

FIELD OBSERVATION REPORT

By Mary Wilson

June 22, 2019

Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve



◀ There are poppies still in bloom at the Poppy Reserve. They are not the vibrant poppy orange but turning a yellow color and without the green background of new plants they are harder to see. There were even a few poppy plants that had the buds with the calyx on them.

It is now the time for the plants with the word “weed” in them to start growing. Have found ragweed, tumbleweed, camphorweed, horseweed and Turnkey mullein coming up but with no flowers.

The plants with flowers are Jimson weed and mustard.



Poppies—March & April



Poppies—April & May



Poppies in mid-June



◀ **California Dodder** (*Cuscuta californica*) is having a good year. Found a lot of plants on the east side of the valley—Barrel Springs Road up to Devil’s Bunch Bowl. This is a parasitic vine that climbs other plants and takes nutrition directly from them. It resembles a pile of yellow-orange straw wrapped tightly around its host. It has leaves that are reduced to minute scales.

After a dodder attaches itself to a plant, it wraps itself around it. If the host contains food beneficial it produces haustoria (root-like structures) that lets it insert itself into the vascular system of the host. They can also attach themselves to more than one plant to keep their hosts alive.

Arthur B. Ripley Desert Woodland



The California Buckwheat is making a great showing with their clusters of white flowers at Ripley. Also seeing comet blazing star, sun cups, Desert straw, Desert dandelion, and the elderberry tree has blossoms and berries.



◀ There are still small patches of goldfields and a few still have the petals and have not gone to the cone stage.

Poppies ▶

Even found poppies at Ripley under a Joshua tree.



◀ Found this flower just off of the Rare Juniper Trail between the beginning of the trail and Post #1. It is a white lupine growing up through a female Mormon tea. Now have a new flower to add to the Ripley plant list.

YUCCA

Hesperoyucca Whipplei

Aka—Our Lord's Candle, Our Lord's Candlestick



These interesting plants are now in bloom. They are part of the Agave Family (Agavaceae) and the name *Yucca whipplei* has changed to *Hesperoyucca whipplei*. It was named after Amiel Weeks Whipple (1818-1863), a surveyor who oversaw the Pacific Railroad Survey to Los Angeles in 1853. The name our Lord's candle is derived from its large, flame-shaped inflorescence.

This plant has hundreds of fragrant small white flowers displayed on top of 6-12 foot tall spikes. It is pollinated by the California yucca moth, a relationship known as symbiosis. It has sometimes been called Spanish Bayonets because of the very sharp needle-like pointed leaves that can pierce through flesh, much like a sword. The plant will produce fruit and then a capsule containing numerous flat black seeds. Once the plant produces these fruit and seeds, it will die. New plants can grow from seeds but can also produce an **offset** which is a complete daughter plant that has been naturally and asexually produced on the mother plant. They are clones that are genetically identical to the mother plant.

Archaeological evidence show that the use of the yucca species extends to approximately 5,000 years. Native Americans harvested the plants for food by roasting or boiling the spikes, boiling or eating the flowers raw, would eat the seeds raw or grind them into a paste and used parts of the plant for medicine. They would also use the leaves and pound them into fibers to make rope, cloth and sandals. The leaves could also be made into fishing line, used to bundle up supplies, make baskets, and house frames.



◀ Flower

Fruit that will become the seedpod. ▶



BURROWING OWLS

The photos below show these owls to be between two and three months old. They are losing their down feathers on their chest and showing the bar feathers. They are showing the white spots on their wings.



The burrowing owls have long legs to get a better view from the ground-level perch and those legs enable them to sprint and run after food, as well as fly, when hunting.



These two owls are either practicing with those long legs or could be having a sibling dispute.