Poppy Reserve

The wildflower season is winding down at the reserve. You can still find some fiddleneck, filaree, rattlesnake weed, goldfields that have gone to the cone stage, pineapple weed, and a few poppies. The combs bur and tiny forget-me-nots are going to seed. Cheat grasses have gone to seed. Rubber rabbit brush is starting to get new green leaves.

The beaver tail cactus in front of the visitor center are starting to bloom. There are also a few plants of milk vetch that still have flowers but are also forming the seed pods.

Photos above ▲ The wild cucumber, *Marah macrocurpus*, is of the squash or gourd family. It is not like the garden cucumber that are edible as all parts of this plant are poisonous to some degree. Another name for the wild cucumber is the Man Root because of the large root or tuber. They are fire followers because of the root system which can survive underground. The California Indians used the seeds to make necklaces and the children used them as marbles.

**Arthur B. Ripley Desert Woodland**

Bladder bush is full of flowers, Spanish Broom by the aqueduct is in bloom. Inside Ripley the combs bur and forget-me-nots are finished flowering, the silver puffs have produced the puffs, tidy tips, blue sage, linear-leaf goldenbush are just starting to bloom, scarlet bugler by Post #8 on the Rare Juniper Trail are in bloom, fiddle-neck, occasional desert dandelion, chia, comet blazing stars, beaver tail cactus are producing flower buds, at Post #11 on the Nature Trail has blossoms on the elderberry tree.
The Transition Habitat Conservancy WILDFLOWER EVENT AND SPRING FLING was held Saturday, April 14th, 2018.

Three PRMDIA Board Members attended this wonderful event. We met at the Broad Canyon Ranch in Portal Ridge and then hiked, drove dirt roads to see spectacular views of the valley, there was food and music, and we met a lot of wonderful people.

On the hike through several woodland drainages that connect with Broad Canyon (Cougar Canyon Trail) we found wonderful wildflowers and Kiley Egan held a captured a coast horned lizard and we got to observe it before it was turned loose.

![Photo by Tom Egan, California Desert Representative, Defenders of Wildlife. Left to Right: President of PRMDIA Margaret Rhyne, Board Member Mary Wilson, Secretary Lynn DuPratt and the lovely young lady holding the coast horned lizard is Kiley Egan, Tom’s daughter.](image)

On the walk we spotted sun cups, coreopsis, baby blue eyes, forget-me-nots, wild cucumber, California bush poppies, bush mallow, manzanita still had some berries, puddle dog bush, miner’s lettuce, elderberry trees were starting to bloom, poison oak, jewel flower (aka chocolate drops), lupine, western wallflowers and Indian paint brush.

Thank you to Jeff Olesh and all those involved with the Transition Habitat Conservancy for an absolutely wonderful day!
Valley wildflowers

Owls' Clover and Goldfields

By MILT STARK
Owls' Clover
Orthocarpus purpurascens ornatus also known as Mojave Owl Clover

This year has been an especially good one for this rather unusual, three to six inch plant with white or yellow tips on purple petals, growing in large patches in and around the poppies on the Westside, on the hills of Leona Valley and out on the desert floor near Boron.

It created a spectacular display on the mountains surrounding Lake Isabella and can be found in many areas of the western Mojave.

The common name comes from the tiny owl's face with two eyes and a beak at the tip of the petals. However, it is not a clover. Perhaps the Spanish name of "escobillas," which means "little whiskbrooms," would be a more appropriate descriptive name. Although in the same family, and similar to the Indian Paintbrush, they have been incorrectly called Paintbrush.

Without being too presumptuous, I would like to give this wildflower watcher's evaluation of the wildflower season thus far. Because of the great amount of rain, many flowers such as the Monolopia, around Rosamond and Mojave, the Coreopsis out Wilsona way, the Owl's Clover and large biennial California Poppies on the west side, the Blue Sage in the foothills and the two-tone Tidy Tips in Ana Verde Valley have been absolutely sensational.

The Blue Dicks and Lacy Phacelia are widespread. The Wild Rhubarb and Peppergrass are plentiful and the Western Wallflower is putting on a nice display in Three Points and Valyermo.

Goldfields has created a brilliant yellow carpet over many hillside as well as on the desert floor. The Desert Candle out beyond H1 Vista has been very good.

But there are some wildflowers which apparently don't care for so much moisture. The California Primrose can be seen in some areas of Quartz Hill and the Westside, but is not nearly as plentiful as in previous years. The Dune Primrose (which as it dries produces the "bridage" skeleton) cannot be found even though last year it was fantastic throughout the east side of the Valley, especially at Saddleback Butte State Park.

The annual California Poppy growing in the Poppy Park has certainly been disappointing. The Desert Dandelion is just now starting to make a display on the vacant lots of Lancaster even though it has been quite good in the eastern Mojave. The many kinds of Lupine (except for the Pygmy Leaved Lupine) and the Gilias have been rather sparse but may come out later.

The Chia, which got off to a slow start, seems to be coming on strong as the ground dries out. Thistle Sage which last year could be found in large patches in many different locations seems now limited to an area north and west of Shady Castle (unless I have missed it).

Fremont Phacelia made a great start but seemed to be knocked out by the late rains.

And so it goes. Each wildflower season is different, depending not only on the amount of rain, but also on how early the rains start in the fall, whether there is a significant amount of snow and how much rain comes after the blooming season begins. The late rains last year were responsible for our bumper crop of tumbleweeds.

Even though the Wildflower Center is closed, our wildflower season is far from over. I fully expect to be photographing spring wildflowers until at least late June or July. Come join me. They will still be beautiful.
BURROWING OWLS

Both parents will continue to feed the owlets once they emerge from the habitat.

Wonder what these little birds must think when they emerge from the underground cozy dark nesting area and seeing what is outside of the habitat for the first time.

Even at this very young age, with only down and no true feathers, they are learning how to preen (photo bottom right).