



NEWSLETTER OF THE CALIFORNIA BOTANIC GARDEN VOLUNTEERS

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FROM THE PRESIDENT Kathleen Noll, Volunteer President

Last month's grand opening celebration for the new Children's Woodland and "*Joy in the Garden: A Celebration of Native Plants!*" was a wonderful success. From sensory tours by our wonderful Garden Guides and ecology-focused story times, to woodland crafts, it was a joyful three days. These days highlighted the Garden's mission as a gathering place for the community to learn, be inspired, and connect with the natural world—especially so for our youngest guests.

Many thanks to all who expressed interest in serving on one of our volunteer board committees following the Spring Luncheon. Joining a committee is a fantastic opportunity to work with others who share our interests and passion for the many offerings of the Garden. This year's board activities are winding down, but you may wish to expand your volunteer experience on one of our fun committees when we reach out again in the fall. Please think about how you could help the Garden, and your volunteer experience, next year.

You may not know that the Volunteer Organization has a Community Outreach team, but it does! This summer season the committee will continue promoting CalBG's summer events, including Garden Groove and Cinema Botanica (both on Thursday evenings). Heidi Arch, committee chair, will provide you with the details if you are interested in making a trip (or two) to Claremont Village and beyond to distribute flyers and spread the word about our magical summer evenings and events.

Please save the date: Friday, June 5 at 11:30 a.m., when we will hold our final Quarterly Meeting and Luncheon of this volunteer year. We will review Garden activities, elect next year's board officers, and discuss upcoming Garden projects.

One final note for our new and "newish" volunteers; please look for Patty's invitation for the annual New Volunteer Training session this fall. This is a momentous time to be involved as we mark 59 years of volunteers in our wonderful Garden and look forward to the centennial of the California Botanic Garden in 2027. We thank you for joining the volunteer organization as we embark on our next 100 years. See you in the Garden.

The deadline for articles to be submitted for the OAK NOTES is the **15th** of the month **prior** to publication. Thank you for your prompt submission!

Volgistics reminder: Please submit your monthly volunteer hours to Volgistics. Every volunteer minute counts.



Children's Woodland
Ribbon Cutting &
Art Show Opening
April 9, 2026





FROM THE DIRECTOR

Lucinda McDade,
CalBG Executive Director
Photos by Andy Torres

Hello volunteers!

I wrote last month about the Children’s Woodland that was nearing completion at CalBG. We have now officially opened it. And what a launch event—or rather series of events—it was!

First, on Thursday the 9th, we unveiled the kids’ art works that were submitted on the theme of “Joy in the Garden.” They are simply wonderful. And the young artists were so proud! Advancement staged a lovely reception for the kids and their families. We strongly suspect that most of the families in attendance had not been to the Garden before so the event very well achieved its goal of broadening our reach.

The guests were then all invited to walk (or ride) down to the Children’s Woodland for the official ribbon cutting. These interesting community events are staged by the Claremont Chamber of Commerce, and they are pretty good at it! We had two city council members in attendance, as well as people representing the offices of a number of our elected officials. They try to outdo each other with regard to the size of the certificate that they present to us (watch for these soon in the glass fronted display case in the lobby—they will be replacing the slew of similar large format certificates that we got when we had the ribbon cutting for the name change).

The kids in attendance then roared through to play in the woodland while some of the adults had to stand about submitting to staged and posed photography. The former group had more fun but the latter group (including myself) was pretty happy about the event too!

Then on both Friday and Saturday of that week, we had special events at the woodland for the central hours of the day including craft stations and other activities. Quite a few volunteers helped out with those stations: very much appreciated as

always! Interestingly, especially on Friday it seemed to be mainly the stroller crowd that was out, so a lot of small children—all of whom seemed to be thoroughly engrossed.

We don’t have numbers yet on attendance or other metrics we’ll be following like membership sales (especially at the family level!) but we expect those soon. *We do* have reports from essentially everyone in attendance that the Children’s Woodland is a smash hit!

We will be adding a feature or two to the Woodland as time and funding permit so watch for changes!

And a sneak peek for all of you who volunteer in association with the Garden’s terrific Community Education program: we are scheming to raise funds to replace the ancient education cart as part of the gala! Think: help us give the beloved stuffed coyote a better ride! I know I will see some of you there!

Very best and thanks to all of you!

MILKWEED FESTIVAL AT GROW NATIVE NURSERY by Laura Christianson

If we all do what we can, we can make a real and lasting difference.

—Emma Pelton, Senior Conservation Biologist, Xerces Society



Grow Native Nursery is gearing up for its annual Milkweed Fest, scheduled May 9th & 10th! This year we have nine species of milkweed available, and plenty of other pollinator-friendly plants, all reduced 20% during the weekend! On the 9th from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., speak with exhibitors from the

Xerces Society, Lopez Urban Farm, Monarch Watch, and more. Steve Bryant, long-time GNN volunteer and our own milkweed expert, will give a talk on

growing milkweeds (and monarchs), and to top it off Marigold Coffee Collective will be on-site for refreshments. On May 10th, join CalBG for a fun Mother's Day Café event, then head to GNN from 12:00 to 4:00 p.m. for the final day of the milkweed sale, with an artisan market alongside featuring local artists.

Ahead of this year's event, we decided to check in with our friends at Xerces Society for an update on the iconic western monarch butterfly, perhaps our most well-known milkweed friend. Xerces Society's Conservation Biologist team have an inside view of how western monarchs are adapting to current conditions thanks in part to their annual Western Monarch Count. This ongoing count takes place throughout the state of California where staff and volunteers have been recording the number of overwintering monarchs for the past 29 years. Unfortunately, this November–December 2025 brought the third-lowest tally of Monarchs at overwintering sites to date.



So, what does this mean? Emma Pelton, Senior Conservation Biologist, states that “Western monarchs are in serious trouble.” The decline of monarchs and other butterflies is likely driven by habitat loss, pesticide use, and climate change. Though numbers fluctuate from year to year, it's this long-term decline that is most worrisome, thus prompting Xerces Society to create the Western Monarch Call To Action. What do they recommend?

The five tenets include:

1. Restoring monarch habitat;
2. Reducing the use of pesticides;
3. Protecting overwintering sites;

4. Spreading the word about monarch conservation;
5. Getting involved in community science.

We hope this year's Milkweed Fest will provide a place to learn more, get inspired, and take the necessary steps to help pollinator recovery and make a difference!

Make sure to do your shopping now before the GNN closes for the summer in May.

FRIENDS OF THE LOS ANGELES RIVER (FOLA) FIELD TRIP

Saturday, June 20, 9 to 10 a.m.



Please join us for a one-hour tour of the Los Angeles River led by the staff of fola.org. We'll meet at Lewis MacAdams Riverfront Park located at 2999 Rosanna Street, Los Angeles. An educator will greet us, give us an introduction about the river and its history, pass out binoculars, and assign River Guides. The Guides will then escort us on a walk to identify birds, other animals, and native plants along the “Glendale Narrows,” a soft-bottomed section of the river. The walk will be about one mile out and back. Bring sun protection, water, comfortable clothing, and closed-toe walking shoes.



To sign up, please RSVP to Patty España at pespana@calbg.org. The field trip is limited to 30 people. When responding, please indicate if you are willing to drive a carpool vehicle, or would like to be part of a carpool. Carpoolers will meet in the parking lot of CalBG at 7:45 a.m. The drive to the park is 30 miles. Deadline to respond is June 6. Hope to see you there!

FIELD TRIPS

by **Patty Nueva España,**
Volunteer Program Coordinator

The Enrichment Committee is doing a particularly wonderful job of finding interesting and fun activities for CalBG’s volunteers to do. The committee has been busy researching and arranging field trips for all to enjoy, and spring 2026 is full of them.

The first field trip was in collaboration with the April enrichment talk by Travis Columbus, PhD. In his presentation, he discussed vernal pools in California and the diverse flora that inhabit them. The field trip that took place on Saturday, April 25th, was to Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Reserve, a place with examples of the occasional presence of vernal pools. It was a bit of a drive to the plateau, which sits in the Santa Ana Mountains just south of Murrieta. Docents were on hand to guide close to 20 volunteers around the trails and explain the unique habitats that make up the plateau.

There is nothing better than having a neighbor right next door as a great choice for a field trip. CalBG has that with the Bernard Field Station! Wednesday, May 13th at 9:30 a.m., many volunteers will get the chance to set foot on our neighbor’s grounds. The director of the BFS, Wallace (Marty) Meyers will be guiding the group, while he talks about the endangered California sage scrub ecosystem, and his work focusing on the preservation and restoration of that ecosystem. Entrance to the station will be through the gate behind the horticulture building.

If that is not enough, CalBG’s volunteers and staff have been invited by the Friends of the Los Angeles River (FoLAR) to attend a field trip at the river on Saturday, June 20th. Those who go will be given an introduction to the river and its history as an urban environment developed around it. Then we can walk

along the river path looking for plants and animals that rely on the river. This trip is limited to 20 people and carpooling will be encouraged.

If you are interested in attending the May and/or June field trips, please reach out to me at pespana@calbg.org.

BERNARD FIELD STATION FIELD TRIP

May 13, 2026 at 9:30 a.m.



Wallace (Marty) Meyers, Director of the Bernard Field Station and Associate Professor of Biology at Pomona College

Meet at the gate that borders CalBG and the field station. It is above the Grow Native Nursery.

We will tour the Bernard Field Station, learn about the endangered California sage scrub ecosystem, and discuss southern California ecology.

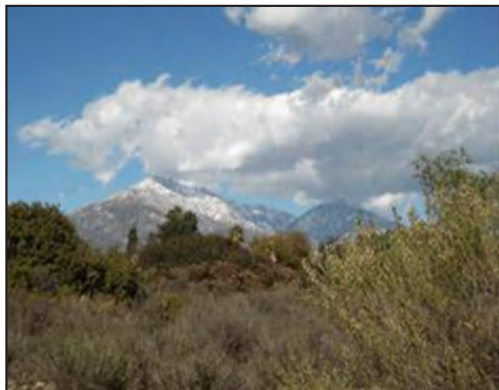
Marty’s research explores the fields of conservation biology, invasion biology, biogeography and ecology, including aspects of population, community



A Very Happy May Birthday to:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Jeffrey Arango | Alexis Martinez |
| Barbara Buratti | Emily Monjaraz |
| Paul Clarke | Leah Moreno |
| Linda Clement | Annette Reed |
| Paul Clement | Brian Sandoval |
| Gabe Elliott | Bradley Starr |
| Sofia Franco | Dawn Thielo |
| Emily Franz | Aris Thomas |
| Lay Hak | Sachin Trivedi |
| Monica Halper | Sandi Wallace |
| Erik Larson | Ray Wilson |

and ecosystem ecology. Currently, his main research interest is in understanding how and why the species composition of local biotas are changing, and how such changes directly and indirectly affect ecosystem-level processes and properties. His work focus is on the preservation and restoration of coastal sage scrub ecosystems.



Please RSVP to Patty Nueva Espana, pespana@calbg.org

COMMUNITY OUTREACH, VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

by Heidi Arch



WANTED! Volunteers are needed to help distribute flyers for upcoming events to local businesses and to cities beyond. It is an easy commitment that lets you choose your own timing, though between eleven a.m. and two p.m. is often best. Additionally, you will get your daily exercise.

If you are interested contact, either Lauren Stoebel or Patty España. You can pick your own location(s), unless another volunteer has already chosen it. Lauren will provide the flyers in a handy bag with tape and push pins included. When you are done, just return the bag to the kiosk or to Lauren's office.

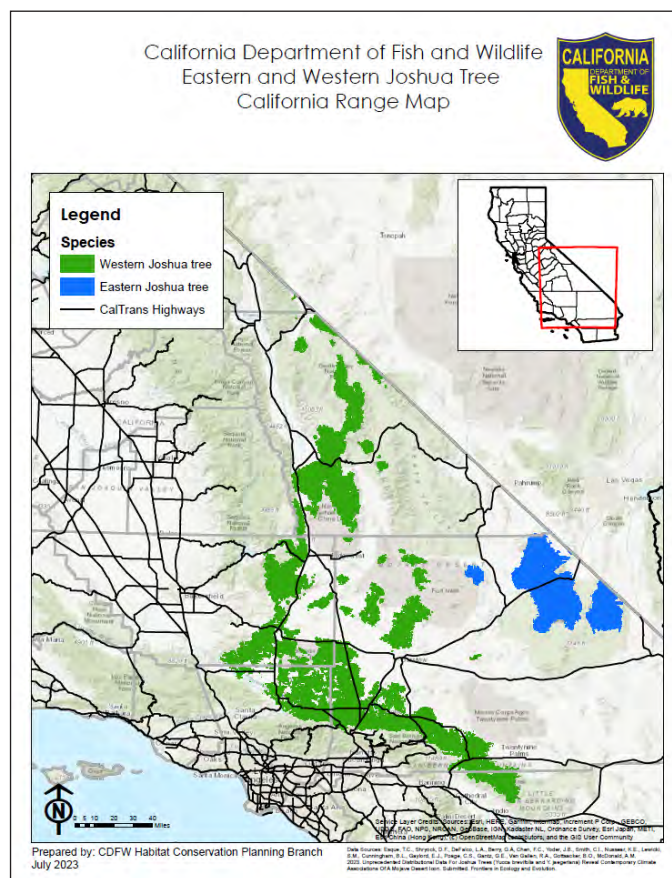
JOSHUA TREES

by Steve Bryant



Long considered a single species (*Yucca brevifolia*), Joshua Trees have been split into two species, largely based on the different species of moths that pollinate them. The more common Western Joshua Tree is still *Y. brevifolia* and is pollinated by the yucca moth *Tegeticula synthetica*. Some eastern

populations (formerly *Y. b. var. jaegeriana*), however, are pollinated by *T. antithetica* and are now the species *Y. jaegeriana*, or Eastern Joshua Tree (2008. Godsoe, W., et al., Coevolution and Divergence in the Joshua Tree/Yucca Moth Mutualism, *Am. Nat.* 171:816-823). From the CA Dept. of Fish and Game:



“Western Joshua trees typically have a distinct central trunk that usually branches higher off the ground than eastern Joshua trees. Additionally, a western Joshua tree may have clonal growth from the base of the trunk and be more bush-like in appearance. On western Joshua trees, the first branches usually split between 3–10 ft from the ground whereas eastern Joshua trees usually branch below 3 ft.”

The range of *Y. brevifolia* pretty much coincides with the snow line, being rarely found in areas that completely lack snow. Populations are said to form Joshua Tree woodlands, and in some areas, very dense woodlands. The Western Joshua Tree Conservation Act of July 2023 now generally requires a permit fee of ~\$1000–2500 for the removal of a large tree. Joshua Trees start with a female moth taking pollen from a flower on one tree and depositing it on the stigma of a flower on another tree, thus ensuring fruit set. The moth lays one or more eggs in the ovary and the developing larvae will then eat some, but not all, of the developing seeds. The moths are seemingly better at discriminating between the species than humans used to be. Joshua Trees grow slowly, perhaps 3–10 cm per year, taking 50+ years to mature. Trees may live to 500 years old and typically bloom in late winter; the moths then develop and eclose when the trees bloom the following year. See publications by Jeremy B. Yoder for more information.



FLORA OF THE SAN JACINTO & SANTA ROSA MOUNTAINS
Enrichment Presentation,
June 10 at Noon in the Sycamore Room

On June 10 at noon there will be an enrichment presentation by Scott White on the flora of the San Jacinto and Santa Rosa Mountains. Scott recently retired from a long career as a consulting biologist. He holds B.A. and A.M. degrees from Humboldt State University (now Cal Poly Humboldt).



Scott has been conducting floristic surveys throughout southern California since 1987. In retirement he is focusing on his favorite long-term project, a vouchered flora of the San Jacinto Mountains, based on herbarium specimens and his own collections. Scott is no stranger to California Botanic Garden as he is a Research Associate with the Garden. Please join us to hear his 1-hour presentation.

BOOK OF THE MONTH

Ann Morgan, Volunteer Library Committee



The ABCs of California's Native Bees by Krystle Hickman. Heyday, Berkeley, CA, 2025. 240 pp.

Krystle Hickman is a National Geographic Explorer, community scientist, and conservation photographer. Several years ago, she became concerned about honeybees and began photographing them in their natural habitats. At one point she came across an unknown (to her) bee and after consulting online naturalist groups and other resources, she learned it was a native bee—an *Andrena* sp. (mining bee). She then learned that native bees are seriously threatened and that as pollinators they are as important, if not more so, than honeybees. She also discovered the importance of native plants that support the native bee populations. She was now on a mission to photograph as many of California's native bees

as possible, including one for each letter of the alphabet. This book is a result of that project, which took her all over the state from Imperial County to the Trinity Alps.

The ABCs of California's Native Bees is arranged alphabetically by species—*Melissodes agilis* (Agile Longhorn Bee) through *Calloopsis zonalis* (Zone-tailed Banded Mining Bee). Each section includes descriptions of the bee, where she found it, the flowers it visited, and other characteristics. Along the way she includes more general information about native bees such as the fact that many are solitary and have a very localized range. The highlight of the book is the color photographs—detailed close-ups of bees and the flowers they visit. Hickman often spent hours in one spot waiting for bees to make an appearance. She also includes photos and descriptions of the habitats. Many of the locations she visited are remote, not easy to get to. Others are closer to home. She describes a site in the Santa Monica Mountains that she had previously photographed. Instead of native flowers and bees she found deep ruts from a large vehicle that had been clearing brush, sadly illustrating the impact of habitat loss on native species.

The ABCs of California's Native Bees is available for check out in the Volunteer Library.

CALBG VOLUNTEER EVENTS MAY–JULY 2026

May 2: Yoga Half-Day Retreat 8:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. (registration required)

May 3: First Sunday Family Friendly Bird Walk 8:00 a.m. (registration required)

May 3: Forever California Spring Fundraising Gala

May 5: Run for Fun Monthly Meetup 6:00 p.m. (please RSVP)

May 9: Milkweed Festival at GNN 10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.

May 10: Mother's Day Cafe 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. (registration required)

May 10: Mother's Day Artisan Market & Milkweed Sale at GNN noon–4:00 p.m.

May 10: Silent Reading Club Meetup 1:00 p.m. (please RSVP)

May 13: Volunteer Field Trip to Robert J. Bernard Biological Field Station with Marty Meyer 9:30 a.m. (see email for details)

May 15: Spring Photo Contest through June 15 (see Garden website for details)

May 16: Medicinal Herb Walk 9:00–11:00 a.m. (registration required)

May 16: Nature Art: Tree Techniques 10:00 a.m.–noon (registration required)

May 19: Family Story Time 9:00 a.m. (please RSVP)

May 23: Natural Dyes of the San Gabriel Foothills Class 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. (registration required)

May 29: Yarn in the Yuccas: Fiber Arts Monthly Meetup 1:30 p.m. (please RSVP)

June 2: Run for Fun Monthly Meetup 6:00 p.m. (please RSVP)

June 5: Volunteer Quarterly Luncheon & Business Meeting, 11:30 a.m. Forest Pavilion

June 10: Volunteer Enrichment: Scott White, program on the Flora of the San Jacinto & Santa Rosa Mountains, at noon, Sycamore Room

June 14: Silent Reading Club Meetup 1:00 p.m. (please RSVP)

June 16: Family Story Time 9:00 a.m. (please RSVP)

June 20: Volunteer Field Trip: Friends of the LA River (see email for details)

June 24: Volunteer Recognition Celebration

June 26: Yarn in the Yuccas: Fiber Arts Monthly Meetup 1:30 p.m. (please RSVP)

July 4: Garden closed

July 7: Run for Fun Monthly Meetup 6:00 p.m. (please RSVP)

July 12: Silent Reading Club Meetup 1:00 p.m. (please RSVP)

July 21: Family Story Time 9:00 a.m. (please RSVP)

July 31: Yarn in the Yuccas: Fiber Arts Monthly Meetup 1:30 p.m. (please RSVP)



VOLUNTEER LUNCHEON

Photos by Susan Starr and Marla White



CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT DAY

Photos by Marla White

