

# FIELD OBSERVATION REPORT

By Mary Wilson

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## Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve

Sunflowers, Jimson weed and turkey mullein still have flowers. The tumbleweed and ragweed are green but no flowers yet. The rubber rabbitbrush has some green leaves but the short-horned grasshoppers are eating the leaves.



Jimson weed/Sacred datura, *Datura wrightii*, are an invitation to disaster as all parts of the plants are poisonous. All of its tissues contain chemical compounds known as “alkaloids,” and the toxic levels vary from plant to plant. These compounds can cause intense thirst, distorted vision, uncoordinated movements, high temperature, a rapid and weakened heart beat, convulsions, coma, and even death.

Datura is a member of the potato (Solanaceae) family. What is interesting is this plant has several insects that feed off of it and survive and even thrive. One such insect is the Three-lined Potato Beetle, *Lema daturaphila*, also known as an Old Fashioned Potato Beetle. These beetles are only about 1/4-inch in size and have bright coloration that could be a warning that they are toxic and are to be left alone. They will eat the leaves of the Jimson weed until only the middle-vein remains. Once the leaves of the plant have been completely devoured, the plant dies and cannot produce fruit or seeds.



## Arthur B. Ripley Desert Woodland State Park

The female Juniper tree to the right of the ramada is filled with the gray berries. This tree has berries on it throughout the year, not like some of the other female trees in the park. Milt Stark gave her the name “Big Mama” because of her prolific production of berries and this tree is one of the larger trees with 15 trunks.



◀ Big Mama

Big Mama berries ▶



The following article is the last one in the series that 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 enjoyed the articles as much as I did.

# Wildflowers, stuff and things

By MILT STARK

**Monolopia** — *Monolopia lance lata* (Sunflower family).

A profusion of these eight to twenty inch high, brilliant yellow, daisy-like flowers with slightly wooly, lance-like leaves, has started the wildflower season in the Rosamond-Mojave area off with a bang. Covering many areas of rocky hillsides on either side of the freeway and to the north of Bacchus Road, this sensational display may be seen from several miles away and should be well worth seeing for at least the next couple of weeks. For an upclose view, go north of Rosamond, take the Bacchus Road offramp and go west for three or four miles.

Although we have been unable to find a recorded common name for this flower, we have heard it called "Hilltop Daisy" and "Wooly Daisy." But when you think about it, *Monolopia* has nice sound, and should be easily remembered, so it should do.

The bluish-purple tint to the ground near the *monolopia*, results from a

great abundance of the tiny, fine petaled flower, which is a species of "Gilia" and the tiny white flower which also is seen in great numbers is one of the "popcorn" flowers.

Pleasing and attractive photographs of wildflowers have undoubtedly been taken with almost every device capable of producing a photographic image. This is especially true since the advent of color film for the amateur in the 1930's. But some of the old black and whites weren't so bad either. Fine photographs are a result of the photographer's sense of beauty and his knowledge of the materials and equipment with which he works so that he can record that beauty then from the excellence of the equipment itself.

With this in mind then, what kind of equipment is appropriate for the person who has a yen to record the beauty of the wildflower? The first consideration of course is the expense. The camera, the accessories and the ongoing cost of the film can be rather minimal or may run into

the thousands of dollars. Today the most popular camera for wildflowers (as well as many other subjects) is the single lens reflex camera selling for between about \$200 and \$2000.

Its popularity stems from the fact that you can see directly through the lens at your subject; that most of these cameras have light meters within them which either adjust or helps you adjust for the exposure and that available for these cameras are a tremendous variety of lens and accessories which allows the photographers more versatility.

For wildflower photography, my recommendation is to keep it simple. Carry equipment into the field which is light and compact. Select a lens which allows you to stay a comfortable distance from the flower and which will stop down preferably to f22 to give the greatest depth of field possible. Become very familiar with your equipment so that you operate it automatically. This leaves your thoughts free to concentrate your energy on recording the beauty of the wildflower.



MONOLOPIA



Both of the photos above were taken by Milt Stark. How fortunate he was to get to see a field of the *Monolopia*—once again no dates of the photos.



## BURROWING OWLS

By Mary Wilson



The photo on the left shows a parent and the owlets. They are only a few days old but beginning to show their true feathers on their wings. The photo on the right shows two owlets, one is taking a nap and the other is parallaxing or turning its head. Owls have binocular vision, their large eyes are fixed in their sockets so they must turn their entire heads to change views.



These owlets are sitting, relaxing and taking in the warm sun rays. The photo on the right has one owlet lying down for a nap, one is learning to preen its feathers, and the third is showing off its vocalizing skills—probably calling for a parent to come feed it.