



## **Native Plant Society of New Mexico Las Cruces Chapter 2025 Annual Report**

### **OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS**

President - Gordon Berman was elected to serve another term

Vice President - Matthew Becker

Treasurer - Mary Steigman

Recording Secretary - Jeanne Barker was elected to succeed Cheryl Beymer

Membership Secretary - John Freyermuth was elected to serve another term

State Board Representative and At-Large Board Member - Jackye Meinecke

### **COUNCILS and COMMITTEES**

Communications Council Chairs - John Freyermuth and Mary Selfridge

Conservation Chair - Ken Steigman

Hospitality Chairs - Jamie Blair and Jenny Lockwood

Program Chairs - Matthew Becker

Student Grant Interim Chair - Joan Woodward

State Conference Chairs - Mary and Ken Steigman

### **TALKS and WALKS**

**January:** Trystan Harpold with the New Mexico Forestry Division spoke about forest management/thinning/wildfire prevention. Wynn Anderson led our field trip to UTEP's Chihuahuan Desert Botanical Garden. As first curator who designed, planted, and nurtured the Garden since its 1999 opening, Wynn shared his dirt under the fingernails personal history from the ground up. Under Wynn's leadership, the Garden has been nationally recognized for its outstanding display of Chihuahuan Desert native plants.

**February:** Matt Becker spoke about the Phenology of Native Flowering Cactus. Using his own photographs and other sources, Matt charted a time line of native cactus in their short-lived blooms. Our field trip to the El Paso Museum of Archaeology Garden showcased the wide diversity of local native cactus.

**March:** Cheryl Beymer was recognized for her volunteer work at NMSU's Herbarium where she devoted countless hours each week for six years - mounting specimens, gathering and analyzing data for research projects, pilot testing on site elementary school activities. Craig Severy was recognized by the local BLM Office as its Volunteer Of The Year. Craig was a mainstay at the Dripping Springs Natural Area where he maintained trails, tended the Visitor Center Garden, and welcomed newcomers. NMSU

graduate and Canadian based University Professor of Botany Root Gorelick returned to Las Cruces for his annual cactus hunting pilgrimage. Root and Matt Becker led our field trip on the Sierra Vista trail below Bishop's Cap.

**April:** Our meeting showcased a slide show of members' gardens. Matt Becker led a field trip to Fillmore Canyon with side trips to La Cueva and Arroyo Trail.

**May:** We held our annual pot luck picnic at Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park. Gordon Berman led our field trip to Soledad/Bar Canyon.

**June:** Margie Gibson and Don Graves hosted our field trip to Silver City's Silva Creek Botanical Garden, a colorful and well maintained collaborative effort of the Gila Chapter and the City.

**July:** Midsummer rain splashed down Fillmore Canyon, a welcome sight on our field trip.

**August:** Chapter volunteers helped BLM's restoration project of a Cienega on the Corralitos Range. At our monthly meeting, Ken Steigman presented an overview of the upcoming State Conference and an update on the Spring Canyon Protection Project. The Spring, a naturally occurring year-round surface water feature in the desert, had been reduced to cesspool status, and Picacho Peak within the Organ Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument had been over-grazed -- by cattle on governmentally leased grazing allotments. Spearheaded by Ken Steigman, our Chapter and a consortium of like-minded ecologically motivated groups documented both the starving condition of the cattle and environmental degradation and lobbied both the State Land Office and BLM to take action. As a result of these efforts, the cattle were removed. Continued monitoring and hands-on effort will be necessary to protect these natural resources. Field trippers to Picacho Peak enjoyed a native flower bloom revived by summer rains and spared by the ban on cattle grazing.

**September:** Kaitlin Haase, a Pollinator Conservation Specialist with the Xerces Society, narrated a fascinating slide show presentation of rarely observed nighttime pollinators. We field tripped to the Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park.

**October:** We can't thank Mary and Ken Steigman enough (along with many Chapter members) for imagining, planning, coordinating, and staging the State Conference. Not only did Mary and Ken create perfect weather conditions but they overcame the unexpected keynote speaker Covid cancellation and the government shutdown. Dr. Sara Fuentes-Soriano, Assistant Professor at NMSU and our Chapter's Faculty Advisor, contributed to the success of the conference by serving as Honorary Conference Chair and Faculty Sponsor working countless hours with NMSU to facilitate use of University facilities for the reception and presentations. The Convention proceeded smoothly with a Thursday evening meet and greet; Friday daytime field trips, workshops, and garden tours; a catered, live music, Friday evening tour of the University Art Gallery; presentations, book sales, silent auction, catered breakfast and lunch on NMSU's campus; recognizing Chapter member Robert A. Barnes with the Jack

and Martha Carter Conservation Champion Award; capped off by an outdoor full moon dinner.

**November:** Student Grant awardees Mickie Barraza and Sara Isabel Ruiz Flores presented their research projects (genetic diversity of grama grass and the evolutionary fate of Sotol respectively) with professional grade quality. El Paso Chapter President Kevin Floyd and multi-versed naturalist Paul Hyder led our field trip to Knapp Land Nature Preserve.

**December:** Dormancy

### **ONGOING PROJECTS**

The Chapter continues to take care of the Dripping Springs Visitor Center Garden. Chapter volunteers keep the water feature flowing; unclog and expand irrigation tubing; add and prune and clear vegetation to highlight a diverse inventory of native plants; install identifying signage.

### **CHALLENGES**

Continue the gains at Spring Canyon and Picacho Peak. Encourage BLM to pursue conservation minded policies. Promote community appreciation of and respect for the native environment. Fill empty Board and Committee positions.

*The Las Cruces Chapter Board of Directors*