



Theodore Payne Foundation, a non-profit plant nursery, seed source, book store, and education center dedicated to the preservation of wild flowers and California native plants. This a report for **March 24, 2017**. New reports will be posted each Friday through the end of May.

Cool, and in some places rainy, weather has returned to the southland, resulting in a transitional phase of flowering this week. The heat during the past days sped up, then over-cooked the bloom in a few areas, especially in the southernmost, low elevation, desert basins. Still nice, but the bloom will be starting at a little higher elevations now.

In Orange County, Hwy 74, the Ortega Highway, winds across the Santa Ana Mountains from the coast to the Inland Valleys. East of San Juan Capistrano, [Caspers Wilderness Park](#), is a popular site for local wildflower enthusiasts of the region. The East Bluff Trail in the park is wide and maintained as a fire road, but there are some steep ups/downs. The backdrop for wildflowers includes some handsome shrubs like lemonade berry (*Rhus integrifolia*), California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*) lush with new vegetative growth, and abundant California brittlebush (*Encelia californica*). California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*) is abundant on south-facing slopes at the northernmost end of East Bluff Trail. The San Diego jewelflower (*Caulanthus heterophyllus* yellow-flowered form) is showing along the trail, and in shady moist patches, miner's lettuce (*Claytonia perfoliata*) is abundant. Popcorn flowers (*Plagiobothrys* spp.) are common, and Coulter's lupine (*Lupinus sparsiflorus*) can be found in patches along with collared lupine (*Lupinus truncatus*) and wild hyacinath (*Dichelostemma capitatum*). The coastal paintbrush (*Castilleja affinis*) is seen in bright red patches on cliff faces, and Chaparral yucca (*Hesperoyucca whipplei*) is in full bloom, most covered in southern California yucca moths (*Tegeticula maculata extranea*). Many colorful species are showy in spots on the cliff faces along the trail. Do not attempt to scale the cliffs! Doing so is not permitted in the park, nor is it even remotely safe. From afar and with a long camera lens, enjoy California butterweed (*Senecio californicus*) forming terrific stands right along the cliff edges and faces, California bluebells (*Phacelia minor*), popcorn flowers (*Plagiobothrys* spp.) and Coulter's lupine (*Lupinus sparsiflorus*). For the butterfly watchers (we don't just cater to flower lovers) the following are easily seen along the trail, Western tiger swallowtails, (*Papilio rutulus*), pale swallowtails, (*Papilio eurymedon*), Sara orange-tips (*Anthocharis sara sara*), bramble hairstreaks (*Callophrys dumetorum*), painted ladies (*Vanessa cardui*) and red-admirals (*Vanessa atalanta rubria*).

Once you get to the Lake Elsinore end of Hwy 74, enjoy the various sites around the area, including Walker Canyon, for wildflower viewing. Also in Orange County, in the Santa Ana Mountains and the [Cleveland National Forest](#), check out Weir and Santiago Canyons where many wildflowers including many, many poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*) are showy now.

South and east of Lake Elsinore, along SR76, the ceanothus (*Ceanothus* sp.) on the south side of Palomar Mountain have finally popped and the goldfields (*Lasthenia* sp.) have begun blooming at Lake Henshaw and from the lake to Ranchita (*Ceanothus perplexens*) is in beautiful full flower.

The fantastic bloom on the desert floor at [Anza Borrego Desert State Park](#) is starting to fade, with some areas of the desert floor now crisped. Hungry, fat caterpillars are abundant and eating away many of the brown-eyes (*Camissonia claviformis*) and other members of that genus. Most of the sunflower field on Henderson Canyon road and the end of Di Giorgio road is still going strong, but again some areas there are fading fast. There will still be some good blooms, such as carpets of desert dandelion (*Malacothrix glabrata*), on the desert floor in the Borrego Springs area, especially on the west side of Borrego Springs, but this will probably be the last weekend for them. Peak bloom has now moved to slightly higher elevations to the west of Borrego Springs. For example, the descent on the Montezuma grade on S22 is now a gorgeous display. There hasn't been a show like this for many years! If the people in your car are "o-o-h-ing" and "a-a-h-ing" as you drive down, please *do* keep safe and not distracted while driving. The most obvious part of the display is desert encelia (*Encelia farinosa*), but there are many other species in bloom as well. Every pullout has cars in it, and people are climbing the hills next to the road to enjoy the bloom. Again, be careful! The canyons on the west side of Borrego Springs is almost surely similarly fantastic especially in isolated patches of plants, in places not exposed to the full force of the sun. Don't miss the great number of desert threadplant (*Nemacladus rubescens*) in bloom along the canyons. Other plants that obviously like the rocky terrain in these canyons include ghost flower (*Mohavea confertiflora*) and broad-leaf gilia (*Aliciella latifolia* ssp. *latifolia*).



Threadstem (*Nemacladus* sp.)

Photos by Fred Melgert. Visit Fred's Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/BorregoWildflowers/>

The [San Jacinto Valley](#) is putting on a rare spectacular show of poppies and bluebells along Gilman Springs Rd. and Soboba Road. People who have lived there 30+ years do not remember a display like this. Pretty terrific show coming and going in and out and about the valley these past couple weeks. Nearby Bautista Creek, is still early. South facing hillsides will be pretty showy in a couple more weeks with chia (*Salvia columbariae*), hairy lupine (*Lupinus hirsutissimus*), pincushion (*Chaenactis* sp.),

bluebells (*Phacelia campanularia*), forget-me-nots (*Cryptantha* sp.), and a whole lotta California Four O'clocks (*Mirabilis laevis*) which, as they are literally covering many of the hillsides right now, are the show to be seen. Be sure to visit them in the afternoon, anytime around, well, four o'clock when this lazy plant gets around to opening its flowers! Despite the wonderful rains, the porous, sandy alluvial terraces along the creek are rather dry. Lupines (*Lupinus* sp.) are coming along pretty well however. The north slope is rich with a variety of shade and moisture loving species. We can only hope for a showing of Mariposa lilies (*Calochortus* sp.), the extravagant jewels of the wildflower world. No matter the show, Bautista Creek is always beautiful.

Nearby in the Hemet region, [Diamond Valley Lake](#) also has some excellent displays Of wildflowers along its trails. Get a map at the visitor Center.



Poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*) and California bluebells (*Phacelia campanularia*).
Photos by Michael Wall

Traveling through the desert east along I-10 to the California-Arizona border, one can see a profusion of desert lilies (*Hesperocallis undulata*) together with desert sand-verbena (*Abronia villosa*) and evening primroses (*Oenothera deltoides*) coloring the side of the highway. Please do not pull over just anywhere on I-10 for a closer look. Get off the interstate, maybe on a frontage road. For the best desert lily viewing, take a side trip north on highway 177 to the Desert Lily Sanctuary. There you can get out of the car and really enjoy seeing these beauties up close.

Be sure to check out [Box Springs Road \(to Mecca\)](#) and neighboring [Painted Canyon](#), south of I-10, opposite the Joshua Tree exit. Same caution about CalTrans closure applies here. Do check conditions before you visit, but it is well worth the effort

Also, word is that [Ford Dry Lake](#), [Cottonwood Springs](#), [Red Cloud Mine Road](#) are good pull off wildflower viewing if you are traveling the long drive from Palm Springs to Phoenix.

In [Joshua Tree National Park](#), the best blooms are currently happening at the lower elevations. Perhaps the best area to now view wildflowers is Wilson Canyon, south of White Tank Campground and north of the Cholla Cactus Garden. The yellow cups

(*Chrylisima brevipes*) in Wilson Canyon are turning the surrounding slopes a bright yellow color. Other showy wildflower species in Wilson Canyon include browneyes (*Chylismia claviformis*), purple mat (*Nama demissa*), sand blazingstar (*Mentzelia involucrata*), desert chicory (*Rafinesquia neomexicana*) and phacelia (*Phacelia spp.*). Along Pinto Basin, and in between the creosote bushes, you will find a carpet of cream colored flowers called browneyes (*Chylismia claviformis*). If you are looking closely, you might spot a desert lily (*Hesperocallis undulata*) or the magenta flowers of sand verbena (*Abronia villosa*). Desert gold (*Geraea canescens*) makes a yellow carpet in some areas, as do poppies (*Eschscholzia spp.*). Phacelia (*Phacelia spp.*) adds some purple to the mix. The beavertail cacti (*Opuntia basilaris*) are also beginning to blooming. The little belly flower called desert star (*Monoptilon belliodes*) is common in sandy areas, and look for the photogenic desert five spots (*Eremalche rotundifolia*) too. Try stopping for a walkabout from Turkey Flats or Porcupine Wash. You may see evening primrose (*Oenothera spp.*) occupying sand flats. If you are prepared with plenty of water, and have four-wheel drive, check out the Black Eagle Mine Road for some good wildflower blooms. The poppies are abundant a short distance down this sandy dirt road from the paved Pinto Basin Rd. Down in the southern part of the Park, Cottonwood Springs, there is a widespread bloom along the trail to Mastodon Peak. Poppies and Canterbury Bells (*Phacelia campanularia*) are common. Also look for the bright blue hues of flowering chia (*Salvia columbariae*) and Mojave aster (*Xylorhiza tortifolia*). If you enjoy capturing the magnificent Joshua Trees and Mojave yuccas (*Yucca brevifolia* and *Y. schidigera*), they are now flowering throughout the areas in which they grow within the park. Some of the hot spots include just inside the Joshua Tree Entrance Station, and near the intersection of Park Blvd. and Pinto Basin Road, and just inside the Twentynine Palms entrance, and Wilson Canyon.



Joshua Tree (*Yucca brevifolia*). Photo by Margaret Hurley

[Amboy Crater](#) in the east Mojave Desert is an iconic landscape feature that guides travelers along [Route 66](#). The site provides easy access (low-clearance 2wd) to visitors wanting to experience [Mojave Trails National Monument](#). Mojave Trails National Monument spans 1.6 million acres and includes rugged mountain ranges, ancient lava flows and fossil beds, and spectacular sand dunes. The Monument, managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) also contains irreplaceable historical resources, such as the longest-remaining undeveloped stretch of the iconic Route 66 and World War II training camps. They are sharing more wildflower photos and locations as part of their #TracktheBloom campaign on social media; feel free to share anytime and/or tag them.



**Wildflower scenes around Amboy Crater, Mojave Trails National Monument.
Photos by Bob Wick, BLM.**

As of March 17th at the [Antelope Valley California Poppy State Natural Reserve](#), the poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*) have started blooming on the east half of the park! They suddenly exploded into color this week, and can even be seen from across the valley! Due to the late rains, there will no solid carpet of poppies across the park, but the bloom is already better than expected. It will likely be getting a little better over the next couple of weeks, with the peak spread out over late March/early April. Rain is in the forecast this week, which will help the bloom last at least through mid April, or longer if it doesn't get too hot. Look for the spectacular bush lupine (*Lupinus excubitus*) as well. The gold and blue color contrast is s-o-o-o California.



Bush lupine (*Lupinus excubitus*) at AVSPNR. Photo by Jean Rhyne

North of the Poppy Reserve on Hwy 14, [Red Rock Canyon Stat Park](#) is wildly colorful now with a spectacular wildflower bloom and awesome landscape features. One of the State's best kept secrets.

Crossing over west from Red Rock through the northwest Mojave Desert and southern Central Valley to Carrizo Plain, pass through the Tehachapi and Arvin regions for a sensationally colorful driving experience.

It is still a little while until peak bloom at [Carrizo Plain National Monument](#), but there are good patches of yellow hillside sunflower (*Monolopia lanceolata*) on the valley floor and the hills, particularly the north part of the Temblors and the center of the Monument. Starting to be widespread are goldfields (*Lasthenia* sp.). In selected locations, there are patches of slender blazing star (*Mentzelia gracilenta*), desert candle (*Caulanthus inflatus*), cream cups (*Platystemon californicus*) and California poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*). On the road out to Selby Campground and in the Caliente Range, look for the showy bush lipine (*Lupinus* sp.) and the interior goldenbush (*Ericameria* sp.) another stunning blue and gold combination. Predicting that the peak of the bloom will be in 1-3 weeks. Rain is expected this week and road conditions depend on rainfall. And

speaking of road conditions, please do not drive the Panorama Road to avoid getting stuck in the clay soil. There is no service in the Monument that will pull you out! Also Elkhorn Road, a county road, is closed due to eroded sections. Soda Lake Road is passable for passenger cars, but be warned that there are several rutted out spots.

Very common for a wet year, the wildflowers are getting a late start at [Figueroa Mountain](#). There really aren't many yet, but finally enough for a short report. Most of the wildflower that are currently blooming are in the lower elevation, below 3,000 feet, with the exception of the south facing slopes, which get the sun shine most of the day. A friendly reminder. When you stop to look and take pictures of all the beauties, please make sure that you park on the shoulder of the road and not on the road itself. If there isn't a place to stop, find a turn-out and walk back to the area. Please do not block the road at any time as this will be enforced. Starting at the first cattle guard all the way through to the enchanting tree canopy area, bright buttercups (*Ranunculus* sp.), milk maids (*Cardamine californica*), blue dicks (*Dichelostemma capitatum*), delightful fiesta flowers (*Pholistoma auritum*), fiddlenecks (*Amsinckia* sp.), Johnny jump-ups (*Viola pedunculata*), and miners lettuce (*Claytonia* sp.), are in bloom. As you continue up the hill, beautiful California poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*) are beginning bloom. Right before you get to the rusty gate, look to the right and find some tiny cream cups (*Platystemon californicus*) in bloom. Other wildflowers to look for as you continue your uphill climb include, ceanothus (*Ceanothus* sp.), buttercups (*Ranunculus* sp.), fiddleneck (*Amsinckia* sp.), wild hyacinth (*Dichelostemma capitatum*), a few lupine (*Lupinus* sp.), carpets of goldfields (*Lasthenia* sp.), stunning orange wall flowers (*Erysimum capitatum*), shooting stars (*Primula clevelandii*), and coreopsis (*Leptosyne* sp.). At Vista Point (large gravel turnout about 11.4 miles from the bottom), the exquisite chocolate lilies (*Fritillaria biflora*) are in flower. Also look for shooting stars (*Primula clevelandii*), goldfields (*Lasthenia* sp) and wild onions (*Alium* sp.). In the serpentine area across Vista Point and along the road leading to the station, there are California poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*), buttercups (*Ranunculus* sp.), blue dicks (*Dichelostemma capitatum*), coreopsis (*Leptosyne* sp.), golden yarrow (*Eriophyllum confertiflorum*) and more wild onions (*Alium* sp.). As you pass the station, fields of gorgeous (*Dichelostemma capitatum*) shooting stars (*Primula clevelandii*) can be seen, ranging in color from deep magenta to purple to the occasional white blooms. Buttercups (*Ranunculus* sp.) can also be spotted here. About a half mile further, the infamous poppy hillside is about one quarter filled. This year the poppies in this area appear smaller, but still beautiful. It also seems as though they will be sharing the spotlight with lovely lupine (*Lupinus* sp.). About one half mile further, you will find some colorful fields housing beautiful shooting stars (*Primula clevelandii*), lomatium (*Lomatium* sp.) and buttercups (*Ranunculus* sp.). From Ranger Peak to Cachuma Saddle, because of the higher elevation, the flowers are just starting to bloom. At this point, because of the damage incurred to the dirt section of Happy Canyon Road by the heavy rains, it is recommended that only high clearance vehicle exit the mountain through Happy Canyon Road. People in low clearance vehicles are advised to turn around and exit the mountain via Figueroa Mountain Road.

Flowers at [Hungry Valley SVRA](#) are barely starting, but enjoy the view as you drive to the park with the splashes of yellow coreopsis (*Leptosyne* sp.) and fiddleneck (*Amsinckia* sp.) in Tejon Pass. Poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*) are scarce here, right now, but are reported to be showing color along Highway 138 toward the Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve near Lancaster and most definitely in Gorman. Within the park, the area around Meadows Trail has goldfields (*Lasthenia* sp.) and goldenbush (*Ericameria* sp.) starting to show color in places along Schmidt Ranch road. The manzanitas (*Arctostaphylos* sp.) are covered with pinkish-white blossoms along the Oak Grove hiking trail. Take a drive along the frontage road between Smokey Bear Rd. and Gorman to see Joshua trees (*Yucca brevifolia*) in bloom. Further north are patches of pale purple phacelia (*Phacelia* sp.) among the yellow valley sunflowers and fiddleneck. The white flowers of the wild cucumber vine (*Marah macrocarpa*) sprawl in spots and glow in the morning light. Also, along the frontage road are bladderpod (*Peritoma arborea*) bushes, showy with their yellow blossoms, and the bush lupine (*Lupinus* sp.) is starting to bloom with their fragrant deep purple flowers. Please remember that the warm weather that brings out the flowers also brings out the snakes. Walk carefully to avoid stepping on flowers, and snakes! The flowers should really be popping out over the next few weeks so plan your trip to Hungry Valley now!

Along the coast in Orange County, the [Environmental Nature Center in Newport Beach](#) is even more beautiful than we reported last week. The pathways that guide you through the different plant habitats of Southern California display different species of California wild lilacs (*Ceanothus* spp.) and elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* ssp. *cerulea*). Fragrant mock orange (*Philadelphus lewisii*), Cleveland sage (*Salvia clevelandii*) and Munz's sage (*Salvia munzii*) tickle your nose, and California encelia (*Encelia californica*) and Baja Desert Rose are outstanding! The ubiquitous but "Statelike" California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*) and baby-blue-eyes (*Nemophila menziesii*) are blooming everywhere!

[Elizabeth Learning Center](#) is an urban oasis of wildflowers! Their Habitat Gardens continue to have vernal pools full of goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata*) and owl's clover (*Castilleja exserta*) is really starting to "exert" itself everywhere with Otay mesa mint (*Pogogyne nudiuscula*) and thread-leaf brodiaea (*Brodiaea filifolia*). The Desert Garden is experiencing its own "Super Bloom", with Baja vizcaino (*Viscainoa geniculata*), whispering bells (*Emmenanthe penduliflora*), desert bluebells (*Phacelia campanularia*), Canterbury bells (*Phacelia minor*), cream cups (*Platystemon californicus*), birds-eye gilia (*Gilia tricolor*), desert dandelion (*Malacothrix glabrata*), Mojave sun cups (*Camissonia campestris*), Mojave lupine (*Lupinus sparsiflorus*), Coville's pygmy poppy (*Eschscholzia minutiflora covillei*), apricot mallow (*Sphaeralcea ambigua*), Spanish needle (*Palafoxia arida*), brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*), desert lavender (*Hyptis emoryi*), desert candle (*Caulanthus inflatus*), chia (*Salvia columbariae*), and desert lily (*Hesperocallis undulata*). Island bush poppy (*Dendromecon harfordii*), woolly paintbrush (*Castilleja foliosa*), tidy-tips (*Layia platyglossa*), poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*), and pink fairyduster (*Calliandra eriophylla*) are showy as well. These wonderful educational gardens are located at Elizabeth Learning Center on Elizabeth Street in Cudahy between Atlantic Ave and Wilcox Ave. They are open to the public during school hours by checking in at the Main Office and getting a visitor's pass.



Garden at ELC. Photo by George Nanoski

That's it for this week. Look for our next report on **Friday, March 31st** and check back each week for the most up to date information on southern and central California wildflowers.

If you would like to be a wildflower reporter send your information about wildflower blooms and their location to flowerhotline@theodorepayne.org by Tuesday of each week when blooms of note occur.

NATIVE PLANT & WILDFLOWER EVENTS:

Theodore Payne Foundation

2017 Annual Theodore Payne Native Plant Garden Tour

Saturday & Sunday, April 1 & 2, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm

[Tickets On Sale Now](#)

Full details at <http://theodorepayne.org/calendar/annual-garden-tour/>

California Native Plant Society Hikes & Events

Riverside-San Bernardino Chapter

Saturday, March 25, 2017, 11:00 am to 2:00 pm – Horsetheif Canyon Preserve Field Trip- Take this special opportunity to explore this beautiful preserve with CNPS. There are many species in flower and diverse vegetation including coastal sage scrub, chaparral, oak woodland, and rich riparian plant communities. For more information go to <http://riverside-sanbernardino.cnps.org>

**Saturday, April 1, 2017, 9:00 am to noon – Hardford Springs Reserve,
Gavilan Hills, Riverside Field Trip** - For more information go to
<http://riverside-sanbernardino.cnps.org>