

PLANTS & PEOPLE

Habitat conservation in Mediterranean climate areas: a trip through the web

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Now when our newsletter editor, Cynthia Vargas, informed me that our next issue had the theme of habitat conservation, I'll admit I was a bit flummoxed about how I could write a "Discovery Trails" article without revisiting our Englemann Oaks (*Quercus engelmannii*) again and again. When my colleague, Botanical Information Consultant, Frank McDonough, suggested I think broad, think Mediterranean climate areas, I started to get excited about a Discovery Trails that would take me on a journey to places I hadn't really explored in detail. That is the habitats of the five Mediterranean climate areas which have the most similar features to our own Southern California climate.

Now I knew The Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanic Garden couldn't afford a quick trip around the world, but as a librarian, I knew how I could get some of that experience right at my desk in The Arboretum Library.



I had to test out my trip on Timothy Phillips, our Interim Chief Executive Officer, and he suggested my hook could be "biodiversity hotspots." Now there is a good term to google. If you look at www.biodiversityhotspots.org, you will notice in the "Jump to Hotspot" section that all the Mediterranean climate regions are biodiversity hotspots and several of them have a couple of different habitats separated out.

What you learn when you ramble through that website about the Mediterranean Basin is that almost 1/2 of the plants native to the Mediterranean are endemic to that area. Wow! Are half the plants native to California only found in California? No. Well, back to habitat conservation. The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources has a Centre

for Mediterranean Cooperation www.iucn.org. If you ramble around that website for awhile, you'll notice a lot of work is being done to encourage the establishment of "protected areas." The language got a little dense for me, so I needed a break and started looking for inspirational websites and found a beautiful one at www.dogadernegi.org. It is done by Dođa Derneđi, BirdLife International's Partner in Turkey. They created an exhibit about Turkey's natural environment as an asset to their desire to become part of the European Union. Through the exhibit you can get a sense of their commitment to habitat conservation and the extraordinary diversity found in Turkey. That website makes me want to hunt up the Turkish plants in The Arboretum.

If we move onto southwestern Australia the government of the state's Department of Environment and Conservation, www.dec.wa.gov.au, as well as the Southwest Australia Ecoregion Initiative, www.swaecoregion.org, throws you right into the environment with publications on un-verified sightings of Tasmanian tigers (*Thylacines*) and the debate about using Xanthorrea fire-rings as a dating method. The government site has an entire section on living sustainably and has voluntary suggestions about how to protect biodiversity on your land.

My South African trip brought me to familiar territory. My favorite South African magazine, Veld & Flora is put out by the Botanical Society of South Africa and if you go to their website projects area, www.botanicalsociety.org.za, you'll see a wonderful project of land stewardship on the Bokkeveld Plateau. It is rich in endemics, especially bulbs. How I would love to see those winding their way through our Aloe Trail. My other favorite South African site was the Succulent Karoo Ecosystem Programme, www.skep.org with many projects devoted to conserving habitat in Namaqualand and other areas with strikingly beautiful succulent treasures. The edges of the website rotate through remarkable images.

Chile was a little tougher to garner my attention. There are easy websites to find about their forest conservation efforts: www.globaltrees.org and www.worldwildlife.org, which has a pdf file titled "Southern Chile: a land of ancient forests and abundant oceans", but I was looking for the Southern-California-like part of Chile which in the southern hemisphere is farther north than those ancient forests. But my persistence lead me to a Smithsonian Institution Department of Botany Centres of Plant Diversity (The Americas) site www.botany.si.edu about the Atacama fog desert with strange and wonderful cacti and the Mediterranean region of Chile touting its more botanically diverse matorral, which superficially resembles our less botanically diverse chaparral. The only references to habitat conservation on



the sites are the designations of National Parks in Chile in both areas. A trip to www.conaf.cl Corporación National Forestal of the Chilean government talks about the protection of 62,000 individuals of the Chilean wine palm (*Jubaea chilensis*) of which The Arboretum has several examples.

Back in California, I naturally gravitated toward the California Native Plant Society website for their view on habitat conservation and I found the announcement of their January 2009 Conservation conference, www.cnps.org. I fell deep into the California Department of Fish and Game Habitat Conservation Branch www.dfg.ca.gov, which had old publications on the rare and endangered plant I have on some land I own in the foothills of the southern Sierras.

It seems that mediterranean climate habitat conservation is alive and thriving on the internet and all it takes to get educated and involved is a quiet afternoon and my wily librarian search strategies. If you'd like my assistance on your research adventure, just contact me at The Arboretum Library at 626-821-3213 or Susan.Eubank@arboretum.org.

A list of where to find the information listed in this article:

www.biodiversityhotspots.org
www.iucn.org/places/medoffice/en/index.html
www.dogadernegi.org/english/?page=7
www.dec.wa.gov.au
www.swaecoregion.org/
www.botanicalsociety.org.za/cu/projects.php
www.skep.org
www.globaltrees.org/proj.asp?id=1
www.worldwildlife.org/what/wherewework/southernchile/WWFBinaryitem6441.pdf
www.botany.si.edu/projects/cpd/sa/sa43.htm
www.botany.si.edu/projects/cpd/sa/sa44.htm
www.conaf.cl/?seccion_id=1cc2ac1aef005e435161a33ff06dbada&unidad=2
www.cnps.org/cnps/conservation/conference/2009/highlights.php
www.dfg.ca.gov/habcon/goals.htm



Eubank, Susan. 2008. "Plants & people: habitat conservation in mediterranean climate areas: a trip through the web." *Arboretum members' magazine* (14), 3-4.

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