

Shasta Snow-wreath Threatened by Water Interests

By Ron Stork

One of the most startling finds of a new plant species in California was the discovery of the Shasta Snow-wreath, *Neviusia cliftonii*, in 1993 just in time for it to be included in the Jepson Manual.

The Snow-wreath is a good-sized shrub (to ten feet) in the Rose family with showy white flowers (stamens and occasional petals) growing in often shaded mesic habitats mostly around Shasta Reservoir. Its only close relative is the Alabama Snow-wreath, which grows only in the U.S. southeast.

The presence of such a large, conspicuous, and previously undescribed species made the news. See *Fremontia* Vol. 22(3): pp. 3-10, 1993 & Vol. 33(2): pp. 26, 2005. It also made the Rare, Threatened, or Endangered in California or Elsewhere Rank 1B.2 (fairly endangered in California status).

It got my attention when I read a report on the April 2015 Shasta Discovery Day in the Botanical Electronic News (BEN). It concluded with the following post script:

On Thursday, September 17, 2015 Barbara [Ertter] wrote to the BEN Editor: "I was just in touch with Julie Nelson [USFS], and she indicated that half the known populations would be completely or partially inundated by raising the dam. A few small populations would be completely lost. Since these are right on the edge of the existing full pool line, they are probably remnants of formerly larger populations. Of course, we'll never know how much the original population was flooded when the original dam was built."

A quick review of the unreleased draft of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act report, previously obtained by a Freedom of Information Act request, revealed some of the details: "Shasta Snow-wreath would especially be threatened by the raising of Shasta Dam ... 11 of 24 known sites of the plant species would be partly or completely lost within the inundation zone with one more impacted by relocation actions... Another 11 occurrences of Shasta Snow-wreath are threatened by non-project related activities due to their locations near roads, trails, and logging activities... Thus, only one occurrence of the Shasta Snow-wreath is not threatened by the SLWRI [dam raise] or non-project related activities..." (F&WCAR, p. 164)

Fortunately, the dam raise is illegal under California law because of the protection of the McCloud River in the State Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. It is also illegal to fund the dam raise with Proposition 1 funds.

Photo taken by Steve Matson



Shasta Snow-wreath

Unfortunately, in 2013 the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California made repealing the protection and funding prohibitions a legislative priority. Earlier, in 2007 the Westlands Water District bought about 3,000 acres of land along the McCloud River to, according to the Redding Record Searchlight, "protect its interests along the river and around Lake Shasta."

These guys are heavy hitters with aspirations to receive water or more water from the Sacramento River, the river dammed by Shasta Dam. Let's hope that decision-makers in the legislature can keep a warm spot in their hearts for the Shasta Snow-wreath.

6th Annual Gardens Gone Native Tour April 9, 9:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Planning is well under way for the 2016 Gardens Gone Native garden tour. Interest in California natives continues to grow and this year's garden tour should draw more attendees than ever. Last year we had a record 997 registered attendees. Judging from the enormously successful fall plant sale, we anticipate even more interest in this year's tour. We have a wonderful blend of gardens that have been on the tour in the past as well as many new gardens. Registration for the tour opens at gardensgonenative@eventbrite.com March 11, 2016. The tour brochure including maps and garden descriptions will be available at that time. Won't you share your love of California native plants with the public by becoming a volunteer docent or greeter for one of the gardens on this year's tour? If you are interested please send an email to gardensgonenative@gmail.com. Please join us as a volunteer or as a tour participant. Also check the CNPS website for additional garden tour information: [SacValley.CNPS.org/Events/Native Garden Tour](http://SacValley.CNPS.org/Events/NativeGardenTour).



Hibiscus

California Native Plant Society
Sacramento Valley Chapter Newsletter

sacvalleycnps.org

Serving the Sacramento, Yolo, Colusa, Sutter, Yuba,
lower Placer and northern San Joaquin County areas

FEBRUARY 2016

Meetings are held on the second
Wednesday of the month (except
July, Aug, & Dec) at 7PM
at the Shepard Garden & Arts
Center in McKinley Park,
3330 McKinley Blvd, Sacramento

NEXT MEETING:

Wed., Feb. 10

Questions? Contact
John Hunter,
jhunter@harveyecology.com

Chapter meetings are free and open to the public.

Books and Sacramento Valley
Chapter T-shirts are available
for purchase at meetings.
Refreshments provided!

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members' support. To join or
renew, go to www.cnps.org
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5113. Other membership levels
are also available.

Send questions or address
changes to cnps@cnps.org.

February Chapter Meeting: Kaleidoscopes of Life: Merced Version Presented by Carol Witham and Splash Volunteers

Kaleidoscopes were a favorite
holiday gift for children many
years ago. They displayed
a quickly and constantly changing
series of brilliantly colored patterns.
The metaphor works for California's
vernal pool landscape, which has
short-lived, weird-looking, fascinating
fauna which evolved millions of years
ago, and dazzling swaths of tens of
thousands of tiny flowers that change
from week to week through a two-to-
three month season.

Nowhere in California is the
vernal pool landscape as large and as
pristine as in eastern Merced County.
Nearly 100,000 acres of this habitat
are on cattle ranches controlled by a
dozen families. This area is also home
to 30 rare, threatened or endangered
plants and animals.

While a large portion of the eastern
Merced vernal pool landscape is
under some form of protection—
mostly conservation easements—the

area is also
highly threat-
ened. With the
establishment of
the University
of California at
Merced campus,
land speculation
for future hous-

ing development runs rampant. Until
very recently, only regulatory agencies
and the environmentalists cared about
the fate of these precious jewels of the
eastern Merced landscape.

In 2014, through grant funding from
the Bureau of Reclamation, the Splash
program debuted in several Merced
schools. Sacramento Splash has been
introducing local students to the won-
ders of nature and science through the
study of the Mather Field Vernal Pools
for the past 15 years. Funding from
grants provided one year of field trips
for Merced students and allowed the
curriculum to be modified to be more
Merced place-based. In 2015, the CNPS
Sacramento Valley Chapter provided a
second year of funding for the Merced
program. We anticipate providing
funding for 2016 while continuing to
look for a more permanent funding
source for the Merced vernal pool
education program.

Please join us for a presentation

on the vernal
pools of eastern
Merced County
and an inspiring
story building
a constituency
of vernal pool
supporters.



The mission of the California Native Plant Society is to conserve California native plants and their natural habitats,
and increase understanding, appreciation, and horticultural use of native plants.