

# FIELD OBSERVATION REPORT

By Mary Wilson

March 17, 2018

## Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve

I cannot report that there are fields of poppies now at the reserve. There are small poppy plants but not large enough to produce those beautiful orange flowers. When we have years without the showy poppy, we can concentrate on other wildflowers. This year there are tiny forget-me-nots on just about every trail. As you can see from the photo, these plants may only grow to 1 to 2 inches across and the flowers are very tiny.

Jane Pinheiro wrote an article called “A Bugs Eye View” and this was when she became intrigued with small wildflowers and called them “Desert Miniatures”. They are sometimes called “belly flowers” because you have to practically be on your belly to see them.

There are several different forget-me-nots (*Cryptantha*) and in Milt Stark’s book “A Flower Watcher’s Guide To Spring-Blooming Wildflowers of the Antelope Valley” he states “It takes a botanist with a microscope to tell the difference between them. In our valley there are as many as seven species of this flower, having only a small difference.”

While giving a tour one year I had a group from Texas and they stated their forget-me-nots were blue. I looked them up on-line and sure enough they were mostly blue and some purple. All the forget-me-nots I have found at the Poppy Reserve are white but in different sizes.



While on-line I found out there are different meanings of why it is called forget-me-not and below are a few:

- True and undying love.
- Remembering someone after their death.
- Loyalty in a relationship despite separation.
- Growing affection between two people.
- Caring for the poor, disabled, and needy.

If you walk the trails you will have to look for patches of green then look closely and you might find these lovely little flowers.

**Arthur B. Ripley Desert Woodland—The new entrance sign has arrived and has been installed.**



The old sign faced Lancaster Road and it was easy to drive by and miss it.



The new sign is two sided and faces north and south. Now you can see this new bright colored sign driving in both directions on Lancaster Road.

This park is free day-use on Lancaster Road, between 205th and 210th St. West. Just park off Lancaster Road and go through the gate. The park has picnic tables and portable toilets. There are also two trails; the “Nature Trail” that is about .03 miles and the other is the “Rare Juniper Trail” that is about one mile long. Some of the Juniper trees growing there have had the rings counted and they are around 200–years old. Pick up a trail brochure by the picnic tables and take a hike on one of the trails to see the beauty of a Desert Woodland.

## Wildflowers

# Lacy Phacelia

By MILT STARK

Lacy phacelia

*Phacelia tanacetifolia*

Waterleaf Family

(Also known as Lacy Leaved Phacelia, Wild Heliotrope and Scorpionweed)

This is certainly one of the most common and widespread plants in all of Antelope Valley. From the Poppy park to El Mirage Dry Lake; from Godde pass to California City, this sturdy purplish plant with almost fern-like leaves can be seen poking its many heads out from under the shelter of the Creosote Bushes or above many other desert shrubs. Sometimes it can be seen growing by itself.

Its height of from six inches to more than two and a half feet seems to depend not only on the amount of moisture and type of soil but also on the height of the bush it is trying to outgrow. The light purple flowers with many extra-long stamens make pleasing photographic subjects.

If one is not a trained botanist, what is the easiest means of finding a name for a wildflower? When I first attempted to do this, I was fortunate to have friends like Jame Pinheiro, Tony Baal and Wandalee Thompson who came to my assistance. I also bought lots of flower books with pictures,

because I soon found that no one book or even a dozen of these books could help me identify just the common flowers in Antelope Valley. The great difference in rainfall, soil, elevation, etc., over the Valley produces conditions under which many different kinds of wildflowers may grow. A desert wildflower book or a mountain wildflower book did not begin to provide the information desired.

This situation has now been corrected. The Antelope Valley Wildflower Guide, published by the Lancaster Woman's Club and prepared by the Antelope Valley Conservation and Environmental Education Council contains drawings by Sheryl Myers and descriptive statements of about 380 wildflowers found in this area. It is very easy to use and is most informative.

I would recommend this volume not only to wildflower photographers but to all citizens of Antelope Valley as well as to our visitors. They can be purchased at the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce Wildflower Shop, at the Fairgrounds for a modest \$3.50 plus tax.

The Lancaster Woman's Club and the members of the AVCFEC are certainly to be commended for this project.



Lacy Phacelia



M. Wilson

Lacy phacelia



M. Wilson

Lacy phacelia, poppies and fiddleneck

## COURTSHIP CONTINUED

The owls will collect materials to decorate around the entrance. They will bring in cow manure, sheep droppings and coyote scat. There are several theories as to why. It may be to mask the juvenile owl's scent or it may be involved in attracting mates. Researchers now believe it is to attract insects, which they eat.



©2017 California State Parks

Decorating.



©2017 California State Parks

Bringing a meal of a Kangaroo rat as a gift.



©2017 California State Parks

Nesting material of a twig.



©2017 California State Parks

Billing is a sign of affection.