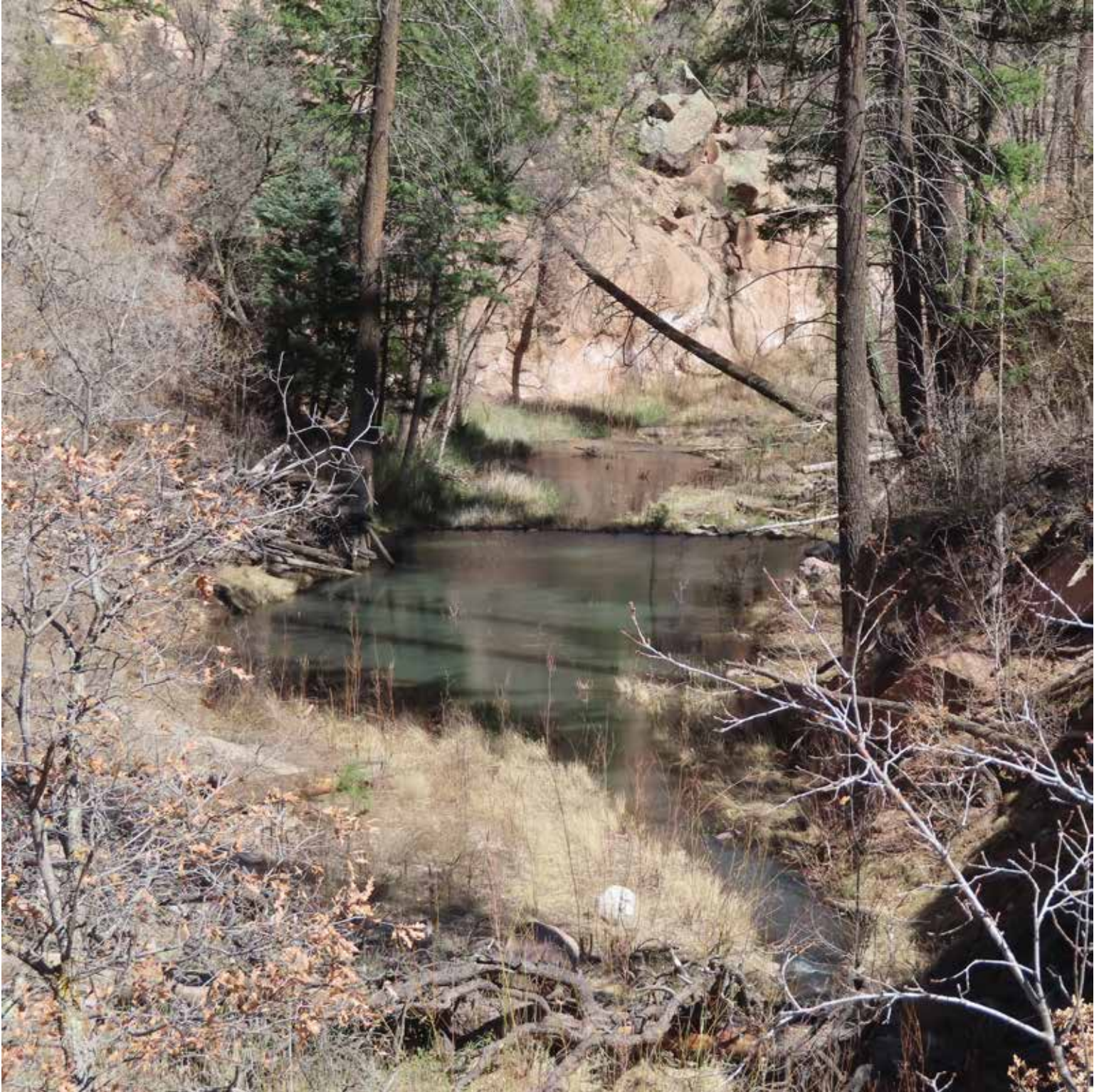




NEW MEXICO'S VOICE FOR NATIVE PLANTS
NEWSLETTER
OF THE
NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF NEW MEXICO

JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH 2026

VOL. LI NO. I



Frijoles Creek in Bandelier National Monument.

Image: Sylvan Kaufman

The Newsletter of the Native Plant Society of New Mexico

January–March 2026, Vol. 51 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, 2026.

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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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

Our Golden Jubilee

This year marks a golden milestone for us. For half a century, the New Mexico Native Plant Society has stood as a supporter of biodiversity, an advocate for conservation, and a community united by a deep love for the landscapes that define our New Mexico home.

By encouraging the use of native plants, we've supported wildlife and cultivated healthier ecosystems. We've sponsored native plant gardens in parks, schools, and other public spaces—and of course, our own yards. We've funded research projects to learn about and protect native plants and their habitats, as well as for habitat restoration. We've organized countless field trips and programs, arranged workshops, and held native plant sales. And so much more. Our legacy has been built on myriad volunteer hours.

Where did we begin? On a dark night in February, plant enthusiasts from as far as Las Cruces and El Paso navigated a maze of dirt roads in Santa Fe to meet and discuss forming a native plant society in New Mexico. The year was 1976. The following April, officers were elected, and that summer, articles of incorporation were filed. Individual membership was \$5 (inflation-adjusted to around \$29 today).

In creating a new organization, the participants identified these purposes, which are still applicable today:

- Recommend suitable native plants for landscaping and encourage their availability.
- Delineate the laws that affect and protect native flora, and assist in monitoring them.
- Create educational materials, including programs, about native plants.
- Support special projects to plant native plants in public areas.
- Offer field trips.

In 1993, we started funding conservation projects. The NPSNM Board voted in 2007 to name the grant program after Jack and Martha Carter and launched a year-long fundraising campaign for it. The Carter Conservation Fund continues to award grants for conservation, restoration, research, and education. It also supports seven herbaria, which preserve plant specimens that are invaluable for research and identification. In 2025, in recognition of generous donations from the Wootten family, the board approved the Thomas H. Wootten Family Student Conservation Grant, aimed at university students focused on field research or public education (for more about the Woottens, see the President's column in the April–June 2025 Newsletter).

While grants are a vital part of our work, it's our boots on the ground that make us successful as an organization. Did you know we once had ten chapters? The first chapter was in Santa Fe, and Las Cruces and Albuquerque soon followed. Among the chapters still active today, Otero (which was Otero/Lincoln for a while) started in 1981, Taos in 1998, and El Paso in 2001. The Gila chapter (Silver City) began as its own organization, the Gila Native Plant Society, in 1988, but joined the state organization around 1999. It still uses its original name.

Early on, there was a Southeast Chapter in Roswell and a Glenn Niner chapter in Los Lunas. It was named after a botanist who collected roughly 500 plant specimens, representing 231 species, at the Los Lunas Plant Materials Center. Carlsbad had a chapter from 1993 to 2006; San Juan (Durango) from 1999 to 2016; and Sacramento (Ruidoso) from 2001 to 2008. As we know, chapters require a lot of volunteer effort!

As we celebrate this remarkable 50-year journey, we honor those who came before us and all that they accomplished. Together, we will continue advocating for native plants and their habitats, and work to nurture a public movement that values stewardship and supports biodiversity. If you have stories to share about our history, please email me: president [at] npsnm [dot] org. I'd like to hear your ideas for celebrating our golden anniversary, too.

Much of the above information on our history was gathered from our newsletters, which started in April 1976 and can be found on our [website](#). ❖

Links

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Conservation Corner

Sylvan Kaufman,
NPSNM Conservation Committee Chair

I attended a Town Hall on Public Lands in November 2025 where a participant asked the panel what they would suggest as the most effective action she could take given that she only had a couple hours a week to advocate for public land protection. They gave two answers.

First, call your state representative, county commissioner, or city council person and arrange to meet them for coffee to discuss the issues that are most important to you. That one-on-one conversation is probably more meaningful than sending letters and leaving phone messages, although those things can still be very useful!

Second, get outdoors, become deeply familiar with the land, and invite others to join you. We need to continue to foster a love for the land so that current and future generations want to protect it. The same holds true for native plants. We need to continue to build love, appreciation, and support for the amazing plant diversity in New Mexico.

New Mexico Legislative Session

The 2026 legislative session in New Mexico lasts only thirty days and will focus on the budget. The Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) houses the Botany and Endangered Plants Program within the Forestry Division. The Department of Game and Fish (soon to be the Department of Wildlife) has a new mission that incorporates pollinators and habitat restoration. The Environment Department houses the River Stewardship program and Wetlands Program. The Economic Development Program houses the Outdoor Recreation Division. All of these programs directly or indirectly support native plants through conservation and restoration, and all could use significantly more funding. Please contact your state representatives and urge them to support these programs.

Public Lands and Roadless Areas Rules

On behalf of NPSNM, I submitted a letter opposing the rescission of the Conservation and Landscape Health Rule, also known as the Public Lands Rule. An analysis of comments by the [Center for Western Priorities](#) found that 98% of comments submitted opposed rescinding the rule. The Public Lands Rule directs the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to consider, equally with other uses, the protection and restoration of clean water and wildlife habitat. The BLM manages more than 13 million acres of land in New Mexico.

NPSNM also signed on to a letter opposing the appointment of Steve Pearce to head the BLM, given that he has supported selling off public lands and favors extraction of resources over conservation priorities.

The Conservation Committee is also working on a letter opposing withdrawal of lands around Chaco Canyon from federal protections. The committee supported adding the lands in 2022.

The [Center for Western Priorities](#) found that 99% of comments opposed rescinding the Roadless Areas Rule. Department of Agricultural Secretary Rolins wants to repeal that rule in order to increase timber harvests and reduce wildfire risks, even though increasing roads through forests actually increases [wildfire risk](#). The rule currently applies to 59 million acres of national forests and grasslands. Most of the National Forests in New Mexico have some designated roadless areas.



Skeleton plant, *Lygodesmia grandiflora*, flowering in Chaco Canyon.
Image: Sylvan Kaufman

Pesticides and Pollinator Plants

Kaitlin Haase, Southwest Pollinator Conservation Specialist of the Xerces Society, gave a talk to the Santa Fe chapter on the new [Xerces Society study](#) on pesticide contamination of butterfly host plants in urban areas. The study looked at host plants in Albuquerque, NM and Sacramento, CA. A disturbing 93% of all the plants sampled contained pesticide residues, even in yards where pesticides had not been applied.

In Albuquerque, the most common pesticide found on plants was the herbicide atrazine. Atrazine is used as a pre-emergent for weed control in highway medians, gravel mulch, lawns, golf courses, and in some agricultural fields. Atrazine acts by inhibiting photosynthesis in plants, but it is an endocrine disruptor in animals, and can persist for weeks to years in water and soils. Atrazine can kill aquatic plants when it gets into waterways. Its impacts on insects that feed on pollen or plant leaves is less understood, but it has been shown to impact insects' immune systems and physiology. It also seems to enhance toxicity of other herbicides that it is often mixed with.

Although sixty-three countries have banned atrazine, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has allowed its continued use in much of the United States. In 2024, the EPA changed atrazine's level of concern concentrations from 3.0 to 9.7 µg/L, but mandated decreased application rates and banned application to saturated soils or during rainfall events, along with a few other changes.

The [Center for Biological Diversity](#) estimates that the new rules would only decrease pollution below the new level of concern concentrations in 1% of contaminated wetlands. The [US Fish and Wildlife Service](#) published its Biological Evaluation of impacts of atrazine to endangered species and critical habitats under the new EPA rules in October, 2025 and found that, of the 530 species examined, 500 would not be affected under the new EPA regulations. The other thirty species require further study and are mostly aquatic species. In the 2020 EPA assessment of atrazine, it found that 1000 endangered plant and animal species were likely to be harmed.

Institute for Applied Ecology Federal Grants Revoked

The [Institute for Applied Ecology](#) (IAE) has a very active office in Santa Fe that has taken on numerous projects throughout New Mexico. They organize the [Southwest Seed Partnership](#) to help collect seeds and find growers to increase native seed availability for restoration projects across the Southwest. Through programs like [NM Conservation in Prisons](#) and collaborations with local schools, the organization grows and plants out native plants for restoration projects, including the [River for Monarchs](#) program. Their summer [Forest Bound](#) program immerses high school students in nature to learn about plant ecology and cultural importance. They track endangered plant populations to inform management decisions. On September 23, IAE was suddenly informed that thirty of their federal grants, totaling \$3,500,000, had been canceled as they no longer met the priorities of the Department of the Interior. Private foundations and donors have stepped in to allow completion of some of the projects.

Chapter Conservation Activities

A lot of on-the-ground conservation projects are undertaken by our individual chapters. For just a quick sample, Taos chapter has a greenhouse that grows native plants for sales, a great way to

introduce the public to native plants and get more native plants into the community. The Otero chapter learned from the Forest Service to survey plants in habitat used by the endangered Sacramento checkerspot butterfly. The Albuquerque chapter planted pollinator plants at the Oso Grande Park with the Xerces Society. Check in with your local chapter to participate in conservation activities! ❖

Links

- Center for Western Priorities, Public Lands Rule: <https://westernpriorities.org/2025/11/new-analysis-finds-98-of-public-comments-oppose-rescinding-the-public-lands-rule/>
- Center for Western Priorities, Roadless Areas Rule: <https://westernpriorities.org/2025/09/commenters-overwhelmingly-oppose-roadless-rule-repeal/>
- Wildfire risk: https://pdf.wildearthguardians.org/support_docs/Roads-Lit-Review-2020.pdf
- Xerces Society Study: <https://xerces.org/news/organizational-news/study-finds-pesticide-residue-widespread-on-urban-butterfly-plants>
- Center for Biological Diversity: <https://xerces.org/news/organizational-news/study-finds-pesticide-residue-widespread-on-urban-butterfly-plants>
- US Fish and Wildlife Service: <https://www.epa.gov/endangered-species/biological-opinions-available-public-comment-links-final-opinions-and-links>
- Institute for Applied Ecology: <https://appliedeco.org/>
- Southwest Seed Partnership: <https://southwestseedpartnership.org/>
- NM Conservation in Prisons: <https://appliedeco.org/education/new-mexico-nature-in-prisons-project/>
- River for Monarchs: <https://appliedeco.org/river-for-monarchs/>
- Forest Bound: <https://appliedeco.org/education/forestbound/>



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Wrapping it up: Las Cruces' 2025 Conference on Responsible Beauty



We thank all the volunteers of the Las Cruces Chapter for putting on this year's NPSNM annual conference! The chapter members pulled together and followed the Taos format to expand the conference to include a Thursday night Meet-and-Greet so that everyone could visit with old friends and make new ones at the very start of the conference. Several of the field trip venues highlighted the beautiful Organ Mountains. All of those who hadn't been to Las Cruces for nine years really enjoyed getting to see how Las Cruces has grown. The reception and presentations on the New Mexico State University campus were very special with a visit to the reception at the NMSU Art Museum from the NMSU President.

Next year's conference moves to Silver City and is set for September 10–13, 2026. One of the conference organizers, Elroy Limmer, gave us a sneak peek of the conference, which will include Doug Tallamy, a nationally known entomologist, ecologist, and conservationist, as banquet speaker. ❖



Mary and Ken Steigman pause to touch base as the conference banquet gets underway at Lescombes beautiful outdoor setting.
Image: Margaret Ménache

Remembering the 2025 Conference

I want to pay tribute to all those in the New Mexico NPS (particularly Las Cruces chapter) for the incredibly organized conference!!! It was thorough, thoughtful, and well-put together. Everything from the events, unique-quality auction items, QR codes and communication, meals, and even a water station to reduce 'plastic' waste!!! I know it was A LOT of work with few hands but you all were mighty and greatly appreciated for the labor of love there. Newly back in El Paso, it was my first conference and I was impressed with such detail! So thank you!!

Kym H.



The NPSNM Board meets twice annually, once on the opening afternoon of the conference.
Image: Tom Stewart



The spring at Dripping Springs.

Image: David Phillips



Left: When conference attendees weren't out viewing the spectacular landscapes, speakers provided a wide range of information on native plants.
Image: Ken Steigman

Jack and Martha Carter Conservation Champion Award



Bob Barnes displays his Conservation Champion award plaque.

The Native Plant Society of New Mexico's Jack and Martha Carter Conservation Champion Award recognizes outstanding efforts to conserve native plants and to educate the public about them. Each year, the chapter hosting the State Conference bestows the Award, which includes a \$500 appreciation. This year, as host, the Las Cruces Chapter's decision was made both easy and difficult by having five chapter members to consider: each furthering the stated goals, each worthy of recognition.

With delight, respect, and admiration, the Las Cruces Chapter selected Robert A. Barnes as this year's recipient of the Conservation Champion Award. The Award carries a \$500.00 prize. Bob and Rebecca had intended to be with us at the conference but, of necessity, sent their regrets.

Like Jack and Martha Carter who transplanted in retirement to Silver City, Bob Barnes and his wife, Rebecca Hallgarth, transplanted in retirement to nearby Hillsboro. Like Jack and Martha, Bob and Rebecca immersed themselves wholeheartedly in their new environment.

Eager to learn about local natural history, but not finding information easily accessible, Bob filled the gap by creating the Black Range website seventeen years ago and encouraging participation from his neighbors. Nine years ago, Bob started publishing the *Black Range Naturalist* in quarterly editions, focusing initially on the Black Range of Sierra and Grant Counties. From mountain lions to mistletoe, from trees to tadpoles, from landscapes to lichen, Bob's topics about the natural world have no limits.

The *Black Range Naturalist* is freely available to all online. Bob accepts no revenue. His profit margin is measured by gains in curiosity and growth. Each edition is scientifically researched, minutely detailed, whimsically anecdotal, colorfully photographed. It is important to Bob that the website and journal be based on the concept of community science. His motto is "accepting material from anyone to share with everyone." The contributors are mostly local and regional but some are farther afield with national and international reputations. Experts and wide-eyed wanderers, everyone is welcome here. A refreshing DEI of diversity, ecology, and inclusion.

Over the past few years, Bob has expanded his reach to include Doña Ana and Luna Counties, and he has added publications to embrace topics of specialized interest about butterflies, birds, and dragonflies. Bumpy back road travelogue videos are also available online.

Bob's wife, Rebecca, has virtual fingerprints on each publication as collaborator and on the *Black Range Naturalist* as copy editor. Their friend Harley Shaw adds warmth and a wild man's adventures.

To Bob and his collaborators, congratulations! To everyone else, do yourselves a favor—go online and check out the [Black Range Naturalist](https://www.blackrange.org/the-black-range-naturalist/). ❖

Links

<https://www.blackrange.org/the-black-range-naturalist/>

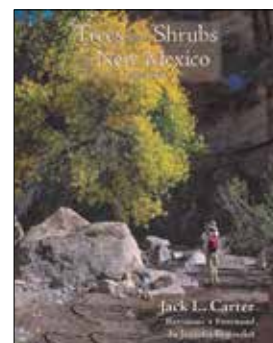
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The Gila Native Plant Society is committed to promoting the education, research, and appreciation of the native flora of the southwest; encouraging the preservation of rare and endangered plant species; and supporting the use of suitable native plants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

Conferences Past and Future

Margie Gibson



Congratulations to the Las Cruces Chapter for hosting the 2025 NPSNM Conference. Hats off to conference chair Mary Steigman and her dedicated team of volunteers. In a nightmare scenario, the first scheduled speaker canceled due to Covid, and the second, a federal employee, was furloughed. All as the conference was beginning! They handled it admirably, including Ken Steigman filling one slot. On Friday, there were several options for field trips, workshops, and garden tours. I chose the garden tour and felt a bit of green envy over the incredible gardens we saw. The chapter also introduced a clever buy-it-now feature for its silent auction, allowing us to purchase an item outright instead of bidding. Last but not least, the food was outstanding.

Our 2026 conference, *Roots of Resilience: Native Plants in the Next Fifty Years*, will take place September 10-13 in Silver City.

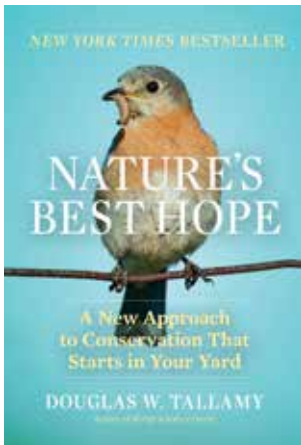
Elroy Limmer and Don Graves are the event's co-chairs. As a gateway to the Gila National Forest, there are a multitude of outdoor opportunities. Conference registration will begin on Thursday afternoon (September 10), followed by a Meet-and-Greet. Friday will feature morning speakers, workshops and field trips in the afternoon, and end with a reception. On Saturday, the schedule shifts to include field trips in the morning, then speakers, followed by a banquet. Sunday will include field trips that could be on your route home. You can read more about two of our featured speakers, Doug Tallamy and Phil Connors, in this issue.

It has become the custom of the hosting chapter to develop an emblem for the conference. We're still working on details but we will feature *Asclepias uncialis*, wheel milkweed. It is a short milkweed found in several locations across New Mexico and usually grows in habitats dominated by grasses. Surveys of its status are needed. Look for the image in the top corner of pages with conference-specific information and articles. Photo by Andrew Tree, courtesy of Gila Flora.

Save the date and stay tuned for more details in upcoming newsletters! ❖

Doug Tallamy and the 2026 NPSNM Conference

Margie Gibson



Doug Tallamy, the entomologist and ecologist known for his work on native plants and biodiversity, will be our featured speaker at the banquet for the 2026 Conference, *Roots of Resilience: Native Plants in the Next Fifty Years*, in Silver City. He communicates complex ecology in an engaging, hopeful way that inspires ordinary people to make a difference. We need to do the same as we enter the next fifty years of promoting native plants.

Tallamy's book, *Bringing Nature Home* (2007), advocated the simple yet potentially revolutionary idea that native plants are essential to supporting insects, birds, and the entire web of life. What you plant in your yard matters! A review of this book is available in our third-quarter 2008 newsletter and another in our first-quarter 2018 newsletter.

Tallamy's 2020 book, *Nature's Best Hope*, proposed that if everyday people planted native plants, we could create the largest collective conservation effort in history—a “homegrown” national park that exists across backyards, schoolyards, and community spaces. In 2021, he co-founded an organization to promote this idea, Homegrown National Park. The [website](#) invites us to “Get on the Map,” registering our native plantings to watch the “park” grow. The map features rankings of each state, primarily based on the percentage of land area dedicated to native plantings. New Mexico is number 41.

Tallamy is a professor in the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware. In 2000, he and his wife, Cindy, bought property in rural Pennsylvania with a tangled thicket of non-native plants. He noticed there were no caterpillars. It was his *aha!* moment. He and his students began researching, and their studies showed that most insects—especially caterpillars, which are an essential food for baby birds—can eat only the native plants they evolved with. Their findings demonstrated that using non-native ornamental plants in landscaping directly impacts the health of local ecosystems.

My own *aha!* moment happened soon after my husband and I bought a home in Silver City in 2019. We were leaving our home in Alaska, which bordered the 495,000-acre Chugach State Park. We were surrounded by native plants, but our yard was planted mostly with non-natives. A botanist friend suggested I join NPSNM. She also recommended watching Tallamy's [2018 presentation](#) to the California

Native Plant Society on YouTube. I did both. I began planting native plants in our new yard—still a work in progress—and slowly removing non-natives. It's now listed on the Homegrown National Park map. How about you? Are you on the map? ❖



Links

Homegrown National Park: <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/map/>

2018 CNPS Conservation Conference Plenary Session: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3wzcz8dWyBc>

From Prose to Poetry: Philip Connors' *Fire Season* and *The Mountain Knows the Mountain*

David E. Phillips

The Mountain Knows the Mountain: A Fire Watch Diary

By Philip Connors

181 pages, University of New Mexico Press, 2025

Fire Season: Field Notes from a Wilderness Lookout

By Philip Connors

272 pages, Ecco (Harper Collins), 2012

The Gila chapter of the Native Plant Society of New Mexico is pleased to announce that Philip Connors will be one of two special guest speakers at our 2026 conference in Silver City.

Fire! No other word in the English language elicits such powerful fear in most humans, especially those of us who live in or at close proximity to national forests and other wilderness areas. We associate fire with loss of lives, homes, properties, recreation areas, and natural habitats. We recall the destructive Calf Canyon/Hermits Peak Fire of 2022; the Las Conchas Fire of 2011; the Little Bear Fire of 2012; and the South Fork Fire of 2024. Three of the five largest fires in New Mexico's history occurred in the Gila National Forest: the Black Fire of 2022, the Whitewater-Baldy Fire of 2012, and the Silver Fire of 2013. Most recently, residents of the Gila region vividly remember the Trout Fire of 2025, its mass evacuations, huge plumes of smoke visible from Silver City, and the anxiety-inducing “Ready, Set, Go” updates.

Nowhere in New Mexico are we safe from destructive wildfires. However, we who love the forests and wilderness understand that fire is a necessary element in nature, having the power to renew and restore. Its many benefits include nutrient cycling, promoting biodiversity and new growth, and reducing the risk of future catastrophic fires. Lodgepole and ponderosa pines depend on fire to help release seeds, reduce undergrowth and competition, and produce mineral-rich ash necessary for their seedlings to thrive.

No other writer has done more to further our understanding of wildfires, their causes, suppression, and benefits in the Gila National Forest than Philip Connors. Author of four memoirs, three of which focus on the Gila National Forest and the Aldo Leopold Wilderness area (*Fire Season*, *A Song for the River*, and *The Mountain Knows the Mountain*), Connors is required reading for anyone visiting or



Image: David Phillips



living in one of the most beautiful regions of the state, the Gila. But Connors' writings tell us more than just about the nature of wildfires. In the best tradition of nature writers that precede him—John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Henry David Thoreau, Edward Abbey, Wendell Berry, Gary Snyder, and many others—Connors explores

the power of nature to heal and renew the human spirit, serving as a corrective to the ills of the social world.

Born in Iowa and raised in Minnesota, Connors studied journalism at the University of Montana. He interned at *The Nation* and later worked at *The Wall Street Journal* as an editor on the *Leisure & Arts* page. In 2002, he took a seasonal position as a fire lookout in the Gila National Forest, a job he's held every year since, with the exception of one. Connors recounts his journey from the canyons of New York City and the smoking ruins of the World Trade Center through the suicide of his brother to the mountains of the Gila in his second memoir, *For All the Wrong Reasons* (2015).

Connors' most well-known memoir is his award-winning, *Fire Season: Field Notes from a Wilderness Lookout* (2012), the first of three works that focus on the Gila. Drawing on diaries Connors kept from 2002 onward, the book, a type of Walden in the Gila, focuses on the annual fire season that runs from April through August. In lyrical prose, Connors includes practical information such as what a good fire lookout needs to survive (whiskey and books are important), how to spot and report fires, and how to appreciate the solitude and pleasures of the natural world. Along with such practical knowledge, Connors includes a history of the Forest Service's management and mismanagement of the Gila, the joys of fishing (reminiscent of Izak Walton's *The Compleat Angler*), Aldo Leopold's views on wolves, the conflicts between Victorio's Apache warriors and Buffalo Soldiers, Jack Kerouac, and Smokey Bear, in short topics for a curious and creative mind in a place of solitude and isolation.

In the best tradition of transcendentalists such as Emerson and Thoreau, Connors includes critiques of the social world. On smartphones, he manages “to subsist without one” (72), preferring to “do [his] part for social harmony face-to-face across a bar top” when he's working his non-fire season job in a Silver City tavern. Of social media, he writes that “one indisputable charm of being a lookout is the sanction it offers to be shed of the social imperative of productivity, to slip away from the group hug of digital culture enthralled with social networking” (73). Contrasts between the natural and social worlds abound, as when Connors observes how “The person on the other end [of a radio] can't fathom why I'd spend most of the summer alone in a little tower, far from running water, cold beer, and satellite TV” while Connors can't conceive of why someone would join the Forest Service “only to spend your days shuffling paper under banks of florescent light” (25).

In his recent and most introspective memoir to date, *The Mountain Knows the Mountain*, Connors returns to his fire look-

out duties in the Gila after a year-long absence due to a double hip replacement. During his convalescence, the pain was so intense that he had difficulty focusing on reading, and at the suggestion of a friend turned to poetry. As a result, this memoir, more than his previous two that focus on the Gila, is his most intentionally poetic and illustrates the healing and renewing power of the natural world. Loss and renewal, whether through fire or personal suffering, as elsewhere in his writings, is a major theme.

Why write another book on the Gila? Connors tells us that he “will keep writing about the work [fire lookout] until I'm dragged off my tower and ordered to leave, and I'll probably publish some of what I write... books that examine the work and the place I do it through the lens of celebration, lamentation, poetization, [and] novelization” (xiii). With poetization, Connors turned to a specific form of poetry, haibun, a Japanese form which is a blend of poetry and prose, practiced by Japanese haiku poets of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, meant to be appreciated by “a mind...attuned to nonhuman beauty” (xii), the Gila. He writes that his goal is to be “true to the music in our minds when experience elicits the urge to sing” (xii), the first of many allusions to other poets, in this case perhaps Walt Whitman's “Song of Myself.” And sing Connors does, his lyrical prose interspersed with his own haiku and longer poetry.

The mountain offers Connors the opportunity for spiritual renewal after much loss: the loss of his mobility for a year; the loss his brother, Dan, to suicide in 1996; the loss of a marriage; the loss of John, a fellow lookout who died when his horse fell on him; the loss of three teens in a small-plane crash in the Gila; and the loss of his dear friend and editor Bobby Byrd. Even a simple potsherd he finds on the mountain can help heal, serving as “reminder of my transience here, even as it connected me to the long, rich life of the place. It gives and gives, this mountain, and I merely want to be a worthy recipient of all it offers. Not a philosopher, a neo-Thoreauvian, a blinkered spelunker in the caverns of the self—but an eyeball” (36). The mountain stands as a place of memory and healing just as in Wordsworth's poetry. “Memory,” Connors writes, “is an indispensable companion in the midst of solitude. It takes you to people you'd forgotten” (119).

The transcendentalism of Emerson and Thoreau and the romanticism of Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats infuses the prose and poetry of Connors in *The Mountain Knows the Mountain*. In addition to those suggested above, we find echoes of Shelley in Connors' ode to the wind: “I try to write an ode to the wind / as the wind seethes in the pines / but its song subsumes my song” (69). His human frailness is overshadowed by nature's power. We find Shelley again perhaps (his “Mont Blanc” comes to mind) when Connors “bow[s] before” the mountains' majesty and how he “exalts in insignificance” (48). Keats' “Ode on a Grecian Urn” indirectly influences Connors' views on the relationship between truth and beauty. Even the opening lines of Allen Ginsberg's “Howl” apparently make a brief appearance in yet another critique of smartphones: “... I watch the best minds of my generation,

writers whose work I once admired, destroyed by their machines, dragging their thumbs across the timeline at all hours of the day and night, hunting an angry fix” (104). As in *Fire Season*, Connors offers stark contrasts between the natural and social worlds. The social is a place where “the lurid concrete valleys...too often provoke aggression and ugliness in me,” (4) while the Gila is “my ritual, my meditation, my atonement, my act of solidarity with my fellow creatures” (5).

But all is not doom and gloom, loss and tragedy in *The Mountain Knows the Mountain*. There is joy in the “beautiful Babylon of bees sipping water from the huecos, spotted towhees singing in the limbs of the aspens, Clark's nutcrackers jabbering and jeering in the branches of the pines... all of them are a piece of the mountain, with which I want to be joined now and forever” (86). There is warmth in the embrace of his wife, Mónica Ortiz Uribe, who shares his love of “getting in the groove,” that “moment when you're finally in sync with the rhythms of the mountain after arriving here from some other place, particularly a city. It's when your senses finally and fully experience the magic of this place...and the feeling of never wanting to leave” (80). And there is pleasure in sharing the solitude of the mountain with friends who understand that “[h]uman beings are simply brief sparks of light. This [the mountain] is a place for teaching ourselves the breadth of scale and time” (144).

Connors' *The Mountain Knows the Mountain* is beautifully written and the most poetic of his works to date; however, I believe there are better places to begin an exploration of his writings. You're jumping into the deep end of the pool here. To truly grasp the dominant themes and understand the nature of and the nature in the human spirit and Connors' Gila, it's best to begin with *Fire Season*, work through *A Song for the River*, and end with *Mountain*. You will better understand Connors' views on loss, renewal, beauty, and nature. You won't be disappointed.

The next time you hear the word “fire,” “Remember—Only YOU can Prevent Your Cigarette or Campfire from Starting a Wildfire We Are Forced By Long-standing Protocol to Suppress with Every Available Resource so as Not to Encourage Promiscuous Pyromaniacs; On the Other Hand Some Fires Ought to Be Allowed to Run Their Course, for Reasons of Forest Health and Ecological Renewal—Fires We Call Wildland Fire-Use Managed for Resource Benefit...” (*Fire Season*, 228). ❖

Meet One of Your Board Members

Jackye Meinecke



Cool, calm, and collected describes Betty Spence, a member of the Gila Chapter and recording secretary for the board of the Native Plant Society of New Mexico. Perhaps this is a result of a career that culminated as a translator for more than a decade for the United Nations in Santiago, Chile, and New York City. “Intense, but interesting,” Betty said of her years as a linguist. She still maintains

contact with some of her colleagues through phone calls and visits.

“Writing minutes is the talent I have to offer,” Betty said, “I'm not a botanist.” As a linguist, she spent most of her career as a translator, which also involved attending meetings, taking notes, and writing extended summaries.

When she retired and moved to Silver City around 2010, she joined the Gila Chapter. In 2016, she became more active in the chapter, handling publicity and communications, and eventually becoming secretary. She served as chapter representative to the NPSNM board for several years before taking on the job of NPSNM recording secretary.

Betty was drawn to the native plant society for the outdoor experiences and opportunities to learn about native plants. She has always “loved going out into the woods to identify plants or just to enjoy them.” Whether she lived in Chile, the Hudson River Valley or New Mexico, she has always enjoyed exploring nature.

“I was first attracted to NPSNM by the field trips,” she said. “It's still my favorite thing.” As a member of the upcoming state conference planning team, she is hoping to share her appreciation of the Gila environment with other NPSNM members.

Betty contributes to her community in other ways as well, including helping at Silver City Museum events. She is a member of a book club, participates in several fitness programs, and hikes regularly. She and her husband also care for her nephew's chihuahua, Nutmeg, when his family travels. She finds retirement to be a busy time. “It doesn't feel very quiet,” Betty reflected. “Every day, I don't get through everything I intended to do.”

Betty shares a rewarding volunteer ethic with many who serve non-profit organizations. Many volunteers believe they need to give back to the organization in which they participate.

“It was time to contribute something to an organization I'd gotten so much from,” Betty concluded, when reviewing her fifteen years as an NPSNM member. ❖

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Membership Recognition

The NPSNM would like to thank all members who have made monetary contributions above their regular dues. This list, which covers August 16, 2024 through August 15, 2025, includes those who sent in extra contributions with their memberships. During this same period twenty-four organizations and members contributed over \$16,750 in unrestricted donations. We would also like to recognize the contributions of cooperation and energy from the wonderful members of this volunteer organization. The NPSNM thanks all of you for your support, whatever form it takes.

Life Membership (\$1000)

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Carol Conoboy
Suzanne Davis

Jennifer Gruger
Kathryn Mayer
Elva Osterreich
Arian Pregenzer

Glenda Winnie
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Mary & Ken Steigman
Keller Suberkropp
Gwen Tennison
Jennifer Thorne-Lehman
Dixie Wicker
David L. Witt
Pamela Wolfe
Sarah & Ron Wood

Tribute Gifts

Some of the support we receive from our members is made in the form of a recognition for those who have died or to commemorate an individual. When provided, we have included additional information.

Jon Bever, in memoriam

Howard Dietz, in memoriam

Carter Conservation Fund Donors

The NPSNM thanks all who have contributed to the Jack & Martha Carter Conservation Fund from August 16, 2024 through August 15, 2025. This fund was created to assist the NPSNM in maintaining a balanced budget while continuing to increase the funds available for conservation research and educational grants to individuals and organizations. It is a long-term endowment fund and your contributions enable the NPSNM to expand its support of programs, research, and education for those involved in the study of native plants. Now more than ever, every dollar we receive is important and we deeply appreciate your support.

Jack & Martha Carter Conservation Fund

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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

Interested in Applying for a Grant?

Applicants may send in their proposals any time of the year until November 30. Guidelines for applying and an application form may be found on the website: <https://www.npsnm.org/nps-sponsored-grants-donations/>

The proposals are reviewed by the statewide NPSNM Board and voted on at the winter Board Meeting, usually at the end of January. The awards for grants are sent in February, while gifts in support of the regional herbaria are sent later in spring or early summer. The Carter Fund also finances an award for a Teacher of the Year and to a Conservation Champion, chosen by the chapter hosting the statewide annual conference and presented to the individual at the conference banquet.

The NPSNM Policies identify criteria for awarding grants, management of the fund, and responsibilities for the awardees: <https://www.npsnm.org/about/chapters/statewide-organization/> ❖

Carter Conservation Fund Award: Seed for five acres at Santa Fe County Fairgrounds

Tom Dominguez and Pam Wolfe

Tom Dominguez, Santa Fe County Cooperative Agricultural Extension Agent, was awarded two grants in 2025 for the “Reclamation of Remnant Prairie using [Keyline Planting](#) of Native Grasses, Legumes, and Forbs.” The reclamation project was funded by the New Mexico Healthy Soils Program and the Native Plant Society of New Mexico.

A June inventory of the vegetation on the neglected and eroding site on the south side of the Santa Fe County Fair Grounds revealed sparse cover of purple threeawn (*Aristida purpurea*), sand dropseed (*Sporobolus cryptandrus*), tumblegrass (*Muhlenbergia paniculata*), windmill grass (*Chloris verticillata*), and squirreltail (*Elymus elymoides*). Along the edges of the parking lot were a few forbs: goldenweed (*Xanthisma gracile*), hoary aster (*Dieteria canescens*), Tahoka daisy (*Machaeranthera tanacetefolia*), horsetail milkweed (*Asclepias subverticillata*), stickseed (*Hackelia* sp.), and sweetclover (*Melilotus* sp.). Across the area are scattered oneseed junipers (*Juniperus monosperma*). The dominant vegetation consisted of kochia (*Basia scoparia*), goathead (*Tribulus terrestris*), and several species of Russian thistle (*Salsola* sp.).

On August 30, 2025, Gordon Tooley seeded (see list in sidebar) the five-acre plot using specialized equipment that rips, imprints, and seeds in one pass following key points along contour lines determined by a GPS device located on the tractor. The process increases infiltration and water holding capacity while directing water along contour lines rather than fall lines (the most direct routes downhill) on the property.

To support community engagement and knowledge-sharing, we offered hands-on workshops that day. We covered rangeland transect and plant count methods, water infiltration testing, and proper soil sampling techniques. These measurements and procedures will be repeated in August 2026 to estimate the direct impact of the reclamation project after twelve months.

This project promotes ecological restoration, conservation of native plant communities, and sustainable land stewardship through practices that build soil health and biodiversity. We have focused on keeping soil covered with native vegetation year-round to prevent



In common with many neglected landscapes, this site hosted extensive areas of kochia and goathead, weedy annuals listed in the June inventory. Image: Pam Wolfe



Gordon Tooley ripping, imprinting, and seeding in one pass. Be sure to check out the [document](#) on his website for more detailed information about this process.

Image: Pam Wolfe

Seed list

sideoats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*)
 blue grama (*B. gracilis*)
 sand dropseed (*Sporobolus cryptandrus*)
 Indian ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*)
 purple prairie clover (*Dalea purpurea*)
 white prairie clover (*D. candida*)
 oats (*Avena sativa*)
 triticale (*Triticum X Secale*)
 buckwheat (*Fagopyrum esculentum*)
 fringed sagebrush (*Artemisia frigida*)
 California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*)
 Mexican gold poppy (*E. mexicana*)
 skunkbush (*Rhus trilobata*)
 western wheatgrass (*Pascopyrum smithii*)
 blue flax (*Linum perenne*)
 Rocky Mountain beeplant (*Cleome serrulate*)

erosion, conserve moisture, and support the soil microbiome. By minimizing soil disturbance and reducing external inputs, we are protecting soil structure and fertility while reducing reliance on synthetic fertilizers and chemicals. This approach fosters self-sustaining native plant systems that thrive without heavy intervention. Our work emphasizes maximizing biodiversity—both above and below ground.

We planted a diverse mix of native plant species and traditional cover crops that provide continuous habitat and food sources for pollinators, birds, and other wildlife, while also enhancing soil ecosystem diversity. Maintaining a living root system throughout the year supports nutrient cycling and carbon sequestration, which strengthens long-term soil health. Additionally, we plan to integrate animals into land management, including grazing animals and beneficial species such as birds, insects, and earthworms. Managed grazing mimics natural disturbance patterns, helping to maintain plant diversity and stimulate healthy ecosystem processes. Beneficial insects and key soil organisms play vital roles in nutrient cycling, pest control, and soil aeration.

The restoration work has already begun to enhance soil structure, increase native plant diversity, and improve water retention on the site. These changes will contribute to a healthier, more re-

silient rangeland ecosystem that can better support wildlife and withstand drought conditions.

A major success of this project is that it brought public access to techniques that are typically used on private lands, making the Santa Fe County Fairgrounds a living example of ecological restoration in action. Community members now have the opportunity to observe and learn about sustainable land management year-round. This visibility encourages local landowners, educators, and students to consider similar practices on their own properties, fostering a broader culture of environmental stewardship and land care within the community.

This project serves as a replicable model of regenerative land management in arid and semi-arid environments for the public, landowners, natural resource managers and constituents. Over time, the project will continue to provide a visible, measurable example of how regenerative techniques can benefit both people and the planet. ❖

Links

Tooley's Trees Keyline Design Goals: https://tooleystrees.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Keyline_Design_Goals.pdf

USDA Tricale as a cover crop: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2024-04/Triticale%20Cover%20Crop%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>



We recorded 2.4 inches of rainfall at the County Fairgrounds between September 1 and October 29. Germination was robust. By early November the annual buckwheat was blooming. Image: Pam Wolfe

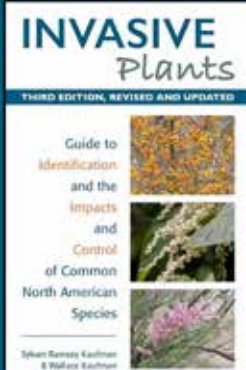


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Chapter Activities & Events

For further information on upcoming events, email or call the contact person listed, or visit the chapter's webpage 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 Yasmeen Najmi at 505-220-1381 or [yasmeennajmi40\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:yasmeennajmi40[at]gmail.com). For questions, future field trip ideas, or to volunteer as a leader or co-leader, contact our Field Trip Coordinator: Lee Regan at [Inbregan2\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:Inbregan2[at]gmail.com). 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 14 Meeting. "For the love of plants: Philosophical values in ecological restoration." Dr. Lisa Gerber will discuss philosophical values in ecological restoration and rewilding through a few of Aldo Leopold's essays and more contemporary literature. Dr. Gerber is an environmental philosopher and lecturer at UNM who teaches courses on Aldo Leopold, the philosophy of food, environmental ethics, and Henry David Thoreau.

Feb 4 Meeting. Shelby Bazan, conservation organizer with New Mexico Wild, joined us at our Las Cruces conference and the field trip to Otero Mesa in early October. Her presentation on Otero Mesa and Beyond will open our eyes to this largest remaining, intact Chihuahuan Desert grassland and the conservation efforts underway there and in support our other public lands.

Mar 4 "Understanding and overcoming seed dormancy in native woody plants." Jason Roback will discuss seed dormancy, physiology and evolutionary functions as well as harvesting considerations with first-hand data on over fifty native species. Jason is a former science educator and greenhouse coordinator at Sandia High School.

Field Trips Dates will be determined based on weather and growing conditions.

Our meetings feature presentations on varied subjects related to native plants and their habitats, but we also plan to include "short features" on gardening topics as we roll into the growing season.

Surveys done by NPSNM and its chapters show that members really enjoy social events and desire more of them. Our field trips have a social aspect: in **September** we held a potluck picnic in the Manzanita Mountains that was popular, delicious, and included a wildflower walk. In **December** we had our traditional indoor/outdoor potluck in lieu of the regular meeting. It included acceptance of new and continuing board members. This year we included a slideshow of pollinators of all types on their plants, created by George Miller.

Speaking of our dear former president, the George O. Miller Education Grant Program is going strong, with good support from donors and an influx of worthy requests from around the Albuquerque area. Here are the grants awarded this past year: (1) \$1,000 to Naina Panthaki, a 7th grade science teacher at Garfield STEM Magnet and Community Middle School. Naina used this money to help defray costs of bringing students to multi-day

Continued page 19



From the September potluck picnic.

Image: Candace Staughton



Participants wander the species-rich Otero Mesa during an NPSNM 2025 conference field trip.

Image: Tom Stewart

El Paso The El Paso Chapter holds combined meetings with the El Paso Cactus and Rock Club. The meetings are the first Saturday of the month at 10:00 am and 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\[at\]utep.edu](mailto:kwfloyd[at]utep.edu); <https://www.facebook.com/Native-Plant-Society-of-New-Mexico-El-Paso-Chapter-191913520833180>

Jan 3 Seed exchange and Q&A. Bring some seeds and some questions: leave with different seeds and, hopefully, some answers. Make sure to label your seed container with as much information as possible. Only bring seeds that you have permission to collect. This meeting will also be a chance to ask some of our experts your pressing questions. We will do our best to answer them!

Feb 7 Getting started with native plant gardening. Do you want to add more native plants to your yard but aren't sure where to start? We will decode the natural habitat—the sun, soil, and water conditions—that these plants have thrived in over thousands of years. Discover how to set the plants up for success, cut your water bill, and transform your landscape into a beautiful sanctuary that boosts local biodiversity. Dr. Kevin Floyd is the Botanical Curator at the Chihuahuan Desert Gardens at UTEP. He is passionate about helping everyone embrace the beauty and benefits of native plants.

Mar 7 Geology of the El Paso Area. The history of geologic forces in El Paso gave rise to the features of today. Dr. Donna Ekal, retired UTEP associate provost and professor, will share this story and bring samples and magnifying glasses so everyone can get a closer look at the rocks and minerals of the area.



The Knapp Land in the Franklin Mountains from a joint field trip we did with the Las Cruces chapter on Nov 22.

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 [at] gmail.com. Check the website for the latest field trip information: <https://gilanps.org/events/field-trips/>

Jan 16 Meeting. Diane Larson, retired USGS research scientist, will present “Who’s a Pollinator? It Depends...”. The plight of bees and how that affects pollination of both crops and native plants has rightly received much attention. But, bees are not the only insect pollinators. Sometimes, they are not even the best pollinator for a particular plant species. This talk takes an in-depth look at the different insect taxa that carry, or don’t carry, pollen. In the end, we find that a diverse pollinator fauna is necessary for robust pollination services.

Feb 20 Meeting. Justin Zweck will present his PhD research into pollination systems of *Dalea* species that feature different floral forms. While some *Dalea* species (e.g., *D. formosa*, *D. nana*) feature the typical "papilionoid" floral form in which the anthers and stigma are enclosed within the petals, others have a more open floral form (e.g., *D. purpurea*, *D. candida*, *D. albiflora*). Justin will share insights regarding the advantages and disadvantages of specialist vs generalist pollination.

Mar 20 Meeting and subsequent field trip. Carolyn Koury of the Gila National Forest has graciously rescheduled with us and added an associated field trip. She will present on the federal Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) program, particularly as it relates to the 2025 Trout Fire, which burned approximately 50,000 acres in Grant County. The BAER program assesses fire effects on vegetation, soils, and watershed function, and executes immediate actions to manage unacceptable post-fire risks to critical values.

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 [at] 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.

At our **September** general meeting, Kaitlin Haase with the Xerces Society narrated an excellent slide show presentation featuring nighttime pollinators. We took **September's** field trip to the Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park.

We hosted the NPSNM Conference in early **October**. Events included social hours, field trips, workshops, featured presentations, silent auction, book sales, banquet.

Kevin Floyd, El Paso Chapter president, hosted **October's** field trip at UTEP's Centennial Museum and Chihuahuan Desert Garden, where he serves as Botanical Curator.

At **November's** monthly meeting, 2024 Student Grant awardees Mickie Barraza and Sara Isabel Ruiz Flores presented their research projects. Chapter member Craig Severy was honored as BLM's outstanding volunteer for his tireless work at the Dripping Springs Natural area—greeting visitors, tending the Visitor Center Garden, mending trails. Guided by Kevin Floyd, our chapter joined the El Paso chapter on a field trip to the Knapp Land Nature Preserve on the east side of the Franklin Mountains.



Conference Honored Guest Speaker Joe Saenz, Chiricahua Apache Nation, at NMSU's Domenici Hall. Image: Gordon Berman



BLM honoring outstanding volunteer Craig Severy, standing left of center with hands clasped. Image: Gordon Berman



We were pleased to host lively, informative research presentations by two NMSU Range Science students, who were recipients of student grants offered by the chapter.

Mickie Barraza (right top) was the recipient of the chapter's Undergraduate Grant, and presented "Why You Should Care about Your Grama: A Closer Look at Genetic Diversity in Southwest New Mexico."

Sara Ruiz Flores (right bottom), recipient of the John Freyermuth and Carolyn Gressitt Graduate Student Grant, presented "Distilling the Future: The Evolutionary Fate of Sotol."

Both students are now pursuing Masters degrees at NMSU. Their work has important implications for restoration and conservation activities in New Mexico.

Images: Gordon Berman

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.

The Otero County Chapter is looking forward to a fresh new year and wishes all New Mexico members a great plant adventure year.



Ric Rao demonstrates the use of native plants (and the infamous cochineal bug) in dyeing. Samples of cochineal, indigo, and madder are shown to the right. Images: Elva K. Österreich

We had a great plant dyeing workshop in **November** with Ric Rao of Las Cruces who works with native plants to color wool yarns. Using various plants for dyeing yarns has a long history. He has raised various breeds of sheep and is familiar with the very different fibers produced and how they accept dye. The plants were passed around along with the dyed wool. He has also dyed silk scarves with gorgeous results. Mr. Rao seems to be part chemist, part historian with perhaps a bit of wizardry mixed in. In **January** the Otero Chapter will have its annual meeting on the second Saturday of the month and looks forward to planning its trips and presentations for the year. The annual plant sale will be back (in **April**) after a year hiatus and the community is waiting. We are also collecting seeds to share at our Otero County Fair. Please reach out to our Joy Coordinator, Sandy McAfee, with tips and ideas to help with the seed project at slwatson52 [at] yahoo.com.



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, 1701 Arroyo Chamiso. Speakers are announced via the Santa Fe listserv. To sign up to receive emails, email santafe [at] npsnm.org. We will post speakers on the NPSNM website when we have advance information. Meetings and talks are free and open to all.

Jan 13 Meeting. "Riparian Monitoring in Bandelier National Monument. Ana Casillas Brownson, Biologist with Bandelier National Monument.

Feb 11 Meeting. "A Success Story: Fire Ecology and Management in the Santa Fe Fireshed" Ellis Margolis

Mar 10 Meeting. "Insect Galls of the Southwest". Quin Baine, Albuquerque Biopark.

Special Event! Mar 8 "Landscaping in New Mexico, 50 Years of Change". This will be a panel discussion with Judith Phillips, Tracy Neal, Linda Churchill, and Charles Doerwaldnof on the past, present, and future of landscape design and practices, plants, and hardscaping materials. Details will be announced on the NPSNM web site, Santa Fe page.

On **Oct 14**, the Santa Fe Chapter hosted Victor Lucero, Forest Health Program Coordinator at Energy Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD), who presented "Damaging Agents and Forest Health Conditions – A Broad Overview." His presentation covered signs and symptoms of biotic and abiotic damaging agents of forests and woodlands including phloem feeders (bark beetles), defoliators (Douglas-fir tussock moth, pine sawfly, fall webworm), sap suckers (scale insects), dwarf mistletoe, drought, hail, and fire.

On **Nov 11**, Kaitlin Haase from the Xerces Society presented, "Pesticides, Plants, and Pollinators," at the Santa Fe Chapter monthly meeting, discussing a recent study on pesticides found on urban butterfly plants in Albuquerque and Sacramento.

In lieu of a monthly meeting in December, the Santa Fe Chapter enjoyed a holiday party on **Dec 7** hosted by Tom Antonio.

Oral History Project.

Do you have experience with oral history projects or know someone who can help? For NPSNM's (and our chapter's) 50th Anniversary, we would like to start an oral history project about the early days of the organization. Barbara Fix is leading the project, but we need professional assistance. Please reply to santafe [at] npsnm.org with contacts.

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 [at] 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 2026, with our first scheduled meeting on **4 Mar**.

Wildflower walks and other activities will be announced when scheduled and will be posted at <https://www.npsnm.org/taos/>.

In Taos it all begins with seeds

Bob Pokorney

Summertime brings our Taos chapter plant sales when we distribute hundreds of healthy new plants to grateful gardeners in the Taos area. It is the high point of the year for us, for good reason as we earn thousands of dollars for our greenhouse operations. But it is just the culmination of a year's work, starting with seed gathering and cleaning the previous fall.

As this newsletter went to press, we were just finishing up seed gathering and cleaning. Hundreds of thousands of seeds from dozens of species were gathered from our demonstration garden and area patches. Most of these seeds will be given away to growers at one of our many community outreach events. Selected varieties will go to heated germination rooms operated at three member homes. These specialized operations will propagate seedlings over the winter, assisted by lights and heat mats.

Come springtime, these young plants are ready to move to our main, unheated, greenhouse at Taos Land Trust where they continue maturing to nice size, and the summer plant sales begin anew. ❖



Dedicated volunteers collect and process seeds. Correct seed identification is a critical step to ensure both growers and plant purchasers get a well-identified plant with appropriate growing instructions. Images: Bob Pokorney

More from Albuquerque

field activities at Cottonwood Gulch Expeditions, near Bluewater Lake in the Zuni Mountains. Outdoor learning there featured curriculum-based experiences focused on ecology, fauna, and flora of New Mexico; (2) \$500 to Sally Stevens, founder and director of an alternative outdoor educational program, the SOL Forest School in Albuquerque. This money was used to engage students in planting tree seedlings at selected Albuquerque sites; (3) \$500 to Theresa Sandoval, a teacher at Dolores Gonzales Elementary School, to purchase materials, supplies, and tools for the school greenhouse and to expand its pollinator garden, hoping to include herbs as well as native wildflowers. These provide practical, interactive experiences for young students learning the value of plants and pollinators, and (4) \$500 to the Yerba Mansa Project for education materials.

We thank Lee Regan for spearheading this program and Sara Keeney and Carol Conoboy for their participation with Lee on the selection committee.



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Image: Gordon Berman