

FIELD OBSERVATION REPORT

By Mary Wilson
July 17, 2018

Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve

There have been many days with the temperature of 100-plus degrees lately and I am always amazed at the plants that can take the heat. Tumbleweed is green, there are still Jimson weed with flowers, the common sunflower are coming up and starting to bloom, mustard is still blooming, turkey mullein are starting to flower, rattlesnake sandmat (weed), *Euphorbia albo-marginata*, is also in bloom and the rubber rabbitbrush are getting new leaves. There are young short-horned grasshoppers eating those new leaves on the rubber rabbitbrush.

Rattlesnake sandmat is of the spurge family, grows flat to the ground and has white circular margins around the edge of the tiny burgundy centered flowers. The plant (rattlesnake weed) was formerly used as a folk remedy for snakebites and that is where it got its name. However, this species is not proven to be medically effective in treating rattlesnake venom.



◀ Rattlesnake sandmat

Short-horned grasshopper ▶



Arthur B. Ripley Desert Woodland

When you take the Rare Juniper Trail and get to the area of Post #6 you will see groves of young Joshua trees. There are many old Joshua trees in the park but it is nice to know about a new generation of these trees. A lot of these young trees are considered juveniles because they have only one trunk and no branches. For the first several decades of its life, it will grow a vertical trunk and only grow approximately 1/2 to 3-inches per year. When they reach 5 to 10 feet they will produce their first blooms.



The following article was written by Milt Stark. Unfortunately there is no name or date of the newspaper but was probably either the Ledger Gazette or the Antelope Valley Press. Milt had his own style of writing and I hope you enjoy the article as much as I did.

Valley Wildflowers

Grass nuts now growing



Royal blue flowers grow in clusters

By MILT STARK
Blue Dicks
Dichelostemma pulchella
(Previous botanical name — *Brodiaea capitata*)
Amaryllis Family
(Formerly thought to be in the Lily Family)
also known as *Brodiaea*, Grass Nuts, Desert Hyacinth and Cluster Lily
These beautiful royal blue flowers (actually a cluster of flowers) growing at the top of a reed-like stalk from four inches to two feet tall can be found growing in many different areas in the Antelope Valley.

Recently, I have found them growing among the *Monolopia*, northwest of Rosamond, mixed with Cream Cups in the same location, sticking their heads well above the Goldfields in Palmdale and growing in our unplowed field in Leona Valley.

The common name "Grass Nuts" refers to the fact that the stalk grows from an edible corn which was harvested by the Indians and slowly roasted in hot ashes. Raw, they have a sweet nutty taste. As a boy I remember them incorrectly called wild onion, perhaps because of the shape of the corn. Although related to the onion, there is not even a hint of the taste of onion in the corn.

Although in a number of these articles I have mentioned how the plants were used by early pioneers and Indians, I must caution the readers not to use these plants for the same purpose at the present time for three reasons.

First, it is illegal to pick the flowers or destroy the plants; second, we all have responsibility to preserve our environmental heritage for future generations; and third, unless you are a trained botanist or were raised in a

culture where the plant materials were used for generations, you may very well eat poisonous materials.

Some corns or ^{bulbs} plants are edible, but others such as the *Zygadenes* are quite poisonous. Some parts of plants are edible while others are poisonous. Other plants may be edible in the very immature stage of growth and very poisonous when mature. Some plants were eaten by the Indians only after the poison had been leached out and apparently the Indians developed an immunity to the ill effects of some plant materials.

So let us enjoy the wildflowers for their great beauty. We should learn the folklore of wildflowers so that we can appreciate and remember them. But when we visit the wildflower fields let's "take only pictures and leave only footprints."



Blue dick/wild hyacinth



M. Wilson

August 10th is S'mores Day. There is a debate as to who came up with this campfire treat but going back at least to 1927 a recipe for the more formally designated "some mores" appeared in *Tramping and Trailing with the Girl Scouts*. Other sources attribute the original recipe to the Campfire Girls. The original S'more was made of two graham crackers. Place a square of a chocolate bar on one cracker, toast a marshmallow and while it is hot place it on the top of the chocolate and put the other cracker on top of the marshmallow and give a little squeeze. Today people have S'more Parties and include items like: peanut butter, peanut butter cups, caramels, sliced strawberries or bananas, thin mints, jelly and may use chocolate chip or oatmeal cookies.



BURROWING OWLS

By Mary Wilson



The young owl chicks (also known as owlets) have white, fluffy down feathers. These feathers are eventually molted and replaced with the mottled brown plumage like the adult in the photo. Even at this young age they will start doing wing practice.



Both parents will hunt and bring back food for the chicks for 1 to 3 months. The parents do not regurgitate the food as many birds do, but feed them what they catch such as mice, lizards, and insects. They tear off small pieces of the catch and feed the pieces to the young chicks.