

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY MARIN CHAPTER



March 2024 Newsletter

Marin Chapter Meeting

“2023 Floral Highlights from California and Beyond - Images by CNPS Members”

Guest Speakers: **Betsey Crawford, Madeline Kellner, Doreen & Vernon Smith, Dana Swisher, and Suzanne Weakley**

Monday, March 11 @ 7:30 pm

Our presenters will share their best recent photos - Betsey, Suzanne, and Vernon have images of native species from Marin and other locations in California. Madeline will show us floral delights from her travels in California, Guatemala, Ecuador, Peru and Costa Rica. Dana will show us some highlights of Monarch butterflies in Mexico.

As a landscape designer and environmental activist, Betsey Crawford devoted her efforts to planting native plants and restoring ecosystems. Now retired and living in a town named with a wildflower, she shares her passion for nature with photos and essays about wildflowers, ecology, botany, spirit, and all things nature on her website, The Soul of the Earth: <https://thesouloftheearth.com>.

Madeline Kellner: Native plant enthusiast, community developer, avid traveler

Doreen and Vernon Smith are long-time members of the Marin Chapter of the CNPS. Doreen served for many years as Rare Plant Chair for the Chapter and gained an encyclopedic knowledge of where the native plants grow, and when they flower. Her botanical expertise helped Vernon find and photograph most of Marin’s native species.



© Betsey Crawford

Mountain coyote mint (*Monardella odoratissima*) hosts a wild forget me not moth (*Gnophaela latipennis*) Lower Carpenter Valley, Truckee, California

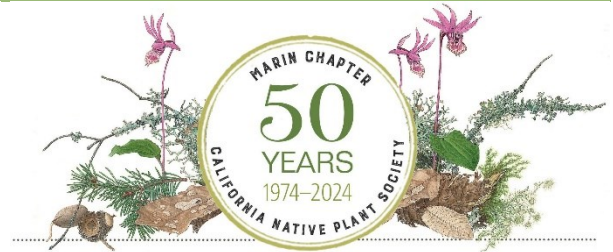
Dana Swisher is a teacher and the garden director at Neil Cummins Elementary School. She is also the founder and director of Refugia Marin, a nonprofit devoted to fostering environmental stewardship. Dana just returned from a trip with Wendy Caldwell, executive director of Monarch Joint Venture that is working to preserve the eastern monarch migratory population.

Suzanne Weakley is a San Francisco native who grew up on a ranch in Sonoma County, where she learned to love California wildflowers at an early age. Currently, she is one of the volunteer photo editors for Calflora.

[Register for this Zoom meeting here.](#)

Marin Chapter Turns 50

During 2024, we will be celebrating 50 years of native plant conservation and appreciation. Special articles and activities will mark the occasion. Save the date for our celebration August 24, 2024.



50 Acts of Caring

This year, we are inviting everyone to think about the wider effects of choices we make on our property. People still think of land as a resource for human use, not as a home for thousands of other living things. Can we make room for lichens, lace wings, bunchgrasses, and bluebirds, too? It doesn't require sacrifice, only awareness. It isn't difficult or expensive.

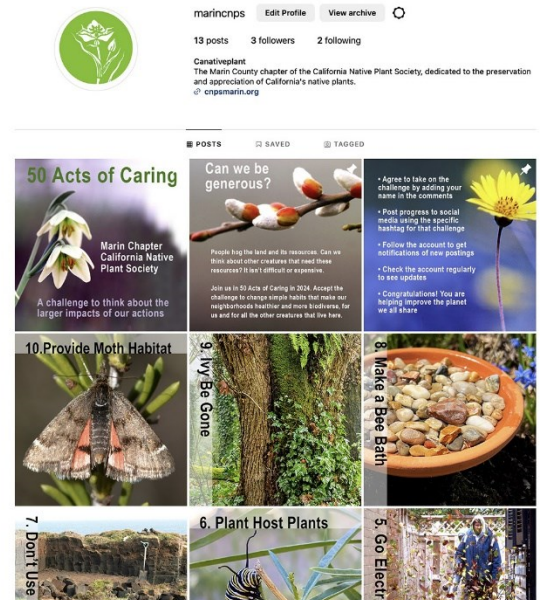


Join us in 50 Acts of Caring, a challenge we are running on our Instagram page [#marincnps](#). You don't have to have an Instagram account to view the site, but you'll need one to participate.

To access Instagram on the web, go to the address bar in the browser, then enter <http://instagram.com/marincnps>.

- Agree to take on the challenge by adding a comment
- Post progress to social media using the specific hashtag for that challenge
- Follow the account to get notifications of new postings
- Check the account regularly to see updates.
- You don't have to have an Instagram account to view the site, but you'll need one to participate.

Thanks for helping us improve our neighborhoods, one act of caring at a time. *****



On your mark, get set ...

50 Plants Challenge starts March 1!

Find and photo-document with [iNaturalist](#) 50 native plants in Marin's glorious wildlands. Join our field trips as we search for some of these [plants](#).

[Read more. . .](#)

[Marin CNPS 50th Anniversary Marin Native Plant Challenge List](#)

The Road to Ring Mountain

Kristin Jakob and Laura Lovett

Tiburon's Ring Mountain is now known to be a rare biological island, home to several rare plants including one species unique to that site. However, it went through some rough times before it was preserved for the public to enjoy. Upon its founding in 1974, CNPS Marin Chapter became active participants in the campaign to save Ring Mountain. Its significant role in the story of the Preserve includes early and continuing advocacy, a long history of educational outings, and the compilation and maintenance of a plant species checklist. Last year, in conjunction with Marin County Parks, it established the Ring Mountain Wildflower Docent Program to help visitors learn about this unique site.

Tiburon Mariposa Lily, a Rare Endemic

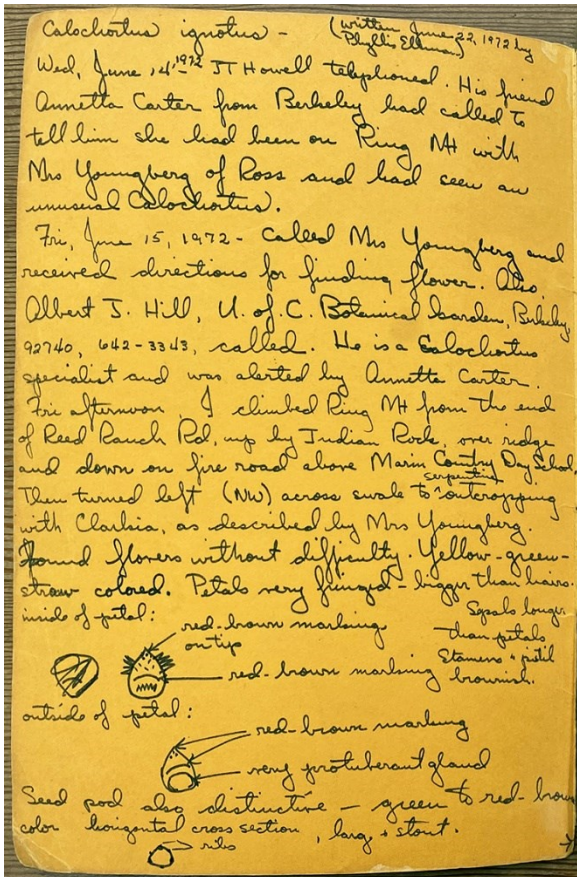
Ring Mountain is probably best known for the Tiburon mariposa lily, *Calochortus tiburonensis*, whose entire population is restricted to the serpentine rock outcrops in the grasslands of the Preserve's upper slopes. Its existence was brought to scientific light by Chapter member and amateur botanist Dr. Robert (Bob) West. Bob, a regular leader of plant and mushroom field trips for the Marin Chapter, resided in Corte Madera near the northern foot of Ring Mountain. In June of 1971, he observed and photographed a lily he didn't recognize while hiking on the ridge. The cryptic coloration of the flowers and foliage matches the tones of the drying grasses among which it grows, effectively camouflaging the plant and delaying its discovery. Bob showed his photos of the lily to Florence Youngberg of Ross, who in turn showed them to Annetta Carter, a Research Associate at the University of California Herbarium in Berkeley, who then brought them to the attention of Albert Hill at the UC Berkeley Botanic Garden. Albert had a special interest in the genus *Calochortus* and in 1973 proceeded to describe and name the new species in Vol. 22 of *Madroño*, the quarterly journal of The California Botanical Society.



Rhododendron columbianum -Labrador tea
Photo by Suzanne Weakley



Ring Mountain Photo by Laura Lovett



Notes written on 22 June 1972 by Phyllis Ellman

Serpentine and Other Habitats

The mountain is home to several other rare plant species: serpentine reedgrass (*Calamagrostis ophitidis*), Oakland star tulip (*Calochortus umbellatus*), marsh star tulip (*Calochortus uniflorus*), Tiburon paintbrush (*Castilleja affinis* ssp. *neglecta*), Tiburon buckwheat (*Eriogonum luteolum* var. *caninum*), Marin dwarf flax (*Hesperolinon congestum*), and marsh zigadene (*Toxicoscordion fontanum*). These and several other plants found on Ring Mountain are considered serpentine endemics, having been found (at least to date) only growing in soil derived from serpentine rock. This soil type is high in minerals such as chromium and nickel that are generally toxic to plants, and low in primary plant nutrients. The soil is commonly waterlogged in winter and very dry in summer except along watercourses. These conditions favor adapted native plants and are inhospitable to most invasive introduced species, so this habitat can reward visitors with spectacular floral displays and great botanical interest.

Serpentine grasslands cover nearly fifty percent of Ring Mountain's acreage, with nonnative grasslands dominating the lower slopes with deeper soils. There are also patches of mixed evergreen forest, areas of coyote brush scrub, along with seeps and freshwater marshes that support moisture-loving species. This diversity of habitats provides for a particularly rich array of plants.

From Grazing to Preservation

The land we now know as Ring Mountain Preserve was originally part of an 8,000-acre land grant called Rancho Corte Madera del Presidio, deeded to Irish immigrant John Reed in 1834. The Reed family and descendants owned much of Tiburon Ridge and used it for grazing up until the 1900s, when development was started on the lower slopes.

In the 1940s, the US Army took over the property, bulldozed large terraces out of the slopes, and pushed serpentine soil to places it wasn't before. In the 1950s, the highest part of the mountain served as the location for a large 16-inch gun installation. Some of this damage was repaired and bunkers were removed when the Army left, but the terracing and red chert (brought in for drainage) platforms remain.

In the 1960s, Thomas Deffebach, descendent of the original land-grant family, sold 427 acres along the top of the ridge to developers Ring Mountain Ltd. The move to build on the remaining portion of this rare habitat galvanized Marin County's conservation organizations to campaign to preserve it.

Marin Chapter member and Tiburon resident Phyllis Ellman served on a newly-formed Ring Mountain Advisory Committee to review development plans put forward. Phyllis was a tireless advocate for protection of this property. She led untold field trips on the mountain to show others the location's unique flora, encouraging them to support the campaign to preserve it.



Phyllis Ellman standing by the trail marker

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) entered the picture in 1980 when they launched a campaign called California Critical Areas Program, a push to evaluate and identify eleven sites around California that represented optimal examples of particular habitats and worthy of preservation. Ring Mountain was chosen as a unique example of serpentine grassland. TNC initiated negotiations with the developers to purchase some or all of the unbuilt portion. The first parcel purchased was the 74-acre strip that runs from Paradise Drive to the top of the mountain. The developers concluded that it was unstable enough as to be unbuildable and sold it to TNC for \$400,000.

In need of funding for their development plans, Ring Mountain Ltd. received a loan from The Nature Conservancy; in exchange for five years of interest TNC took title to another 42 acres at the top of the mountain. TNC specifically chose the area where the Tiburon Mariposa lily grows. As part of the deal, TNC obtained management authority over the remaining 311 acres for the next five years.

Ring Mountain Ltd. got approval to build 50 houses on 64 acres in pockets adjacent to existing development, then tried to sell the land and development approval to a bank which would not accept it with the TNC management lease attached. Ring Mountain Ltd. promptly gave all but 50 acres to TNC to clear the title, adding 261 acres to the total acreage that became Ring Mountain Preserve. Because of potential damage from earlier landslides, TNC left the responsibility to remediate the unstable sections with Ring Mountain Ltd. but put up the \$450,000 required to do the work. CNPS Marin Chapter contributed \$4,400, donated by our members to our Ring Mountain Fund.

This beautiful and singular property had been torn up by motorcyclists and dirt bikers over many years, leaving deep scars. In addition, it had been used as an illegal dumping site. TNC biologist Lynn Lozier was made preserve manager. Together with community volunteers, she started the work of putting up fencing and gates and removing and repairing the damage. Twenty-eight truckloads of trash were hauled away from the east side alone.

Ring Mountain Preserve was dedicated on April 23, 1983. The Nature Conservancy named the main trail for Phyllis Ellman in recognition of her tireless work to help secure the land for conservation and public use. On November 13, 1995, The Nature Conservancy transferred ownership to the newly-formed Marin County Open Space District, which presently maintains this gem.

Consider joining CNPS Marin Chapter in preserving Ring Mountain by participating in the [Ring Mountain Wildflower Docent Program](#).

2024-2025 Howard-Kohn Scholarships

This year, one Howard-Kohn scholarship for the amount of \$3000 will be available for a student doing research on plant systematics, plant ecology, plant physiology, plant community restoration or other related botanical studies of native plants that grow in habitats in Marin County or other local habitats in Central and Northern California. Students researching topics related to native plant and native habitat conservation are especially encouraged to apply. The Marin Chapter of the California Native Plant Society is pleased to offer scholarships to students doing research on plant systematics, plant ecology, plant physiology, plant community restoration or other related botanical studies of native plants that grow in habitats in Marin County or other local habitats in Central and Northern California. Students researching topics related to native plant and native habitat conservation are especially encouraged to apply.

This year, one Howard-Kohn scholarship for the amount of \$3000 will be available. Evaluation of student applications will focus on the stated purpose of the research, research plan, and overall impression of the research project. Extra consideration will be given to proposals for work on one or more species that grow in Marin County, work to be carried out in Marin County, and work having special potential for improving conservation of California native plants or educating the public about them.

Additional smaller scholarships may also become available throughout the year; please continue to check the website for details.

[More Details and Application Form](#)

Documents may be submitted electronically to the CNPS Marin Scholarship Committee at marincnpsgrants@gmail.com.

2023 Howard-Kohn Scholarships – awarded

During 2023, two scholarships were awarded. Maria Velasquez received a scholarship for work titled “Does community assembly determine restoration success and persistence of remnant kelp forests? Miranda Melen received a scholarship for work titled “Seedbank and germination behavior of an invading member of the Asteraeae, *Dittrichia graveolens*.” We wish our recipients all the best in their research

Application Deadline: **Sunday, March 31, 2024.**



Miranda Melen prepares a field site for a competition experiment.

Photo by Emma Snyder

Marin Chapter Field Trips

New Signup Process

- Field trip registration will be handled in online or with the . Sign ups to Meetup are free for participants using your Google, Apple, or Facebook account or by using an email address. [Meetup app](#)
- You must also electronically sign the CNPS waiver with WaiverSign. **New!** You only need to sign the waiver for Marin CNPS events once in 2024. [2024 Marin CNPS WaiverSign Link](#)
- We limit the number of participants for each field trip. Please only sign up if you plan to attend.
- Contact the leader(s) with any questions.

King Mountain Loop, Kentfield

Thursday, **March 7, 2024** - 12:30 to 4:30 pm

Leaders: **Betsey Crawford & Ann Elliott**

The two-mile King Mountain loop contains multitudes: redwood forest, bay forest, oak canopy, California buckeye, a variety of woodland shrubs, views of Mount Tam and Baltimore Canyon, and even some patches of chapparal. Among the flowers I've seen in March are hounds tongue (*Cynoglossum grande*), common pacific pea (*Lathyrus vestitus*), death camas (*Toxicoscordion fremontii*), blue dicks (*Dipterostemon capitatum*), mission bells (*Fritillaria affinis*), *Iris douglasiana*, milk maids (*Cardamine californica*), monkey flower (*Diplacus aurantiacus*), morning glory (*Calystegia macrostegia*), drops of gold (*Prosartes hookeri*).

[Read more . . .](#)

[Meetup Registration Link](#)

Rock Spring Calypso Orchid Hunt, and More!

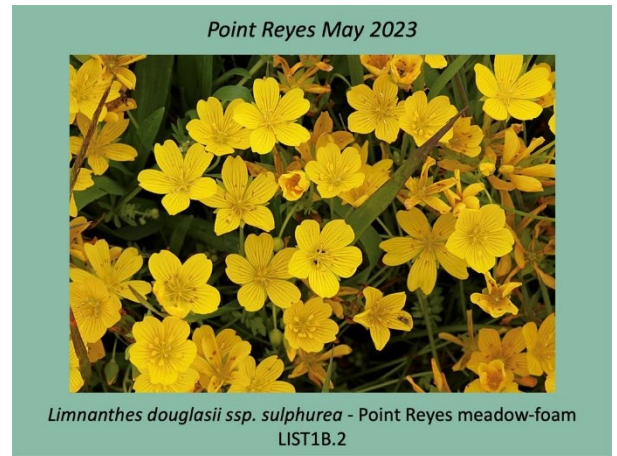
Sunday, **March 10, 2024** - 10:30 am to 2 pm

Leaders: **Kristin Jakob & Renee Fittinghoff**

Join Kristin and Renee to search through the Douglas fir forest looking for the fairy slipper orchid, *Calypso bulbosa*. The group will explore the trails around the upper Rock Spring meadow, enjoy a picnic lunch around noon, then head down the Cataract Trail as far as participants wish to hike, enjoying other early wildflowers and a diverse array of ferns.

[Read more . . .](#)

[Meetup Registration Link](#)



Fritillaria affinis - mission bells
Photo by Betsey Crawford



Calypso bulbosa - Calypso orchid on Mt Tam
watercolor on vellum by Kristin Jakob

Lower Steep Ravine and Rocky Point

Sunday, **March 17, 2024** - 10 am to 2 pm

Leaders: **Ann & Woody Elliott**

Lower Steep Ravine trail and the Rocky Point loop down to the Steep Ravine cabins can be quite incredible in March. To the east of Route 1 is a botanically rich riparian habitat that is the home to *Trillium chloropetalum* (giant wake-robin), both species of *Mianthemum* (Solomon seal), *Fritillaria affinis* (mission bells) and *Disporum smithii* (Smith's fairy bells).

Then we will backtrack and cross Route 1 and descend down the Rocky Point paved road through the "soft chaparral" to lunch overlooking the ocean, passing such colorful gems as *Lasthenia californica* (goldfields), *Layia platyglossa* (tidytips), *Castilleja subinclusa* ssp. *franciscana* (Franciscan Indian paintbrush), and, if we are really lucky, we will get to smell the heavenly scent of the rare (for Marin) yellow *Erysimum franciscanum* (wallflower).

[Read more...](#)

[Meetup Registration Link](#)

Indian Tree Open Space Preserve, Novato

Saturday, **March 23, 2024** 10 am to 3 pm

Leader: **Ann & Woody Elliott**

Ascend the nicely graded Big Trees Trail through hillsides of ferns and wildflowers, and new stands of redwoods and mature woodlands that open up to scenic views of Stafford Lake. We hope to catch some of the early flowers on the 50th Anniversary Challenge list: shooting stars (*Primula hendersonii*), checker lily (*Fritillaria affinis*), and warrior plumes (*Pedicularis densiflora*).

[Read more...](#)

[Meetup Registration Link](#)

Chimney Rock, Point Reyes National Seashore

Wednesday, **March 27, 2024** 10 am to 2 pm

Leader: **Ann & Woody Elliott**

Chimney Rock is a spectacular walk year-round. During this mid-spring visit we hope to find some of the flowers on the 50th Anniversary Challenge list: Wight's paintbrush (*Castilleja wightii*), goldfields (*Lasthenia californica*), tidytips (*Layia platyglossa*), suncups (*Taraxia ovata*), and more. We will see some elephant pups before they take off to deeper ocean and maybe the beginning of the pacific gray whale northward migration.

[Read more...](#)

[Meetup Registration Link](#)



Trillium chloropetalum - giant trillium
Steep Ravine photo by Woody Elliott



Pedicularis densiflora - Warrior's plume
Indian Tree OSP Photo by Ann Elliott



Castilleja wightii - Wight's paintbrush
Chimney Rock, Pt. Reyes by Ann Elliott

Hoo-Koo-E-Koo Trail, Kentfield

Wednesday, April 3, 2024 - 12:30 to 4:30 pm

Leaders: **Betsey Crawford & Ann Elliott**

This afternoon stroll is less than 3 miles out and back, depending on how far we decide to go. The walk alternates between forest and chaparral. HKEK trail is a wildflower gold mine and flowers we may see include iris, blue dicks, larkspur, buckwheat, mint, silene and others. There are always manzanita, huckleberry, ferns, buckeye, and chinquapins.

[Read more . . .](#)

[Meetup Registration Link](#)



© Betsey Crawford

Lathyrus vestitus - common Pacific pea
By Betsey Crawford

Do you love Ring Mountain?

Training for the Ring Mountain Docent Program begins in March. Share your love of Ring Mountain's unique ecology, wildflowers, and unusual serpentine grassland habitat with the general public, while also fostering stewardship of this Marin landmark.

[Read more. . .](#)

Sign up sign up with Amanda Magallanes Amanda.Magallanes@marincounty.gov.



Layia platyglossa - Tidy Tips and poppies
Ring Mountain Photo by Laura Lovett

Spring 2024 CNPS Marin Chapter Native Plant Sale

It's still planting time! We are holding an online plant sale in early April with order pickup in Greenbrae the following Saturday.

Plants we will be offering include a variety of perennials and flowering shrubs, along with some choice annuals, all of which contribute habitat value to your gardens. We plan to post a partial species list on our website a couple of weeks before the sale.

Online Plant Sale *Opens*: **Thursday April 4 at 6 pm**
Online Plant Sale *Closes*: **Monday April 8 at 6 pm**
Order *Pickup* at Bon Air: **Saturday April 13, 10:30 am to 1 pm**

[Read more. . .](#)



Penstemon heterophyllus, Sidalcea malviflora, and Allium unifolium in Bay Model garden - Kristin Jakob

Earth Day Event April 21 in Mill Valley

Save the Date! On Sunday, April 21, CNPS Marin will join the Marin Master Gardeners and other nonprofit organizations for an environmentally focused day at the Mill Valley Community Center. From 11 am to 2 pm Marin Chapter will have a table offering information about our mission, activities, and native plant gardening. We will also be selling plants, books, and posters. Free admission.



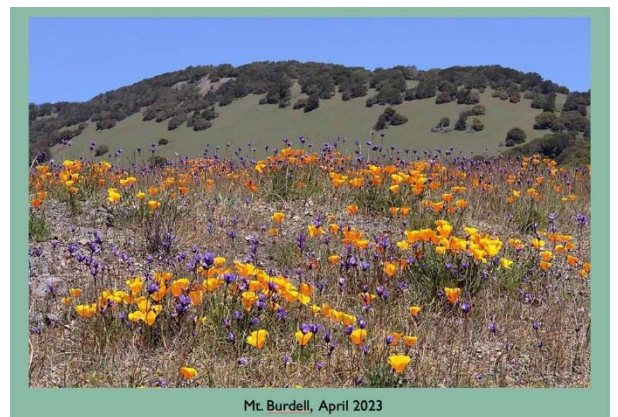
[Read more...](#)

Upcoming [Marin Chapter Events](#)

- 3/7 12:30 - 4:30 pm [Field Trip: King Mt.](#)
- 3/10 10 am - 2 pm [Field Trip: Rock Spring Calypso Orchid Hunt](#)
- 3/11 7:30 pm Chapter Meeting: "[2023 Floral Highlights](#)" Zoom talk
- 3/17 10 am - 2 pm [Field Trip: Steep Ravine](#)
- 3/23 10 am - 3 pm [Field Trip: Indian Tree OSP](#)
- 3/27 10 am - 2 pm [Field Trip: Chimney Rock](#)
- 4/3 12:30 - 4:30 pm [Field Trip: Hoo-Koo-E-Koo](#)
- 4/4 6 pm [Online Plant Sale Opens](#)
- 4/8 6 pm [Online Plant Sale Closes](#)
- 4/13 10:30 am - 1 pm [Plant Sale Pickup - Bonair](#)
- 4/14 10 am - 2 pm Field Trip: Bowman Canyon
- 4/29 10 am - 2 pm Field Trip: Mitchell Canyon, Mt. Diablo
- 8/24 CNPS Marin 50th Anniversary Event



Epidendrum sp
Guatemala
Photo by Madeline Kellner



Mt. Burdell, April 2023

Other Activities in Marin and Nearby

- **3/1 to 3/3** CNPS Chapter Council in Rancho Palos Verdes [Zoom Registration Agenda coming soon.](#)
- **3/2 7 pm** [Pollination, Seeds, and Fruits](#) Zoom talk by: J.R. Blair for Friends of San Pedro Valley Park
- **3/7 5:30 pm** [CNPS Naturehood Webinar](#): Surviving Storms: Tips for Native Trees
- **3/12 7:30 pm** [Ring Mt. Wildflower Docent Online Training](#)
- **3/14 7:30 pm** [The building blocks to resilience of California's grasslands to fire and drought](#), Zoom talk by Valerie Eviner, Yerba Buena Chapter CNPS
- **3/17, April 14,21,28** [Kite Hill Wildflower Preserve workshops](#)

Be sure to periodically check [CNPS.org/events](https://www.cnps.org/events) for interesting talks and field trips sponsored by CNPS Chapters and staff throughout the state.

Below is a list of links to listings for Field Trips in nearby CNPS Chapters.

- [Milo Baker](#)
- [Napa Valley Chapter](#)
- [Yerba Buena Chapter](#)
- [East Bay Chapter](#)
- [Santa Clara Valley Chapter](#)

Also check the [Events Calendar for Marin County Parks](#). They host a variety of local hikes, service projects, and presentations.



Calochortus venustus - butterfly mariposa lily
Photo by Suzanne Weakley



Aristolochia sp
Guatemala
Photo by Madeline Kellner

Newsletter Submissions

Consider sending me images of your favorite or almost favorite plants as we progress through the wildflower season.

I also accept poetry, stories, or articles of interest to our readers.

Ann Elliott, Newsletter Editor annonfire@gmail.com



Snowdrop bush (*Styrax redivivus*) private native plant garden

Join/Renew

Donate

Subscribe

Privacy



Marin Chapter
California Native Plant Society

[CNPS Marin Chapter Website](#)



CALIFORNIA
NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

[CNPS Statewide Website](#)