

# THE FOOTHILL ADVOCATE

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SIERRA • FOOTHILL



• CONSERVANCY •

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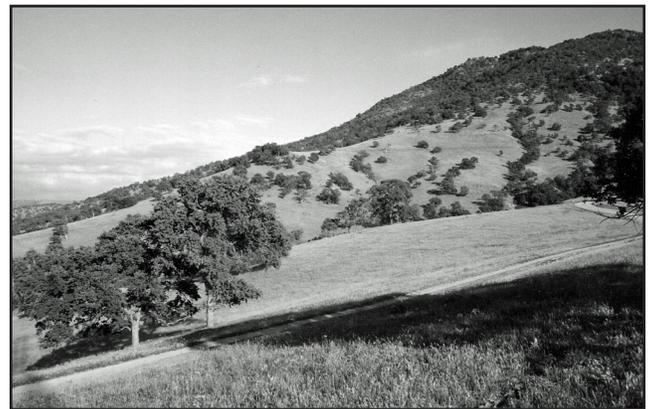
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## Tivy Mountain Geology and Botany

If you visited the McKenzie or Finegold Preserves this spring-and literally more than a thousand of you did-you saw beautiful hillsides covered with grass, popcorn flowers, lupine, and scattered blue oaks. There were rounded granite boulders, some with colorful lichen. But many of our members have not taken advantage of the hikes on our Tivy Mountain Preserve, which is also beautiful and unique.

In spring, a fine outing is to drive past Tivy Mountain in Piedra and continue along the north side of Pine Flat Lake to see a wonderful display of wildflowers. You will notice that Tivy Mountain itself has only a few scattered oaks and shrubs, and the rocks are not granite. Why are Tivy and McKenzie, relatively close together and at the same elevation, so different? Well, most of the difference is below the surface. In the Mesozoic era, say 150 million years ago, the Atlantic Ocean was being formed by a long crack in the crust of the earth, separating the American continent from Europe and Africa. A tectonic plate in the Pacific moved toward America, and pieces of land the size of Japan “docked” against the continent, becoming what is now California. Much of this plate dove under the edge of the continent, leading to events which built the Sierra Nevada mountain range.

Some of the oceanic crust and even some of the dark, heavy rocks of the mantle from four miles below the bottom of the sea found themselves in the Sierra foothills after this tectonic collision. These are the basalt, gabbro, peridotite and serpentine which have weathered to become the soils around Tivy Mountain, as well as in many other places in the gold country. These soils are low in silica, potassium and calcium, and very high in magnesium and iron compared to soils derived from granite. Many plants do not like this environment. Native flowers are picky about their habitat, as anyone knows who has hopefully purchased wildflower seeds and found that their plantings did not turn out like the picture on the packet.



The Tivy Mountain Preserve

A huge problem for California natives has been the imported animals and plants that arrived here when the state was invaded by Europeans and immigrants from the eastern United States. A whole new ecosystem of sheep and cows, and the European grasses and forbs which had evolved with them during thousands of years of grazing, spread over the state. The slow-growing but tasty native bunch grasses and the vast fields of annual wildflowers barely survived this invasion. Even in areas that are not grazed, many natives and small animals are crowded out by competition from non-native plants.

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## Fire, walking and water in Mariposa: The Stockton Creek Preserve and Trail

The new Stockton Creek Preserve and Trail is a unique partnership project between Sierra Foothill Conservancy and the Mariposa Public Utility District. This 410 acre preserve, which surrounds the Stockton Creek Reservoir, protects Mariposa's domestic water supply and provides recreation opportunities and fire hazard reduction. The utility district will now own and manage the property for its public benefits in perpetuity. SFC and the district are very thankful to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy for providing the funding for this now publicly accessible preserve.

The Preserve is adjacent to Mariposa's high school and elementary school and will be valuable to the school's cross country track team for training. Visitors, residents and students alike can enjoy a hike just on the edge of town on the network of trails which currently exist and will be expanded. This project includes a trail easement donated by the Fischer family through their adjacent property so that the publicly accessible trails now extend from just above the Mariposa County High School to Hwy 140. The property is part of the Hwy 140 scenic viewshed which visitors enjoy on their way to Yosemite.

The utility district will be implementing fuels reduction and vegetation restoration projects to reduce the significant fire hazard that the property currently poses and prevent impacts to the town's water quality. A previous incomplete vegetation management treatment in 2000 left a major fuel load on the property. In 2004 a fire spread from Mariposa to the property, devastating native vegetation. The following runoff period produced more than double the amount of contaminants in the town water supply, resulting in violations of the Federal Drinking Water Disinfection Byproduct Rule for an entire year. The district will work towards restoring the native plant community and reducing the possibility of wild land fire effects and negative impacts to Mariposa's town water supply.

Individuals who visit the Preserve must help out by being safe while hiking on the property and cleaning up after themselves and others. The District is working to establish policy around public use of the property.

The rules will include no motor vehicle access outside of established public roads and no horses on hiking trails. To insure the water quality, the reservoir itself is not open to the public. Mining activity will be restricted to gold panning only. Access is limited to daylight hours, with no overnight camping or campfires and no consumption of alcohol.

SFC will continue to work with the Mariposa Public Utility District and the community of Mariposa to complete trail development and maintenance projects, and to provide educational and recreational opportunities on the Preserve. Look for a Stockton Creek Preserve and Trail dedication event later this year.

Bridget Fithian, Conservation Director

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### Connect with SFC

SFC is now online. Find us on Facebook, Twitter and Google+, and follow for updates on our work and events, photos, and more. We have also updated our e-newsletter; each month will include news about SFC projects, events, and how you can get involved.

# SFC spring classes and hikes

Hikes and classes are open to the public; reservations are required. Classes are \$10 for members, \$20 for members' families, \$5 for student members, \$15 for non-members or \$30 for their families. There is a suggested \$5 donation for hikes for non-members. To register for classes, go to [www.sierrafoothill.org](http://www.sierrafoothill.org) and follow the Hikes & Classes link, or you may call Rosanna at 559-855-3473 for Fresno county events or Ray at 209-742-5556 for Mariposa. Bring lunch and water; hiking shoes or boots are a good idea for both classes and hikes.

**Saturday, May 12: Family Hike in Clarks Valley:** Bring the kids and your camera for a day of adventure and exploration. Meet at Mariposa Kiwanis Preschool parking lot on the corner of Darrah and Triangle Roads, 5 miles off Hwy 49. **10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

**Sunday, May 20: Birding Clarks Valley.** Follow Len McKenzie to discover a diverse array of spring birds in the foothills habitat on SFC's Clarks Valley conservation easement. Boots are recommended; bring binoculars, field guides and cameras. **8 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

**Saturday, June 2: Native Plants and Traditional Uses.** Join Bill Leonard, a local Miwuk, on a walk at Clark's Valley where he will share his knowledge of the

plants of the foothills and their uses. Meet at the corner of Darrah, Triangle and Jerseydale Roads. **9 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

**Saturday, May 5: Wildflowers on Black Mountain.** Botanist Jamie Tuitele-Lewis will lead a moderate hike to the top of the mountain looking at the many wildflowers and shrubs that will be in bloom. Included will be Carpenteria in all its glory and the rare orange (yellow) lupine as well as many other species. **9 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

**Saturday, June 9:** A class is being planned at the Bean Creek property in conjunction with the John Muir Fest. Check the website or office for details. There will also be a booth at the Mariposa Rotary Art and Wine Fest on June 9, showcasing the photographs of David Hunter.

**Saturday, June 16: Astronomy Night at the Bohna Ranch.** Bring a folding chair, binoculars, and a flashlight for an evening of star gazing on Bohna Ranch. Fresno City college astronomy instructor Garrett Wimer will take you on a tour of the night sky. Telescopes will be set up for viewing stars and planets. Meet at the Oasis Gas Station in Catheys Valley off of Hwy 49. **7:30-11:00.**

**Don't forget our Sierra Foothill Picnic on Saturday May 19!**

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## Tivy Mountain

*continued from page 1*

For botanists such as John Stebbins, one of SFC's founding fathers, and Jepson Manual editor Bruce Baldwin, Tivy Mountain is a great place to look for rare plants which can live on the inhospitable soil and enjoy the lack of competition. In 1999 Tivy became our third preserve when SFC was able to purchase 80 acres on the mountain with funds from the Endangered Species Recovery Program. The immediate goal was to save the habitat of a very rare little plant, Keck's Checkerbloom, which John discovered growing on the slope of the mountain.

Then, a couple of years ago John and Bruce found another rare and endangered flower, forked hareleaf, which is known to grow in only three other places. Soon after this, entomologist Dr. Terry Spears discovered a totally new moth species which lays its eggs on this same plant. So now if you hike on Tivy Mountain, you have a chance of seeing at least three very rare specimens as well as the usual tidy tips, shooting stars, milkweed and beautiful views.

In a way, the landscape around Tivy Mountain is more like the scenes of wildflowers and native grasses we read about in the writings of John Muir. The geological happenings that formed California are responsible for the gold that led to the rush of men to its foothills, and also for the few places where unusual soils allow fields of native flowers to survive. We can also thank these rare and endangered flowering plants for enabling SFC to have such a beautiful, unique preserve.



Keck's Checkerbloom

Sallie Mook

# A Sierra Foothill Picnic

at the Beal Ranch at Bullard & Academy  
with a beautiful foothill view  
which includes SFC's Tivy Mt. Preserve.

## Sierra Foothill Conservancy's 12th Annual Dinner!

Saturday, May 19, 2012--4:30 to 9:00

We're having an old fashioned picnic this year. This will be a great opportunity to meet with old and new Sierra foothill friends in a casual setting. You will enjoy music by Timberline, Mariposa's premier bluegrass group. Meritt Catering will be serving gourmet hamburgers using all natural grass-fed beef raised by Sierra Lands Beef on SFC's preserves (or a vegetarian option of portabella mushroom) accompanied by sauteed mushrooms and other tasty toppings, and a selection of savory salads. For dessert SFC member Vickie Maxwell will be serving her award winning apple pie!

Beer is being donated by Tioga-Sequoia Brewing company, and we will have our usual outstanding wine selections. Limited edition SFC Logo Collector glasses will be available near the bar for a \$10 donation. We are also looking forward to the fun of the live & silent auctions--our wonderful volunteers are collecting another fine selection of items for you to peruse and bid on.

For reservations please respond by May 11.  
For more information call 855-3473  
or email [sfc@sierrafoothill.org](mailto:sfc@sierrafoothill.org)

The grasslands, foothills and forests between Yosemite and Kings Canyon National Parks provide land for farms and ranches, a home for native plants and wildlife, and a source of clean water. The Sierra Foothill Conservancy honors our natural and cultural heritage by protecting these resources and ensuring that present and future generations will continue to experience and enjoy the land in this region.

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