

My Year in Review

By: Scott Oneto, UCCE Farm Advisor

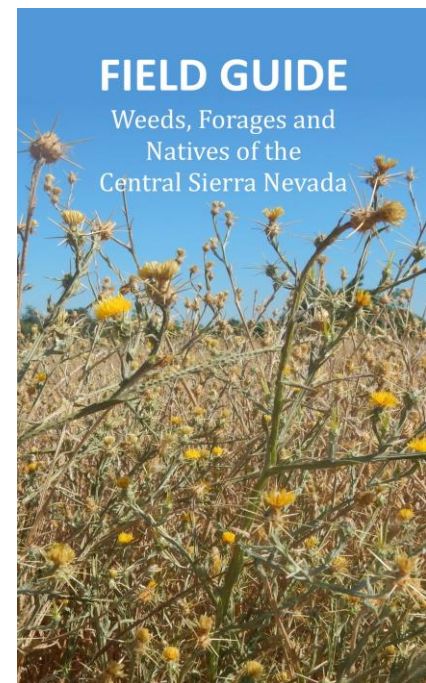
One of the most common questions I would get from family, friends and clientele over the past year was, “what is a sabbatical?” And more importantly, “so you are telling me they are paying you not to go into the office every day?” My typical response would start by explaining what a sabbatical is and what they are intended to be used for. I would then talk about some of the projects that I was expected to accomplish during my leave and how a sabbatical is a great way to be productive by getting rid of the daily distractions of every day work life.

Although many of my colleagues will often travel as part of a sabbatical, my main focus was to stay put and write. Over the past few years I could never find the time to write. Between the emails, phone calls, walk-ins, farm visits, and the administrative task of being the Director, writing always took a back seat. Especially the bigger projects. Often I could squeeze time to write a blog or newspaper article, but the larger writing projects like publications, journal articles and books were never an option.

One project that has been sitting on my desk for nearly a decade was to write a new field guide for weeds in the region. The last one we produced was about 20 years ago and has been out of print for several years. Many ranchers, landowners, agency personnel and land managers want tools for helping identify weeds and although technology through the use of smart devices has made this easier, many of us still like a field guide that we can carry around or put in a vehicle.

Although it started out with just weeds, I ended up including some desirable forages and some California natives. In all there are 80 plants featured with a description of each plant, information on reproduction and control strategies. With amazing financial support from local organizations and agencies I received enough funding to print 5,000 copies so we can give these out for free! You can pick up a copy at our office or visit one of the county agricultural departments. The book is also available on our website as an E-book and can be viewed on a computer or mobile device. If you find the book useful, please send an [email](#) so I can forward your comments on to those that funded the project.

I also took this time to revise several of our university pest notes. These are short publications that give advice on how to deal with a variety of pests including many weeds, vertebrates, insects, etc. Some of the pest notes that I revised include wild blackberries, poison oak, yellow starthistle, Russian thistle, and brooms. I am also writing a new pest note for pokeweed and maretail.





Applied research is an important part of our jobs. Research gives us the opportunity to work with clientele to solve problems, develop new technologies and answer questions. One of my newest research projects is in collaboration with the Amador Resource Conservation District. The project is examining the effects of adding a one-time application of compost to annual rangelands. We all know how great compost is, however do we know all the awesome benefits that we might get from adding this black gold to rangelands? Are there any drawbacks? Annual rangelands cover nearly 10 million

acres in California and produce nearly 70% of the state's livestock forage base. From similar projects across the state, we are expecting to see increases in forage quantity and quality but we also want to look at some of the soil properties including water holding capacity, soil compaction and soil nutrients. In addition, we are investigating carbon sequestration and the impact compost might have on seeding with legumes and if there are any impacts on specific weed populations. We will be making our compost applications this Fall so stay tuned for more information.

Another research project I have begun to work on involves a rapidly spreading invasive weed called rush skeletonweed. Also known as bone weed, this plant is posing a significant concern for landowners and land managers throughout the region.

Although it historically has been a problem along roadsides and disturbed areas, it is now showing up in rangelands, vineyards, orchards and in ornamental landscapes. To better understand what control options might be effective at combatting this weed, I established two research projects. One on annual rangelands and the other in a vineyard. The results of these studies will be available this Fall.



I am currently writing up my findings from a project I completed last year looking at developing control strategies for the invasive weed oblong spurge. Next month's newsletter will feature those results.

There are several other projects in the que but I will save those for another time. Have a great rest of your summer and I look forward to seeing you out in the fields.

Scott Oneto
Farm Advisor
209-223-6834

sroneto@ucanr.edu