



of the Southern California Botanists

VOLUME 39 • NUMBER 1 • JANUARY - APRIL 2026



IN THIS ISSUE

President's Message • 2026 Field Trips
2026 Workshop • 2025 Grant Winners
Treasurer's Report • Crossosoma: Call for Abstracts Board
Election Results • What's in bloom? • 2025 Field Trip Report

Photo credit:
Nina House



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello Southern California Botanists!

It's been an exciting start to the year across the rich world of southern California botany. For those who attended the CNPS conference—tell me you didn't walk away feeling a renewed sense of hope? In the midst of climate change, budget cuts, rising living costs, job uncertainty, and, dare I say... fake news, the message from CNPS Executive Director Jun Bando really hit home. Our hope for the future is being tested. My wish is that

SCB's work continues to fuel that hope through the dedication and contributions of our board members and their commitment to the SCB mission.

Onto other news... can you believe all of California has been drought-free since mid-January? With the warm, dry spell leading into mid-February, I'm curious to see how early snowmelt will shape this year's flora in our mountains and across the SoCal region. Either way, I hope you're as excited as we are about everything we have planned! We're working hard to bring you field trips throughout the region, workshops both new and familiar, and to lock in dates and venues for the annual SCB Symposium.

We're also trying something new—we'll be at the Clarkia Flower Festival at the UCLA Mathias Botanical Garden this year! More details coming soon. And if the wildflower outlook leans in our favor, we're hoping to host a Boraginaceae workshop in late March. You can read more about these upcoming events in this issue. With several SCB board

members stepping down, we're thrilled to welcome a new cohort, who you'll meet within these pages. I'm honored to serve as your SCB President for the next two years and to support a dedicated team of board members as we continue advancing the study and conservation of California's native plants and plant communities.

Cheers,
Diana Brand Ramirez



Hesperocallis undulata
Photo credit: Nina House

2026 FIELD TRIPS: SAVE THE DATES!

Los Angeles County – Neil Uleman, Palos Verdes Peninsula, March 14
Orange County – Fred Roberts (Joint CNPS trip) – Moulton Meadows, April 12
Riverside County – Scott White – San Jacinto and Santa Rosa Mountains, June 6
Santa Barbara County – Wayne Ferrin – UCSB North Campus Open Space Botanical Tour – July 12

Palos Verdes Peninsula Botanical Exploration, Los Angeles County

Neil Uelman

March 14th, 8:30 AM - 12:00 PM

The Palos Verdes Peninsula is situated on the southwestern edge of Los Angeles County and extends into the Pacific Ocean from the mainland. It is a mixture of suburban communities and open space. It is known for its scenic coastline, island history, and remnant patches of native plant communities, including coastal sage, willow riparian, back dune, coastal bluff scrub, grassland, and chaparral. Numerous native plant species call this unique area home, and some species of interest are *Crossosoma californicum* (California Rockflower), *Dudleya virens* subsp. *insularis* (Island Green Dudleya), *Erigeron palosverdensis* (Palos Verdes Daisy), *Lycium brevipes* subsp. *hassei* (Catalina Island Desert Thorn), *Ambrosia pumila* (Diego Ambrosia), *Leptosyne maritima* (Sea Dahlia), and *Piperia michaelii* (Michael's Piperia).

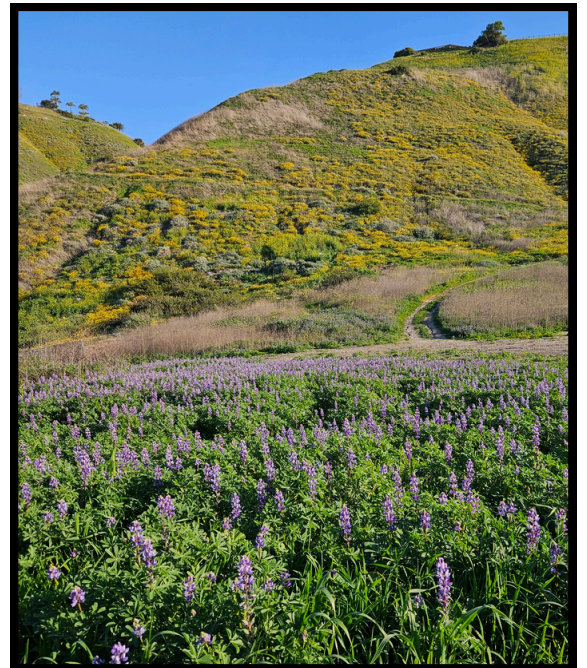


Photo credit: Neil Uelman

Botanical Exploration of Eslinger Ridge, Orange County

Fred Roberts

April 12th, 8:30 AM - 12:30 PM.



Rhamnus crocea
Photo credit: Ron Vanderhoff

Field trip in association with the Orange County CNPS chapter to the south end of Temple Hill, Laguna Beach. The trip will focus on Eslinger Ridge, a rocky ridge rising steeply some 800 feet between Aliso and Woods Canyon Wilderness Park and the Pacific Ocean. Eslinger Ridge hosts one of the higher diversities of rare plants in Orange County. The underlying rock is San Onofre Breccia and the vegetation is more typical of Diegan coastal sage scrub and southern maritime chaparral.

Among the plants seen will include species more typically seen in coastal San Diego County, including spiny red berry (*Rhamnus crocea*), bush rue (*Cneoridium dumosum*), San Diego chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum* subsp. *obtusifolium*), and summer holly (*Comarostaphylos diversifolia*).

San Jacinto and Santa Rosa Mountains Sky Islands, Riverside County

Scott White

Saturday, June 6, all day



Photo credit: Nina House

The San Jacinto and Santa Rosa mountains are sky islands at the northern end of the Peninsular Ranges. They separate the California Floristic Province from the Sonoran Desert. From west to east, they support chaparral, and montane and subalpine forests, and then transition steeply downslope to desert shrublands. Localized wetlands and edaphic habitats are scattered throughout. The highest peak, Mount San Jacinto, rises to 10,800 feet. On this field trip, we will visit the Desert Divide area, hiking the Cedar Springs Trail from the trailhead on Morris Ranch Road (ca. 5500 ft. elev.) to the junction with the Pacific Crest Trail (ca. 6800 ft.). We will hike up a wooded cismontane canyon, then take switchbacks up an open chaparral-covered slope, to a saddle on the ridgeline above the Coachella Valley. We'll explore the open quartzite areas around the trail junction and possibly head north or south on the PCT, depending on time and interest. There will be a lot of diversity, mostly of chaparral and desert transition species. Some highlights we should expect are *Allium monticola*, *Penstemon californicus*, and *Boechea johnstonii*.

UCSB North Campus Open Space Botanical Tour, Santa Barbara County

Wayne Ferren and CCBER Staff

July 12th, 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Join us for a guided exploration of the University of California Santa Barbara North Campus Open Space (NCOS) and adjacent natural areas, including Coal Oil Point Reserve, Devereux Slough, and Ellwood Mesa. Managed by the Cheadle Center for Biodiversity and Ecological Restoration (CCBER) at University of California, Santa Barbara, this landscape showcases the restoration of upper Devereux Slough and the successful translocation of rare and endangered species such as salt marsh bird's beak (*Chloropyron maritimum* subsp. *maritimum*) and Ventura marsh milk-vetch (*Astragalus pycnostachyus* var. *lanosissimus*).

Please bring appropriate footwear, water, and sun protection. Meeting location details will be provided prior to the trip. Public Parking for NCOS is located just west of the intersection of Storke and Whittier roads, south of the Storke Road exit off Rt.101, in Goleta.



Chloropyron maritimum subsp. *maritimum*
Photo credit: Chris Winchell

2026 WORKSHOP: THE CURIOUS & CHARISMATIC CACTI OF CALIFORNIA



When: Friday, Apr 3 at 5 pm to Sunday, Apr 5 at 2 pm

Description: Cacti are a vitally important component of our California desert biomes, comprising approximately 38 species in 12 genera. In this field-based workshop, we will have the opportunity to see more than a third of California's cactus species in and around the spectacular Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. We will meet at 5PM Friday, April 3rd at the Hampton Inn in El Centro for a pizza dinner and lecture introducing the cactus family and the major groups of cacti in California. Saturday we will carpool into central Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and spend the day making multiple stops on our way back south to get to know the cacti of the park in habitat. Participants can either camp or return to El Centro Saturday evening. Sunday morning, we will head west towards San Diego, making two stops along the way to meet a few higher elevation cacti. All hikes will be less than 1.5 miles round-trip over easy to moderate terrain. It is recommended that participants plan to stay in El Centro Friday night. A pizza dinner will be provided Friday night. Attendees must provide their own sack lunches for Saturday and Sunday. A group dinner may be planned on Saturday night for those staying in El Centro. Further details and workshop materials will be sent to registrants prior to the workshop.

Additional workshop details and logistics can be found on the Eventbrite page. See QR code above or: <https://tinyurl.com/2azhmchr>

Instructor Bio: Michelle Cloud-Hughes is a semi-retired desert botanist and restoration ecologist with nearly 30 years of fieldwork experience. She has worked on numerous rare plant surveys and other botanical and restoration projects throughout the southwestern U.S. and Mexico. She is an authority on the genus *Cylindropuntia* (chollas). Her research focuses mainly on the evolutionary relationships within the cholla tribe, with occasional detours into other cactus genera.

SCB GRANT WINNERS 2025

The Southern California Botanists Grant Program attracted six proposals in 2025. This year's recipients are:

The Jessica Mae Orozco Diversity Grant:

Marife Auccapoma, California Botanic Garden and Claremont Graduate University. Diversification and Endemism in *Zeltnera* (Gentianaceae): Phylogenomic and Morphological Perspectives on a Cryptic Pan-American Lineage.

The goal of this project is to provide a phylogenetic framework that clarifies how evolutionary processes such as polyploidy, hybridization, and ecological specialization contribute to ecological divergence in *Zeltnera*. Additionally, the project will clarify the current taxonomy and will possibly reveal new species, adding to the five *Zeltnera* presently identified in Southern California.



Zeltnera venusta
Photo credit: Bonnie Nickel

The Alan Romsper Grant in Desert Botany for Field Research:

Felix Ramirez Rodate, California State University Fullerton. Genetic and Environmental Drivers of Xylem Form and Function in Polyploid *Larrea Tridentata*.

This project aims to understand how ploidy shapes hydraulic anatomy and functional divergence in *Larrea tridentata*, contribution to our understanding of adaptive evolution in desert ecosystems and informing restoration and seedbank strategies under changing conditions.



Larrea tridentata
Photo credit: Steve Matson

The Gary Wallace Conservation Grant for 2025:

Ava Joseph, California Botanic Garden and Claremont Graduate University. Alpine Origins and Evolution In A Mega-Genus: A Systematic and Biogeographical Study Of Western North American *Astragalus*.

The goal of this project is to improve our understanding of both *Astragalus* diversity and the patterns of diversification of montane and alpine plants in Southern California. It will also improve our understanding of the origins and patterns of dispersal illustrating how species responded to past environmental changes and how they may react to future changes.



Astragalus whitneyi var. *whitneyi*
Photo credit: Steve Matson

The Susan Hobbs Grant for Field Research:

Erica Fontanez, California Botanic Garden and Claremont Graduate University. Phylogenetic and Biogeographic Analysis of *Chloropyron* (salty bird's beak, Orobanchaceae), a genus of Salt Marsh Dependent Species.

The goal of this project is to compare geologic events with diversification events, to better understand the drivers of speciation in *Chloropyron*. This research can aid in predicting how current climatic pressures such as rising sea levels and drought will influence the future of *Chloropyron* diversity and will have a positive impact helping plan for detrimental pressures by informing plan conservation practices such as seed banking, translocation, and habitat restoration.



Chloropyron tecopense
Photo credit: Nina House

PREVIOUS GRANT WINNER PUBLICATION!


Emma Fryer, Ph.D. Candidate in the Plant Ecology Lab at ETH Zürich, received the Jessica Mae Orozco Grant from Southern California Botanists in 2021 for her master's thesis research. The results of the research that scholarship helped fund were recently published in the American Journal of Botany.

Emma had this to say: "My master's thesis research was primarily funded through grants and scholarships, and would not have been possible without support from organizations like SCB!"




Congratulations, Emma, on the publication of an incredible research paper!
<https://doi.org/10.1002/ajb2.70171>

Received: 27 June 2025 | Accepted: 15 December 2025
DOI: 10.1002/ajb2.70171

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Botany 

Soil, competition, and niche shifts shape the floral mosaic of an annual plant diversity hotspot

Emma R. Fryer^{1,2}  | Ryan O'Dell³ | Dena L. Grossenbacher²  | Alyssa Shon² |
Skyler McKinnon^{4,5} | Nishanta Rajakaruna^{2,6} 

Please consider donating to support the Grants Program!

The grants are supported by revenue generated by the silent auction at the annual symposium, donations, and the general funds of the SCB. Please assist us in maintaining this tradition by donating to support our grant program.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BOTANISTS FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2025

EXPENSES

2025

STORAGE	\$946.00
STUDENT GRANTS	\$5,000.00
MAILING / MAILCHIMP	\$609.50
TAXES / FEES (CA SALES, SECRETARY OF INFO, RRF-1)	\$308.44
BOARD INSURANCE + EVENT INSURANCE	\$2629.00
HONORARIUMS SYMPOSIUM	\$1300.00
CATERING DINNER SYMPOSIUM + LUNCH SYMPOSIUM	\$1830.08
HOTEL FOR SYMPOSIUM SPEAKERS	\$1270.22
TRAVEL FOR SPEAKERS	\$708.37
GENERAL SYMPOSIUM EXPENSES	\$866.13
PROMOTIONAL MERCHANDISE	\$747.50
POMONA COLLEGE RENTAL FEES	\$570.00

TOTAL EXPENDITURES

\$16,785.24

INCOME

2025

MEMBERSHIP (NOT FROM SYMPOSIUM)	\$2,416.22
PRE-REGISTRATION EVENTBRITE SYMPOSIUM	
STUDENT	\$960.00
REGULAR (INCLUDING MEMBERSHIP)	\$9870.00
ON-SITE REGISTRATION SQUARE	
STUDENT	\$315.00
REGULAR (INCLUDING MEMBERSHIP)	\$1330.00
SYMPOSIUM FOOD SALES	\$1750.00
FIELDTRIPS EVENTBRITE	\$180.00
INTEREST CHECKING AND SAVINGS	\$116.22
GIFTS + SYMPOSIUM AUCTION	\$1,454.00
SALES	\$2,103.00
PUBLICATIONS	\$35.00
WORKSHOPS	\$3966.00

TOTAL INCOME

\$24,495.44

NET PROFIT: \$7,710.20



CROSSOSOMA: CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS!

Crossosoma serves as the esteemed scientific journal of the Southern California Botanists. We invite contributions that illuminate the flora of Southern California and its adjacent, floristically intertwined realms. We seek subject matter such as ecological, taxonomic, floristic, or horticultural studies of both vascular and non-vascular plants, as well as informal notes, observations, and opinion pieces.

If you are interested in submitting content or are uncertain about the suitability, please inquire with the editors (editor (at) socalbot.org) and visit our website (<https://socalbot.org/crossosoma/>) for more information.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BOTANISTS BOARD ELECTION RESULTS



President
Diana Brand Ramirez



Vice President
Kristen Hasenstab-
Lehman



Treasurer
Carrie Kiel



Secretary
Gabe Elliot

New & Reconfirmed Board Members for the 2026-2027 Term:

Anna Arft*	Duncan Bell
Leah Dann*	Nina House
Claire Jorgensen*	Drew Kaiser
Mel Letterman	Holly McMullen*
Nathan Pinckard*	Kim Pivetti*
Marisol Sanchez*	Sunny Saroa

*New to SCB Board



What's in Bloom?

Showcasing the beauty of California's native flora.





Oenothera deltoides (Birdcage Evening Primrose)
Onagraceae
Imperial County, February 2026
Photo Credit: Duncan Bell







Palafoxia arida var. *gigantea* (Giant Spanish-Needle)

Asteraceae

CRPR 1B.3

Imperial County, February 2026

Photo Credit: Duncan Bell

2025 FIELD TRIP REPORT

On March 7th, the SCB field trip crew went to the Jacumba Mountains Wilderness in Imperial County, California. With Jon Rebman as the field trip leader, participants got to contribute to ongoing floristic research while searching for rare and sensitive species, including newly described taxa such as *Pentagramma rebmanii* (Rebman's Silverback Fern) and potentially undocumented populations of *Cuscuta psorothamnensis* (Indigo Bush Dodder). This trip emphasized floristics, biogeography at the interface of the California Floristic Province and desert regions, and the importance of documenting botanical resources in Imperial County.

Thanks to everyone who came out!



Jacumba Mountains Wilderness group photo
Photo credit: Claire Jorgensen

Membership

Join SCB or
renew your
existing
membership
online via
PayPal at:
socalbot.org

Do you have something to contribute to Leaflets?

We like short informal articles, notes, sketches,
& photographs.

Send email to the Editor:
ninahouse@berkeley.edu

To submit scientific articles for publication in
Crossosoma, send email to editor@socalbot.org