FROM THE PRESIDENT
Cindy Walkenbach, Volunteer President

“Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.”
—Author Unknown

I can hardly believe that this is my last Oak Notes column as your president. It has been an honor and a pleasure to serve, and Vice President Lynn Miller, Treasurer Ingrid Spiteri, Secretary Patricia Brooks, and I have appreciated the support we have received as your Executive Board members. We would like to propose the following slate of officers for 2019–2020 for your vote at the Quarterly meeting on Friday, June 7:

President, Marla White
Vice President, Lynn Miller
Secretary, Wanda Ewing
Treasurer, Paul Donatelli

I’d like to shine a spotlight on a few of the special things the Volunteer Organization Board has done:

- We received the Halo Award Grant from the Carl & Roberta Deutsch Foundation which has provided funding for purchase of the Volgistics system to track volunteer hours electronically. A very special thanks goes to Personnel Committee head Julie Scheuermann for her tireless work on this project. The grant money we received will continue to be used to support Volgistics implementation and to strengthen our organization in a variety of ways through volunteer education, recruitment, training, and retention.
- The Visitor Education Committee headed by Marla White and Katy Douglass has worked diligently over the last two years to align our school tours to the newest California State standards and to create easy-to-use tour information sheets for Nature Interpreters.
- The Enrichment/Field Trip team under the leadership of Linda Clement has provided interesting enrichment sessions and well-attended regional field trips. With grant money we were able to pay for van transportation, thus increasing volunteer participation.
- A highlight of the Horticulture team under the direction of Richard Davis was its addition of a Saturday work crew so high school and college students...
and those who are employed during the week can participate in Garden beautification efforts.

- The Public Relations team headed by Darcia Bradley and Bev Jack has greatly improved our presence in the community through its work with the Village marketing group and has collaborated with David Bryant on numerous outreach activities. Conducting interviews for the Interpretive Master Plan and distributing flyers and information about Garden events throughout the community have been but a few of their many efforts to get the word out about this special place.

- Betty Butler and her Hospitality Team have kept us entertained and well fed at our delightful Quarterly Meetings and luncheons. And, of course, the Native Design team wows us at each event with the lovely bouquets and centerpieces they create. Thanks to Linda Prendergast, Carol Petty and the entire group for all you do to add beauty to our lives!

- The Library Committee has continued to add to our knowledge through interesting book reviews in Oak Notes and the addition of many new books to the library. A special thanks to Gene and Amy Baumann and their team for making the Volunteer Library such an inviting place.

Of course, Oak Notes continues to be an excellent vehicle for learning and information. It is truly a special publication of which we can all be proud, and we owe a debt of gratitude to Louise and David Gish, our editors, and to Carole Aldrich, our publisher, for their years of editing and hard work each month to “make it happen.” Dr. McDade, Kathleen Noll, Judy Hayami, and David Bryant keep us well informed about what is going on in the Garden and behind the scenes. And, of course, our regular volunteer contributors Fred Brooks, Carol Lerew, and Rudi Volti have taught us about bugs, pests, Garden history and trees through their very professional articles. Debbie Woo’s gorgeous pictures have added a special touch!

Finally, let me just say how very thankful I am for your support. When I have asked, you have “volunteered” your time without reservation and generously given of your resources. Collectively, we are making a difference with the Forest Pavilion campaign, and I look forward to reporting the Volunteer gift at the June 26 Volunteer Dinner. Our fundraiser at Panera Bread raised $200, and a very special thanks goes to Marla White for organizing this event and greeting us at the restaurant. Perhaps most importantly, I thank you for your continuing commitment to this Garden that we all love and to our mission to care for and support California’s natural heritage. Susanna Bixby Bryant’s vision of preserving California’s native plants has inspired us to help in a variety of ways and the Garden is the state’s treasure. Wouldn’t she be proud to know how significantly her dream has been realized!

**From the Director**

**Lucinda McDade, RSABG Executive Director**

Greetings Faithful Volunteers!

Spring! And what a spring it has been and continues to be. Aren’t the Matillija poppies near the admissions kiosk spectacular? … and I am not used to looking up to see the tops of the flowering stalks of *Penstemon* as one must do this year for the spectacular plants in the oval. Of course, as our staff in horticulture lament, what’s good for the native plants is also just terrific for our invasive weeds. I don’t believe I’ve ever seen “peplus” (*Euphorbia peplus*, our chartreuse annual weed with milky sap) as tall and many branched as they are this year. Luckily, “peplus” is fairly easy to pull out—easier than, oh, say our invasive mustards which are more deeply rooted and also develop rather stiff, coarse hairs on their stems: ouch. Thanks to all of you—Wednesday morning work crew regulars and others—who have helped with the weeding projects this spring. Still, we will all take this weed problem compared to the problems presented by drought years.

I want to give a special shout out of thanks to volunteers who are helping with the Butterfly Pavilion this summer: THANKS for signing up for shifts to provide vital back-up for the staff in the pavilion. Everyone: be sure to visit the pavilion! David Bryant, Lisa Pritchard, Marion McGinnis, DD Dornisch (staff) and Steve Bryant (volunteer!) have worked hard to make it more of a destination—more
of a place to spend some time rather than to just walk through. Feedback is welcome! Of course, we are off to a very unusually wet and cool butterfly season—have already closed the pavilion on two days owing to rain and cold—and we will see what the next two and a half months bring!

I want to talk a bit about education at RSABG in my Oak Notes column this month. This seems appropriate since Oak Notes is about to go on summer vacation as are most school children. Of course, many of you already know a great deal about education at RSABG because you are the conveyors of content to our visiting classes of school children. RSABG’s Nature Interpreters do a terrific job and I am your biggest fan! In addition to your every day and ongoing excellence, you have impressed me over the last year or so in terms of your open-mindedness—your willingness to take on new approaches and teaching styles as we have worked to maintain the consistency of our lessons with the latest curriculum standards. Special thanks to Marla White and Katy Douglass.

Many of you are also aware that, with Lisa Pritchard on board now, we’ve taken on educational programming for the younger set in the form of the preschool nature tours that Lisa led through the winter and spring. If you did not see the “spread” on the program in the Claremont Courier, there is still a copy on the bulletin board outside of the mailroom: literally a spread with three pages of coverage and lots of images. These sessions were highly successful! Those of you who witnessed the program in action know that Lisa is a natural for this age group. We also offered an informal education program for grade school children: Rancho Rangers. Going forward, we will be working to hone both of these programs. These offerings very nicely supplement what we already have on offer by way of both formal (e.g., school field trips program) and informal education (i.e., diverse

There is nothing in a caterpillar that tells you it’s going to be a butterfly.
— R. Buckminster Fuller

MEET ELI FELDMAN,
GROW NATIVE NURSERY MANAGER

To those I haven’t met yet, hello and I hope to meet you soon! My name is Eli Feldman (as in Man-of-the-Fields), and I’ve been managing Grow Native Nursery since right before the Fall Sale. Our team has been working hard to improve GNN customer experience in the Nursery and success at home! If you’ve been volunteering with the Garden for a long time (or even a short time), please don’t hesitate to share any suggestions and/or observations with me—your input is so valuable!

I started working at the Garden in 2016. First I learned about its rich history and current resources/programming while working in the Library, then its Living Collection through my former position as Production Nursery Propagator. I believe I’ve crawled through every bed in the Garden looking for seeds or cuttings!! It’s been a great benefit and joy to work in multiple capacities here, driving home how much the Garden has to offer its staff, volunteers and public. That joy, of working collaboratively with all of you, is what led me to the Garden in the first place! I hope that my academic and work background in Landscape Architecture, Art and Agriculture will aid me in growing our Nursery’s reputation as a place that strikes a balance between truly hard-to-find natives and popular selections too.

I’m firmly rooted in the sights and smells of Southern California’s plants, from the rushes pushing through the concrete Arroyo Seco to the sagebrush covered slopes of the foothills—that is why it’s so easy sharing what I love, home. We are all plant-geek’s here, so come on down to the Grow Native Nursery and say hi—I look forward to meeting more of you!
classes for young adults/adults on everything from how to identify grasses to how to prune your trees and shrubs).

And of course, there is also our graduate education program. Carol Lerew enlightened you about how the grad program works a few months back. RSABG houses and supports (funds!) the program entirely, and it operates under the academic aegis of Claremont Graduate University and in association with the larger academic consortium in Claremont. Many of you have interacted directly with our graduate students, especially those who have been assigned to the community education program as the assistantship for which they are paid. In that role, the student often leads NICE walks (i.e., “Nature Interpreter Continuing Education”), handles several of the lessons that are part of Nature Interpreter training, works actively with the family education events that take place in that particular semester, whether *Things That Go Bump* or *Family Bird Festival*, and generally provides plant science support for all of our educational programming. Most of our students give an enrichment talk at some time during their graduate career here and many also volunteer for family education programs, especially *Things That Go Bump*.

You will see—whether via email or posted notices—invitations to attend seminars by visiting scientists that are presented as part of the academic programming here at RSABG. I hope that you feel most sincerely invited to attend. Likewise, less

---

### Celebrating 40 Years in the Garden

**Nature Interpreter, John Biddle**

Dr. John Biddle marks 40 years as a Nature Interpreter at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden. John Biddle joined the Volunteer Organization’s Class of 1979 after reading a recruitment notice in the Pomona Progress Bulletin. John joined the Thursday Team, with Director of Education, Bonnie Busenberg and has led two-hour programs and general tours ever since!

John’s passion for sharing the Garden with visitors of all ages stems from his enthusiasm for California’s unique diversity of plant species and love of the natural world. John says, “I love teaching and learning about conservation and the Garden setting is ideal for asking questions and for sharing information that visitors of all ages may find meaningful now or in the future.”

Outside of the Garden, John Biddle, Ph.D. is Professor of Mechanical Engineering at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, where he has spent nearly his entire career connected to teaching mechanical engineering. A native of St. Louis, Missouri, he earned a B.S and M.S at Washington University in St. Louis and Ph.D. from Arizona State University. In 1971, Dr. Biddle accepted a position at Cal Poly and moved to Upland. John shares, “With emphasis on teaching science, math and engineering, I’m blessed knowing and teaching undergrad and graduate students, under the green and gold.”

Growing up near Missouri Botanical Garden, informally known as Shaw’s Garden, named for founder and philanthropist, Henry Shaw, John visited frequently and fell in love with the plants and beauty of the changing seasons. John says, “After moving to Southern California, I found the same joy in the beauty of diversity in the renewal of RSABG following winter rains, spring blossoms and in the stillness of summer.” The true gift of the Garden is volunteering, says John, “The Garden opens all doors, and there are many fun and interesting ways to become involved working with wonderful staff and fellow volunteers. It’s a pleasure to spend Thursdays at RSABG.”

We celebrate you, John Biddle, and thank you for 40 incredible years of volunteer service to the Garden. Your dedication to RSABG’s mission of education makes the Garden a great place for kids and adults to learn about nature and their connection to the environment.
formally, our students, scientists and others give talks from time to time that are announced to all: please come if the topics sound interesting to you OR if you just want to have a better idea what goes on at the Garden.

Last Friday, the graduate students who are enrolled this semester in the **Plant Anatomy and Morphology** class taught by Travis Columbus gave talks on the projects that they undertook for the class. Volunteers were invited along with the rest of the Garden community, and I was very happy to see a handful of volunteers in attendance. At least two of you remarked on how accessible you found the talks to be, how much you had learned even if you were not familiar with every single technical term that was used—you still got the gist of the project and its results. You also complemented the students on their skill as speakers and realized that this kind of exercise is part of the professional development aspect of our graduate program. Our students **must** learn to give content-rich, organized and well-presented talks on their work and learning by **practice** is essential.

In sum, as volunteers, I hope you will feel welcome to attend events such as these, when relevant to your interests and the time that you have available permits. I firmly believe that the more all of us—including volunteers—know about **all** that takes place at RSABG, the stronger our community.

Lastly, over the years so many volunteers have been active in the seed bank that I thought you would want to know that the new generator for the seed bank handled a real-life power outage **perfectly**. There was a power outage in Claremont today when a car ran into a utility pole and caused a transformer to fall onto the car. When the power went out, the generator came on automatically, burning natural gas. When the power came back on, the generator shut itself off. The power source to the seed house (So Cal Edison OR generator) seamlessly transitioned via the automatic transfer switching system that was installed along with the generator. WHEW! It is a great relief to have this working well and helping to safeguard our invaluable and irreplaceable seed bank. Did you

A Very Happy June–August Birthday to:

**June**  
Bruce Hines  
Roberta Stephens  
Mike Allee  
Ann Dodds  
Polly O’Keefe  
Wanda Ewing  
Tracy Cheung  
Ernie Pianalto  
Judy Whale  
Sherry Hogue  
Terry Givens  
Lisa Hahn  
Marion Swick  
Catherine Rowlee  
Paul Donatelli  
Bill Waggener  
Drusilla Burt  
Barbara Nakaoka  
Diego Tamayo  
Joan Oyler  
Jack Rosenbrock

**July**  
Chris Caenepeel  
Marla White  
Nicholas Costello  
Jean Beckner  
Jodi Martin  
Albert Finnerty  
Nan Davidson (Kaeser)  
Eugene Baumann  
Tom Velasquez  
Emilie Ballard  
Joaquina Hernandez  
Enid Eckert  
William Gendron  
John Biddle  
Robert Koukol  
Anne Moreau  
Mary Perera

**August**  
Sara Simon  
Linda Munsey  
Carol Petty  
Christine Zukowski  
Elene Kallimanis  
Eduardo Martinez  
Kelly Swift  
Rudi Voti  
Ray Owens  
Susan Starr  
Mary Chamberlain  
Cliff Hutson  
Linda Troyer  
Tom Irvin  
Shaunna Gygli  
Cindy Walkenbach  
Sharon Kaatmann  
Rita Ruminski  
Stephen Bryant  
Susan Winderman
know that RSABG holds about 78% of the seeds of California natives that are seed banked anywhere. Next up: propane tanks as the ultimate backup in the event that the natural gas flow ceased/were turned off. We are working on permitting for those tanks right now.

Enjoy your summer vacation, Oak Notes (and the volunteers and staff who work to put it out!). We will be carrying on full speed ahead at RSABG!

The first day of Summer is almost here. Do you have plans to do anything special?

I am about to do something I have never done before. I am going to retire! After 19 1/2 years in the Education Department at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, June 2019 will be my last month as the Tour Program Manager. My time here has been both a wild ride and a purposeful journey, and I am extremely grateful and proud to have shared it with you.

Of course, there will be business as usual in the coming months. I know you will carry on with what you do and all you do so well!

• Materials Work Party will wrap up for the summer with a final party on Wednesday, June 12.
• Please continue to check the tour schedule and sign up for tours over the summer months. There are June Sign-Up and Tram tours on the NI calendar. There is also a Native Partners Program for Upward Bound students, Wednesday, July 10 at 9 a.m.
• Keep an eye out for Touring Preference Questionnaires to be broadcast sometime in July.
• Teacher Open House is scheduled for Saturday, August 10, from 9 a.m. to Noon. Teachers are already registering online. Reservations for school tours open first to teachers in attendance.

I look forward to seeing you at the Volunteer Appreciation Dinner on June 26. Thank you very much for the volunteer hours you give to the Garden. Thank you, even more, for everything you have given to me.

Yours truly,

-Judy

Volunteer Programs
Kathleen Noll, Manager of Volunteer Programs

In the RSABG Volunteer Program office, I watch the seasons change from my window. Summer has a very different pace than spring. Gone are the buses of school children from all corners of the Inland...
Empire arriving to learn about California native plants and natural history. At the end of the touring and the volunteer season, Garden staff celebrates our wonderful volunteers and your incredible contributions to the Garden. On Wednesday, June 26 at 5:30 p.m. the annual volunteer dinner will be held in conjunction with the joint Board of Trustees and Board of Overseers Annual Meeting.

The theme of this year’s volunteer dinner is “Camp Matilija” in honor of exquisite Romneya coulteri (native perennial flowers blooming beautiful, resilient and returning year after year – just like our wonderful volunteers!) At our fun volunteer appreciation event, volunteers will be honored for reaching five-year milestones in their volunteer experience. And, of course, all volunteers are among those we wish to thank and honor. The following volunteers will receive recognition for their years of service:

40 years: John Biddle. 25 years: Cliff Hutson. 20 years: Ed James and Jack Rosenbrock. 15 years: Donna Bedell, Virginia Herd, Carol Hopping, Carol Lerew, Carolyn Lucas and Judy Whale. 10 years: Herb Boss, Lee Boss, Laura Burt, Shaunna Gygli, Bill Waggener and Lee Waggener. 5 years: Mike Allee, Linda Munsey, Dean Shimek, Robert Swank and Betsy Zimmerman. Also at the party, the most recent RSABG 101 graduating class—Class of 2019 will be inducted into the Volunteer Organization.

Congratulations and thank you to the Class of 2019: Jordyn Brase, Alec Bryson, Judy Bryson, Drusilla Burt, Sofia Flores, Lorraine Francis, Martin Francis, Laura Holbrook, Tom Irvin, Mark Kay, Ann Levangie, Daryl Mixon, Wendy Olvera, Rita Ruminski, Barbara Shelley, Michael Shelley, Susan Starr, Diego Tamayo, Katina Vlastos and Christine Zukowski.

We welcome new volunteers entering the Class of 2020: Linda Des Marais, Debbie English, Michelle Fraley, Phoebe Frankeberg, Christopher Jarosz, Carly Lake, Anne Odgers, Muriel Fernandez-Replogle, Benjamin Segura and Lanae Wiederhoeft.

I hope you will join us for this fun-filled and meaningful event. RSVP’s are due by Wednesday, June 19. Thank you for a wonderful year!

Rudi Volti
Columns, Oak Notes
An Interview by Chris Ilgen, Library Committee

I have known Rudi for many years and continue to be impressed by his curiosity and remarkable talent for turning his findings into entertaining reading. During his career as a professor of sociology at Pitzer College, where he not only taught and fulfilled other academic duties, Rudi maintained a prolific publishing record focused on technology and society, automobile history, technological development in East Asia, several editions of a sociology textbook, a technology encyclopedia, and various studies dealing with technology and work.

In his retirement, Rudi has become a Nature Interpreter, most frequently offering his wealth of Tongva and Cahuilla lore on regular Native Partners tours and occasional Sensational Walks. Complementing his fascination with cars, Rudi also sometimes drives the Garden’s carts. In the past few years he has written a column on (mainly California native) trees for Oak Notes. In his columns Rudi expands on descriptions of specific trees with their historical context, special features, and uses, interspersed with entertaining anecdotes. He plans to compile the collection into a book that should enhance NI training in the future. The columns that have appeared to date have been copied and are located in a binder along the north wall of the Volunteer Library, along with field notebooks.

Personally, Rudi’s hobbies include his love of baseball. Drawing on a remarkable memory, you can always count on Rudi for baseball trivia and get a correct answer to such queries as “Who hit into the only all-Cuban triple play? (Clint “Scrap Iron” Courtney)

I recently interviewed Rudi so that volunteers would know him better. Following are some highlights from that Q and A. (My questions follow my initials ”CI”)
CI: First, what features of the Garden interested you in becoming a volunteer?

After thirty-five years of teaching in a college environment, I wanted to continue teaching without having to grade exams, read papers, and conduct personnel reviews. I also regarded the Garden to be a real treasure in our region, and I wanted to contribute to its development in any way I could.

CI: How did this current project, on California trees, most of which are native species, emerge?

Amy Bauman, along with David and Louise Gish, inquired if I would be interested in contributing to Oak Notes. I could choose any topic, so I selected trees because they always have appealed to me in a number of ways, and I had learned a little about them through various woodworking projects.

Note (CI): one of my favorites is your column on the sycamore, symbol of the Garden, which you point out to be the largest native broadleaf tree in the U.S. Although not useful for lumber, it has had many practical uses, including musical instruments. The sycamore is referenced in the Bible. Sycamore leaves are shiny on one side and soft on the other, the soft side used, along with spider webs and twigs, to build hummingbird nests. The sycamore is also host for the deadly polyphagus shot hole borer, a beetle that injects a fungus that damages the tree’s vascular system.

I’m glad you enjoyed it. I have fond memories of a large sycamore than stood in the front yard of one of my childhood friends.

CI: Do you see your current column on California trees as a project nearing completion? Are there other Garden plants that you similarly plan to highlight?

As the saying goes, the series is “complete, but never finished.” At this point one of my publishers wants a new edition of one of my books, so I’ll have to move on. I have thoroughly enjoyed learning and writing about trees, and I hope to return to the project sometime in the future.

---

**Visitor Education Committee**

**Marla White, Visitor Education Committee**

This year began our journey in the evolution of the school tour programs. Our Nature Interpreters have embraced the California Next Generation Science Standards as they incorporated some of the NGSS components into the one-hour tours. TK, K, 1st and 2nd graders now engage in inquiry-driven tours focusing on observations using the senses of sight, hearing, touch and smell. Students are shown garden examples emphasizing the higher-level thinking skills of asking questions, identifying similarities, and comparing and contrasting key features in animals and plants found at RSABG. We also offer a transportation grant for Title 1 schools to participate in school tours.

David Bryant, Director of Visitor Experience and Web Guru, has set up online tour reservations and uploaded teacher tour resources, thus saving time for the Education support staff. Thanks to Lee Waggener and her crew of hearty volunteers who created all of the hands-on materials for the tours and crafts for special events.

Katy Douglass, Marla White and Elene Kallamanis have nearly completed the revamping of the two-hour Adaptation and Survival school program. The new emphasis is on our local coastal sage scrub and chaparral habitat using the Garden’s native plants and animals to help tell their adaptation success story.

Community Education has been gaining many followers from Pre-school Nature Hour participants, K–4th Rancho Rangers, Night Walks, Yoga in the Garden, Forest Bathing and visitors to the newly remodeled Butterfly Pavilion.

The Visitor Education Committee is seeking additional participants for the coming year. We meet the 3rd Thursday at noon in an effort to support the RSABG Education department.
The following article is reprinted from the June 2003 Oak Notes:

Payne’s Pleasures
Joe Pham, RSABG Volunteer

Theodore Payne (1872–1963) began his own garden at age 3 when he was shorter than a shovel. At age 17 he climbed a 6-foot gate, with head first to the ground and right foot caught between the iron spikes: Just to examine an excellent specimen of *Quercus ilex*. And in his words: “Of course I was trespassing and might have been arrested, if caught, but you are apt to take chances when you are seventeen and hunting for rare trees.”

Coming to the state in 1893, he fell in love with California wildflowers which carpeted the hills and valleys with such lavishness and brilliance, undreamed of in his native England: “I can remember one Sunday traveling by team across the valley from Corona to Ontario, I passed through miles and miles of Tidy tips, White daisies, poppies, cream cups, blue lupines, Owl’s clover, Yellow pincushions, Thistle sage, White forget-me-nots, and Mariposa lilies. An ever-changing carpet of brilliant colors.”

Toward the end of his days, when what pleases him most in his career of seedsmen, nurseryman and conservationist, he said one word: “Wildflowers”

And his last words to Alice, his wife for 56 years: “I love you very much and always will.” Perhaps his “you” was meant for both Alice and his wildflowers!

Being Present
Lisa Pritchard, Community Education Coordinator

“Let’s go see the baby owls,” I said to my preschooler charges and their parents. Excited that I was preparing for this wonderful teaching moment because, let’s face it, how many of us have come across a great horned owl nest with nestlings?

We set off through the trail behind the building to find the nest, high in the Torrey pine. Just a few steps in, a 3-year-old focuses on a Roly-Poly crossing the path. Immediately the whole group begins to bend down to watch and soon everyone is picking up Roly-Polys. If you’ve ever done this — as a child or adult — you first notice the crustacean (yes, related to crabs and lobsters) begins to roll into an armored covered ball. The thrill of this protective adaptation delights the youngsters.

Soon, I realize, my planned lesson of looking afar to a nest some 100 feet away, untouchable and possibly hard to see, was lost on the ordinary, touchable invertebrate underfoot right here and now. The “in the moment” sense of discovery and ability to touch becomes paramount to this “lesson-planning” teacher, as I give in, and stoop down to join the youngsters. The owlets can wait.

As the preschoolers with parents spring sessions wind down for the season, I’d like to thank volunteers Susan Starr, Wendy Olivera, Anne LaVangie, Mary Chamberlain, and coworker, Judy Hayami for their help with this program.

Fox Squirrels
Fred Brooks, Nature Interpreter

Civil War veterans from the Mississippi Valley are credited with introducing the eastern fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger*) to Southern California in 1904. From the Sawtelle Veteran’s Home in West Los Angeles, the squirrel population spread at rates of 0.4 to 6.8 miles per year. By 2004 fox squirrel populations had spread north to Santa Clarita, west to Oxnard, south to Newport Beach, and east to Claremont.

The fox squirrel and native western gray squirrel (*Sciurus griseus*) have comparable lifestyles. They eat similar foods, nest in trees, and their habitats sometimes overlap. Though they can coexist, confrontations do occur. One study reported 57 incidences of aggressive behavior, with 43 (75%) initiated by gray squirrels; these conflicts seldom ended in fights.
Despite their similarities, gray squirrel populations throughout California are decreasing. Several reasons are proposed for the decline. Foremost, the fox squirrel is a generalist, able to modify its diet and lifestyle. If pine nuts or acorns aren’t available, for example, your tomatoes, oranges, or seed from a bird feeder will suffice. Also, sources of water are usually available around human habitation during drought years. These factors make the fox squirrel more adept at living among humans, so more competitive in urban areas.

In Southern California the gray squirrel is generally restricted to undisturbed areas of the foothills, or to botanic gardens and parks with large stands of mature trees. As human populations spread into these areas the gray squirrel becomes isolated, its population declines, and its genetic diversity narrows. In good years, female gray squirrels produce one litter per year compared to two litters for fox squirrels.

Competition with the fox squirrel and habitat fragmentation are major factors in declining gray squirrel populations, but disease is also a consideration. Epidemics of mange, coccidiosis, and mites have decimated populations of gray squirrels over the years. Because of its greater fertility, however, the fox squirrel can lose an estimated 40% of its population and still recover. Like them or despise them, fox squirrels are established in California.

**ITALIAN CYPRESS**

*(Cupressus sempervirens)*

Rudi Volti, Nature Interpreter

The Italian cypress, also known as the Mediterranean, Tuscan, and Persian cypress, is an elegant native California tree. Native tree? Sure. It flourishes in many parts of the Mediterranean region. Much of Southern California has a Mediterranean climate. Therefore, it is a native California tree.

OK, there is something wrong with the logic here. But there is no denying that the tree serves as a splendid complement to our local landscape. The Italian cypress is a medium-sized coniferous evergreen tree that grows to heights of up to 35 m. (115 ft.). It grows at a rate of one to two feet a year, which according to horticultural standards constitutes a medium rate of growth. It is quite long-lived, with some specimens reportedly living more than 1,000 years.

Although its origins lie in the Mediterranean, where its high drought tolerance is advantageous, Italian cypresses can also be grown successfully in areas with cooler, moister summers, such as the British Isles, New Zealand and the Pacific Northwest. It is also planted in Florida and parts of the coastal southern United States.

Although free-growing trees may have a rounded shape, the majority of ornamental trees are selected cultivars with a fastigiate structure, i.e., having closely-bunched, erect parallel branches. These varieties have a narrow crown that is often less than a tenth as wide as the tree is tall.

Wood from the Italian cypress has been used for a variety of wooden creations, most famously for the doors of the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome. Claimed medical applications range from stress relief through aromatherapy and treatment of dandruff, to varicose veins and hemorrhoids.

Its alleged medicinal qualities and picturesque contributions to landscapes aside, the Italian cypress, rather surprisingly, also has been linked to death and the underworld, perhaps because it does not regenerate when cut back too severely. In classical antiquity, the cypress was a symbol of mourning; Athenian homes observing the death of a family member were garlanded with boughs of the cypress. It also had the practical application of freshening the air during cremations. It was among the plants that were suitable for making wreaths to adorn statues of Pluto, the ruler of the underworld. Today, it remains a common cemetery tree in both Europe and the Muslim world.
In antiquity it was common to endow animals, plants, and geological features with mythic significance. The Roman poet Ovid (43 BC–17 or 18 AD) records the best-known myth that explores the association of the Italian cypress with death and grief. According to the story, a handsome boy named Cyparissus, accidentally killed a beloved tame stag. So great was his grief and remorse that he asked to weep forever. His divine lover Apollo thereupon transformed him into Cupressus sempervirens, the tree’s sap acting as his tears. In another version of the story, the woodland god Silvanus, another divine companion of Cyparissus, was the one who turned him into a tree. But unlike Apollo, who seemed to have little concern for the fate of his former lover, Sylvanus thereafter always carried a branch or sapling of the tree to express his mourning.

In addition to his place in mythology, Cyparissus lives today in arboreal nomenclature; his name was chosen by Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778), the creator of the modern system for classifying plants and animals, to designate the genus to which the Italian cypress belongs.

Adler has omitted rabbits, a critter that can test any gardener. My husband recently planted our garden only to observe an adorable bunny enjoy a nice meal. In this volume, hints to combat the rabbit problem would be welcome. Regrettably, bunnies multiply like rabbits!

In the foothills are big animals of concern: besides bears, bobcats and coyotes, there are deer and mountain lions, as well as rattlesnakes. Adler has suggestions for dealing with all of them.

One annoying animal for which we have no solution is ants. They may have colonies inside houses (one variety) or they may just be coming in when it is either too cold or too hot outside. The boric acid-based traps don’t work well; it’s unclear whether the arsenic-based sticks are any better, and I am reluctant to spray pyrethrum near food. According to Adler, ants require a large tool kit: boric acid powder, or a liquid form called Drax, mint-apple jelly or corn syrup for making your own cocktail with boric acid, a good eye for ant trails and nests, caulking and a caulk gun, household cleaners and patience. The latter is probably the most important: he says the ants should be gone in a month or two.

I highly recommend this book. However, it would be more user friendly with the addition of an index. There’s a very valuable Resources section at the end. “Outwitting Critters” can be found in the “Animals” section of the Volunteer Library and is immediately available for check-out.

**Book of the Month**

**Chris Ilgen, Volunteer Library Committee**


“Outwitting Critters” is an entertaining read. First published in 1992 by Bill Adler, a literary agent, Outwitting Critters provides humorous, often first-hand accounts of encounters and frustrations with nettlesome critters of all sizes, including ants, domestic cats and dogs, squirrels, bears, bees, coyotes, rats, scorpions, skunks, snakes, bats, crows, mice, raccoons, roaches, seagulls, sparrows, ticks and wasps.

Final Clearance!

There are only three apple green volunteer polo shirts left! We have one men’s XL and two men’s medium. Clearance sale cost is $15.00 each. (Originally $22.00). If you would like one of these “soon to be extinct” shirts, please send an email to Linda Prendergast at PrendergasL@verizon.net. Linda will make arrangements to take your payment (cash or credit card) and get the shirt to you.
2018/19 Field Trips

Left: Whitewater Preserve near Palm Springs.
Right: Vernal Pools at Santa Rosa Plateau.
JUNE CALENDAR

Special Events

**June 7:** Volunteer Quarterly Meeting and Luncheon, Friday, 11:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m., Outdoor Classroom

**June 26:** Volunteer Appreciation Dinner, Wednesday, 5:30 p.m., Johnson Oval + California Courtyard

Ongoing meetings, classes, workshops

**June 1:** Garden Walking Club, Saturday, 8 a.m., Admission Kiosk

**June 2:** Pomona Valley Audubon Society Beginner’s Bird Walk, Sunday, 8–9:30 a.m., Admission Kiosk, FREE with Garden admission.

**June 3:** Volunteer Library Committee Meeting, Monday, 10:15–11:45 a.m., Volunteer Library

**June 4:** Public Relations Meeting, Tuesday, 10–11 a.m., Volunteer Library

**June 6:** Volunteer Organization Board Meeting, Thursday, Noon—1:30 p.m., East Classroom

**June 7:** Volunteer Quarterly Meeting and Luncheon, Friday, 11:30 a.m–1:30 p.m., Outdoor Classroom

**June 7:** Butterflies & Brews, Friday, 5–8:30 p.m., Butterfly Pavilion

**June 8:** Garden Walking Club, Saturday, 8 a.m., Admission Kiosk

**June 9:** Medicinal Plants of California Herb Walk, Sunday, 10 a.m–1 p.m., pre-registration required. $20 members.

**June 14:** Butterflies & Brews, Friday, 5–8 p.m., Butterfly Pavilion

**June 15:** Garden Walking Club, Saturday, 8 a.m., Admission Kiosk

**June 15:** Family Bird Walk—Wild Birds Unlimited, Saturday, 8 a.m., Admission Kiosk, FREE with Garden admission.

**June 16:** Father’s Day—Dad’s receive FREE Garden admission. Sunday, 8 a.m–5 p.m.

**June 18:** Full Moon Night Hike, Tuesday, 7:30–9:30 p.m., pre-registration required; $16 members.

**June 19:** Volunteer Personnel Committee Meeting, Wednesday, 9:30–11 a.m., Volunteer Library

**June 21:** Butterflies & Brews, Friday, 5–8 p.m., Butterfly Pavilion

**June 22:** Garden Walking Club, Saturday, 8 a.m., Admission Kiosk

**June 26:** Volunteer Appreciation Dinner, Wednesday, 5:30 p.m., Johnson Oval + California Courtyard

**June 28:** Volunteer Service Hours Due, Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

**June 28:** Butterflies & Brews, Friday, 5–8 p.m., Butterfly Pavilion

**June 29:** Garden Walking Club, Saturday, 8 a.m., Admission Kiosk

Coming In July: Brew Wild II on July 6.
Pictured are several members of the Native Designs Team, harvesting flowers and foliage to be used in the vases and centerpieces for the Forever California gala. Our volunteer florists made 24 large centerpieces for the tables and over 30 other vases and arrangements for the event.

The Volunteer Organization donates the flowers for the annual fundraiser. The value of this year’s efforts was $1427.00.

**New Volunteer Library Section**

**Gene Baumann, Volunteer Library Committee**

The Volunteer Library Committee is pleased to announce that a new section of the library will be set up and dedicated to **Pioneering Botanists/Naturalists**.

This section will emphasize early botanists and/or naturalists who influenced work on native California plants. Special attention will be given to women contributors. The Volunteer Library Committee is eager to hear from Oak Notes readers regarding books we might purchase to support the collection. Better yet, if you have a book in this area that you would like to donate to the Volunteer Library, we would be most appreciative. Please contact me with your ideas/books at eugeneamym@verizon.net.