

NEW MEXICO'S VOICE FOR NATIVE PLANTS



NEWSLETTER

of the

NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
OF NEW MEXICO

JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH 2016

VOL. XXXXI NO. 1



Evening view to Bishop's Cap from Organ Mountains–Desert Peaks National Monument.
See "The Fall Is Not Just Golden," page 10. Photo: Carolyn Gressitt

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From the President

by *Barbara Fix*

Life is full of ironies, isn't it? In July the San Juan chapter of the NPSNM put on what one longtime NPSNM member described as the best annual meeting ever done. That meeting, with incredible field trips and scientific talks, was the product of the vision, passion, and energy of Al Schneider, the chapter president. Afterward, because of human clash and exhaustion, all the chapter officers except the treasurer, John Bregar, resigned. After canvassing chapter members and not finding enough volunteers to do some of the work Al had been doing single-handedly, John informed our board that the San Juan chapter would cease to exist at the end of the year.



Once Jan and Charlie Turner, copresidents of the Colorado Native Plant Society, heard this, they immediately went about drumming up more volunteers, and *voilà*, the phoenix is rising and there will again be a southwest chapter of

CONPS, whence the San Juan chapter originally came. Much thanks is owed to John Bregar for the responsible and gracious way he has handled this transition. Likewise, Charlie and Jan (who are also NPSNM members!) are to be congratulated for turning what could have been a sad occasion into one of continuing and furthering our mutual goal of protecting native plants. Our regions overlap. Our goals are the same. Further collaboration is highly likely.

One lesson to be drawn from this is that we must make our organization fit our membership. Chapters should be free to structure annual meetings and other activities to fit the talents and energies of their members. This conversation will continue. One place for that to happen, to which all are invited, is our annual NPSNM board meeting at Sevilleta Wildlife Refuge (see below). Let's talk! ❖

Potluck and Winter Board Meeting at Sevilleta! Do Come!

by *Barbara Fix*

Once again the NPSNM board and friends are meeting at the Sevilleta Wildlife Refuge the weekend of January 29. Last year's potluck on the Friday before the Saturday board meeting was such a success, we're doing it again. Delicious leftovers gave us plenty to savor the next day.

Seeing and participating in NPSNM board meetings gives one a greater appreciation of the thought and effort that has gone into making this a vital organization and the voice for native plants in our region. The past two years the board has finished up business by Saturday (Sunday is also reserved for us, if needed). Traditionally, Saturday evening

many folks go to a restaurant in Socorro, twenty miles south.

Staying at Sevilleta is always a treat. Sevilleta ranges from wetlands to foothills, with hiking trails and much botanical interest. The night sky shows wonders not seen these days in citified places.

It may still be possible to reserve a bed at Sevilleta. But do it asap. The housing is comfortable, with fully equipped kitchens. You can contact me at 505/989-8654 or baafix@earthlink.net about availability.

Come enjoy Sevilleta with us this year! Share your thoughts with your friends. And have a good time. ❖

Please Note: Membership Dues Changes for 2016

by *Bettie Hines and Pam McBride, Albuquerque Chapter*

Because of a recurring deficit in the operating expenses, the NPSNM State Board voted that an increase in membership

dues is necessary. Effective January 2016, new memberships and renewal dues will be:

Thank you for your continued support & membership!

- Individual** \$ 30, an increase from \$25
 - Family** \$ 45, an increase from \$30
 - Friends of the Society** \$ 60, an increase from \$50
 - Sponsor** \$125, an increase from \$100
 - Patron** at \$250 and **Life Member** at \$1,000 remain the same.
 - Students, Teachers, Seniors, and Limited Income** \$ 15
- (Note that this category has added teachers and remains at the previous level.)

Conservation Corner

by Rachel Jankowitz, NPSNM Conservation Committee Chair

Chattanooga Iron Fen

During the 2015 annual meeting in Durango, I participated in a field trip to the Chattanooga iron fen, hosted by Mountain Studies Institute and Army Corps of Engineers. After waiting out a morning thunderstorm at the MSI headquarters in Silverton, we drove to the nearby fen and spent a lovely day wandering over the restoration project and botanizing the fen and surrounding uplands. Our group took this opportunity to key out several specimens using Jennifer Ackerfield's new *Flora of Colorado*.

A fen is a groundwater-supported wetland that accumulates "peat," a thick layer of organic soil. There are estimated to be 4,000 to 5,000 fens in the San Juan Mountains. Many of them are 6,000 to 10,000 years old, and they typically have a peat layer between three and eight feet thick. Chattanooga is a rare iron fen, with a pH of less than 4.5. Iron fens form in areas of weathering pyrite, which is oxidized in a microbially mediated process to form sulfuric acid. (Much of the information in this paragraph came from the chapter "Fens of the San Juan Mountains" by Rodney A. Chimner and David Cooper, in the book *The Eastern San Juan Mountains: Their Ecology, Geology and Human History*.)

Dominant woody plants at Chattanooga iron fen are bog birch (*Betula glandulosa*), plane-leaf willow (*Salix planifolia*), and mountain willow (*S. monticola*). The herbaceous layer includes a wide variety of grasses, sedges, and forbs. There weren't any moss mavens in our field trip group, but

many species have been documented at this site, including *Sphagnum balticum*, occurring here 1,200 miles disjunct from its main range in Canada.

Chattanooga fen was impacted by iron mining in the first part of the 20th century. The opportunity for restoration came with a proposed expansion of the Purgatory ski resort in 2009. Mitigation was required under the Clean Water Act for impacts of the expansion on wetlands. MSI is a partner in this project with the US Forest Service, Purgatory, and the Army Corps of Engineers. They are plugging ditches with excelsior bales, to raise the water table, and transplanting sedges into bare spots.

Little Water Canyon

In connection with the Cibola National Forest management plan revision process, former NPSNM conservation chair Jim McGrath has sent a letter to the Forest Service advocating special management status for Little Water Canyon. This past summer Jim hosted a field trip to the site for agency personnel.

LWC was formerly proposed to be designated as a Research Natural Area; however, the RNA was never established. The primary feature of the original proposed RNA is that it contains the type locality for the *Picea pungens*/*Cornus stolonifera* or Colorado blue spruce/red-osier dogwood plant association. Some of the blue spruce are near record size. The diameters and heights of these spruce trees reflect the maturity of the forest and the fact that it has been maintained in a more or less pristine state. Jim did not observe evidence of cattle grazing or nonnative plants during his recent visits.

The blue spruce forest lies in a very narrow, steep-sided, shady canyon that creates microclimatic conditions simulating colder and moister conditions found much farther north and at much higher elevation than the Zuni Mountains. Thus, it may represent a relict from an earlier era when conditions in central New Mexico were much colder and wetter—such as following the retreat of Pleistocene glaciers. A graduate student at the University of New Mexico

Continued page 5



NPSNM members behind a ditch plug structure at Chattanooga fen. Photo: Dana Price

The Newsletter of the Native Plant Society of New Mexico

January–March 2016. Vol. 41 No. 1. This newsletter is published quarterly by the Native Plant Society of New Mexico (PO Box 35388, Albuquerque, NM 87176) and is free to members. The NPSNM, a nonprofit organization, 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.

Next deadline is March 1, 2016. Articles and high-resolution artwork supporting the NPSNM's mission are welcomed and can be sent to the editor, Sarah Johnson, at sarita@gilanet.com, or PO Box 53, Gila, NM 88038.

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Mission The Native Plant Society of New Mexico (NPSNM) is a non-profit organization that strives to educate the public about native plants by promoting knowledge of plant identification, ecology, and uses; fostering plant conservation and the preservation of natural habitats; supporting botanical research; and encouraging the appropriate use of native plants to conserve water, land, and wildlife.

Conservation Corner (continued from p. 3)

who is studying springs in the Zuni Mountains has reported to Jim that the spring in the upper part of the blue spruce forest is one of the highest-flow springs in the Zuni Mountains.

A 1984 paper reported finding the orchid *Piperia unalascensis* in the vicinity of LWC. SEINet contains a single record of *P. unalascensis* collected from McKenzie Ridge in the Zuni Mountains—about 16 miles to the northwest. This is the only known location in New Mexico or Arizona where this species has been found.

Special management designation for LWC is warranted to protect it from livestock grazing, mineral development, water development, and motorized trails. Any designation should facilitate scientific research and monitoring. Kudos to Jim for bringing this special place to the attention of the Forest Service and putting his letter on the record for Forest planning. All five of the National Forests in New Mexico are currently revising their management plans—look for more about that process in coming newsletters.



The orchid *Malaxis soulei* on Oso Ridge in the Little Water Canyon area. Photo: Jim McGrath

Santa Rosa Update

From time to time we have covered developments affecting the wetlands complex at Santa Rosa, which supports three special-status plant species: the Pecos sunflower, Wright's marsh thistle, and Great Plains ladies' tresses orchid. A coordination meeting was convened on September 14 to bring together the major actors regarding conservation and restoration of these wetlands. Here's the latest news:

The Army Corps of Engineers plans to restore a wetland surrounding the pond above an existing dam near the Santa Rosa Wastewater Treatment Plant, and the riparian corridor below the dam. The NM Environment Department is funding a project using state River Stewardship funds to improve habitat and stabilize a stream that flows through city parks along one side of the wetlands. US Fish & Wildlife Service staff talked about progress toward fulfilling Endangered Species Act recovery criteria for the Pecos sunflower. The Soil & Water Conservation Commission has half a million dollars for tamarisk and Russian olive removal. The City of Santa Rosa intends to replace the above-mentioned dam for structural reasons, and feels the time has come to develop a comprehensive plan for managing the wetlands and associated waters. The state Forestry Division and WetWater Environmental Services discussed past and future monitoring efforts and management strategies for the state-owned wetland parcel. WetWater, working with a local teacher, has developed an approved school curriculum on wetland environmental monitoring.

Good things are happening in Santa Rosa, under the leadership of an enlightened city government that is committed to conservation of their unique natural resource. ❖

How to Give Money to Your Society Without Paying Anything Extra!

Folks who buy books or other merchandise through Amazon can buy and give at the same time, at no extra cost. For all Amazon purchases made through the Native Plant Society of New Mexico's website, www.npsnm.org, Amazon will donate a small percentage of the purchase price to NPSNM.

It's simple. Instead of going directly to Amazon.com, go first to NPSNM.org. On the home page, click on the Amazon link in the lefthand column. If you don't have an Amazon password, you may be required to set one up. And there you are: your usual shopping will benefit your Native Plant Society. ❖

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*What we leave behind,
we give to the future.*

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to consider including
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For further information,
call Barbara Fix at 505/989-8654.

The Art of Plant Collection

by William Norris, Gila Chapter

Essential aspects of plant-collection preparation, from start to finish, are demonstrated here by twenty students enrolled in the fall 2015 Range Vegetation course in the Natural Sciences Department at Western New Mexico University. The students, who hail from California, Arizona, Hawaii, New Mexico, and Utah, are Derek Duran, Valerie Garcia, Gabe

Gilmore, Michael Gomez, Warren Goode, Don Gwyn, Matt Hayes, Raelyn Kimmick, Nate Martin, Ayrin Meeks, Joseph Morales, William Padilla, Isaiah Reynolds, Kelsey Sessions, Eric Stevens, Evan Surek, Kyle Tate, Zachary Tecca, Jake Vega, and Kirsten Walsh. ❖



On the lookout for bush muhly, tobosa, black grama, plains bristlegrass, and the elusive burrograss at City of Rocks State Park (Grant Co. NM). All photos: Evan Surek.



Recording field notes is an essential aspect of preparing any plant collection.



Pressing plants in the "mud room" of the Dale A. Zimmerman Herbarium at WNMU is urgent business.



Now the fun begins: using the *Key to New Mexico Grasses*, third edition, by Dr. Kelly Allred, to identify each grass specimen.



Almost done: mounting plants and associated labels on archival paper using buffered glue.



Scientific specimen or wall art? You decide.

Chapter Activities & Events

For further information on the following events, notify the contact person listed, or visit the chapter's web page: First go to www.npsnm.org; click on Local Chapters; then

Albuquerque

All scheduled monthly meetings are normally the first Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. in the NM Museum of Natural History, 1801 Mountain Rd. NW. For more info on programs contact Jim McGrath at 505/286-8745 or sedges@swcp.com. For field trips, contact Carol Conoboy, carolconoboy@gmail.com, 505/897-3530.

Jan 6 Meeting. Native Riparian Seeds in the Art of Basia Irland. Basia Irland, Fulbright scholar, *National Geographic* writer, and UNM professor emerita.

Feb 3 Meeting. The Natural History of the Valles Caldera: Landscapes Present, Landscapes Past. Mark Ward, naturalist.

Mar 2 Meeting. Restoration Techniques in the Middle Rio Grande: Bringing the Bosque to the River. Ondrea Hummel, ecologist for the Albuquerque District of the US Army Corps of Engineers.

Mar 5 Field Trip. A Tour of the San Antonio Oxbow. 9:00–11:00 a.m. Ondrea Hummel, leader. Meet 9:00 a.m. at the City of Albuquerque Open Space parking lot on the SW side of the Montano bridge.

El Paso

All programs are second Thursdays at 7 p.m. (coffee social at 6:30) at El Paso Garden Center, 3105 Grant Ave. unless otherwise noted. All events free unless a fee is specified. Nonmembers always welcome. Info: Jim Hastings, 915/240-7414.

Jan 14 Meeting. Helping Achieve National Monument Status for Castner Range. Judy Ackerman, secretary, Franklin Mountain Wilderness Coalition.

Feb 11 Meeting. Hummingbird Plants of the Southwest. Marcy Scott, author and lead propagator at Robledo Vista Nursery, north of Las Cruces.

Mar 10 Meeting. Native Plant Photography, Part 2. Lisa Mandelkern, Las Cruces hiker and photographer.

select the chapter. **Hikers** should always bring plenty of water, hat, sun protection, lunch and/or snacks, field guides, and wear sturdy shoes, suitable for rough, uneven ground.

Gila (Silver City)

All programs are free and open to the public. Meetings are third Fridays at 7 p.m. at WNMU's Harlan Hall, with refreshments following the program. Updates posted on www.gilanps.org.

Jan 15 Meeting. Adaptations in Photosynthesis Occurring in Many of Our Native Plants. Dr. Keller Suberkropp.

Feb 19 Meeting. Water Harvesting Projects as They Relate to Growing Native Plants in Our Area. Van Clothier, owner, Stream Dynamics.

Feb 27 Field Trip in conjunction with the 6th Natural History of the Gila Symposium. Details to follow.

Mar 18 Meeting. Program to be determined.

Las Cruces

Meetings and workshops are second Wednesdays (unless otherwise noted) at 7 p.m. in the conference room of the Social Center at the University Terrace Good Samaritan Village, 3011 Buena Vida Circle, Las Cruces. Field trips are Saturdays; most last into the afternoon. Participants must sign a release-of-liability form. Children must be accompanied by their parents. Programs and field trips are free; nonmembers always welcome. Contacts: Carolyn Gressitt, 575/523-8413; Tom Packard, 575/202-3708.

Jan 13 Meeting. New Year celebration/release-signing party. Bring your best 10 native-plant photos on a thumb-drive, and bring some treats to share.

Jan 16 Field Trip. Mesilla Bosque State Park. Meet 9 a.m. at First National Rio Grande, corner of Telshor and University.

Feb 10 Meeting. Poppies. Lisa Mandelkern.

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Feb 13 Field Trip. Aden Crater. Meet 9 a.m. at First National Rio Grande, corner of Telshor and University.

Mar 9 Meeting. Chihuahuan Desert Cacti. Ad and Gertrude Koenig.

Mar 12 Field Trip. Bar/Soledad Canyon. Meet 9 a.m. at First National Rio Grande, corner of Telshor and University.

Otero (Alamogordo)

For field trip information, contact William Herndon, laluzlobo@gmail.com, 575/437-2555; or Elva Osterreich, echoofthedesert@yahoo.com, 575/443-4408; or Helgi Osterreich, hkasak@netmdc.com, 575/585-3315 or 443-3928. More info should be available by the beginning of each month.

Jan 23 Talk. Orchids of Kentucky. Ben Begley, chapter member. 11 a.m., Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 1010 16th Street, Alamogordo.

Feb 20 Field Trip. NMSU Herbarium. Meet 9 a.m. at the old Walmart at Hwys 54/70.

Mar 19 Field Trip. Three Rivers Petroglyph Site. Meet 10 a.m. at the "Y" in Tularosa. Bring hiking shoes, snacks, and water.

Santa Fe

Meetings are third Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. at Christ Lutheran Church, 1701 Arroyo Chamiso (in the triangle of Old Pecos Trail, St Michael's Dr., and Arroyo Chamiso; across street from fire station). For more information, contact Tom Antonio, tom@thomasantonio.org, 505/690-5105. Meetings and talks are free and open to all.

Jan 20 Meeting. Connections Between Native Plants/Caterpillars/Birds. Steve Cary, naturalist.

Feb 17 Meeting. Kathryn Kennedy, US Forest Service.

Mar 23 Meeting. TBA.

Taos

The Taos Chapter has entered its winter dormant state. We will awaken in the spring, with our first meeting the third week in March, and field trips/hikes will commence in April. For updates, please check the NPSNM website (www.npsnm.org/about/chapters/taos), our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/pages/Native-Plant-Society-New-Mexico-Taos-Chapter/453033774707876), or contact Jan at Taos-NPS@gmail.com or 575/751-0511.



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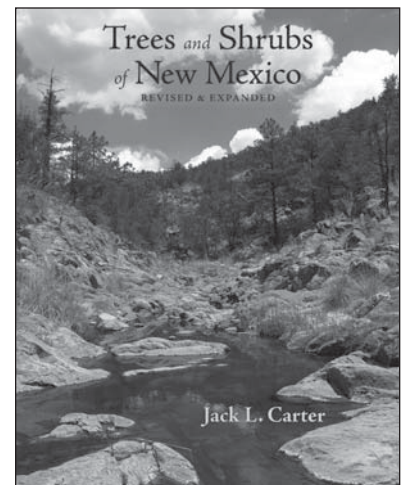
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The Fall Is NOT Just Golden . . .

by Carolyn Gressitt, Las Cruces Chapter President

The Las Cruces Chapter is looking forward to welcoming all native-plant lovers to the 2016 annual meeting, at which botanists and others will reveal the special secrets and diverse plant communities of the Organ Mountains–Desert Peaks National Monument, as well as the story of how this national monument came to be (featured in the April 2015 issue of *New Mexico Magazine*), through presentations by speakers from the different entities that worked together to make OM-DPNM a reality.

Here are some early-fall plants and vistas of this area.

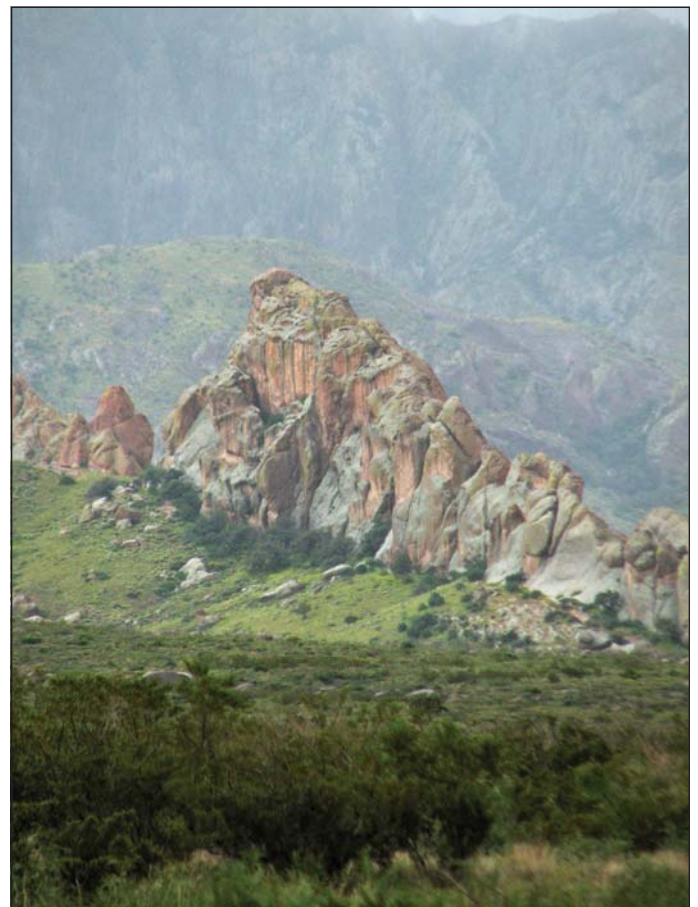




**Please join us in Las Cruces,
September 22–28, 2016!**



Facing page, clockwise from top right: Organ Mountains–Desert Peaks National Monument; *Palafoxia sphacelata* (sand palafoxia); rain, Mars Canyon area, Organ Mountains; *Cevallia sinuata* (stinging cevallia). This page, clockwise from top left: *Pomaria jamesii* (James' holdback); *Zinnia grandiflora* (wild zinnia); La Cueva in sunlit mist, near Dripping Springs; *Linum vernale* (Chihuahua flax); *Commelina erecta* (white-mouth dayflower). All photos by Carolyn Gressitt.



THANK YOU TO OUR MEMBER DONORS!

NPSNM Would Like to Thank . . .

. . . all members who have made monetary contributions above their regular dues. This long-overdue list, which covers December 1, 2012, through December 2, 2015, includes those who sent in extra contributions with their member-

ships. 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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NPSNM Would Also Like to Thank . . .

. . . all who have contributed to the Jack & Martha Carter Conservation Fund since June 2014. This fund, now in its second year, was created to assist the NPSNM in maintaining a balanced budget while continuing to increase the funds available for research and educational grants to individuals

and organizations. It is a long-term endowment fund that has the potential to provide considerably more funds in the future than are currently available. Every dollar is important and we deeply appreciate your participation.

Jack & Martha Carter Conservation Fund

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Judith Babka	Diane Harris	NPSNM Taos Chapter
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Lewis Grenier & Cheryl Price	Katie Northrup	Naida Zucker & Richard Spellenberg
	NPSNM Gila Chapter	

Farewell to Betsy

by *Claudia Bianca, Taos Chapter*

This past spring the Taos chapter of the NPSNM and the state organization lost a wonderful friend.

Betsy Robertson was a natural leader and enthusiast in all she did. She led the Taos chapter to high standards of action and did so in a gentle, loving, and generous way. She made the chapter a friendly place for people of all levels of interest. It was a place where we would gain knowledge. For example, she challenged us to use floras on the trail, to seek new ways of raising native plants, and to be proactive in adding native plant gardens around town. She was adept at welcoming newcomers to the Taos lecture series, finding ways for their talents to help the chapter's mission, and, in addition, attending to their social needs. Many members of the Taos NPS got started because of Betsy's inviting personality.

Betsy reflected her roots in the Bronx and the great Bronx institution, the New York Botanical Garden. She shared with that organization the mission of being an advocate for plant life and espousing the joy and acceptance of diversity and inclusiveness. She wanted everyone to rise beyond their initial level of understanding about plant life and add to their knowledge. In a subtle way she challenged us all to be curious about life and things surrounding us. She was successful in getting us to add the academic dimension to our interest in plants. She loved the simple joys of plants, but she went further and subtly urged us to delve deeper into science to understand the natural history and conservation aspects of the Taos chapter's mission. This urging was reflected in her leadership while hosting the chapter's two memorable annual meetings of 2001 and 2009. She made sure that business was conducted but had a special creative way of adding unforgettable social dimensions to the celebration.

Betsy was brilliant and had boundless energy. She approached the tasks of life with drive, curiosity, and creativity. She was known to excel in whatever task she undertook, including her professional career, home building, kitchen artistry, community service, and writing. Betsy made friends throughout NPSNM. She tapped experts from across the state to enrich the Taos lectures and programs and in return was active in serving in statewide leadership and activities.

Serving as president of the Taos chapter, Betsy found that "creating money for the chapter" was her greatest challenge, yet she succeeded in helping make the chapter financially viable. The first state meeting in Taos was hosted while she was president and was a rousing success. She also served as treasurer on our board for many years to follow. Her greatest accomplishment was establishing the Taos greenhouse. She was never afraid to take on a new project, spending much time working on garden design and installations, including the Millicent Rogers Museum, San Geronimo Lodge, Brodsky's demonstration garden downtown, our evolving greenhouse, propagation projects, and annual plant sales. She was always ready and able with great ideas and enthusiasm.

She is survived by Steve Robertson, who served as state treasurer for four years. Betsy will be greatly missed. We cannot forget her or how she touched our lives with joy. ❖



Steve and Betsy Robertson

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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. 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 (contact information listed on page 4).



New Mexico wildflower posters: \$8 (nonmembers, \$10)
Cactus poster: \$5 (nonmembers, \$8)

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- Albuquerque
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- Gila (Silver City)
- Las Cruces
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- Santa Fe
- Taos
- No affiliation
- I am interested in forming a new chapter in:*

Annual Dues:

<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$ 30
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6TH

Natural History of the Gila Symposium

February 25–27, 2016

on the campus of Western New Mexico University, Silver City

The Gila region is recognized as a unique and dynamic landscape, and the waterways, forests, and wildlife that come together to form this region are the subject of the upcoming Natural History of the Gila Symposium. Come join us on the campus of WNMU at the Besse-Forward Global Resource Center, Silver City, NM—Thursday, February 25 (1:00–5:00 p.m. and 7:00–9:00 p.m.) and Friday, February 26 (9:00 a.m.–noon and 1:00–5:00 p.m.). The public is encouraged to attend any or all of the symposium sessions free of charge. Optional field trips highlighting the local flora and fauna will be held Saturday morning, February 27.

FOR MORE INFORMATION <http://www.gilasymposium.org>

CONTACT US NaturalHistoryGilaSymposium@gmail.com or norrisw@wnmu.edu