

FIELD OBSERVATION REPORT

By Mary Wilson

August 16, 2020

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Lake Hughes Fire—View from Lancaster—August 12, 2020



7:12 p.m.

According to the A.V. Press the fire started around 3:30 p.m. near North Lake Hughes Road and Pine Canyon Road. By 4:30 p.m. the flames burned 400 acres, an hour later it had burned 6,000 acres and by 6:40 had consumed 10,000 acres with zero containment.



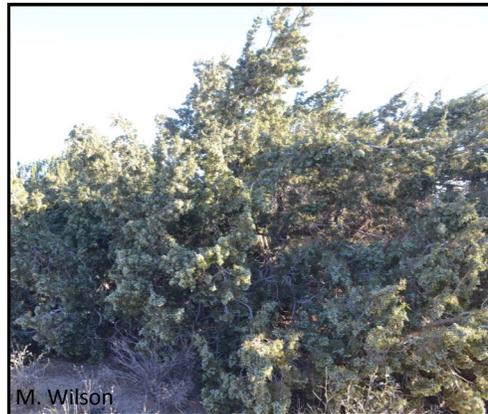
7:45 p.m.

Arthur B. Ripley Desert Woodland State Park

The male Juniper trees have new cones and new tree growth and the female trees are loaded with ripening berries and have new tree growth.



Male Cones & New Growth



Female Juniper with berries



Female berries & New Growth

COYOTE MELON
Cucurbita foetidissima

Cucurbita foetidissima is a tuberous plant found in the central and southwestern United States and northern Mexico. It has numerous names such as buffalo gourd, fetid gourd, fetid wild pumpkin, prairie gourd, and stinking gourd—to name a few. It requires little water and grows best in semiarid and arid environments. Leaves are typically heart-shaped that are 4-5 inches across and 8-10 inches in length. The flowers are similar to those of pumpkins, squashes and other members of the cucumber family and are yellow. The fruit are about 3-4 inches in diameter and can produce 290-315 seeds per fruit. The fruit starts out a dark green with lighter green stripes, then turns yellow when ripe. The seeds can remain viable for months or even years within an undamaged gourd. The plant forms a fleshy tap root which is used as a storage and overwintering structure. The central tap root can weigh up to 200 pounds. The low growing vine can spread up to 20 feet across. The fruit is consumed by both humans and animals, and yes coyotes do eat the fruit.

The flowers have a sweet, pleasant smell, however, the leaves can have a strong repulsive smell, sometimes described as that of human body odor. Some plants have a stronger smell than others and sometimes will have no smell.



Flower



Ripe Fruit



Drying Gourd



This coyote melon plant was on Munz Ranch Road and I did a heel-to-toe measurement of 30 paces.

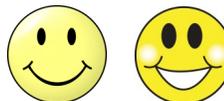
Fresh gourds were eaten like squash, however, the mature fruit is no longer edible, due to bitter compounds. Seeds were eaten after being roasted or boiled. Fresh leaves or the whole plant were used for animal food.

Native Americans would grind the seeds from the gourd to make a type of porridge and would use the gourds and roots as soap. The melons were also dried with the seeds intact and used as a rattle, or hollowed out to become a container or drinking cup.

I drove Munz Ranch Road to Lake Elizabeth Road and decided to go see how the lake was doing. Here are a couple of photos . Not much help for the Lake Hughes fire.



Well we are all in a strange place. The COVID-19 virus is keeping us home and away from each other. Wear the mask and don't share the virus droplets, wash your hands and distancing is still in place. The Lake Hughes fire is destroying beautiful forests, animals, homes and we are having to put up with over 100-degree temperatures. So in the next article I hope to bring a smile to your face—remember smiles?



JACKALOPE



There were two teenage brothers named Douglas and Ralph Herrick who lived in Douglas, Wyoming. They enjoyed hunting in the woods and had taken a taxidermy class together through a mail order service. In the 1930's they had been out hunting and were returning home late for dinner. They tossed a jackrabbit carcass up against the wall of their taxidermy shop and the body of the rabbit slid down between a pair of pronghorn antlers. The two had an idea of mounting the rabbit with antlers of the antelope and created the first Jackalope.

In the town of Douglas, Wyoming was the La Bonte Hotel run by Roy Ball who bought the first Jackalope for \$10. Roy Ball was also a trapper and supposedly caught a real Jackalope in 1929. The mounted Jackalope from the Herrick brothers became an attraction of many of the guests and it didn't take long to attract attention and became a focus for the tourist industry. The Herrick brothers now had a tourist industry business for more of the Jackalope mounted heads, however the boys lost interest in continuing the trade after they had made approximately 1,000 of them.

It didn't take long for the Jackalope to develop a unique history of its own. There were strange and magical stories of this mythical creature. The Jackalope had developed a unique set of traits and abilities that made it one of the strangest animals to have ever inhabited the United States. This creature was reputed to be a powerful and dangerous adversary. It had been reported that the creature was extremely defensive. It could move quickly when it was being chased (so fast that only a trail of dust could be seen behind it), and preferred to face its hunters head on. It was rumored that

the Jackalope used its horns to attack the men who dared hunt it and would often leave its victims bloody and full of gouge marks. Its horns were also known to be especially sharp, which inspired the recommendation to wear stove pipes over one's legs when hunting the beast.

Other mythical stories include: The Jackalope can mimic human sounds. Cowboys in the desert have reported hearing mysterious voices that would repeat their campfire songs. The milk extracted from the female Jackalope contained medicinal properties that was extremely valuable and could cure most illnesses.

As fearsome as this creature was it could be captured or it might be persuaded to come to a human willingly. All you had to do was offer it their favorite drink: whiskey. So a lot of people who traveled to the wilds of Wyoming made sure they packed a bottle of the finest whiskey.

This mythical creature became so popular stores started catering to tourists and selling postcards and other paraphernalia. The Jackalope has appeared in stores, books, poems, television shows, video games and films. Musicians have formed groups with Jackalope in their names and songs. There was a hockey team called the Odessa Jackalopes. There are hotels, brewing companies that make Jackalope whiskey, ranches where you can get married, and restaurants that feature Jackalope named dishes—like the Jackalope sandwich, which consists of two pieces of bread, peanut butter and pickles.

If you want to catch your own Jackalope you need a hunting license. With the license in Wyoming you can hunt only on June 31, the country's official Jackalope Hunting Day, from sunrise to sunset. In South Dakota with the license you can hunt only at elevations above 5,000 feet from June 1 through October 31 between the hours of midnight and 3 a.m. on the 3 nights prior to a full moon. All hunters must use slingshots and tranquilizing pellets. Happy Hunting!

NATIONAL PEACH PIE DAY

August 24, 2020



There is a peach farm called the “M&M Peach Ranch at Three Points Road (which you can reach by Elizabeth Lake Road and then Pine Canyon Road) - hopefully they have been spared from the Lake Hughes fire.

Georgia may be the first state to come to mind when we think of peaches, California actually leads the nation in production.

There are basically two types of peaches—freestone and clingstone. The difference is in the way the flesh comes away from the pit in the middle of the peach. When the meat comes away freely from the stone it is a freestone. If the flesh clings to the stone it is a clingstone. A medium peach typically contains 30 calories, 7 g of carbohydrate, 1 g of protein, 140 mg of potassium, and 8% of the daily value for vitamin C. They are loaded with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.

May is the beginning of peach season, which continues until late September, but peach season is at its peak in July and August.

So why not make a peach pie? Don't forget the ice cream!

