

FIELD OBSERVATION REPORT

By Mary Wilson
September 2018

Alongside Lancaster Road there are ragweed, tumbleweed that are still green but some are starting to turn brown, turkey mullein are finishing the season, the Jimson weed and common sunflowers still have blooms and tarweed has the yellow flowers.

Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve

The turkey mullein is just about done for the season. There are a few of the rubber rabbitbrush that are starting the flower buds, however, the grasshoppers are stripping many of these plants of their leaves. The long stemmed buckwheat are just starting to get the small white clusters of flowers.



Rubber rabbit brush before grasshoppers.



Rubber rabbit brush after grasshoppers.

Arthur B. Ripley Desert Woodland State Park

The male Juniper trees still have cones and many of the female trees have berries that are starting to get the gray color. The California buckwheat clusters of flowers are now the rust brown color. The cotton thorn bushes (photos below) have gone to seed. The thorns on these bushes can be up to 2-inches in length.



Cotton thorn with flowers.



Cotton thorn with seeds.

GRASSHOPPERS

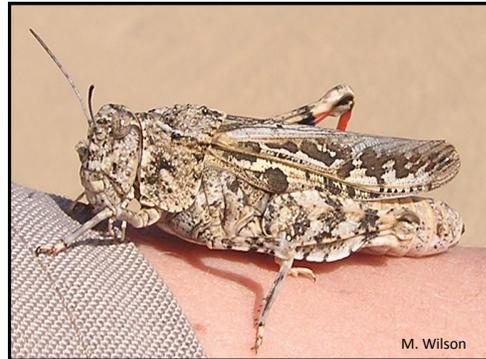
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Grasshoppers can be found almost everywhere in the world, except for the colder regions near the North and South poles. There are over 1,000 species of grasshoppers occurring in the U.S. alone. Worldwide the numbers go over 23,000! The modern day grasshoppers descended from ancient ancestors that lived before the dinosaurs roamed the earth. Fossil records show they first appeared during the Carboniferous period, more than 300 million years ago.

There are two main groups of grasshoppers: 1) long-horned grasshoppers (family *Tettigoniidae*) that include crickets and katydids, and 2) short-horned grasshoppers (family *Acrididae*) that include grasshoppers and locusts. Grasshoppers are divided according to the length of their antennae (feelers), which are also called horns. At least two short-horned grasshoppers have been seen at the Poppy Reserve.



Short-horned grasshopper—*Acrididae*



Pallid-wing grasshopper (*Trimerotropis pallidipennis*)

Grasshoppers are medium to large insects. Adult length is 1 to 7 centimeters, depending on the species. Like their relatives the 'katydids' and 'crickets', they have chewing mouthparts, two pairs of wings and long hind legs for jumping. They hear with ears on their bellies. The auditory organs are on the abdomen on each side of the first abdominal segment, tucked under the wings. This simple eardrum, called the tympana, allows the grasshopper to hear the songs of other grasshoppers. They usually have large eyes, and are colored to blend into their environment, a combination of brown, grey or green. In some species the males have bright colors on their wings that they use to attract females. A few species eat toxic plants, and keep the toxins in their bodies for protection.

They lay their eggs in the ground or on vegetation. Eggs are commonly laid in the ground with a foamy substance around them to protect them during incubation; typically the number of eggs laid by a female is between 400 and 500. The eggs hatch and the young nymphs resemble adults but lack wings and at this stage are often called hoppers. Through successive molts, the nymphs develop wing buds, until their final molt into a mature adult with fully developed wings. The insect produces one generation each year with the adult lifespan being approximately 60 to 90 days.

Grasshoppers live in fields, meadows and just about anywhere they can find generous amounts of food to eat. The grasshoppers favorite foods are grasses, leaves and cereal crops, but some also scavenge on grasshopper feces and even on dead grasshoppers of the same species.

The grasshoppers greatest enemies include various kinds of flies that lay their eggs in or near grasshopper eggs. After the fly eggs hatch, the newborn flies eat the grasshopper eggs. Some flies will even lay their eggs on the grasshoppers body, even while the grasshopper is flying. The newborn flies then eat the grasshopper. Other enemies of the grasshoppers include beetles, birds, mice, snakes and spiders. Ground squirrels, field mice and other rodents eat grasshoppers and dig around for their eggs. Blister beetle and ground beetle larvae attack the egg pods of grasshoppers. They are both capable of consuming between 50 to 60% of grasshopper egg pods.

Grasshoppers can both jump and fly and they can reach a speed of 8 miles per hour when flying. A grasshopper is an amazing insect that can leap 20 times the length of its own body. If you or I could do that, we would be able to jump almost 40 yards!

WILDFIRE BY THE POPPY RESERVE

A fire across from the Poppy Reserve started around 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, September 9, 2018. The blaze reached 170 acres. It did not reach the Poppy Reserve. I drove San Francisquito Fairmont Road—this is the dirt road that goes past Shea’s Castle. The fire did not reach the castle and was on the south side of San Francisquito Fairmont Road.



View of fire from the Poppy Reserve.



Middle and bottom photo ae views from San Francisquito Fairmont Road



BURROWING OWLS

By Mary Wilson



The photos on this page were taken in May so these fledglings are about 4 to 5 weeks old. It is about 10:00 a.m. in the morning and they are out of the habitat sitting and letting the sunshine warm them up. The photo on the left shows one of the fledglings brave enough to check out the motion camera and gets a selfie of him or herself. After they warm up a bit they start moving and calling out for their parents who are still feeding them.



The photo on the left has one of the fledglings doing some wing practice and finds out that if you flap those wings and get a little lift you can take off from the ground. It won't be long before it will not only be able to get off the ground but to actually take a short flight.