San Diego County has been the home for a number of very large native trees. The National Register of Big Trees\(^1\) lists three trees from San Diego County as representing the largest of their species: Coulter pine, Engelmann oak and Tecate cypress. A number of other trees in the County were very large for their species and downright huge, even though they may not be the largest of their kind. Unfortunately, a series of events in the last decade has resulted in significant losses of large trees in this county.

The world’s largest Coulter pine (*Pinus coulteri*), with a diameter of 5.9 feet and a height of 141 feet, is listed as occurring in Julian. That is very large for a tree that is semi-serotinous, meaning that the cones open and release seeds following fires, in this case, bright red seeds.

These trees near Julian and the southern part of Palomar Mountain were affected by drought and die offs in the late 1980s and early 2000s. These trees may survive small fires periodically over their life span, which may be hundreds of years in the case of a nearly 6-foot diameter tree, but during rare periods of major drought, the trees may begin to die. If a fire occurs then, the seeds will be released and if the following seasons are anything close to normal, they will germinate and reproduce. That has occurred to some degree in the Cuyamaca Mountains where they are the only conifer that has generated significant reproduction in some areas following the Cedar Fire of 2003. However, if the trees die and no fire occurs for a longer period of time, reproduction seems not to have occurred. That is the case in areas north of Volcan Mountain where remnant wood is all that remains of large conifers surrounded by chaparral species such as chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculata*) and several species of manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* spp.). Unfortunately, the largest Coulter pine died in the Cedar Fire.

Several other tree species have or had massive representations in San Diego County. I wrote about the largest Sugar pine (*Pinus lambertiana*) in the County in the Summer 2007 issue of Fremontia. Sugar pines that were 5.5 feet in diameter were 475 years old. Later, I found a Sugar pine stump in the San Bernardino Mountains that was 6 feet in diameter and 562 years old. A 9-foot diameter tree in the midst of several 6-foot diameter trees grew on Middle Cuyamaca Peak and it was killed by the Cedar Fire. I estimated that it would have been around 900 to 1,000 years old based on the other tree ages. At the time I wrote that article, one old Sugar pine survived the 2003 fire on Cuyamaca Peak and was more than 7 feet in diameter. Though its trunk was scorched, it initially lived through the fire, but died in 2009. (Continued on p. 6)

\(^{1}\)http://www.americanforests.org/bigtree
JULY BOARD MEETING REPORT

The Chapter board met on July 6, 2011 for its monthly meeting. The board voted unanimously to fund $200 for a two month trial test of Wells Fargo’s credit card service during September and October. **The service will allow the chapter to accept credit card payments for items sold by the chapter, including at the plant sale.** In a related matter, the board unanimously authorized the use of PayPal services through the PayPal website. Additional fees were approved by the board for credit card and PayPal services on a per transaction basis. Gardening Committee co-chair Dave Flietner tendered his resignation and the resignation was accepted. The board unanimously approved a $500 mini-grant for the Ocean Connectors Habitat Restoration Project to educate San Diego students to take community action to protect native plants and the environment.

~ Tom Beltran, Secretary

VEEP SPEAKS!

The business of conservation and promoting native plants is not without discussion and differing opinions. This occurs at all levels from the first actions that set aside habitats to actions that may ultimately take them away. It is clear from the standpoint of CNPS that the goal is to see land set aside rather than taken, but sometimes land is taken with a great amount of mitigation land that is set aside to compensate for the loss. The determination of whether or not such actions are beneficial for conservation is the heart of a conservationist’s decision making process. Next is the concept of what should be done to be sure that the conserved land is maintained so that the resources present are also protected. What type of access and trails should be allowed, how should the resources be maintained, and what level of effort should be made to remove weeds is another set of decisions which may involve differing opinions. Furthermore, the type of habitat that has been conserved must be considered when addressing the management and maintenance of an area. Then, of course, monitoring must be done in order to determine if the resources that were identified for protection are in fact able to exist in the numbers necessary for their continued viability. These are all issues and actions that may involve discussion with differing opinions.

There are many more issues that we deal with. The weeds that we have in San Diego County are pre-adapted to our landscape, soils and climate, and they do not need supplemental water. Plants that were used for drought tolerant landscaping that were not native to the area have ended up escaping from cultivation. Within the past few decades more than a few have spread in this manner, including the Garland daisy that was so successful this year. Should drought tolerant species be used if they are not native to the area? Even native plants are specialized to their specific location. Each population is genetically adapted to their current soils, elevation, slope and climate. Does moving plants even a few miles to be used in revegetation planning cause a concern for the genetic makeup of those that exist in the wild? More discussion may arise from these types of decisions.

Of course, all of this also becomes wrapped up into politics. Politics occurs at whatever level one operates, whether it is at the national level or the local level of government, or even the office or organization that one deals with every day.

Working for conservation is difficult and full of differences of opinion and discussion. It is something that we live with and something that we deal with every day. The best thing that we can do is become informed about our issues using as much information as possible, and make recommendations and decisions to the best of our abilities. That way we can feel comfortable with our stance on the various topics relating to our area of interest.

Growing up in San Diego, I relished anything that was written about our area from the CNPS Newsletters, the Audubon Society “Sketches”, and even SDG&E newsletters that spoke about local topics, such as whether or not there were ever Torrey Pines in Point Loma. The goal of any author in writing articles for the newsletter should be to provide information to assist in understanding the natural wonders of San Diego County and adjacent areas south of the border in a manner that is interesting and can assist in future discussions.

~ Tom Oberbauer, Vice President
Chapter Council Meeting in San Diego September 10-11 – Your Help Needed!
The CNPS Chapter Council meeting is coming to San Diego September 10-11, 2011. This meeting brings together delegates who represent the 33 CNPS chapters in California. The September meeting is especially interesting, as it is the CNPS Fall Conservation Symposium, and will be a great prelude to the January 2012 Conservation Conference, also to be held in San Diego at the Town and Country Hotel. All CNPS-SD members are invited to attend either Saturday’s Conservation Symposium, Saturday evening’s socializing hour followed by dinner and a great San Diego speaker, Sunday’s Council meeting, or all three! Registration details will be coming in August 2011.

CNPS San Diego Chapter, along with the Orange County and South Coast Chapters, are hosting the September meeting. Venue is the San Diego Natural History Museum for Saturday’s Conservation Symposium, and Room 104 at the Casa de Prado for Saturday dinner and the Sunday morning Council meeting.

I will be coordinating the event, but I can’t do it without you - my fellow CNPS-SD member! If you can help with one or more of these tasks, your time and talents will be so appreciated by our chapter and the state organization (and me)!

- Host a chapter council delegate in your home Friday and Saturday night (a great way to meet a fellow plant enthusiast and learn about their area of our state!)
- Help with dinner set up and/or clean up on Saturday night
- Provide decorations for Saturday’s dinner tables (lovely plant specimens from your garden are always appreciated)
- Provide an appetizer for the dinner socializing hour, and/or
- Help coordinate a Sunday afternoon field trip for out-of-town delegates not familiar with the diversity of our area

Please contact Marty Foltyn, CNPS Chapter Council Secretary, at marty@bitsprings.com or 619-992-2195 if you can help. Thank you so much!

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**State CNPS Needs Volunteers!**
It has come up recently that the State office could use more volunteer help to address the work overload in the administrative function and in the programs. The State CNPS has posted a list of summary descriptions for volunteer/intern needs for various projects and in state programs on our website at:  
http://www.cnps.org/cnps/support/volunteer-call.php

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**CNPS Conservation Conference UPDATE**
January 12-14, 2012
Town and Country Resort and Conference Center, San Diego

Find out the latest information about the conference by visiting www.cnps.org/2012

Call for abstracts ends August 4!

**Public Day:** The last day of the conference (Saturday, January 14) is free and open to the public. This is a terrific opportunity for CNPS members, the public, and CNPS oficianados to mingle and explore common issues. Thus far we are planning the following sessions:

- Horticultural workshop/panel discussion: maintenance of native plant gardens
- Native Plant Propagation Workshop
- Native Foods and Native Peoples
- Children in Nature Workshop
- Parenting in Nature Workshop
- Native Plants for Teachers Workshop
- Native Gardens for Schools Workshop
- Native Plants and Fire Management
- Native American/Native Plant Basket Weaving Demonstrations
- Native American Storytelling for Children and Adults

If you have additional topics to suggest, or would like to help bring these sessions to fruition, please contact David Varner at chaptercouncil@cnpssd.org or 619-630-4591.

**Fund Raising:** Any person, company, or organization that would like to sponsor, exhibit, or donate to the conference please email Josie at mailto:jcrawford@cnps.org.

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FIELD TRIPS

TECOLOTE CANYON
NATURAL PARK

August 7. 9:00 a.m.-noon.
Meet at the Tecolote Canyon Nature Center for a three hour stroll to learn some of the plant lore of Tecolote Canyon. From I-5, take the Sea World Drive/Tecolote Drive exit and go east. At the end of Tecolote Road, continue up the driveway, past the ballfields and rec center, to the Nature Center. Wear comfortable walking shoes and sun protection and bring water. Repeated the first Sunday of each month except holidays.

Members Only Field Trip

August 13 (Saturday). 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Efforts to Improve Mixed Conifer Forest Regeneration in Cuyamaca Rancho State Park.
California State Park reforestation expert Mike Wells will lead a trip to view several large sites in the 25,000 acre Cuyamaca Rancho State Park to observe and discuss the Park’s efforts to improve post-fire regeneration of the mixed conifer forests. You must RSVP to fieldtrips@cnpssd.org if you want to attend since the group must be small. When you RSVP, you will receive a map to the meeting place near Lake Cuyamaca. You will also receive links to several studies that form the conceptual basis for the Park’s efforts. You will get a lot more out of the field trip if you read these studies prior to going. Bring water, lunch, and sun protection; wear long pants and good hiking boots.

Three Park staff members are available to drive three off-road vehicles with a maximum of nine CNPS members. If a CNPS member has a 4WD with high clearance, an additional four members (or however many that vehicle could carry) could attend. We need a minimum of five attendees to have the trip. If you are not a member, you may join CNPS at the meeting point if you join CNPS at that time. Please bring the membership form (see www.cnpssd.org) and a check made out to CNPS at the appropriate level. Ride-sharing will be arranged if possible. Please state if you would like to meet others at 7:45 a.m. at either the Poway Park’n’Ride (Sabre Springs & Poway Rd, or the Park’n’Ride near El Cajon Severin/Fuerte’ I-8 exit.

The chances are small, but heavy rain and flash flood warnings on Saturday at 8 a.m. will cancel the trip.

CONSERVATION

Google Earth has given us a time machine, sort of. Some of you already know that you can view aerial photos from different years on Google Earth. If you have the program, I invite you to turn it on now, and check "Miramar Wholesale Nurseries," just off Governor Drive. There are images all the way back to 1994. Take a look.

Interesting, isn't it? That nursery has been growing steadily since 1994. This year the conservation committee got interested, because it looked to us like the nursery was bulldozing across vernal pools and a streambed as they expanded.

We assumed they had all the proper permits for these impacts, but we checked to make sure. The nursery leases that land from MCAS-Miramar, so we asked the Marines for the relevant environmental documents (EIR/EIS, etc) under the Freedom of Information Act.

The Marines don't have any of the documents we asked for. They also gave themselves a categorical exemption for the Nursery's lease, saying that lease didn't need any permits. The interesting part was that this categorical exemption was dated the date of our request, in 2011. This for a project that was already on site in 1994.

Fascinating, isn't it? Retroactive immunity.

Fortunately, I've heard rumors that some of the MCAS top brass (and their wives) think vernal pools are neat and worth conserving, so I'm quite sure that the Marines wouldn't paper over any loss of vernal pools. Really.

We're still investigating, of course, because the situation is unclear. Where are the permits? Who is regulating Miramar Nursery, the City of San Diego, or the Marines? We don't even know that yet. What does the lease allow? Did the nursery follow the law as it grew? We'll find out in the coming months, as our inquiry continues. At least one other environmental group is interested in the Nursery too.

The really neat thing about this episode is that we now have all these great online tools to do conservation work.

Anyone can use Google Earth to go back and see what used to be on a site. We used to need to buy aerial photos to do that, and they weren't cheap.
Anyone with a smart phone can take a picture of an environmental problem in progress, and send it to us with a question.

You can use these new tools to help us. Even if all these legalities make your stomach churn, you can still take pictures and send us emails. After all, if we don’t hear about a problem, there’s little we can do about it. So let us know what you see, whether you’re driving around enjoying the summer, or checking out old aerials on Google Earth.

Happy August!

~ Frank Landis, Conservation Committee

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**INVASIVE PLANTS**

**Cal-IPC's 20th Annual Symposium**

**Granlibakken Resort, Tahoe City**

**Invasive Plants and Ecological Change, October 5 - 7, 2011**

The San Diego Chapter has three attendance slots to the CalIPC Symposium. We are making those slots available to a deserving person in San Diego or Imperial County. The theme of this year's Symposium is Invasive Plants and Ecological Change. CalIPC has invited speakers to address the myriad types of human-influenced changes to the natural environment that impact invasive plant management, including changes in soils, fire, nitrogen deposition, and, of course, climate change. As it is CalIPC's twentieth symposium, they will also look back on how Cal-IPC and weed management has changed in the past two decades and examine prospects for the future. They will begin with a presentation from Carla D’Antonio of UC Santa Barbara, reprising her role as the keynote speaker from the very first Symposium. The student paper and poster contest will showcase the next generation of researchers. Finally, special exhibits will trace Cal-IPC's evolution and plans for the future.

This year the Pre-Symposium Field Course will occur on Tuesday, October 4, 2011. The Symposium will be held Wednesday and Thursday, October 5 & 6, 2011, and Field Trips will be held Friday, October 7, 2011.

You would still need to pay for transportation, lodging, meals, the field course and/or fieldtrips. CNPS-SD is accepting notes explaining why you would be a good person for CNPS to send to this year's symposium be it you are a State or City employee whose job involves weed control, you work or volunteer for a non-profit that conducts weed removal projects in an open space area, or you are a student interested in impacts of weeds on native plants. Please submit your request to the chapter by August 24 either by email to cindyburrascano@cox.net or by mail to CNPS c/o SDNHM, PO Box 121390, San Diego, CA, 92112. If mailing in a request, please confirm you have sent in a request by calling or emailing Cindy Burrascano (858-578-8040). Decisions on the three awardees will be made by August 31.


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**GARDENING AND RESTORATION**

**CNPS SD Fall Plant Sale**

**Saturday, October 15**

The plant sale committee is looking for volunteers to help organize and host this year's sale. No plant experience is necessary, but we need organized individuals with good communication and basic computer skills. Specific tasks are needed for our fall plant sale. The time commitment depends on your schedule. If you can help, please contact the Fall Plant Sale Committee at: plantsale@cnpssd.org.

~ Carolyn Martus, Fall Plant Sale Chair

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**Seed and Bulb Team work groups will meet at the Tecolote Nature Center to package seeds and bulbs for the Fall Plant Sale on:**

**Sunday, August 14, 2011 from 9-12**

To RSVP or get directions, please contact akahuie@gmail.com.

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**Gardening Committee**

**Now Planning the 2012 Garden Tour! Volunteer Opportunities!**

The Gardening Committee met on July 8th at the Cardiff library. The major topic was, of course, the upcoming 2012 Garden Tour. Twenty-five gardens! All over the county!

And we are looking for volunteers to recruit and train a group of docents for these gardens. If you would like to help find Gardening Enthusiasts or environmentally friendly people – especially younger members or people who have not been involved in activities yet –
please send an email to gardening@cnpssd.org and we will be in touch.

Once we have rounded up enough docents, we will do some really interesting and fun training - so stay tuned. Volunteers for that will be very welcome. We have a variety of other opportunities in other capacities, so let us know your interests and we’ll find a spot for you.

For info, contact Clayton Tschudy (858-774-7692; tschudyecodesigns@gmail.com) or Susan Krzywicki (619-318-4590; Susankrzywicki@mac.com). Please volunteer for this exciting opportunity and help us make the First Annual Native Plant Garden Tour in San Diego County a success!

~ Susan Krzywicki, Gardening Committee Chair

Garden Work Parties

Old Town State Park Native Garden: August 13 (Saturday), 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Midsummer Work Party at Old Town Native Plant Garden

Thanks to all who hauled rock (WHEW!!!) at the July work party. Those areas look neat and clean with the mulch!

The wetland in the Garden will have some weeding to do in August, but in mid-summer the rest of the Garden is a bit sleepy, it is siesta time for many plants, and even the weeds slow down usually so that makes our work easier. We can spend some time walking around and talking about the Garden's future, especially planning for the fall planting season.

The Garden is located at the corner of Taylor and Congress Streets, the far west end of the Old Town State Historic Park, right across from the MTS trolley/bus/train depot. If you come by MTS, cross at Taylor Street and you are there, under the trees. By car, free parking in the lot at Calhoun and Taylor. Drinking fountain and restroom are on site, but bring your own drinks if you prefer. Bring gloves and your favorite weeding tools, or borrow the chapter tools.

Bring sun protection and your favorite gloves and weeding tools, or dig weeds using the gloves and tools that we provide. The garden is located at the corner of Taylor and Congress Streets, across from the train/trolley/bus depot at the very west end of Old Town State Historic Park. Come by public transit, or if you drive, free parking is in the lot next to the garden at Calhoun and Taylor Streets. When you see the trees, you know you are almost there! Questions? Contact Kay Stewart at president@cnpssd.org.

The Nature School – Native Plant Garden Maintenance: August 13 and September 10 (Saturdays), 10 a.m. to noon. Meet behind the Rose Creek Cottage 2525 Garnet Ave in Pacific Beach. Park on Fogg Street just South of Garnet.

Join the Friends of Rose Creek on the Second Saturday of every month while we work on The Nature School’s native plant interpretive garden behind Rose Creek Cottage. Enjoy weeding, watering and planting native species and get involved with your creek and your community. We’ll have snacks and beverages. Easy one to two hour project, and great for children of all ages. Perfect for community service credit hours. Please wear sunscreen, closed-toe shoes, and a hat. Volunteers should bring water and heavy-duty work or gardening gloves. For more information contact Karin Zirk 858-405-7503 or kzkir@earthlink.net

The Native Plant Garden is part of the Rose Creek Wetlands & Salt Marsh Restoration and Nature Education Preserve project by The Nature Institute. New habitat restoration is supported by The Nature Institute and the City of San Diego Environmental Services Dept.

Point Loma Native Plant Garden: August 6 and 21, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. Rain cancels; bring water; no facilities; tools/supplies provided. Usually the first Saturday & third Sunday of each month. Contact Richard@sandiegoriver.org for more info.

(Last of the Big Trees, continued from page 1) An enormous Incense cedar (Calocedrus decurrens) survives in Palomar Mountain State Park. It is more than 7 feet in diameter and has the look of the Grizzly Giant sequoia in Yosemite. It has a large scar from past fires, a huge side branch above, and it leans slightly to the west. It is apparently referred to as Joaquin by the sixth grade camp counselors and is a popular hiking destination for children and adults.

Tom Oberbauer and the huge Incense cedar in Palomar State Park. Photo by Bobbie Stephenson.
Not far away in the Cleveland National Forest to the northwest of the park another huge incense cedar grew. It was 8 feet five inches in diameter and grew relatively straight but not especially tall. Until the Poomacha Fire in 2007, it apparently lived a storied life because for its first 200 years, it grew at a rapid rate with nearly quarter inch growth rings each year, slowing somewhat abruptly later to a significantly lower rate. It burned in the Poomacha Fire and was cut down, revealing an age of approximately 430 to 460 years, which is a great age for an Incense cedar. The oldest Incense cedar is listed as 542 years old in the Forest Service Silvics Manual.² The old tree in Palomar Mountain State Park could be expected to be in the same range of age as this, 430 to more than 500 years, or maybe even older considering its heavily grizzled appearance.

The largest Canyon live or Gold cup oak (Quercus chrysolepis) is 13 feet in diameter and found in Tulare County. A tree in Palomar Mountain State Park along the French Creek trail approached that in size. However, possibly because of being affected by the Poomacha Fire or simply age and a decaying core, it has fallen within the past year. In addition, a number of very large 4.5-foot diameter White fir (Abies concolor) died in the drought of the past 13 years. Unfortunately, the forests in San Diego County became too dense with young trees growing in the midst of old trees due to the exclusion of fire or other treatments that would remove too many small trees in the understory of the forest (Keeley et al. 2004³; Goforth and Minnich 2007⁴). On page 27, the Keeley et al. report describes how the density had increased and how younger trees became ladder fuels to change the fire from surface fires to crown fires.

Figure 15 in the Goforth and Minnich compared the forest density in Cuyamaca in 1995 to the density that was analyzed in 1928 and shows that forest density had doubled during that interval. When forests are overly dense during periods of water stress the trees all compete for the same limited water and they all suffer. If the tree density had been lower, there would not be as many trees drawing from the same water source and more of the larger trees may have survived.

There are other more encouraging big tree stories for San Diego County. The world’s largest Tecate cypress (Hesperocyparis forbesii) still grows on Guatay Mountain to a size of 3.6 feet in diameter. The world’s largest stand of cypress occurs on Otay Mountain, but nearly all of that mountain has burned in the last decade. The largest Engelmann oak (Quercus engelmannii) is more than 8 feet in diameter and is apparently still standing in the Julian area. Furthermore, huge Big cone Douglas fir (Pseudotsuga macrocarpa) grow in Palomar Mountain State Park on the lower parts of the north slope of Boucher Hill.

Finally, the world’s largest Torrey pine (Pinus torreyana), at 9.5 feet in diameter, is reported to be in Carpinteria near Santa Barbara. It was planted in the late 1800s. It is, to be sure, a very large tree, but not growing in a natural condition. While the ones in Torrey Pines State Park may not all be considered to be in a completely natural condition where they grow next to the road or the Torrey Pines Lodge, very large trees can be seen on the road up the hill into the upper parts of the park and on the edge of the Torrey Pines Lodge near the A.R. Valentien restaurant that was named for a botanical illustrator.

We are living in a time where a number of factors are culminating in major changes in our natural resources. The extended drought, combined with efforts to prevent fires of any kind, have adversely affected our region in a powerful manner. We must work to maintain the values that have existed here from times before European settlement.

If anyone knows of any really large trees in San Diego County or elsewhere in southern California, please send the information on their location to me at vicepresident@cnpssd.org.

~ Tom Oberbauer

CNPS-SD CALENDAR
AUGUST 2011
8/6: Point Loma Native Plant Garden (p.7)
8/7: Tecolote Canyon Public Walk (p.3)
8/13: Old Town Work Party (p.7)
8/14: Seed and Bulb Packaging (p.6)
8/21: Point Loma Native Garden Work Party (p.7)

CNPS-SD NEWSLETTER
The CNPS-SD Newsletter is now published 12 times a year. We are always looking for interesting articles and notices by CNPS members, so, please, share your stories and knowledge with other members. The newsletter is not peer reviewed and any opinions expressed are those of the author identified at the end of each notice or article. Submissions are due by the 10th of the month preceding the newsletter; that is, August 10 for the September newsletter, etc. Please send submittals to newsletter@cnpssd.org.
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

___Student or Limited Income $25; ___Individual $45; ___Family or Library $75
___Plant Lover $100; ___Patron $300; ___Benefactor $600; ___Mariposa Lily $1,500

Name(s): _______________________________________________________________

Address:   _______________________________________________________________

Phone:         ________________________ e-mail: ________________________________

Mail check payable to “CNPS” to: CNPS, 2707 K Street, Ste 1, Sacramento, CA 95816.

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
San Diego Chapter
C/o San Diego Natural History Museum
P. O. Box 121390
San Diego, CA  92112-1390

August 2011 Newsletter

Dedicated to the Preservation of the California Native Flora

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