Theodore Payne Foundation’s Wild Flower Hotline is made possible by donations, and memberships. Please support the Hotline today! The Theodore Payne Wild Flower Hotline offers free weekly on-line and recorded updates on the best locations for viewing spring wild flowers in Southern and Central California. All locations are on easily accessible public lands and range from urban to wild, distant to right here in L.A.

APRIL 7, 2023

ENJOY RESPONSIBLY

While super blooms are a beautiful and awe-inspiring natural phenomenon, they are also delicate and are easily damaged by human activity, so it is important to enjoy them responsibly and minimize the impact on fragile ecosystems. Please…

☆ Stay on designated trails
☆ Share the trails; be respectful of others
☆ Visit on weekdays and/or off-peak hours, if possible
☆ Do not collect or trample wildflowers
☆ Remember your experience(s) through photos

The sun has come out from behind the storm-laden clouds and stayed around for a while. The wildflowers are responding accordingly. Temperatures are another story. In SoCal at least, temperatures are predicted to soon reach above normal. Take advantage over the next two weeks to get out and see the ephemeral beauty of California wildflowers before they set seed during a heat wave.

CHANNEL ISLANDS — SANTA ROSA ISLAND

Hiking on any of California’s offshore Islands is an other-worldly experience! A friend reported on such a hike this week. He walked in Cherry Canyon on Santa Rosa Island, which is part of the Channel Islands National Park! Transportation for day trips and camping is available through Island Packers out of Ventura Harbor! After coming ashore on Santa Rosa, use the map provided to make your way to the trailhead for Cherry Canyon. Along the way you will see “gargantuan” giant coreopsis (Leptosyne gigantea), and instantly know why the plant is named so. Most plant and animal species on the islands are just grander than the mainland version of the same organism. Sure, evolutionary evidence points to the reason it is so, but also extends to you a different perspective from which you can view familiar plants. Some plants that are in bloom along the Cherry Canyon hike include coastal paintbrush (Castilleja affinis ssp. affinis), occurring in every warm color and shade from yellow to red. Douglas’ silver bush lupine (Lupinus albifrons var. douglasii), California buttercups (Ranunculus californicus), Johnny jump-ups (Viola pedunculata), dwarf checkerbloom
(Sidalcea malviflora ssp. malviflora), cardinal catchfly (Silene laciniata ssp. laciniata), and cobweb thistle (Cirsium occidentale) can also be found. A babbling stream runs parallel to the trail, and you can listen to singing Baja tree frogs along your way forward. Enjoy the wafting fragrances and brilliant colors of Santa Rosa Island sage (Salvia brandegeei), Island shooting star (Primula clevelandii var. insularis), pink-flowering hedge nettle (Stachys ajugoides), innumerable school bells (Dipterostemon capitatus), blue-eyed grass (Sisyrinchium bellum), Fremont's star lily (Toxicoscordion fremontii), miner's lettuce (Claytonia perfoliata), Island monkeyflower (Diplacus parviflorus), and the rare seaside Calandrinia (Cistanthe maritima). Exiting the canyon, enjoy the breathtaking ocean views as you continue towards the campground. Once there, proceed to the furthest campsite windbreak and make a left to descend into Water Canyon. There, search for the endemic, white-felted paintbrush (Castilleja hololeuca). By the way, endemic means native to and restricted to a defined geographic area. Many of the plant and animal residents of the Islands are endemic to their Islands. Return to the pier via the new Coastal Trail and see coastal poppies (Eschscholzia californica var. maritima), two-colored rabbit tobacco (Pseudognaphalium biottii), Island morning glory (Calystegia macrostegia ssp. macrostegia), and Pacific gum plant (Grindelia stricta var. platyphylla). The lucky wildflower reporter and explorer extraordinaire who relayed this experience, thinks it’s worth your time and effort to get out there and relish in the wildflower extravaganza! But that is not the whole story! The boat trip to and from the Islands is every bit as exciting as exploring them. Delight in the sight of grey whales, blue whales, humpback whales, dolphins, sea lions, and thousands of marine birds! The trip also includes a visit to Santa Cruz Island's Painted Cave, the fourth largest sea cave on Earth! This trip can be done in one day and is most definitely a day trip you will never forget!
At Pinnacles National Park young raptors will soon be taking their first flight and that event is eagerly anticipated. In the meantime, new wildflowers are popping up everywhere along trails and vistas, so suspend looking into the sky for now and enjoy the scenery on the ground beneath you. Look for lovely Mission bells (*Fritillaria affinis*) often found in wooded and shady areas. These are cousins to chocolate lilies, but for the yellow-green and purple mottling of the petals. Spreading larkspur (*Delphinium patens*) is a blue-ish to purple wildflower often found in coastal areas of California but is also native to Pinnacles. On the back of the flower is a long spur that contains nectar for pollinators so watch for those critters as well. A cute newcomer to the spring bloom is chinless mouse-ears (*Diplacus douglasii*). Chinless mouse-ears is a native wildflower species which thrives in serpentine soils, or gravelly and moist ground. The flower is unusual for a Diplacus which has five petal lobes, two lobes above and three below forming a “face.” The three lower flower petal lobes on mouse ears are very reduced in size resulting in a flower face that looks “chinless.” The striking gold-streaked throat of the flower more than makes up for the chinless appearance though! California poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*) are everywhere occupying open sunny spaces. The distinctive orange color of poppies with splashes of larkspurs’ royal blue mixed in, forms an awesome display of California wildflowers. Before traveling to Pinnacles, check for road or trail closures due to storm related damage and/or active raptor nesting sites.
GREAT CENTRAL VALLEY

The bloom is nice at Carrizo Plain National Monument, but access is limited due to storm damaged and closed roads. The place with the best wildflower views are Elkhorn Grade Road and Elkhorn Road. The roads are badly rutted in places, so high clearance vehicles would be a wise choice. Take Elkhorn Road northwest to Seven Mile Road to reach Soda Dry Lake (which is not dry!). Wildflower displays around Soda Lake are beautiful and photo worthy. Simmler Road and San Diego Creek Road are impassable, so you must travel through the whole Plain. The southern route, Soda Lake Road, is mostly fine for most standard cars. Hwy 58 is also closed and in fact you cannot enter or leave the park from the north entrance. Flowers are blooming on the Plain regardless of who gets to see them! Orange fiddleneck (Amsinckia sp.), goldfields (Lastenia gracilis), lavender-blue Great Valley phacelia, (Phacelia ciliata) and yellow hillside daisy (Monolopia lanceolata) blanket the gentle slopes as far as you can see. Tansy-leaf Phacelia (Phacelia tanacetifolia), purple owl’s-clover (Castilleja exserta), white popcorn flower (Plagiobothrys sp.) milkvetch (Astragalus sp.), chick lupine (Lupinus microcarpus var. microcarpus), red maids (Calandrinia menziesii) dot the landscape in smaller, but still colorful numbers. Desert candles (Caulanthus inflatus) are glowing out near Wallace Creek.
Southern Sierra Foothills

Oaks are flowering profusely as well as an assortment of pastel-flowers in the Sierra foothills around the Three Rivers, Salt Creek, and Lake Kaweah region. Interior live oak (*Quercus wislizeni*) and blue oak (*Quercus douglasii*) are full of showy tassel-like flowers that, after pollinated, will develop huge numbers of acorns. Western redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*) is just starting to set off fireworks of pink color throughout the landscape. Not as showy but just as majestic, is the mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus betuloides*) displaying abundant but more subtle flowers. Fragrant buckbrush (*Ceanothus cuneatus*) is in full bloom too. The area around Dry Creek is getting good with poppies (*Eschscholzia caespitosa*) still in early bloom. Other flowers include foothill shooting stars (*Primula hendersonii*), long spurred plectritis (*Plectritis ciliosa*), Eastwood’s baby blue eyes (*Nemophila pulchella*), California goldfields (*Lasthenia californica*), spider lupine (*Lupinus benthamii*), miniature lupine (*Lupinus bicolor*), Child’s blue-eyed Mary (*Collinsia childi*), bird’s eye gilia (*Gilia tricolor*), fiesta flower (*Pholistoma auritum*) and foothill golden sunburst (*Pseudobahia heermannii*). Continuing mounds of bryophytes colonize the boulders along with their lichen cousins. The pollinators are super busy this year gathering pollen and nectar. Some are just falling asleep on the job! (See photo below).
Los Padres National Forest sustained major storm damage throughout the forest this winter and spring. The process of clean up and repair is currently taking place so full access to Figueroa Mountain Road as well as Happy Canyon and Sunset Valley may be open soon. Patience is being requested of potential visitors during this wildflower season. Fortunately, the wildflowers in the higher elevation are not in bloom yet as the temperature remains cold, and snow is on the ground. While the plants are starting to emerge, the flowers are still weeks behind. Let’s begin on a short, yet beautiful Figueroa wildflower driving tour. Starting at the first cattle guard on Figueroa Mountain Road, and continuing to the oak tree canopy area, shiny buttercups (Ranunculus california), beautiful fiesta flowers (Pholistoma auritum), blue dicks (Dipterostemon capitatus), fiddlenecks (Amsinckia sp.), sky lupines (Lupinus nanus), lomatium (Lomatium sp.), milk maids (Cardamine californica), California golden violets (Viola pedunculata), and popcorn flowers (Plagiobothrys sp.) can be found. Right before the oak canopy area and on the turnout to the right, look for more California golden violets, popcorn flowers, lomatium and shooting stars (Primula clevelandii). A little further along the oak canopy area, sky lupine and miniature lupine (Lupinus bicolor), can be seen as well. As you continue to climb the mountain, stunning orange California poppies (Eschscholzia californica) are starting to bloom along the road and on the rocky hillsides. Right before the rusty gate, sweet little cream cups (Platystemon californicus) are in bloom. Continuing up the hill, keep an eye out for buttercup, blue dick, the start of
prickly phlox (*Linanthus californicus*), fiddleneck, blow wives (*Achyrachaena mollis*), lomatium, fiddleneck, coreopsis (*Coreopsis* sp.) and shooting stars (*Primula clevelandii*). In the moist, shaded areas along the rocky hillsides, wild canyon peas (*Lathyrus vestitus*) are also starting to bloom. As you’re going up the road, look to your left and note that Grass Mountain is coming alive with more and more patches of orange California poppies. Some patches of lupine (*Lupinus* sp.) are also visible. While there are slides towards the top of the mountain where nothing will be blooming this year, the rest of the mountain will probably be showing off it’s much awaited super bloom within a week or two. At Vista Point (large gravel turnout about 11.4 miles from the cattle guard), you can see the ground turning golden yellow with charming goldfields (*Lasthenia* sp.) There are also shooting stars and chocolate lilies (*Fritillaria biflora*) that are rapidly fading but need not worry. These two beauties will be in bloom later in the season at the higher elevations. In the area across Vista Point and along the road to the Ranger Station, there is quite a variety of wildflowers in bloom including, poppies, blue glia (*Gilia capitata*), coreopsis, blue dick, popcorn flower, ceanothus (*Ceanothus* sp.) and shooting stars. Beyond the station, the wildflowers slow down until you get to the field on the right before Tunnel Ranch Road. This section looks lovely with a display of beautiful buttercups. Approximately half a mile further, the famous poppy hillside is breathtaking! One will find this gorgeous hillside carpeted in vivid orange and vibrant purple from the beautiful California poppies and sky lupine blooming together forming a wave of California blue and gold. If you wish to stop and take pictures you are more than welcome to do so but please remember that this is a very narrow area and vehicles are prohibited from parking in the road for any period. There is a large turnout right before you get to the hillside where one can park and walk to the display. Also remember that if you park along the side of road, your vehicle’s tires must be strictly on the dirt with no part touching the pavement. This allows any emergency vehicle to pass should the need arise. Beyond this area, there are very few flowers to report. It is too early still. The gate at Ranger Peak is closed due to storm damage and black ice. Look for a wildflower update in two weeks. Until then, happy viewing!

**ORANGE COUNTY**

*Caspers Wilderness Park* is a protected wilderness preserve nestled among the river terraces and sandstone canyons of the western coastal Santa Ana Mountains. Entrance to the park is off Ortega Highway (State Route 74). The Park offers visitors a variety of hiking trails that they can walk in a short time or combine trail loops for longer treks. Regardless of the trail choice, one can experience great views of the Santa Ana Mountains and the spectacle of wildflower diversity. Along the Dick Loskorn Trail, there are copious Catalina mariposa lilies (*Calochortus catalinae*) in bloom and on the longer loop combined with West Ridge, Starr Rise and Bell Canyon trails, find the pretty blue toadflax (*Nuttallanthus* sp.), wild canterbury bells (*Phacelia minor*), orange-red monkey flower (*Diplacus aurantiacus*), white popcorn flower (*Plagiobothrys* sp.), and delicate pink Chaparral gilia (*Gilia angelensis*). Not to miss is the bright red paintbrush (*Castilleja* sp.), three lupine species (*Lupinus truncatus*), (*Lupinus bicolor*) and (*Lupinus succulentus*), San Diego jewel flower (*Caulanthus heterophyllus*), wishbone bush (*Mirabilis laevis*) and many more. East Ridge trail is a cornucopia of wildflowers. There are scattered splendid Mariposa lilies (*Calochortus splendens*), and chaparral yucca (*Hesperoyucca whipplei*) displaying towering spikes of creamy white flowers. Lupines (*Lupinus* spp.), and phacelia (*Phacelia* spp.) provide the landscape with shades of blue color and the sunburst yellows of pincushion (*Chaenactis glabriuscula*), sun cups (*Camissoniopsis* sp.), California primrose (*Eulobus californicus*) and tidy tips (*Layia platyglossa*) supply yellow to the color palette.

Scene from Caspers Regional Park, splendid Mariposa lily (*Calochortus splendens*), Catalina mariposa lilies (*Calochortus catalinae*). Photos by Laura Camp.
The flowers are incredible in most of the washes south of the Cottonwood visitor center (south park entrance from I-10) in Joshua Tree National Park. Too many to list but the showiest wildflowers include canterbury bells (*Phacelia campanularia*), purple mat (*Nama demissa*), Parish’s poppy (*Eschscholzia parishii*), yellow Cups (*Chylismia brevipes*), apricot mallow (*Sphaeralcea ambigua*), chuparosa (*Justicia californica*), chia (*Salvia columbariae*), sand blazing stars (*Mentzelia involucrata*) and Bigelow’s monkey flower (*Diplacus bigelovii*). Furthermore, if JTNP’s southern washes are flowering that usually means that Box Canyon through Mecca Hills wilderness (along the road to Mecca in the Coachella valley) is amazing as well. It’s worth your time to investigate that area. Please hike with the purpose and explore all the nooks and crannies the canyons and washes offer. There are so many more lovely plants to find. Make it a treasure hunt! Who knows when you will get the opportunity to “see it all” again?
Some portions of Anza Borrego Desert State Park are still completely covered in wildflowers and the air is perfumed with their delicate fragrance. The southern portion of the park has faded for the most part, but the northern washes and canyons are still quite lovely and still in peak bloom. Be quick to visit if you want to experience the Anza bloom this year. Parish’s poppies (Eschscholzia parishii) still dominate canyon walls and entry to the park via S-22 and the Montezuma grade. Along Henderson Canyon Rd. between Borrego Valley Road and Peg Leg road, desert lilies (Hesperocallis undulata), hairy desert sunflowers (Geraea canescens), dune primrose (Oenothera deltoides) and sand verbena (Abronia villosa) are still good but are beginning the downside of peak bloom. This week’s highlight is Glorietta Canyon. It is a dirt road to the trailhead, but 4-wheel drive is not required. It can be done in a standard vehicle. On the drive, you will come upon large patches of Johnstonella (Johnstonella angustifolia) which smells incredible with the car windows down. (See story about Johnstonella in 3/17 hotline report). The hike into the washes and little side canyons of Glorietta reveals a huge diversity of flowers. There are more different species of flowers on this trail than anywhere else in the park according to some reporters. Refer to hotline reports about Anza trips for the past three weeks to access a long list of species to look for. A big bonus is the cacti that you will find—many in bloom. Get only close enough to take pictures though. You do not want to spend the day painfully removing spines and nasty glochids from you shins and boots! Cacti in bloom include beavertail cactus (Opuntia basilaris), California barrel cactus (Ferocactus cylindraceus), hedgehog cactus (Echinocereus engelmannii) and fishhook cactus (Mammillaria diocia).