

## A Mono Harvest of California Black Oak Acorns

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In about 1925 or 1926, Margaret Baty, a tribal member of Big Sandy Rancheria, displayed a collection of acorns from California black oak (*Quercus kelloggii*, *wi-yap'* in Mono) and an acorn cooking basket (Figure 1). This photograph, was reportedly taken at the home of Mike and Annie Anderson near Auberry, California. Western Mono (*Nium* in the local North Fork dialect) families have long gathered large quantities of acorns as a staple, storable food that was also used as a currency. To sustain this vital resource, they have tended large black oak trees in woodland and forest areas, using fire to control pests and fuels and using knocking poles to collect the acorns and remove broken branches. The large coil basket has a step or tabletop design. Materials used to make the basket include rhizomes of bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*, *nim-oi-nu* in Mono) for the black elements, rhizomes of Santa Barbara sedge (*Carex barbara*, *te-de-nap'* in Mono) for the white elements, stalks of deergrass (*Muhlenbergia rigens*, *monop* in Mono) for the foundation, and a stick of sourberry (*Rhus aromatica*, *ta-ka-te* in Mono) for the top. In recent decades, widespread encroachment of conifer trees, lack of fire, and pests have limited the availability of sound acorns, as well as those associated plants desired for food and fiber. Nevertheless, tribal members continue to gather acorns and are partnering with the Sierra National Forest at various sites to promote more productive oak groves and meadows through active tending, conifer removal, and applications of fire. Long et al. (2017) discuss these trends and efforts in the special issue on tribal forest management.

### Literature Cited

LONG, J.W., R.W. GOODE, R. GUTTERIEZ, J. LACKEY, AND M.K. ANDERSON. Managing California black oak for tribal eco-cultural restoration. *J. For.* 115(5):426–434.



**Figure 1.** Margaret Baty presents a collection of California black oak acorns near Auberry, California. The photograph was taken by George Holt and is shared courtesy of the Santa Rosa Junior College Museum's Flegal Collection.

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