FIELD OBSERVATION REPORT

By Mary Wilson
November 19, 2017

Poppy Reserve

Turkey mullein has gone to the ivory color stage, ragweed has finished for the season, there are a few sandasters with flowers and the long-stemmed buckwheat flowers have gone to the purple color. The rubber rabbitbrush is in bloom and also going to the seed stage. The tumble weed plants are green and have flowers but the temperature is getting colder at night and some are turning brown.

Rubber Rabbitbrush

Rubber Rabbitbrush flower with bee and blister beetle

Rubber Rabbitbrush going to seed

NEWS FROM THE PAST

The following article was applied to mat board. It 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 like the fact he penciled in any corrections on the article. Hope you enjoy the article as much as I did.

FLOWER OF MANY NAMES: FILAREE
Other names come from seeds seen at left

Milt Stark photo

Of wildflowers

Purple filaree

By MILT STARK
Filaree
Erodium cicutarium
Geraninum Family

(Also known as clocks, herron's bill, scissors plant, redstem filaree, storksbill, alfilaria, pinclover, pingrass and pinkets).

Driving west on a spring morning, one is often struck by the brilliant lavendar cast the unplowed fields take on. This is because of the filaree, a low growing, many branched plant which produces a great many tiny (little more than a half-inch across) five petaled, lavendar flowers. On hard ground, this plant has very little foliage, while producing an unbelievable number of flowers. On disturbed soil, this bush foliage tends to hide the blossoms, giving a dark green appearance.

This plant is thought to have been imported from the Mediteranean area by mission fathers in the late 1700's as a proven and valuable sheep forage. It adapted well to California because by 1844 John C. Fremont indicated that in the lower San Joaquin Valley this "covered the ground like a sward" (sward meaning skin, rind or hide).

The many common names are actually references to the seed pods which are like a pin or narrow bill. The word filaree is a corruption of the Spanish word "Alfilerilla" which is derived from the word afliler or pin. As the seeds ripen the "herons bill" seed pod breaks into five, spear-like, one-seeded parts, each with a hairy tail which forms a tight coil near the seed leaving an inch-long "hand" at right angles to the curl.

As a boy, I loved to wet these tails to watch the hands slowly uncurl (from whence came the name "clocks"). Actually, this process serves a very useful purpose in the propogation of these plants, and may account for the speed with they spread over a great portion of California. The seeds are spread by the wind, by hanging on to animal fur or by ants who store great numbers of these seeds in their holes. When moistened the seeds literally screw themselves into the ground which probably ensures a much higher germination note than most wild plants.

Filaree plant with flowers and seedpods

COYOTE VISITORS AT THE HABITATS

2017 Pups

BURROWING OWLS

Below are several photos of the same owl taken in about 15 minutes by the motion camera. There was definitely something on the other side of the camera causing concern, however, it looks like this owl was trying out different poses.