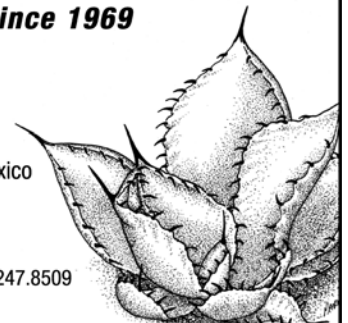
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Urban and Goolsby win scholarships

New Mexico State University graduate students Lillis Urban and Darroc Goolsby (above) are the 2008 recipients of NPSNM Otero Chapter scholarships. Lillis is working on new treatments of the *Leavenworthia* and *Selenia*. Her work will make a big contribution to the flora of the Southwest. Darroc is doing studies on the ecology of shrubland invasion into grassland.

Chapter president Helgi Osterreich presented each with a check for \$1,075 at a luncheon in October. Some of the money had been donated to the scholarship fund in memory of Don Tribble and Lucille Wilson.


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For 2008

Thank You to Our Member Donors!

NPSNM would like to thank all members who have made monetary contributions above their regular dues in the past year. This list includes those who've sent in extra contributions with their memberships or to the Carter Conservation Fund. It doesn't include other contributions people make, such as those sent directly to the treasurer or the contributions of cooperation and energy from the wonderful members of this volunteer organization.

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New Bosque Guide Available

The University of New Mexico Press recently published *A Field Guide to the Plants and Animals of the Middle Rio Grande Bosque* by Jean-Luc E. Cartron, David C. Lightfoot, Jane E. Mygatt, Sandra L. Brantley, and Timothy K. Lowrey. The book includes descriptions of more than seven hundred plants and animals illustrated with color photographs for this important river ecosystem through central New Mexico. An invaluable resource for “land managers, teachers, students, eco-buffs, and nature enthusiasts, it also reveals the important role the bosque plays in New Mexico's natural heritage.”

The book is available from NPSNM book sales at a member price of \$17.60 plus \$2.50 shipping. All book orders should be sent with checks to: NPSNM BOOKS, 1814 W. Currier, Artesia, NM 88210.

From Mountain Peaks to River Valleys:

Invitation to 2009 NPSNM Annual Meeting in Taos

The Taos Chapter of NPSNM is looking forward to hosting the 2009 state meeting. To whet your appetite and encourage you to place the event on your calendar, here are some tidbits about the event. Come and explore the beauty of the mountain peaks and river valleys of north-central New Mexico and the history of Taos.

The meeting will be August 6-9. Full program details and registration information will appear in the next newsletter issue and on the NPSNM website, and via e-mail from Taos800@aol.com.

William A Weber, Professor Emeritus at the University of Colorado and eminent Colorado botanist, will speak at the banquet about "The Importance of Mentoring Young People." During the meeting he will also hold a book signing.

Sprinkled throughout the symposium will be short vignettes on aspects of the natural history and identity of a few plants that are characteristic of the

Southern Rocky Mountains and the Upper Rio Grande Basin. We invite members to offer these vignettes. Please contact Patrick Webber, webber@msu.edu if you wish to participate with a vignette on your favorite species.

The main theme of the meeting will be the plant diversity, ecology, and environment of the mountain peaks and river valleys of Taos County and north-central New Mexico.

The full-day symposium will be devoted to the regional plant life and opportunities it provides for recreation and education. It will be followed by an open panel discussion to explore ways to partner with local and statewide programs. A wide variety of field trips and living workshops will also be offered. Among these will be a celebration of the Aldo Leopold Centennial by visiting his homestead in nearby Tres Piedras and practical tips for digital photography of plants and landscapes.

**Native Plant Society of New Mexico
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