



FIELD OBSERVATION REPORT

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Notes From The Field



Starting to see poppies and goldfields on the hillsides of the Poppy Reserve along with filaree and fiddleneck. Ripley Desert Woodland has the blue sage starting to bloom. The male Juniper trees have a large showing of their cones that are opening and the female trees are loaded with new berries.

MANZANITA

Arctostaphylos glauca



Manzanita is also known as Bigberry Manzanita and is native to California and Baja California. It grows in the chaparral and woodlands of coastal and inland hills. It is an evergreen shrub growing to 13 feet, has leaves all year and flowers from March to May. It is hermaphrodite (has both male and female organs) and is pollinated by bees. The plant is self-fertile. It is a long-lived species, reaching 100 years or more and may not begin to fruit until it is around 20 years old. The shrub is allelopathic (inhibiting the growth of other plants in the area by leaching toxic acids from its foliage). The flowers are tiny white, upside down, urn-shaped flowers that have shades of pink and has a subtle fragrance. It will produce a small round red fruit and these berries were eaten by the Native Americans, made into a cider or a jelly and they dried the berries and ground them into a powder to make mush or added to soups. Manzanita in Spanish referred to the red fruit as "little apples". A yellowish-brown dye was obtained from the leaves and the bark is red, hard and makes good fuel, producing a lot of heat and burns for a long time. The wood is also used for making small tools, awl handles and branches are used for bird perches.



WESTERN FENCE LIZARD

Sceloporus occidentalis

The western fence lizard is a common lizard of the west. Their habitats include grassland, sagebrush, chaparral, woodlands, coniferous forest and farmland.

They are a medium-sized lizard that can be up to 8-plus inches, are brown to black in color, can have black stripes on their back and the mature lizard can have blue patches on their throats or bellies. This blue coloration is faint or absent in both females and juveniles. They are diurnal (active in the daytime) and you can see them sunning on paths, rocks, fence posts and other high places, which makes them an easy target for predation by birds and some mammals. They protect themselves by using their fast reflexes and may bite or possibly defecate on their predator. They will hibernate during the winter and when they emerge from hibernation varies depending on the climate.

They will change color from light grey or tan to jet black. It is believed they change these colors for temperature regulation as well as camouflage. They do thermoregulation which involves behavioral adaptations that let them tolerate the desert environment. An example is the orientation of the lizard's body to the sun's angle. When the lizard lies on a rock in the sun, if it needs to increase its body temperature it turns its body towards the strongest rays of the sun. If it needs to cool off, then it turns away from the sun.

During the mating season the adult males will defend their home range. They do not breed until the spring of their second year. Females lay one to three clutches of 3 to 17 eggs between April and July and the eggs hatch around August. They will eat spiders and insects such as beetles, ants, flies, caterpillars, mosquitoes, and various types of grasshoppers.

Studies have shown Lyme disease is lower in areas where this lizard lives. When ticks carrying Lyme disease feed on these lizards' blood, a protein in the lizards' blood kills the bacterium of the tick that causes Lyme disease. The infection inside the ticks' gut is therefore cleared and the tick no longer carries the disease.

ELEPHANT ROCK

Years ago Dorothy Bolt gave me the post card (lower left) she had received in August 1978. I wanted to find this elephant rock to see if it had changed. It took me some time but I finally found it and it still looks pretty much the same. It is located off of Avenue G and 198th St. East—across from the old church.



Reclining Elephant Rock At Hi-Vista, California



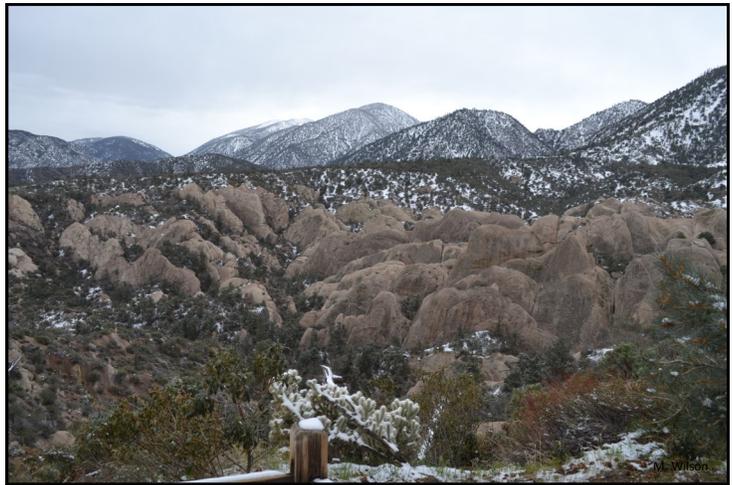
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DEVIL'S PUNCHBOWL

Jane Pinheiro is well noted for the Poppy Reserve even with a Interpretive Center with her name on it. However, she was also very much involved with preserving the plants of the Antelope Valley on the east side. She was instrumental in securing Saddleback Butte State Park, the wildlife and wildflower sanctuaries and the Devil's Punchbowl.



Jane at the Devil's Punchbowl dedication on December 1963. She is on the far left of the photo.



This lovely park has a visitor center, picnic area and great trails to see the wonders of what water and fault lines can do to make interesting rock formations.



The drive up to the park you will see different plant life. Starting on the desert floor with grasses, Joshua trees, suncups, Desert dandelions, goldfields, coreopsis, purple mat—just to name a few. Then as you start to ascend you will see Joshua trees and California Junipers. As you come to the park (4,750 feet) you will see Pinyon pine and shrubs of the chaparral like bigberry manzanita, California buckwheat, creosote bush, scrub oak and mountain mahogany. If you take the trail to the bottom of the bowl there will be cottonwoods and willow. If you go further up in the mountains there will be Coulter Pines and Yellow Pine.

The last time I went up, on March 2nd, there had been a light snow fall and it was beautiful. The bigberry manzanita was in bloom and if you go in the summer you may be lucky enough to see the western fence lizard. Do check out the visitor center to see other plants, insects, and animals you might see.