

# Oak Notes

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NEWSLETTER OF THE RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN VOLUNTEERS

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT Marla White, Volunteer President

*"A garden requires patient labor and attention. Plants do not grow merely to satisfy ambitions or to fulfill good intentions. They thrive because someone expended effort on them."*

—Liberty Hyde Bailey

I recently finished reading *The Overstory: A Novel* by Richard Powers (Winner of the 2018 Pulitzer Prize in Fiction). One of the characters, *Patty Westerford*, is a young botanist in the 1960s who discovers that "trees are social creatures": They communicate with each other and react to their environment in dynamic and ingenious ways. RSABG Volunteers are like those trees as we work together to maintain, support and share this unique place.

October has been a busy month with Garden activities: Bump in the Night, Nature Interpreter Training, prepping & holding the Fall Plant Sale at Grow Native Nursery. Many hands were involved with cutting craft materials for Bump activities, pulling volunteer weeds from pots, labeling & sorting pots in the nursery, creating hands-on materials for school tours and prepping for the rollout of the updated Adaptation & Survival two-hour school program.

I hope many of you took the opportunity to sign up for the Volunteer Field Trip to Santa Cruz Island on November 2 put together by Linda Clement and the Enrichment Committee. An ocean voyage filled with camaraderie and a chance to see unique island plants and animals with Island Packer tour guides.

I had the chance to take new RSABG members on tours of the garden, along with RSABG Overseers who also are volunteers. About half of those attending indicated that they wanted to volunteer in some capacity. We will hold a Sunset Social on November 14 for old and new volunteers in Johnson's Oval. Please join me when we meet these new volunteers and welcome them to our organization.

I can't wait to see you around the garden and THANK YOU for all you do!

—Marla

The deadline for articles to be submitted for the December 2019 issue of OAK NOTES is Friday, November 15. Thank you for your prompt submission!!



## FROM THE DIRECTOR

**Lucinda McDade, RSABG  
Executive Director**

### **RSABG Takes a Stand—or Not Greetings volunteers!**

First, a welcome to our newest volunteers! I am very sorry that I was unable to participate in orienting and welcoming you to our Garden and to our incredible corps of volunteers, but I look forward to interacting with each of you soon. You are joining a group of wonderful, caring, intelligent and altruistic people among whom you will find many friends for life. It is no exaggeration – in fact, it is an understatement – to say that we would be unable to accomplish all that we do here at RSABG without our volunteers. A very good example is the “*Things that Go Bump*” family educational event that we just held in mid-October: it would be *impossible* without you, our volunteers. In other cases, you extend, amplify and increase the pace of our work whether it be on the grounds, in the library, in our educational programs, in the herbarium or in terms of public events. Please know that, to a person, every member of the staff here deeply appreciates all that you do.

Second, a hearty THANKS to all of you who were with us on Friday and/or Saturday nights for the “Bump” event. Together we created a wonderful Garden full of fun, creative learning opportunities and just plain cool things to see and experience! All of us who were at the event last year certainly took note of the perfect weather this year (just ask someone who was here last year).

Third, changes to the membership program that have just been announced. The biggest change is that, after many years of no longer being gold in any way, the Gold card level is being renamed as *Family Plus*. Two benefits are being added: a reusable guest pass so that members at this level may bring a friend for free each time they visit, and the really exciting reciprocal benefits associated with the Garden’s

membership in the NARM Association. I will let you read about these in detail in the materials that you are getting about the program. Yes, the price of membership at this level is going up, in large part to reflect these additional benefits. However, an additional factor is involved in the price increase: when Karina and I took over Garden leadership in our respective areas—now seven years ago!—we quickly realized that the Gold card level was quite dramatically underpriced. Simple, conservative arithmetic quickly led to the conclusion that a gold card member household that took advantage of even half to two-thirds of their benefits would actually owe the Garden money at the end of the year (i.e., they would have gotten back the value of their membership fee and then some in terms of the real value of the benefits they had enjoyed). Since that time, we have been working the fee up to a reasonable level while avoiding a dramatic leap in any single-year transition. This year, that process continues; also, the two new benefits that we are offering are not free to the Garden and must be passed along. As Garden insiders, we hope that you will help others to understand this process. Note that the development office is standing by to address any



### **A Very Happy November Birthday to:**

Amy Baumann	Karen Lent
Fred Brooks	Patricia Nueva Espana
Betty Butler	Joan Presecan
Louise Gish	Jean Rosewall
Virginia Herd	Dean Shimek
Chris Ilgen	Tom White

questions you may have. Significantly, help us stamp out any unfounded rumors by illuminating them with the bright shining light of facts!

And, finally, on to my topic for this month: the role — or not — of RSABG in advocacy. First and most basically, RSABG is not an advocacy organization. We do not lobby, and we do not take political stands. This owes significantly to the legal nature of our Garden as a not-for-profit public charity. Organizations with that status cannot lobby or take stances of a political nature without losing their tax-exempt status.

You may be aware of some organizations that would seem to be not-for-profits but that DO lobby. Behind the scenes, these usually have somewhat complicated

organizational designs to enable them to lobby while also accepting tax-deductible donations. The Sierra Club is one such organization with both a charitable (Sierra Club Foundation, a 501(c)(3)) and a social welfare arm (The Sierra Club, a 501(c)(4)). The former takes your donations unless you make them explicitly for the purpose of supporting their advocacy work, in which case you give to the social welfare arm and your contribution is not tax deductible. As the 501(c)(4), The Sierra Club lobbies public officials, takes stances on controversial issues, and endorses candidates for public office, all things that RSABG cannot and does not do.

For RSABG, there is also the issue of Board governance, by which I mean that the Board of Trustees of RSABG would have to be involved if we



## MEET AMANDA BEHNKE

**Director Of Advancement**

Hello from the Garden for the very first time! I'm the newly hired Director of Advancement. I am originally from a small town in Southern Illinois and moved to Southern California twenty years ago. My professional experience has been at Western University of Health Sciences, the University of La Verne, and two other local nonprofit organizations that support children with health issues. I am trained as a marriage and family therapist and also have an MBA.

I have always loved gardening. My maternal grandfather was a farmer. My paternal grandfather and my parents always had big gardens when I was a child. After working here and learning more, I plan to transform my yard with California native plants and be the envy of my neighbors.

The best part of working in my field has been the relationships I have built and how I have helped

donors manifest their goals. Because of the work that has been so important to me, high school students get introduced to college and students receive scholarships, even years after I have left the respective universities. I have watched children become healthier physically and mentally due to the agencies where I have worked. I am very lucky to have found a career that makes such a difference for others. Additionally, I have made a lot of true friendships.

During my interview process and in other organizations where I have worked, I have learned how important volunteers are to the success of an organization. Whether you are a nature interpreter, a horticulture assistant, a garden gift store associate, or doing another task, we cannot thank you enough for your service.

If you have not already done so, my request is that you introduce yourself to me. Let me know what attracted you to the Garden. I'd also love to hear why you have continued volunteering. I cannot wait to meet each of you!

I can be reached at [abehnke@rsabg.org](mailto:abehnke@rsabg.org) or in Office 120.

were to take a stance on a potentially controversial issue. Our Board comprises people with diverse life experiences and opinions, and diverse political perspectives as well. As such, taking a stance *as* RSABG on a controversial issue would be quite complicated in that it would require thorough vetting by the Board of Trustees.

RSABG can endorse projects and ideas that are entirely consistent with our mission and solidly based in science, education and real-world facts. For these reasons, we have endorsed the “Botany Bill”: <https://botanybill.weebly.com>. This bill has been introduced in both the House and Senate in DC as H.R. 1572 and S. 2384, respectively. It calls actions to make sure that plants are incorporated into federally funded efforts in natural resource management, with three main foci: (1) training and employing botanists; (2) plant research, and (3) promoting the use of native plants. These are goals that are so central to RSABG’s mission and purpose that I had no qualms about signing RSABG up as an endorser.

We have also been asked recently to come out against the several large-scale solar power projects planned or implemented in the desert. Those of you who have thought about these projects will appreciate the dilemma of being at once very sorry that desert landscapes are in the crosshairs while also being very much in favor of renewable sources of energy. Without a great deal of work, RSABG would *not* take a stand for or against any one of these projects. However, I would have no hesitation sending comments regarding siting of such projects (should be fully based on evidence of plant distributions and other natural resources), nor in arguing *for* proper mitigation efforts to save any plants impacted in whatever is the best possible way (e.g., seed banking, relocation). Perhaps this example will clarify the issues for some of you. However, I would be the last to insist that there is always a bright shining line between what we can and cannot do as RSABG. That is not the way the world works! Instead, every such case must be evaluated carefully.

RSABG staff and students (and volunteers)—including myself—may of course form their own opinions and take their own positions with regard to any number of issues; in fact, I urge that we do so! We need caring, educated and altruistic people like you to weigh in on all of the tough issues that face us. It is, however, critical that you *not* present yourself in such cases as representing or speaking on behalf of RSABG unless you have my authorization. That is, you may feel free to ask me (as several Garden staff have done) to help you evaluate a given situation and decide how to proceed.

As always, I welcome your discussion and feedback on this topic. See you around the Garden soon!

## VOLUNTEER ENRICHMENT

### Linda Clement

**Enrichment speaker, Bryce Kunzel,  
Monday, November 25th, at noon in the  
East Classroom**

When Bryce Kunzel was in high school he worked in nurseries, and that was when he realized he wanted to study Botany at Humboldt State. For three summers he worked at Redwood National Park doing plant surveys that were used to write prescribed burn treatments in the parks. He enjoyed his work; he hiked, camped, keyed out plants in five different parks, ran fire behavior models, and even worked prescribed burns by using a drip torch to ignite plots he had surveyed. In his last year at Humboldt, Bryce took part in a directed study program on orchid micropropagation and tissue culture. This led to several years of work with a local orchid grower where he eventually ended up running the lab and managing the greenhouses.

After eight years, Bryce moved to Los Angeles and worked at the Grow Native Nursery in Westwood. When it closed, he came to RSABG to be Manager of Education Programs for the Garden. He reflected that this was a great learning opportunity for him but he missed growing plants, so when a chance to

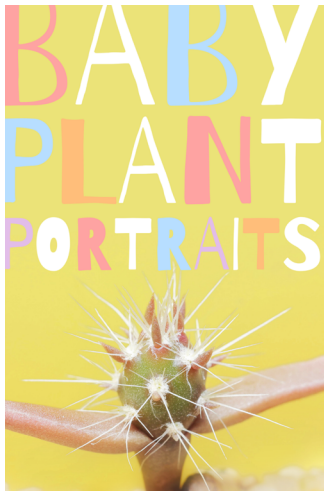


manage the nursery came up, “it seemed too perfect to pass up.”

Bryce has used his experience and expertise to manage the nursery, and with the help of the staff and of Billy Sale, Restoration Projects Manager, the Garden nursery produces beautiful and healthy native plants. The nursery is now a phytosanitary space, and the Grow Native team continues to improve its sanitation regimes and share them with other nurseries.

On Monday November 25<sup>th</sup>, at noon in the East Classroom, Bryce will give an overview of these sanitation practices and explain why they are important. He will define soilborne pathogens and efforts to control them, and then talk about how plants are tested.

by Lynn Miller, Volunteer Enrichment Program



## DIRECTOR OF VISITOR EXPERIENCE

**David Bryant**  
**Baby Plants and the PCH: A Wonderful Exhibition Season Ahead at RSABG**

What’s cuter than a baby panda or tiger cub? Well I might be a bit bias, but I would say a “baby” cholla cactus (*Cylindropuntia* sp.) might steal the spotlight for “most adorable.” In fact, baby plants—scientifically known as sporophytes for most of the plant kingdom—can be wonderfully cute. The very first leaves, or cotyledons, of baby chollas look like outstretched plane wings or dumbo ears, waving as if to say “hello world!” They are totally unexpected on a cactus and quite charming. Other chlorophyll-loving cuties include conifers, which look like tiny parasols when they emerge from the soil. Essentially, a mighty giant sequoia starts life

as a naked cocktail umbrella. Is that not the most adorable thing!?

I invite you to see the diversity of darling plant babies—from the cutest, weirdest and those that only a mother could love—in our upcoming exhibition, “Plant Baby Portraits.” This sweet exhibit will display twelve plant baby portraits that speak to the lovable personalities of tiny plants. Limited edition prints of each portrait and a calendar of all twelve portraits will be available for sale while supplies last! Join us on Sunday, November 10 from 5 p.m.–7 p.m. for the opening reception of “Plant Baby Portraits” and be the first to see these remarkable cuties!

In the Outdoor Gallery, we will be unveiling “PCH: Plant Coast Highway” on November 16! This exciting exhibition is a revival of our display at the United States Botanic Garden’s “Gardens Across America” exhibit. A botanical journey on America’s most scenic route, “PCH: Plant Coast Highway,” will display the superlative plants that define the epic scenery and beautiful environments along California State Highway 1. From towering redwoods to windswept pines, ancient oaks to hillsides of golden poppies, the plants of the PCH are a testament to California’s rich diversity of flora.

We’re excited to share these exhibits with you this fall!

## LYNX SPIDER

**Fred Brooks Nature Interpretor**  
**Photos by Debbie Woo**



You may have seen this image of the green lynx spider (*Peucetia viridans*) in Debbie Woo’s “Around the Garden” series. It is as dangerous as it looks, but mainly to its insect prey. The female is relatively large, up to 22 mm in length, the male somewhat smaller. They are bright green and have thin, yellow-green legs with long black spines. The spiders in this family are identified

by their eight eyes, six of which are arranged hexagonally.

Lynx spiders hunt during the day. They are aggressive, agile, and move quickly from one place to another. They live in low scrub vegetation and, like the lynx cat, often stalk and then jump on their prey. They are known to spit a venom that can cause mild eye irritation in humans. The spiders probably use this as a defense, however, and not to immobilize their prey.

Lynx spiders do not spin webs to capture insects and other spiders, but will trail a silk dragline when they jump. Females also spin silk to form and secure their egg sacs. The sacs are round, about an inch in diameter, and attached to surrounding branches by numerous silken strands. They can contain up to 600 (average 200) orange eggs that take several weeks to hatch, and then another two weeks to molt. The spiderlings are able to leave the egg sac on their own, but the female often helps by tearing small openings.

As they mature, the growing spiderlings climb around on the sac and its attached strands. The female hangs upside-down above the sac, aggressively guarding it during the whole process.

These spiders are major insect predators and were once proposed as biological control agents in crops. Later research, however, showed they ate as many beneficial insects, especially pollinators, as pests.

## MISSING VOLUNTEER LIBRARY BOOKS

**Have you seen us? We are missing from the volunteer library.**

*Butterflies of California* by Comstock

*How to Hide a Butterfly* by Heller

*Great Migrations: Butterflies* by March

*A Scotch Paisano in Old L.A.* by Dakin

*America's Ancient Forests* by Bonnickson



### VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: JOAN SWEENEY Curated by Marla White, Volunteer President

Joan was a terrific mentor to me when I began working as a one-hour school tour guide, allowing me to shadow her and share her easy manner with young school children.

Joan is a member of the Class of 2014 and volunteers as a Nature Interpreter for one-hour school tours, serves on the Library Committee, can be seen assisting in the Butterfly Pavilion, and works special events like Bump in the Night.

#### **What prompted you to decide to become a volunteer?**

*When I lived in Alexandria, Virginia, I had great volunteer opportunities. I was a docent at two different historic houses in Washington DC, read*

*with little kids in an after-school program, and helped in the office of Washington's Shakespeare Theater Company. I made wonderful friends at all the places I volunteered. Volunteering is important to me. After we moved back to Claremont, RSABG seemed to have the best volunteer program here.*

A highlight for Joan was this past summer in the Butterfly Pavilion, watching a Monarch caterpillar shed its last skin and go into its chrysalis—it happened quickly but was a lot of work for the little creature.

#### **Any other insights into yourself?**

*I've been blessed with a long marriage to a very bright guy. We've lived in interesting times together, have wonderful children, and the best grandson in the world!*

#### **What do you like best about our garden?**

*The sights, sounds, and scents of the garden itself. Also interacting with the people here.*

*It's good for me and I hope it's good for the garden. – Absolutely!*



**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2019**

**Sign-Up At The Admission Kiosk On October 3**

**Van Pool: First Come, First Served Or Private Transportation**

**The Details: bring water, lunch, sun protection, and warm clothes.**

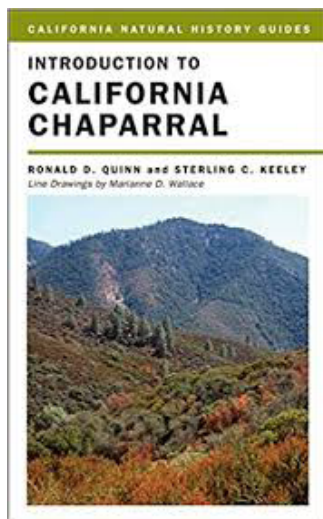
Join us for a cruise (1.5 hr. one way) to Prisoner Harbor with Island Packers Cruises for a ranger-guided tour of the Nature Conservancy Area of Santa Cruz Island.

- Arrive Island Packers at Ventura Harbor at 8:15 a.m.
- Depart Ventura Harbor for Santa Cruz Island at 9:00 a.m.
- Guided tour of Nature Conservancy area (4.5-mile RT hike) at 10:30 a.m.
- Depart Santa Cruz Island for Ventura Harbor at 3:30 p.m.
- Arrive Ventura Harbor at 5:00 p.m.
- Price \$55/person (does not include cost of ground transportation).



# BOOK OF THE MONTH

Julie Scheuermann,  
Volunteer Library Committee



*California Natural  
History Guides:  
Introduction to  
California Chaparral  
by Ronald D. Quinn  
and Sterling C. Keeley.  
321 pages. University of  
California Press. 2006*

The purpose of this book is to supply basic information about chaparral communities. Both authors worked in the chaparral as research scientists and educators for more than 30 years. Each author felt that a basic book on chaparral was needed. They both began writing independently and joined forces when the University of California Press informed them of their parallel efforts.

The book has six chapters. Each chapter addresses a different aspect of chaparral. They include an explanation of what chaparral is and where it is located, a description of Mediterranean climate, the role of fire in chaparral communities, animals and

plants found in chaparral communities, and how to live within the chaparral community.

For those that live in chaparral regions this book provides an excellent description of the chaparral environment and climate. It promotes an awareness of how the chaparral environment works and what will be experienced by those living in chaparral areas. Equally important are strategies for successful living in chaparral areas where fire and problems that occur after a fire are real possibilities.

The section on fire in the chaparral compares the type and number of fires that occurred in the 19th and 20th centuries as well as among the native cultures. It includes information on fire burning patterns as well as species recovery after fires.

A large portion of the book contains detailed descriptions of the plants and animals in chaparral communities. The descriptions are several paragraphs long, however, and not broken down into specific topics. One must read the entire description of a plant or animal to find the desired information. Many descriptions include black and white drawings. Colored photographs occur sparsely throughout the book.

If you would like additional information on living in fire prone areas, the volunteer library also has a book titled *Fire, Chaparral, and Survival in Southern California* by Richard W. Halsey.



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