



FIELD OBSERVATION REPORT

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Wildflower Report

Bouquet Canyon Road. Trees are getting their leaves and the Elderberry, Mountain Lilac, and tobacco trees are starting to flower. Flowers either starting to bloom or in bloom are: mustard, golden yarrow, white pincushions, Indian paint brush, Spanish broom, Jimsonweed, purple yerba santa, western wallflowers, hooker primrose, and thistle. The bush poppies are in bloom as are the Tamarisk. In the area where the water runs along the road, and can sometimes close the road because of water, there are wild iris and cattails.



Tamarisk



Bush Poppies



Yerba Santa

Bouquet Canyon's main stream is Bouquet Creek, which begins in the Sierra Pelona Mountains, near Leona Valley. Bouquet Reservoir, formed by the earthen Bouquet Dam is situated along the creek, and forms part of the Los Angeles Aqueduct system. The two-lane Bouquet Canyon Road follows the stream from Leona Valley to the city of Santa Clarita, where it becomes a major thoroughfare.

The name "Bouquet" came from Francisco Chari who was a French sailor who landed in California and turned cattle driver. He was always telling stories about his adventures at sea on his "buque," meaning ship in Spanish. This led to his land in the canyon being named "El Rancho del Buque" which American mapmakers later changed to "Bouquet" as they didn't know much Spanish, changing the meaning to a bunch of flowers.

The canyon is also nicknamed the "Hangman's Canyon" or "Dead Man's Canyon", after an event in the Castaic Range War when a young cowboy was lynched. The Castaic Range War, also known as the Jenkins-Chormicle Affair, was a range war that happened in Castaic, California from 1890 to 1916. Ranchers and farmers William Willoby Jenkins and William C. Chormicle both staked claims on a piece of land in the territory. The feud started when Chormicle purchased 1,600 acres of the same land Jenkins had settled on years ago. When the dispute couldn't be settled in court, violence erupted between the two, lasting for over two decades, with dozens of men from both sides killed. The feud continued and a group of men working for Jenkins burned down William Gardner's house, killing him and some members of his family. Chormicle retaliated by having son, David Jenkins, lynched in bouquet Canyon.

Today the land by the intersection of Lake Hughes Road and Castaic Road is submerged under Castaic Lake behind the dam.

WILD IRIS

Almost all of the nearly 300 recognized wild iris species live in Asia and Europe. Only a couple dozen, all members of a single group—the “beardless iris” - somehow reached North America. Ancestors of today’s Pacific Coast irises evidently crossed into the New World at various times during the Ice Ages.

Native Irises bloom in the springtime and have beautiful flowers. They can come in a variety of colors from blue, white, yellow, tans and browns. Most of our irises are inhabitants of Pacific coastal areas. They attract pollinators (bumblebees) at a time when many other plants are blooming and competing for most flowering plants. These plants are extremely difficult to transplant and will not survive disturbance. For this reason, on national forest lands, it is illegal to dig or pick the irises.

One such flower is the Yellow Flag Iris. It is an eye catching plant, unfortunately it is as destructive as it is beautiful. They grow like wildfire along streams and rivers, are found in ponds, irrigation ditches and other riparian areas. They threaten native wetland vegetation such as cattails, sedges and rushes. The plant spreads by long rhizomes and by seed, they are easy to spot by their sword-like leaves and bright yellow blooms which appear in spring and early summer. It is a fast growing and rapidly spreading invasive plant that can out-compete other wetland plants, forming almost impenetrable thickets, in much the same way as cattails do.



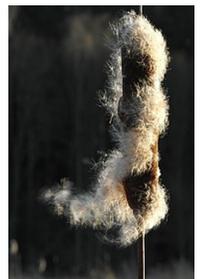
Wild Iris and Cattails alongside Bouquet Canyon Road.

CATTAILS

Cattails are in the family Typhaceae and in America are also known as reed or punks. They are upright perennial plants that emerge from creeping rhizomes. The tiny unisexual flowers are born on a dense cylindrical spike and the male flowers are located above the female flowers. After releasing the pollen, the male flowers wither and fall off, leaving the characteristic brown furry fruiting spikes. When mature, the spike disintegrates to release cottony masses of minute wind-dispersed seeds. The cattail are among the first wetland plants to colonize areas of newly exposed wet mud with their abundant wind-dispersed seeds. Buried seeds can survive in the soil for long periods of time. They also spread by rhizomes, forming large interconnected stands. These plants can be aggressive in their competition with other native species.

They are eaten by wetland mammals such as muskrats and provide nesting and resting places for waterfowl. Many parts of the cattail plant are edible to humans. Before the plant flowers, the tender inside of the shoots can be squeezed out and eaten raw or cooked. The rhizomes can be processed into a flour. Baby shoots emerging from the rhizomes can be picked and eaten raw.

During World War II, the United States Navy used the cattail down as a substitute for kapok in life vests and aviation jackets. Tests showed that even over 100 hours of submersion, the buoyancy was still effective. They are used as thermal insulation in buildings as an organic alternative to conventional insulating materials such as glass wool or stone wool. Native Americans used the seed hairs to start fires, used the down to line moccasins, and for bedding, diapers, baby powder and cradleboards.





Male

BULLOCK'S ORIOLE

Icterus bullockii



Female

You may find these birds at forest edges, farmyards, leafy suburbs, isolated groves, and streamside woods, especially cottonwood trees.

They forage for insects among foliage of trees and shrubs and you might see them hanging upside down or stretching to reach the prey. They may sometimes catch insects in midair. They feed on insects, especially caterpillars, beetles, grasshoppers, crickets, wasps, bugs and spiders. They will eat many different berries and wild fruits. If you have hummingbird feeders or cut fruit out they will help themselves.

Adult males are bright orange with a black back and large white wing patch. The face is orange with a black line through the eye and a black throat. Females and immatures are yellowish-orange on the head and tail, with grayish back and white-edged wing coverts. Immature males show a black throat patch.

The male sings to defend the nesting territory. In courtship, the male faces the female and stretches upright, with tail spread and wings quivering and partly open. The nest is built by the female, however, the male may help. The nest is a hanging pouch, with its rim firmly attached to a branch. The nest is tightly woven of plant fibers, strips of bark, vine tendrils, grass, yarn, and string and will be lined with fine grass, plant down and hair. The female lays 3 to 6 eggs that are bluish white to pale gray with brown and black markings concentrated at the larger end. Incubation is by the female for about 11 days. Both parents feed the nestlings. The young will leave the nest in about 15 days after hatching.

On May 1st of this year a male Bullock's Oriole was helping himself to sugar water in my hummingbird feeder. If you don't have a hummingbird feeder you could mix a half-and-half mixture of water and grape jelly, blended into a syrupy nectar and set it out in a small, shallow container. You can also put out orange halves in a shallow dish of water (to discourage ants). Replace the fruit daily to prevent drying or growth of harmful mold.

RAMADA BUILT AT RIPLEY DESERT WOODLAND STATE PARK

May 15, 2010

A project that was very important to Milt Stark was the Arthur B. Ripley Desert Woodland State Park. Mr. Ripley willed the land for this park property to the state. He died in 1988 and it wasn't until 1990 that the State of California finally accepted the 556+ acres of this prime desert woodland. Milt was involved with this project from its very beginning. He arranged for the Sierra Club members to clean up the place and in five workdays they had filled up five very large dumpsters with trash. He joined PR/MDIA to represent Ripley and he got PR/MDIA to finance the display boards and he and Ranger Bob McAdam laid out the nature trail. The Sierra Club members built the trail and Milt wrote the brochure that visitors would use on the trails. In 2005 Milt got permission to put in another walking trail and after many meetings and setbacks this trail will be completed in 2010. Another project he spearheaded was the need of a ramada so people could sit or picnic in the area with protection from the wind and sun. He got the permission from State Parks to build the ramada and the Chief of Maintenance, Larry Vietti, provided a material list for a 15 foot by 15 foot by 8 foot ramada. After Milt got bids for the material he selected Home Depot and they were to deliver the materials to Ripley on Friday, May 14th. Larry Vietti poured the five cement foundations so the workers could build the ramada on Saturday, May 15.

It was Milt's understanding that one of the requirements for a Boy Scout to earn the rank of Eagle Scout was to build something requiring 100 hours of labor—not necessarily by him, but by him working with other young men. He interviewed a young man and they discussed what needed to be done to build the ramada and what he would have to do.

At 9:00 a.m. on Saturday morning Boy Scout Sean Mulvena showed up with nine of his friends, most of whom were Boy Scouts, three of whom had already attained the rank of Eagle Scout. Under Larry Vietti's direction the young men went to work painting the wood and putting it into place to build the ramada. The group worked until about 6:00 p.m. so that the project was completed in one day. The group was commended for getting the group together and Sean's leadership in getting the project done.



The Ramada was built as an Eagle Scout project. Materials were donated.



Milt later had small slabs of Juniper tree branches cut, stained and attached to the back of the ramada. State Parks furnished concrete picnic tables with benches. It is a great place to just sit and relax, have a picnic, and there are display boards in the area to look at, plus you can get trail guides to walk the two trails in the park.

The Ripley Desert Woodland State Park is on Lancaster Road between 205th St. West and 210th St. West, seven miles west of the Poppy Reserve and about 22 miles from Lancaster.