



California Native Plant Society

1722 J Street, Suite 17 • Sacramento, CA 95814 • (916) 447-2677 • FAX (916) 447-2727



Fifth graders study a vernal pool at Mather Field, Sacramento County. Photo: Ken Davis

**COME
JOIN US!**
For a Tour of
Some of
California's
Unique Vernal Pool
Wildflowers

April 5, 2001

Dear California State Legislator,

You have likely heard a lot about vernal pools and fairy shrimp, much of it probably related to conflicts between conservation of the pools and development. But have you ever visited a vernal pool to learn first hand the intricate balance of life and beauty they contain? They are much more than puddles and little shrimp!

The California Native Plant Society cordially invites you and your staff to a guided tour of the beautiful vernal pools at Mather Field in eastern Sacramento County. Come learn about one of the rarest ecosystems on Earth, one right in Sacramento's own backyard!

We will lead tours on **Thursday, April 26 from 3-5 p.m.**
and **Friday, April 27, from 10-12 noon.**

Vernal pools were once common in California's Central Valley. Now less than 10% remain. The Mather Field pools are some of the Sacramento area's finest. For the last few years these pools have served as an outdoor classroom for 5th graders from Crocker Riverside Elementary School. These children have not only learned about the plants and animals that live in these pools; they have also become some of their most effective advocates. Through their efforts, portions of the area were protected from proposed gravel mining and off-road vehicle traffic. Two years ago the class won a statewide competition for environmental education projects. State Superintendent of Schools Delaine Eastin was so impressed by their project that she asked for a personal tour of the vernal pools.

What Will You See?



During spring, successive rings of wildflowers define vernal pools

Earlier this spring the Mather vernal pools were filled with water, and millions of tiny animals such as fairy shrimp, tadpole shrimp, polywogs, flat worms, and many others. Now that the pools have dried, it is time for the spectacular displays of vernal pool wildflowers. As the pools dry down, the newly exposed plant seedlings grow quickly, and the flowers form colorful concentric rings. Dense patches of yellow, white, pink and purple flowers change from week to week, as each species gives way to the next, like a floral kaleidoscope. These spring or “vernal” flower displays give vernal pools their name.

Please join us – and encourage your staff to come as well – in exploring one of California’s natural treasures. We will provide refreshments and informed guides to ensure an enjoyable and educational experience. All you will need to bring are appropriate outdoor clothes and comfortable walking shoes. The walk will be easy and the scenery beautiful. Come learn why every year more Californians are supporting preservation of this unique native ecosystem - the vernal pool.

Please RSVP to the California Native Plant Society’s Sacramento Office, 1722 J Street, Suite 17, Sacramento, CA 95814. Phone: 916-447-2677. Fax: 916-447-2727. Email: cnps@cnps.org. Website: www.cnps.org. Additional details, including a map to our meeting site, will be sent to you following your response. Please call me if you have any questions or if we can facilitate your participation in these trips.

I hope to see you there.

Sincerely,

Allen Barnes
Executive Director



Different wildflower species appear each week