



CENTER FOR PLANT CONSERVATION

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The Center for Plant Conservation Appoints Dr. Wesley Knapp as New CEO

Escondido, CA – The Center for Plant Conservation (CPC) is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Wesley Knapp as its new Chief Executive Officer, effective March 31, 2025. Dr. Knapp brings to the organization over two decades of experience in botany and plant conservation—as well as a long-standing partnership with CPC as a member of its Network of Conservation Partners—making him uniquely qualified to lead and advance CPC’s mission to save plants from extinction.

Dr. Knapp’s journey into the world of conservation began during his childhood in New England, where summers spent camping, hiking, and fishing sparked a lifelong passion for nature. A transformative experience came in high school when his involvement with the Envirothon program introduced him to environmental sciences as a career path. He went on to earn his B.S. in Environmental Sciences from Catawba College in North Carolina, where he discovered his love for botany and met his wife, Heather.

After graduating in 2001, Dr. Knapp began his career as a field botanist for the Maryland Natural Heritage Program. He completed his M.S. in Plant Science with an option in Plant Systematics under Dr. Rob Naczi at Delaware State University in 2005. Dr. Knapp’s M.S. work clarified the number of species in the *Juncus marginatus* complex and discussed the conservation status of each species. In 2016, Dr. Knapp relocated with his wife and two daughters, Sidney and Bella, to Asheville, North Carolina, where he joined the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program as Mountains Ecologist/Botanist until 2021 before becoming Chief Botanist at NatureServe. In 2024, Dr. Knapp completed his Ph.D. in Ecology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill under advisor Alan Weakley, with his thesis research focused on the importance of taxonomy, species discovery, and prioritization in preventing plant extinctions.

“Dr. Knapp’s dedication to plant conservation and his notable achievements in the field make him an outstanding choice to lead CPC,” said David Doyle, President of the CPC Board of Trustees. “His expertise and vision will be invaluable as we work to protect imperiled plant species and promote biodiversity worldwide.”

Throughout his career, Dr. Knapp has been a leading voice in plant conservation, contributing to significant advancements in the taxonomy and conservation status of plant species across the United States and Canada. An expert in plant identification with extensive field experience, Dr. Knapp has also described numerous new plant species and worked tirelessly to slow the pace of biodiversity loss resulting from the 6th mass extinction.

Dr. Knapp's arrival marks an exciting new chapter for CPC. In his role as CEO, he will lead the organization's efforts to strengthen science-based conservation best practices, foster partnerships, and inspire action to combat the global extinction crisis.

"It is an incredible honor to join the Center for Plant Conservation," said Dr. Knapp. "Plants are the foundation of life on Earth, and CPC and its partners are at the front lines of preventing plant extinction. I look forward to working with CPC's dedicated team and partners to safeguard our planet's most imperiled plant species and prioritize action to save nature for my children and future generations."

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Founded in 1984, the Center for Plant Conservation (CPC) is a leading authority on science-based best practices for rare plant conservation with the mission to *safeguard rare plants by advancing science-based conservation practices, connecting and empowering plant conservationists, and inspiring all to protect biodiversity for future generations*. CPC serves as the hub of a one-of-a-kind network, uniting plant conservationists from 81 botanical gardens, arboreta, federal agencies, and other plant-focused organizations that collectively work to save the 4,400 most rare and endangered plants of the United States, its territories, and Canada, throughout their native range.

The CPC National Office is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization located at 15600 San Pasqual Valley Road, Escondido, CA 92027. CPC has been headquartered at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park since 2016, in partnership with the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, a CPC Participating Institution.

For more information, visit saveplants.org or contact info@saveplants.org. Follow CPC on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [X \(Twitter\)](#) to join the conservation conversation.