

California Native Plant Society

California Native Plants - Did You Know?

Did you know that California is a **biodiversity hotspot** recognized by international conservation organizations? Why is that?

- California has great topographic diversity - from coastline up to the tallest peaks and down to the lowest elevation (below sea level) in the continental United States. This leads to great diversity of species and climates.



- California is only one of five small areas in the world with a “**Mediterranean climate**” – cool rainy winters and warm summers.
- California is host to over 6300 species of plants, *more than the total number of species from the central and northeastern United States and adjacent parts of Canada, an area ten times larger than California.*

- California has **the largest flora** of any state in the United States.
- About 2,270 (**36%** of the 6300 plant species found in California) are found nowhere else on the planet. They are called endemic species.
- Nearly 2,096 (**33%** of the 6300 plants) are considered rare, threatened or uncommon.
- We’ve already seen 32 species go extinct in California, although 3 species have been re-discovered in southern California in the past 4 years.
- We’re *still discovering* new plant species, previously unknown to science, at a rate of 2-3 per year.



Why care about California Native Plants?

- With all this great diversity, only about **25%** of the original vegetation remains in more or less pristine condition.
- Our *population growth is projected to increase by 37%* in southern California in 20 years – to over 22.5 million people.
- A 1996 report by the State of California determined that over 1500 plants are *still declining*.
- The federal Endangered Species Act continues to provide opportunities to protect our unique botanical heritage for our children and onto the seventh generation through “win-win” open-space conservation.



- Plants are the base of the food web. By protecting the plants, the whole food web benefits, including humans.
- We also have the opportunity to increase the use of native plants for drought tolerant landscaping. It simply makes sense – less use of water and build habitat for plants, birds, insects and other critters. We can weave sustainable habitat through our urban areas!

Mission of the California Native Plant Society is to increase the understanding and appreciation of California’s native plants and to conserve them and their natural habitats. For more information, please visit our website at www.cnps.org



Dedicated to the preservation of California native flora



The Endangered Species Act Works! Plant Case Studies



While animals can move around on the landscape, plants have a much harder time. Many of the rare plants in California are rare because they have adapted to living conditions that most plants simply cannot tolerate. Therefore, they have very unique requirements (usually soils). The Endangered Species Act is effective in conserving these plants by protecting the plants' habitat (soils, water requirements, and pollinators) which is essential for their survival. Because plants are the base of the biological food web, their conservation prevents extinction of a wide variety of animals too! A robust food web is essential for human health and food production.



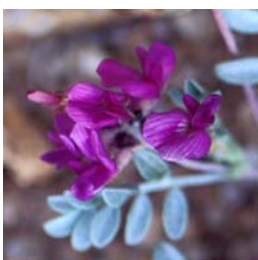
Peirson's milkvetch – Federally Threatened Plant – threatened by unrestricted off-road vehicle activities in the Algodones dunes of Imperial County. Peirson's milkvetch is restricted to the shifting 'deeper' dunes of this large sand dune system. 21,826 acres of Critical Habitat is designated. Protected habitat provides refugia for four other plants and numerous animals found nowhere else in the world. Despite its status and protection, most of the plant's known occurrences are not conserved.

Munz's Onion – Federally Endangered Plant – threatened by clay mining and development in clay deposits in Riverside County. Munz's onion can only survive in heavy clay soils. While only 176 acres of Critical Habitat is designated, its "essential" habitat is actually 1,244 acres. The 1,068 acres is not included as Critical Habitat because it is included in a Habitat Conservation Plan. A suite of other clay-adapted plants also benefit from the protection of Munz's onion habitat.



Spreading Navarretia – Federally Threatened Plant – threatened by habitat destruction from development and altered water regime. Spreading Navarretia lives in seasonally (winter/spring) wet depressions called vernal pools. These plants germinate, grow, flower and produce seed all in a matter of a few months when the soils in the pools are moist, but not saturated. Vernal pools are also home to a number of other rare plants and animals. Although "essential" habitat is identified as over 31,068 acres, only 4,301 acres of vernal pool habitat is currently proposed for Critical Habitat.

Carbonate Endemic Plants – Federally Endangered or Threatened Plants. Unique soils, rich with bright white carbon compounds, are the result of sea creature's skeletons from several million years ago. These carbonate soils are very tough for most plants to grow on, but four very different plants have managed to do that, growing nowhere else in the world. These soils are also very useful to humans for making concrete, toothpaste, cosmetics and medicine. In cooperation with mining companies, a strategy has been worked out to protect most of these plants and their Critical Habitat!



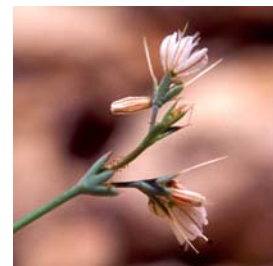
Cushenbury milkvetch



Parish's Daisy



Cushenbury Buckwheat



Cushenbury Oxytheca