



NEW MEXICO'S VOICE FOR NATIVE PLANTS

NEWSLETTER

of the

NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
OF NEW MEXICO

JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH 2025

VOL. I NO. 1



Ready or not, it's 2025!

Green sweat bee pollinating a Chihuahua pineapple cactus (*Echinomastus intertextus*).
Image: Gordon Berman, Las Cruces Chapter

The Newsletter of the Native Plant Society of New Mexico

January–March 2025, Vol. 50 No. 1. This newsletter is published quarterly by the Native Plant Society of New Mexico (PO Box 35388, Albuquerque, NM 87176) and is free to members. The NPSNM, a nonprofit organization, is composed of native plant enthusiasts and advocates, from home gardeners to resource managers and botanists, who have an interest in the flora of New Mexico. Original articles from the newsletter may be reprinted if attributed to the author and to this newsletter. Views expressed are the opinions of the individual authors and not necessarily those of NPSNM. Articles and high-resolution artwork supporting NPSNM's mission are welcomed and can be sent to the editor, Margaret Ménache, *newsletter [at] npsnm.org*.

The next submission deadline is February 25, 2025.

Mission The Native Plant Society of New Mexico (NPSNM) is a non-profit organization that strives to educate the public about native plants by promoting knowledge of plant identification, ecology, and uses; fostering plant conservation and the preservation of natural habitats; supporting botanical research; and encouraging the appropriate use of native plants to conserve water, land, and wildlife.

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Legacy: What we leave behind, we give to the future

NPSNM encourages members to consider including NPSNM in their wills.

For further information,
contact us at [ask.npsnm \[at\] npsnm.org](mailto:ask.npsnm@npsnm.org)

NPSNM is a 501(c3) tax-exempt organization

Membership in the NPSNM is open to anyone supporting our goals of promoting a greater appreciation of native plants and their environment and the preservation of endangered species. We encourage the use of suitable native plants in landscaping to preserve our state's unique character, to conserve water, and as a part of the regional ecosystem in support of native pollinators and other fauna. Members benefit from chapter presentations, field trips, plant and seed exchanges/sales, discounts on publications, a statewide conference, and a network of knowledgeable plant enthusiasts.



Joining is easy! Scan this QR code to be directed to our website or go there the old-fashioned way from your browser: www.npsnm.org. You may also snail mail your contact information, local chapter preference (if any), and dues to our main address (NPSNM, PO Box 35388, Albuquerque NM 87176). Yearly dues [\$30 regular individual, \$45 household, \$60 friend of the Society, and \$20 for youth (through 26 years) or PK-12 teacher] and donations are tax deductible. Higher supporting levels can be found on our website. ❖

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From the President

Margie Gibson

The work of the Native Plant Society is more important than ever to help meet the many challenges facing our planet. Native plants are part of the solution. In addition to creating vital habitat, our resilient native plants can help mitigate climate change by locking up planet-warming carbon dioxide.

My vision is to continue our collective efforts to promote and protect native plants while fostering connections among members, other organizations, and the wider public.

I worked to protect habitat in Alaska for many years, including serving as executive director of a conservation nonprofit that worked as a bridge between conservation organizations and local communities. One focus of our organization was addressing the impacts of climate change on rural Alaska villages. Between the start of my conservation career and its end, I took a break and learned graphic design.

Through my graphic design experience, I became involved in the Gila Chapter and then in our botanical garden. When the need arose, I stepped up and became chapter president; now here I am as our state president. In words attributed to Yogi Berra, “It’s like déjà vu all over again.”

Our other new officers for the next two years are Sylvan Kaufman as vice president, Tom Stewart as treasurer, Betty Spence as recording secretary, and Kathleen Hall as documentarian — I look forward to serving with them and appreciate all of you for voting.

I want to thank our outgoing co-presidents, Don and Wendy Graves; our vice president, Jonathan Tanis; and our recording secretary, Jane Kruse, who served for over a decade. I am grateful for the work of our chapter and statewide boards and committees. It is essential to our organization, as are all the other individuals who volunteer for newsletters, media and online outreach, events, and so much more. Thanks too for the help our staff provides. Because of all of you, our membership is growing. Our organization requires a broad range of skills and help with many simple tasks. If you haven’t volunteered yet, I hope you will.

It’s daunting to face four years of federal “leadership” by those who do not believe in science, including that of climate change. I welcome your ideas to ensure we conserve and promote our native plant heritage. How can we involve more of our fellow citizens? What are the possibilities for collaborating with other like-minded groups? I look forward to hearing your thoughts about making our organization even stronger, and I appreciate your support. ❖



It's a Jubilee!

Kathleen Hall, Documentarian

In 2026 the Native Plant Society of New Mexico will celebrate fifty years of plants and their places – a Golden Jubilee. Yes, we will have an actual party in 2026 as part of our annual conference, already being planned by a chapter deep in the heart of the state. We want this Jubilee to be all over the map all through the year. This is an opportunity to introduce, and encourage, more people to plant, view, enjoy, and appreciate the native plants of our many ecosystems.

Our anniversary gift will be what we offer our beautiful state. So let’s start the planning.

Is it time for a new logo? What would you like to see at the top of the newsletter, the website?

Should we have a slogan or tagline that defines our mission – Grow Native? It could be used on stickers, sleeves, banners, and other visuals that could be put on plant pots, booths, et cetera to let the public know our mission.

Party favors? What do we want to use as outreach to communities throughout the year? Plants, of course. One idea is to select a palette of native trees, shrubs and perennials that are easy to cultivate, well-adapted to more than one part of the state, colorful, and not too aggressive (Sorry, silverleaf nightshade (*Solanum elaeagnifolium*), you’re not invited.) Chapters may have their own palettes but overlap would be a good thing. We could distribute seeds, cuttings and/or starts at gatherings all over the state. What plant would you nominate for the list?

Merchandise? Tee shirts, potholders, gardeners’ tool bags, what else? Coloring pages that can be downloaded from our website? A package of photos of rare native plants?

How can we encourage wider use of the Carter Conservation Fund? A kit that helps users write a good grant application with explanations, examples and tips? Outreach to the general public to solicit donations?

What coordinated tools might we use for outreach? A public service campaign using media to talk about native plants and their value? A table kit with brochures, talking points, visuals, a banner, and other materials? More active engagement with speakers bureau listings?

Many ideas can be implemented on a chapter level, but communication among chapters will enhance efforts to promote our message. If your chapter is using something that works, share it.

Who’s going to think up and carry out all the ideas? To prepare for this Golden Jubilee we need members who want to be involved in this planning effort. If something piques your interest, or if you have more ideas, great! If you are an organizer, an artist, a listmaker, a phone user (aka a texter), a dreamer, or something else, you are needed. There’s room for everyone who wants to Jubilee. Please get in touch with us with your logo, plant selection, and activity ideas, or simply to express your interest in joining this effort. ❖

Contact Kathleen Hall at greenheron405@gmail.com or email ask.npsnm@npsnm.org. Please put the word Jubilee in the message subject line.

Conservation Corner

Sylvan Kaufman,
NPSNM Conservation Committee Chair

This year I think it is important to remember author William deBuys' talk on hope at the annual meeting in Taos. Quoting from his book, *The Trail to Kanjiroba*, he said, "Earth's beauty is inexhaustible," and we must do what makes sense irrespective of outcome. There may always be significant challenges from those who don't care about our amazing diversity of plant life in New Mexico, but the NPSNM will continue to do what it can to conserve and celebrate New Mexico flora.

Support for Forest Service Old Growth Forest Amendments

The NPSNM submitted a letter of support in September for amending Land Management Plans (LMPs) to "institutionalize climate-smart management and conservation strategies that address threats to mature and old-growth forests on Federal Lands". The amendments would put more emphasis on sustaining existing old growth forests and on managing mature forests so that they will eventually become old growth forests. You can read the letter here: <https://www.npsnm.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Old-Growth-Amendment-comments-2024.pdf>

Biodiversity and Climate Change

There were two significant global conferences this fall: COP16, the United Nations Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and COP29, the UN Climate Change Conference. As usual, there were mixed results from these conferences. According to the New York Botanical Garden (<https://www.nybg.org/plant-talk/moving-toward-peace-with-nature-nybg-at-cop16/>), the CBD established a new fund that "would shift profits from companies who profit from genetic information into a fund that would support global conservation efforts" and "established rights for indigenous people, who received a permanent body for future negotiations," two positive changes. There was less agreement on how to fund and implement biodiversity monitoring and protection projects.

COP29 proposes that developed nations pay into a fund to help less-developed nations with projects to reduce the impacts of climate change, but to what extent those funds will ever be forthcoming is questionable.

Closer to home, check out the Southwest's Climate Hub 's cool StoryMap (<https://storymaps.arcgis.com>) and "Come Rain or Shine" podcast (<https://www.climatehubs.usda.gov/hubs/topic/come-rain-or-shine-podcast-series>). The talks from the Botanical Society of America's November online conference, *Plant Resilience and Conservation for a Changing Climate*, had several speakers on alpine plants (<https://climatesymposium.botany.org/plant-resilience-and-conservation-for-a-changing-climate>).



Vanishing Botany Programs

Meanwhile, the number of universities offering a degree in Botany has dropped to just 59 in 2023. By comparison, there were 76 in 2002. The demand for botanists has not declined, with many federal agencies and private companies seeking to hire people with plant identification skills and other botanical knowledge. Fortunately, New Mexico has botany programs through UNM, NMSU, and WNMU. Your donations to the NPSNM Carter Conservation Fund help keep botany research going in our region through our annual grant awards. Please consider making a donation to share your enthusiasm for plants with younger generations!

2025 NM Legislative Session

The State legislature will meet from January 21 through March 22 this year. Look for a bill to be introduced about the Department of Fish and Game that would update rules, secure funding, and modernize the department to enable it to do more to conserve and restore habitat (and that would include plants) for wildlife. Funding for EMNRD's Forestry Department, for university education and research, and for the Extension program also helps with plant education and conservation in our state. ❖





NPSNM 2025 Conference, Las Cruces, NM

October 2 – 5, 2025

Responsible Beauty

Jamie Blair and Mary Steigman, Las Cruces Chapter

The Las Cruces Chapter of the Native Plant Society of New Mexico invites you to the Chihuahuan Desert in the southern half of our state for the 2025 State Conference. The Conference will focus on flora in the Organ Mountains–Desert Peaks National Monument. The Monument was established in 2014 to protect significant prehistoric, historic, geologic, and biologic resources of scientific interest. It includes four areas: the Organ Mountains, Desert Peaks, Potrillo Mountains, and Doña Ana Mountains. We'll also learn about the Jornada Experimental Range, located on the ancestral lands of indigenous peoples of the Southwest to promote understanding of the history, experience, and place-based knowledge of their original inhabitants.

What We're Planning for You

Thursday 10/2

Hacienda de Mesilla, Mesilla, NM

3–5 pm Board Meeting – Hacienda Room

5–7 pm Meet & Greet on the Roof-top Cantina and ground level

Patio: light appetizers provided, self-pay beverages, beautiful sunset views of the Organ Mountains

Dinner on your own

Friday 10/3

Morning/early afternoon: field trips, workshops, garden tours; box lunches provided

Afternoon: on-your-own exploring in Las Cruces and historic La Mesilla

5–7 pm Reception at the NMSU Art Museum: docent-guided tours, live music, slide show preview of silent auction items; mocktails and light appetizers provided

Dinner on your own

Saturday 10/4

Light breakfast provided

All-day speakers, posters

Lunch provided

Banquet: Location TBD, silent auction, live music

Sunday 10/5

Guided and self-guided exploration on your way home

The Organ Mountains are a steep, angular mountain range with rocky spires that jut majestically above the Chihuahuan Desert floor to an elevation of 9,000 feet. This picturesque area of rocky peaks, narrow canyons, and open woodlands ranges from Chihuahuan Desert habitat to ponderosa pine in the highest elevations. Located adjacent to and on the east side of Las Cruces, this area provides opportunities for photography, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, camping, and wildlife viewing.

The Desert Peaks include the Robledo Mountains, Sierra de las Uvas, and Doña Ana Mountains, characterized by desert mountains rising steeply from flat plains.

The Potrillo Mountains are the most remote section of the Monument located a distance to the southwest from Las Cruces, and are comprised of a volcanic landscape of cinder cones, lava flows, and craters. ❖



This road runner, our New Mexico state bird, is a 20-ft tall sculpture created from discarded material. Designed in 1993 by Olin Calk, it is intended to illustrate consumption and waste and the benefits of recycling to create something new.

Image: Ken Steigman



Friday evening reception venue at the NMSU Art Museum.

Image: E. Flynn

Plants of Las Cruces Through the Seasons

Gordon Berman, Las Cruces Chapter

Although we will host the 2025 State Conference in early October, we thought you might like an introduction to our plants and a chance to learn a bit about their life cycles. One thing blooms after the next throughout our year. There's always a spectacle to enjoy.

▼ Spring comes early to the Las Cruces area. You could be forgiven for thinking it's still winter but our plants and pollinators wake up early. Among the first plants to bloom are the mini-stemmed Chihuahuan Pineapple Cactus (*Echinomastus intertextus*) sprinkled intermittently on mid-level mountain slopes. In whites, creams, and pinks, their flowers draw eager foraging pollinators – butterflies as well as varied bees and flies as seen here. A sweat bee swimming in pollen can be seen on the newsletter cover.



▲ The low-key cacti are followed by saturated carpets of poppies and *Physaria*... if we're lucky. Massive blooms like these on the west mesa below the Organ Mountains have declined the past few hotter and drier years.



◀ Not as stressed as the annuals are the hedgehogs, like this mounding *Echinocereus coccinea*. One of several hedgehog species, each is distinctively colored on the yellow to purple spectrum.

▼ The verticals typically come next, their stalks often rising 12" per day. The yuccas (*Yucca torreyi* in this image) produce edibles, fibers, and soaps. Bishop's Cap is in the background.



▲ Atop Tortugas Mountain, an agave attracts a female hummingbird making multiple forays from nest to nectar. Indigenous people found this plant, like the yucca, a source of food and fiber. Incoming people find fermented mezcal and tequila more to their liking.

▼ The just plain pretties pose spring to fall. Finding these bouquets is a joy, often unexpected, visible only round the next bend or hidden save one vantage. Here are a few: *Dalea* sp. and an aster (left); Tahoka daisy, *Machaeranthera tanacetifolia* (center); and globe mallow, *Sphaeralcea* sp. with an arching pea (right).



► The filaments are there if you stop and stare. Apache plume, *Fallugia paradoxa*, (right) and Mountain mahogany, *Cercocarpus breviflorus*, (right below) are members of the Rosaceae Family. Both grow in substantial numbers: their post flowering plumes create feathery wonders.



▲ The grasses gain dominance in late summer and fall. Muhly grass, *Muhlenbergia* spp., (above) and bluestem, *Bothriochloa* spp., (below) create a final splash of color as our weather cools and we enjoy long hikes.



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Chapter Activities & Events

For further information on upcoming events, email or call the contact person listed, or **visit the chapter's web page** at www.npsnm.org. Click on "Chapters" to select the chapter. **Hikers** should always bring plenty of water, hat, sun protection, lunch and/or snacks, field guides. Wear sturdy shoes, suitable for rough, uneven ground. **Check with your chapter for any fees or restrictions they or the event venues might require. Please check with the hosting chapter to be sure you know the current status of any event listed here.** ❖

Albuquerque Monthly meetings are normally the first Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm at the UNM Continuing Education Building, 1634 University Blvd NE. For more information contact Sara Keeney at abq@psnm.org or 505-379-3392. For questions, future field trip ideas or to volunteer as a leader or co-leader, contact our Field Trip Coordinator: Sharon Miles, Sharon@seniorcareoptions.net, 505-604-6307. You must register at least 24 hours before the start with the field trip leader. Please let us know if you need to cancel.

Jan 8 Meeting. "Wandering Around Central New Mexico Looking at Cacti." Rob Romero will take us on a virtual trip around central NM to see interesting cacti. Rob's cactus hobby has been a big part of his life, and he spends as much time as possible wandering around with fellow cactophiles looking at plants in various places. Come along with Rob on this adventure and get a sampling of the cacti that call NM their home.

Feb 5 Meeting. "Native Plant Gardens for Beauty and Resiliency." Judith Phillips will talk about developing native plant landscapes and share her wholistic ideas of appropriate plants for your location to create beneficial habitat for plants and others. The advantages of natives with their tolerance for climate change and their support for native pollinators have become central to her designs.

Mar 5 Meeting. "Yes! New Mexico has Native Ferns" Harpo Faust will share images and information from her recent work researching ferns in New Mexico. Learn more about native species, where ferns grow and how to spot them.

(Right: Harpo admires orchids in the Gila Wilderness. Image: Donna Stevens.)



Continued page 15

El Paso The El Paso Chapter holds combined meetings with the El Paso Cactus and Rock Club. The meetings will be the first Saturday of the month at 10:00 am and will take place at the Garden Center at Memorial Park (3105 Grant Ave, El Paso, TX 79930). All events are free unless a fee is specified. Nonmembers welcome. Info: Kevin Floyd, 915-747-6665; kwfloyd@utep.edu; <https://www.facebook.com/Native-Plant-Society-of-New-Mexico-El-Paso-Chapter-191913520833180>

Jan 4 Workshop. "Growing plants with winter sowing." Many plant species have seeds that require special treatments like cold stratification and scarification to help to break dormancy. Winter sowing is an approach that mimics natural conditions for improving germination without requiring a lot of work. Kevin Floyd will lead this workshop to teach the principles of winter sowing. Participants will leave with a container sown with native plant seeds to try winter sowing for themselves!

Feb 1 Meeting. "Agave Restoration Initiative by Bat Conservation International." To support the recovery of the Mexican long-nosed bat, the continued conservation of all pollinating bats and the agave landscape upon which these bats rely, BCI has launched an Agave Restoration Initiative across Mexico and the Southwestern U.S. Rachel Burke, Agave Restoration Coordinator for Bat Conservation International, will give an overview of this program, talk about how it relates to her previous research on agave distribution and landscape health, and discuss why healthy underlying native plant communities can support the persistence of agave populations in the southwestern U.S.

Mar 1 Meeting. TBA



A slim-footed agave (*Agave gracilipes*) in the Franklin Mountains State Park in El Paso. This agave is a naturally-occurring hybrid of *A. neomexicana* and *A. lechuguilla*.
Image: Kevin Floyd

Gila (Silver City) Upcoming evening programs will be hybrid whenever possible. To attend in person, come to Room 111 in Harlan Hall on the WNMU campus at 7:00 pm. Gila Chapter members will receive an email with the Zoom link; all others are welcome and can request a link from gilanative@gmail.com. Check the website for the latest field trip information: <https://gilanps.org/events/field-trips/>

Jan 17 Meeting. "NMDOT Vegetation Management and our Gila Highways: Working on a plan to improve what's being done." Bill Hutchinson, NMDOT Roadside and Community Design Manager and Andrew Alderete, NMDOT Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM). Bill and Andrew will explain what the IVM Program is and what is being done to improve the way we do vegetation management. They will then introduce the Gila Vegetation Management Plan.

Feb 21 Meeting. "Native Landscaping Is Not a Crime." Val and J bought one of Silver City's fixer-upper houses in 2021. Alongside a complete home renovation, they also planned to rehabilitate the yard with native plants. They will discuss the challenges they faced and how they navigated the charges against them when they were cited under Silver City's nuisance ordinance for their initial efforts in the yard rehabilitation process.

Mar 21 Meeting. "The Night Shift: Moths as Nocturnal Pollinators." Kaitlin Hasse, Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, Southwest Pollinator Conservation Specialist. The work of pollination is never over—even after dark! When our day-active (diurnal) pollinators turn in for the evening, nocturnal pollinators such as moths, bats, beetles, and even some species of bees take on the night shift to feast on nectar. We are just beginning to understand the importance of these nocturnal flower visitors for pollination of wild and managed plants.

Upcoming Field Trips Just a preview of coming attractions: In February we'll be hoping for late winter wildflowers in the Chihuahuan desert at our lower elevations. Come March, interesting native plants should be popping out on Boston Hill. Details as Andrew Tree scouts out the best locations.

Las Cruces Our hybrid meetings are held on the NMSU campus in the Biology Annex, Herbarium Building, 3080 Williams Avenue, Room 101 on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 pm. Zoom link available from LC@npsnm.org. Check the NPSNM website, the LC Chapter's Facebook page, and recent email for updates, changes, additional news and other events and activities of interest.

Matthew Becker led field trips to Valles Canyon, a wild, remote, petroglyph inscribed portion of The Organ Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument; and to Mesilla Bosque State Park, a well tended local preserve.

Ken Steigman continues to monitor a west mesa spring to ensure its recovery from degradation by livestock.

At a general membership meeting, Rachel Gionini's slide show highlighted fascinating knowledge and lore she acquired while attending Professor Olivia Messinger Carril's week long seminar on native bees. The warmer the climate, the more bees we have pollinating both agricultural and native plants. Ours is a species-rich environment.



Curly top gum weed (*Grindelia squarrosa*) hosts the diversity, equity, inclusion of a metallic wood boring beetle and assorted flies. Image: Gordon Berman

Cheryl Beymer and other Chapter members volunteer several hours each week to help NMSU's Herbarium catalogue, arrange, and preserve plant specimens numbering well over 100,000 in its collection.

Otero Most events are free, and everyone, including non-members, is welcome to attend. For more event and/or chapter information, and to contact us, please visit our chapter section of the NPSNM website.

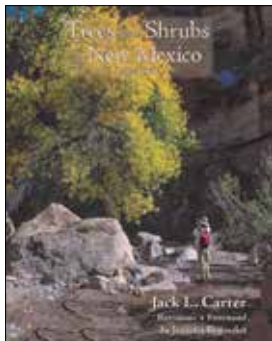
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The Gila Native Plant Society is committed to promoting the education, research, and appreciation of the native flora of the southwest; encouraging the preservation of rare and endangered plant species; and supporting the use of suitable native plants in landscaping.

Santa Fe In-person meetings are on the second Tuesday of the month from September through May at 6:30 pm at Christ Lutheran Church, 1201 Arroyo Chamiso. Speakers are announced to the Santa Fe listserve. To sign up to receive emails, email santafe@npsnm.org. We will post speakers on the NPSNM website when we have advance information. Meetings and talks are free and open to all.

Talks began in September with Teresa Quintana from IAIA speaking on "Amaranth Planting and Harvest." October's speaker was Zac Carlson who gave an overview on using iNaturalist and how useful it has been recording species at Leonora Curtin Wetland Preserve.

In November, Dr. Thomas Antonio gave a wonderful lecture on "Sunflower: History, Culture, and Evolution"



Lesser goldfinch feeds on annual sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*) seeds. Image: Sylvan Kaufman

The chapter voted on new bylaws and held elections at the November meeting. Sylvan Kaufman steps in as chapter president after Tom Antonio's nearly two decades of service! Tom will continue as program chair. Dawn Janney will serve as co-treasurer with Sylvan. Our chapter is still seeking a vice president and a conservation chair. Barbara Fix is the chapter representative to the board, Joy Ford coordinates Membership, Donna Eagles is our field trip chair, and Pam Wolfe has been helping with publicity. Our chapter's winter social was held at Tom Antonio's home on Dec. 8 with a gift recognizing Tom's amazing service to the Santa Fe chapter of the Native Plant Society.

Taos Videos of past meetings are at <https://tinyurl.com/TaosNPSvideos>. For updates, check the Taos page on the NPSNM website, our Facebook page, the Taos News Calendar, or email TaosNPS@gmail.com. Meetings will be held on the FIRST Wednesday of the month in the Kit Carson Electric Cooperative Boardroom, 118 Cruz Alta Road from 6:00 to 7:30 pm. All meetings are free and open to the public.

The Taos Chapter activities go on hiatus during the winter, other than the greenhouse, which operates year-round. Activities will resume in March 2025, with our first meeting on the 5th. The full list of meetings, hikes and field trips will be added to the website as they are confirmed. Please check for any changes prior to attending.

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Exploring the Flora of Silver City, NM (2022-Present): Adventure, Discovery, and Fun

William (Bill) Norris, Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Department of Natural Sciences, Western New Mexico University, Silver City, NM, Gila Chapter

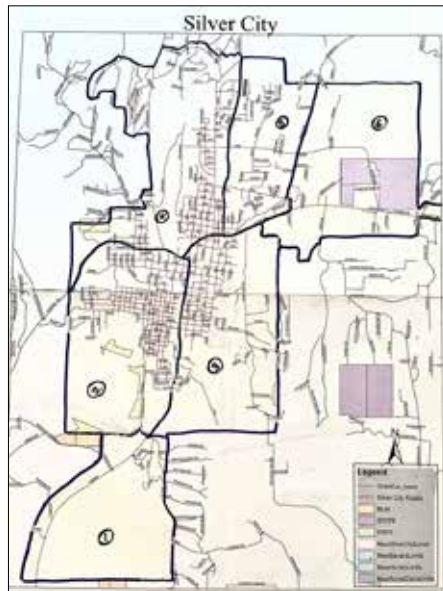
Looming just north of Silver City, New Mexico are most of the 3.3 million acres of the spectacular Gila National Forest. Although the forest has received much attention from botanists for more than a century, large regions within its boundaries remain unexplored to this day because of its immensity and inaccessibility. When I broached the subject of a plant inventory of the municipality of Silver City to an anonymous friend and renowned botanist, they suggested to me that our botanical efforts might be more worthwhile if directed to exploring the adjacent national forest, with its three wilderness areas and fed by the mighty Gila River.

Point taken. That said, the twelve participants in this project are not the first botanists who have been drawn to exploring Silver City (6,464 acres) and environs. Not by a long shot. Prominent NM botanist Charles Wright collected several plant specimens in Silver City in 1851, about two decades before the town was officially founded. Another famous NM plant collector, Edward L. Greene, collected more than 100 plant specimens “near Silver City” in 1880. Elmer O. Wooton and Orrick B. Metcalfe each made dozens of plant collections in the vicinity of Silver City in the first decade of the 20th century. Although botanical field work at that time was definitely a “Man’s World” (quoting James Brown), both Anna I. Mulford and Alice Eastwood collected plants in Silver City and surroundings prior to 1920. By the time we began the current plant inventory of Silver City, more than 8,000 plant specimens had been collected in the city and nearby areas. [Note: all plant records referred to in this article are documented in SEINet – <https://swbiodiversity.org>]



Collecting Plants. Left to right: Jane Spinti, Jim Jacobs, and Kathleen Koopman. Image: Bill Norris

Since fall 2022, twelve plant enthusiasts (Ben Chu, Angela Flinders, Jim Jacobs, Elizabeth (“Betsy”) Kaido, Russ Kleinman, Kathleen Koopman, Karen Nakakihara, Monica Rude, Jane Spinti, Andrew Tree, Mark Widrechner, and I) have participated in a focused study of the Silver City flora. Represented in our team are long-time volunteers in the Dale A. Zimmerman Herbarium at Western New Mexico



University (WNMU), a local artist, an avid hiker, an herbalist, several accomplished nature photographers, a horticulturist, two WNMU botany professors and a WNMU graduate student. Now two years into this project, and in preparation for a recent presentation about this project to the Gila Chapter of NPSNM, I asked my fellow team members: “So, why are we studying the Silver City flora, rather than tackling a chunk of the Gila National Forest?”

The answers came quickly. “Because it hasn’t been done before.”

“To learn about what’s here.”

“Because many of us have a limited time to go out in the field each week.”

“Because Silver City is close and physically accessible.”

“To raise awareness about native plants in the community.”

“To establish a baseline for what’s here as a basis for comparison by future botanists as we face climate change.”

“Because it’s fun.”

I would add to this list the camaraderie of working with team members with different backgrounds and life stories but shared enthusiasm for plants.

To get started, we obtained a map identifying the legal perimeter of the municipality of Silver City. Betsy divided the city into several large areas, which she delineated on our base map. We constantly refer to this map when planning our weekly field trips, taking care that no region of the city is overlooked. Our weekly field trips (early March — early November) typically last two hours and involve a visit to two or three sites that have been identified as potential habitat for native and naturalized (i.e., escaped from point of introduction and showing evidence of reproduction) plant species.

A group of four to six people typically participate on a given field trip, which we conduct on public land or private land (with permission). Although we all scout the landscape of a given area for new



Mounting Plants: Kathleen Koopman processes plants collected during a day in the field. Image: Bill Norris.



Harlequin Spiralseed (*Schistophragma intermedia*).
Image: Andrew Tree



Quince Fruit. Image: Russ Kleinman



Red Monkeyflower (*Erythranthe rubellus*).
Image: Andrew Tree



Pterygoneuron ovatum. Image: Russ Kleinman

plant species, team members divide up the specific tasks of conducting field work: checking the master plant list (maintained by Angela) to see if we have previously documented a newly located plant species, obtaining a specimen of any previously uncollected plant species (when populations support it), bagging the plant specimen, and calling out specific location and habitat data for recording in a field book dedicated to this project. As for succulents and locally uncommon plant species, another team member will obtain a photograph of the plant for later printing and mounting on archival herbarium paper with its associated specimen label. Team member Russ Kleinman also collects specimens of mosses and liverworts, which he immediately deposits in a specimen packet.

At the conclusion of a day's field work, we travel back to the herbarium where several team members press the collected plants. These specimens typically remain in a plant press for several weeks until they are dry and ready to be unloaded, identified, and processed.

Upon entering the Dale A. Zimmerman Herbarium, one will immediately see two adjacent open cardboard boxes each containing a stack of newspapers containing dried plant specimens. These boxes are respectively labeled "Plants to be identified" and "Plants waiting for labels". Once the identity of each plant in the former box is confirmed by one of the plant identification specialists on the team, another sequence of tasks is set in motion: label preparation, mounting the dried specimen and its associated label on archival herbarium paper, entry of specimen label information into SEINet, and finally filing of the specimens into the appropriate folder in the herbarium collection. Clearly, "it takes a village" (quoting Hillary Clinton's book title) to process these plant specimens and takes far more time than their actual collection in the field.

Midway through this project, we have a number of interesting findings to report. To date, we have documented more than 500 plant species (more than 70% of them native to New Mexico) in Silver City, including more than 100 for which we know of no historic record. Among these are several dozen moss species, including the first record in Grant County of *Pterygoneuron ovatum*. Our plant list includes one species recognized as a rare plant by the New Mexico Rare Plant Technical Council, wheel milkweed (*Asclepias uncialis*), which we found in privately owned grassland that we had permission to visit and survey. Andrew has almost single-handedly demonstrated the botanical significance of Boston Hill, an extensive reclaimed

mine site which straddles the boundary of Silver City, as habitat for dozens of uncommon native plant species that we have found nowhere else in the project area.

Whether we like it or not, non-native and naturalized plant species are an established component (20-30%) of the Silver City flora. Still, some of our most significant plant discoveries during this project have been of such species. For example, our team looked for and discovered the only existing plant in North America (according to *Flora of North America*, volume 19) of African Trailing Daisy (*Osteospermum spinescens*) in open shrubland on the margin of St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Cemetery. Although vibrant at the beginning of this project, this shrub now appears to be on the verge of succumbing to recent drought conditions. Discovery of a huge, fruiting quince tree (*Cydonia oblonga*) within a riparian forest strip adjacent to San Vicente Creek on the south edge of town, although non-native, provides evidence of a former homestead for which there is no other trace. The Silver City flora also includes several attractive but potentially invasive non-native species: Dalmatian toadflax (*Linaria dalmatica*) and onionweed (*Asphodelus fistulosus*).

Despite all the above discoveries, there are more than 100 plant species collected historically in the Silver City area that we have not found during the current project.

Tentatively, we plan two more years of field work on this project and then we will submit a research paper, co-authored by all



► **Silver City Flora**, continued from previous page

twelve team members, to a peer-reviewed scientific journal for publication. Although there are dozens of such published papers reporting the results of plant inventories conducted in municipal areas in Europe, we know of only four such published studies summarizing the results of municipal plant inventories conducted in this country: Ames (Iowa), Chicago, Indianapolis, and New York City. Ours will be the fifth, and the first based on a study conducted in the western United States.

Hopefully, the rewards of municipal plant inventories, such as those reported in this ongoing study of the Silver City flora, are evident in this article. Perhaps we have inspired some of you to undertake similar endeavors in your own town or city! ❖

Las Cruces Chapter Awards Two More Native Plant Grants for NMSU Students

Joan Woodward, Las Cruces Chapter Grants Council Chair

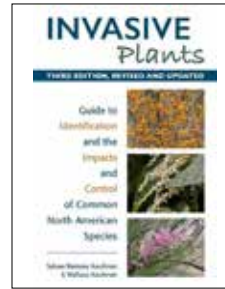
The Las Cruces Chapter of NPSNM is proud to award two grants to NMSU students involved in research and activities highly related to our mission. This year, Mickie Barraza won the \$500 Undergraduate Grant to enable her study of why certain populations of side oats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*) are more productive in restoration programs than others. She identified a gap in our knowledge and will be studying this as an undergraduate and, she hopes, as a future graduate student as well.

Sara Isabel Ruiz Flores won the \$1000 John Freyermuth and Carolyn Gressitt Graduate Grant. She will be expanding our knowledge about a critical and surprisingly under-collected and under-studied Chihuahuan Desert genus, the sotols (*Dasyllirion* species) through fieldwork, collections, and laboratory studies. The Las Cruces Chapter is pleased to support her important graduate work and looks forward to hearing her results when she presents her work to us next year.

Congratulations to both grant recipients, and many thanks to chapter members who donated the funds to support these worthy endeavors. This is our third year awarding grants and we have tripled both our original funds and our number of applicants. Our momentum in supporting the next generation of researchers, educators, conservationists, and plant enthusiasts is growing! ❖

Sylvan Kaufman on Invasive Plants

Margaret Ménache and Tom Stewart, Albuquerque Chapter



If you haven't met Sylvan Kaufman yet, you know her work as the NPSNM Conservation Committee Chair (and author of the regular Conservation Corner column – see p. 4). You'll get to know her better as the NPSNM Vice President beginning this year. The Santa Fe Chapter, where she's an active member, already knows her well. So it's a pleasure to have spoken with her about the recent publication of the third edition of her book, *Invasive Plants*. Her co-author is her father, Wallace Kaufman.

Sylvan and Wallace have a close-to twenty-year partnership writing about invasive plants across the continental US and Canada. This particular writing partnership arose from a confluence of Sylvan's experiences and her father's wide-ranging interests.

Sylvan's PhD (ecology) and post-doctoral research had focused on interactions between native and invasive plants. Then she got a job as a land manager at an arboretum. And suddenly she was "actually managing the invasive plants instead of just researching them."

Her father, meanwhile, is a storyteller and a writer. For those with East Coast ties, Wallace's name will be well-known as a co-author of *The Beaches Are Moving: The Drowning of America's Shoreline* (1979). One description of that book describes its inclusion of beaches "from coast to coast" as well as "sound advice on how to judge a safe beach development from a dangerous one and how to live at the shore sensibly and safely."

It just seemed logical to the two to apply the idea of an accessible guide to identifying problems and outlining suggestions for controlling them for beaches to invasive plants. There wasn't such a guide available then, and really, apart from the Kaufmans' book, there is no such guide now.

Already a hefty book at over 450 pages covering about 175 invasive species in the first edition, the third edition has grown by close to 100 pages and added about 75 species. The first 45 pages of the current edition lay out the premises for what makes a plant invasive and the various techniques available for control. The last 25 or so pages offer resources to learn more as well as a helpful index. In addition, Sylvan maintains a website for the book, <https://www.invasiveplant-guide.com>

Continued page 14 ►

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To learn about Bee City and Bee Campus USA visit: beecityusa.org

The Carroll Petrie Foundation is a private family foundation based in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Alongside its partners, the Foundation invests in the care and protection of animals and the natural world.

Who's on Board?

Kathleen Hall, NPSNM Documentarian

This series introduces the members of the state board, discusses what they do for NPSNM and why, and who they are when they're at home. If readers have questions or comments related to board structure and activities, please contact the newsletter editor (newsletter@npsnm.org) so we can address them in future issues.



Kevin Floyd pauses in the UTEP Centennial Gardens.
Image: Kevin Floyd

One of the most ardent supporters of the native plants of New Mexico lives in Texas. Kevin Floyd is the El Paso Chapter president and also serves as his chapter representative on the state board. He doesn't seem attached to the titles, but he is definitely the guy who wants to get things done. Kevin chaired the 2023 annual conference: hosted by El Paso and held in Alpine. He champions Carter Conservation Fund (CCF) grant applications, demonstrates the use of natives in his yard, and is the Botanical Curator of UTEP's Centennial Museum and Chihuahuan Desert Gardens. If you spend ten minutes talking to him, you will probably discover that his curiosity runs toward birds, insects, and other creatures that like to hang out with our native plants.

His work with UTEP Gardens has included replacing dying, non-native, donated plants with natives while nurturing over 600 species in the acre or so of gardens that are open to the public. Last year the Gardens celebrated their twenty-fifth anniversary.

His suburban home has a backyard wildlife refuge. He estimates that his former gravel "zero-scape" front yard now has more than fifty species, most of the plants from UTEP plant sales. He admits the learning curve has been steep at times. Who knows why Blackfoot Daisies (*Melampodium leucanthum*) died last season, and then, given the same conditions this season, thrive? Kevin has the patience and persistence every gardener needs. You might find him with his nose close to the ground in his front yard, taking photos of his native plants and the bugs that hang out on them.

He grew up in the Sacramento area in California where it's not quite a desert and spent many summers in Eastern Oregon learning to love the high desert of the Great Basin. After a post-doctoral project involving desert lizards, he settled in El Paso and took up with plants.

When asked if he has a favorite species, he offered Apache Plume (*Fallugia paradoxa*) as a current choice. The plumes, backlit and glowing on a perfect Southwestern day, and the little rose flowers when they bloom... a beautiful choice! But he also says there are so many interesting New Mexican natives that he reserves the right to choose another favorite plant tomorrow. As do we all.

The El Paso Chapter of NPSNM drew Kevin's attention and organizing skills. Meetings were not well attended. A little research revealed that many members were reluctant to drive after dark, and

that many of the same people were members of the El Paso Cactus and Rock Club. A partnership was arranged and meetings occur on Saturday mornings with a small number of active members. Program host duties alternate between the two groups. They recently celebrated Cactus Appreciation Month with a visit from Rob Romero, author and cactus guru from central New Mexico (on the schedule to speak at the Albuquerque Chapter January meeting). Other chapter activities include participation in Earth Day activities and zoo and other events as they work to stay engaged in the community.

Kevin doesn't love meetings (does anyone?) but recognizes that state board meetings are "an important way to make sure the organization is moving forward." He characterizes his participation on the board as not involving a "ton of work," to help promote the objectives of NPS. There are two in-person meetings each year — before the annual conference and at Sevilleta Wildlife Refuge field station in winter. Zoom meetings are scheduled as needed.

The winter board meeting is mostly a time to consider applications for CCF grants. Kevin knows from his own academic experience that small grants like the CCF provides, "can make a big difference for helping either a research project...or educational materials at a garden...or putting in a garden or improving a garden." He emphasizes that "Seeing some of the amazing projects people are working on around the state, and being able to actually help provide funding for that" makes his board work fulfilling and enjoyable.

Winter board meetings also provide a space to gather and share time with other board members. Kevin appreciates the camaraderie and the potluck. His own contribution to the table is likely to be a bean salad with sun-dried tomatoes dressed in vinaigrette. He suggests that the gathering needs to continue and expand on the theme of local beer. A few attendees bring their favorite craft brews for pre-dinner sharing and more varieties from every corner of the state would be even more fun.

Do you know your chapter's representative to the board of directors? Does your chapter need a representative? It could be you. Every two years new directors are elected statewide. One of these offices could also be held by you. If you'd like to participate on the state board, the board would like to hear from you. You'll get the satisfaction of working with some great people like Kevin Floyd. ❖

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of Common
North American
Species



Steven Sanchez Kaufman
& Wallace Kaufman

► Invasive Plants, *continued from page 12*

In between the beginning and the end of the book are about 450 pages of (brief) plant descriptions including information on the plant's impact on the ecosystem, how it got to the United States in the first place, how to manage it now that it's a problem, and where to look for more information. The entire book is reference-heavy which is a delight. It is quite helpful that the organization is based on physical characteristics: you don't have to know Latin names or families to find a plant. And, an invaluable tool is the multi-colored chart that tells where all the invasives in the book are a problem.

Among the several reasons for having a book that looks at invasive plants over most of North America, Sylvan emphasized that "the best indicator that something is going to become invasive in a location is if it's invasive elsewhere." Having a big picture reference source can help spot trouble in the making. As an example, she mentioned stinknet, an invasive in Arizona that has now been found in New Mexico. In part, it has been found because people were aware of it and were watching for it. Bringing that awareness to people is one important motivation for writing the book.

Researching so many plants over such a wide geographic range offered this insight. "As an ecologist and someone interested in botany, invasive plants encompass the amazing variability of plants as a whole. It just reinforced how impressed I am with plant life and its impressive ability to adapt to different conditions and to thrive under incredibly difficult circumstances."

Of course, plant identification, while critical, is only the first step toward doing something about invasives. Control is a big issue and the Kaufmans want to be sure that everyone can identify the plants and understands control options. They see the people who will benefit from their book ranging from the homeowner who needs to pull a few tumbleweeds from their yard to the land manager with thousands of acres to protect.

A fine line in many books, like that long-time favorite, *Weeds of the West*, to a recent NMSU booklet on weeds, is that the plant may be a weed to some people but to us it's likely to be a native plant. The Kaufmans are clear that a native plant can be aggressive and you might have good reason to control it, but an invasive plant came to North America from somewhere else. Sylvan also points out that simply because a plant came from somewhere else does not mean that it's invasive, although many are. As she and her father write, plants were brought for what people thought were good reasons. It just happens that the people were wrong about that in too many cases.

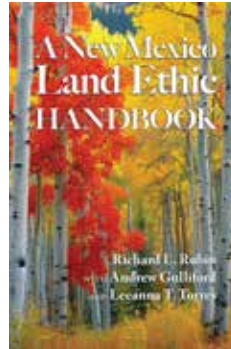
"One thing about the new edition I really wanted to emphasize is early detection. The least expensive way of controlling an invasive plant is when it first arrives and you first discover that it's a problem and you can still eliminate that plant. Because if you wait the problem is just going to get more and more expensive and eventually totally unmanageable."

For Sylvan, the hallmark of an invasive plant is the resultant loss in biodiversity. "I really hope that the book brings greater awareness about the problems that invasive plants cause and how you can't just ignore them. Yes, they all have positive and negative stories behind them and ultimately it's your decision about what you do about invasive plants. But it's important to recognize how big a problem they've become in the last 500 years and how significantly they've altered our environment."

Whether you're on a mission to watch for exotic invasives and be on the frontline of keeping those plants in check or you're simply interested in learning more about invasive plants and why particular ones are so problematic, this book will have something for you. ❖

A New Mexico Land Ethic Handbook

Richard Rubin, Taos Chapter



A New Mexico Land Ethic Handbook encompasses modern places, principles, and practices. We describe the evolution that culminated in Aldo Leopold's 1949 classic, *A Sand County Almanac*.

Our *Handbook* begins with careful study of Leopold's rigorous presentation asserting the importance and value of the land ethic concept. This is followed by selections from modern environmental and ecological thought leaders who appreciate the land ethic's continuing relevance and significance. We describe diverse experiences of the land ethic as interpreted and lived now in New Mexico.

We recognize the contributions of Aldo's work in the US Forest Service and of his wife Estella's New Mexico traditions. As the concept of land ethic evolution began here and matured in their Wisconsin years, we describe the development of the Leopold Foundation in Wisconsin that fosters this legacy.

The *Handbook* then leads readers on recognizing how the land ethic can be appreciated now in New Mexico. We tell stories of our modern wilderness area encounters, the changing social and civic complexity of wilderness, and our ecological concerns for wildlife vitality. We live and work with the land ethic core qualities Leopold recognized: soil, water, plants, and animals.

Experienced author and retired physician Richard Rubin serves as volunteer steward at the Leopolds' historic Tres Piedras home and supports the modern Forest Service mission of conservation scholarship and inspiration. Andrew Gulliford is Professor of History at Ft. Lewis College, accomplished author of Southwestern topics, and deeply engaged citizen in the wild. Leeanna Torres is a Nuevomexicana environmental scientist, writer, and daughter immersed in family *querencia* traditions.

This informative and personally compelling book will speak to all people living in New Mexico who care about our land and seek knowledge evolving from Aldo and Estella Leopold. It also provides important understanding for the many visitors exploring New Mexico history, culture, and ethical environmental policy.

The Taos NPSNM Chapter restored native shrubs at Tres Piedras. In addition to chapter field trips, I will provide guided visits to NPSNM members. All book proceeds go to the Friends of Mi Casita Fund at the Taos Community Foundation for house maintenance and educational programs. Besides SOMOS and OpCit shops in Taos, the *Handbook* is available online from www.nighthawkpress.com. ❖



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Chapter Activities, Continued from page 8

More from Albuquerque

It has been a curiously symmetrical year for the Albuquerque chapter. Our first field trip explored the foothills for galls in February 2024: we finished in October with another gall discovery hike with a different guide, Adam Kranz of UNM. It's a new galling way to see plant-insect relationships.

In spring and again in fall we set up tables at Valle de Oro, our urban national wildlife refuge, for Build Your Backyard Refuge Days. In addition to meeting young and old from the general public, it was great fun fraternizing with wonderful representatives of many kindred organizations. It gets better and better!

At Petroglyph National Monument, a small team of chapter members planted rescued cacti in the spring: we were invited to return to Petroglyph in early December to help coach Volunteers for the Outdoors in a long-awaited effort to revamp the desert garden at the Visitors Center.

It was gratifying this year to strengthen our ties with Xerces Society, Bird Alliance of Central New Mexico, and the Pollinators in the Neighborhood project. New field trip destinations and new presentation topics with new presenters made 2024 something to celebrate at our annual winter potluck meeting.

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Contribute to the Jack & Martha Carter Conservation Fund

The generous financial support from so many NPSNM members and friends of the flora of New Mexico makes it possible for the Board to approve funding for workshops throughout the state, basic research on a variety of critical plant taxa, continued support for the state's major herbaria, and for the development and support of more early education programs from K–12 in New Mexico schools.

Contributing is easy! Scan this QR code to be directed to our website or go there the old-fashioned way from your browser: www.npsnm.org. You may also snail mail your contact information with a check payable to NPSNM—Carter Conservation Fund to our main address (NPSNM, PO Box 35388, Albuquerque NM 87176).



Every contributed dollar is being used to protect the flora of New Mexico well into the future.

~Jack & Martha Carter

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The NPSNM was busy in 2024, is busy as 2025 begins, and is looking toward a Golden Jubilee in 2026



On an Albuquerque Chapter trip to the Petroglyph National Monument in 2024, this delicate *Palafoxia sphacelata* was spotted. Read more about past and upcoming events for all our chapters starting on p. 8.
Image: Tom Stewart

It's never too soon to start planning for a party. Especially a special one like a 50th anniversary. Read about what might be in store and add your thoughts and ideas to the mix. It's on p. 3.



Bill Norris and colleagues have been documenting the flora of Silver City. Their current plant list includes one species recognized as a rare plant by the New Mexico Rare Plant Technical Council: wheel milkweed (*Asclepias uncialis*). Read more about this fascinating project starting on p. 10.
Image: Andrew Tree



Las Cruces is hosting the 2025 NPSNM Annual Conference and is already deep into planning. See what they're planning on p. 5 and look at some of the native plants and rich landscapes they have to offer us starting on p. 6.
Image: Gordon Berman