

# FIELD OBSERVATIONS

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## Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve

The poppies are finishing up their season and going to seed. The few flowers that are left are starting to show the yellow color at the tips of the petals. The insects are frantically trying to do their part like the soft-winged beetles that you can see at the bottom of the flower which disturb the pollen. The metallic green insect is a blister beetle and it gets its name because it secretes cantharidin, a toxic defensive chemical that protects them from predators. Accidentally crushing a beetle (alive or dead) against the skin can result in a painful blister. Unless extensive, medical treatment beyond first aid for blistering on humans is probably not necessary. The blisters soon diminish on their own.



Poppy flower with soft-winged beetles and blister beetle

## Arthur B. Ripley Desert Woodland

Female Juniper trees still have lots of berries and the male trees have lost most of their cones. Joshua trees have gone to the seed pod stage. The male Mormon tea plants are producing their catkins, there are still some comet blazing stars, linear-leaved goldenbush, a few goldfields that have gone to the cone stage, the beavertail cacti have blooms as does the scarlet bugler. Alongside Lancaster Road there are California primroses and the bladder pod still has blooms and starting to form the pods.



Scarlet Bugler



Thorn bush

## **Bush Poppy – *Dendromecon rigida***

Bush poppies are “fire follower “ plants and may be found in great masses after a fire until they are gradually crowded out by other shrubs. There were two major fires in our area, the Station Fire and the Powerhouse Fire and this year the bush poppies are in abundance in those areas.



Angeles Forest Highway—View of Bush Poppies



Angeles Forest Highway—Bush Poppy

### **STATION FIRE – ANGELES NATIONAL FOREST 2009**

More than 161,000 acres of forest were burned by an arson fire that began on August 26, 2009, near Angeles Crest Highway in La Canada and quickly spread, fueled by dry brush that had not burned for over 150 years. The fire burned for more than a month and was the worst in Los Angeles County history, charring one-fourth of the forest (250 square miles), displacing wildlife, and destroying 91 homes, cabins and out buildings and the family-owned Hidden Springs café. You can see these bushes on the Angeles Forest Highway after Aliso Canyon Road and on the Angeles Crest Highway

### **POWERHOUSE FIRE 2013**

The Powerhouse Fire was a wildfire in northern Los Angeles County, California mostly in the Angeles National Forest. It started on May 30, 2013 and was 100% contained by June 10, 2013. The fire burned more than 30,000 acres and destroyed 53 structures, including 24 homes. The communities of Lake Hughes, Elizabeth Lake, and Green Valley were evacuated. Road closures were also ordered as far south as Castaic at Lake Hughes Road. Fire crossed Lancaster Road and was very close to the Poppy Reserve. You can see these bushes on Lake Hughes Road past the Spring Valley Ranch.