

FIELD OBSERVATION REPORT

By Mary Wilson

December 13, 2018

Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve



It is the off season for the wildflowers but the maintenance crew has been busy as you can see by the photo. They have put in a fence on the west side of the entrance road from the entrance sign up to the kiosk/parking lot area.

The weather has given us much needed rain and perhaps the start of the 2019 wildflower season. November 22 produced 0.11 inches of rain and on November 30 there was 0.45 inches. I went out to the reserve to see if the 0.56 inches of rain had produced any wildflower cotyledons. There was filaree that already had true leaves and I was surprised to find two poppy cots.

As of December 7/8th there is a total of 2.40 inches. The temperatures have ranged from 35 degrees at night to 62 degrees in the day. It takes about 10 days for poppy cotyledons to appear and hopefully there will be a good showing this year.

Arthur B. Ripley Desert Woodland State Park



The maintenance crew has put in Post #1 for the Nature Trail so visitors don't have to hunt for a post that wasn't there. After the rain of December 7/8th the Junipers and Joshua trees look clean and bright green. There was snow on the Tehachapi Mountains and a dusting of snow on the Portal Ridge mountain range – very pretty.

After a rain you can really see the berries of the female trees and they are about 2 cm, gray and some are starting to turn the dark purple color that they are becoming ripe.

LADY BUG

Coccinellidae

Ladybugs aren't really bugs at all. Instead, ladybugs belong to the order [Coleoptera](#), which includes all the beetles. They are found in fields, parks, and just about anywhere that has the presence of plants and flowers.

Ladybugs appear as half-spheres, tiny, spotted, round or oval-shaped domes. They have short legs and they taste and smell with their antennae. There are two sets of wings. The outer set is the hard shell for protection, and the inner set are what it uses to fly. Some ladybugs have no spots and others have up to 20 spots. During winter ladybugs hibernate together to stay warm. Their distinctive spots and attractive colors are meant to make them unappealing to predators. Ladybugs can secrete a fluid from joints in their legs which gives them a foul taste.

Ladybugs love to eat scale insects, whiteflies, mites, and aphids. As larvae, ladybugs eat pests by the hundreds. A hungry ladybug adult can devour 50 aphids per day, and estimates are that a ladybug can consume as many as 5,000 aphids over its lifetime.

The mating and courtship rituals of ladybugs are poorly understood but to attract a mating partner, ladybugs secrete pheromones and, once a suitable partner is found, the insects copulate for up to 2 hours. After mating the pair will go their separate ways and the female ladybug will lay hundreds of eggs at the same time. Female ladybugs can store a male's sperm for 2-3 months before laying eggs. The ladybug lifecycle begins as a batch of bright-yellow eggs are laid on leaves near food sources. They then go through a larva stage for 2 to 4 weeks. They will then eat as much as they can and the earliest arrivals may eat some of the eggs that have not yet hatched. Once they're well-fed, they'll begin to build a pupa, and after 5 to 7 days they emerge as adults. The adults don't usually develop their coloration until the second or third day after breaking out from the pupa.

Tiny yellow eggs are laid on leaves
(Eggs hatch in 3-7 days)



Larva stage
(2-4 weeks)



Pupa stage
(5-7 days)



Adult ladybug
(Life span is a few months)



The main predators of coccinellidae are usually birds, but they are also the prey of frogs, wasps, spiders, assassin bugs, parasitic wasps, ants, and dragonflies.

Our native ladybugs are welcome guests in gardens, backyards and farm fields because they eat insects like aphids. However, there is now a nonnative look-alike that is beginning to replace the native North American species and taking over territories once home to native beetles. This beetle is the Asian Multicolored Lady Beetle *Harmonia axyridisi*. This species of lady beetle is a native to China, Japan and eastern Russia. It is believed to have been introduced to North America in the late 1970s. This species is hardy and adapts to a variety of habitats and temperature ranges. They have been known to form clusters over winters and go into warm buildings (homes, offices, etc.) where they will emit a pungent odor which can create an unappealing smell.

A way to tell our ladybug from the Asian lady beetle is the letter “M” on its body.



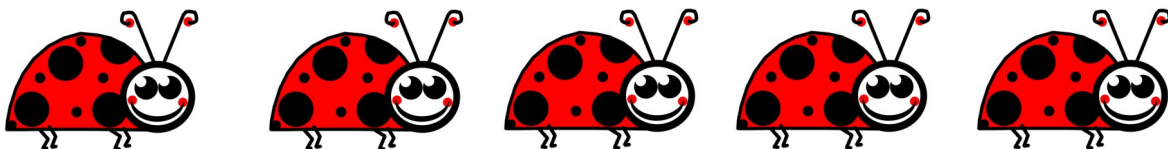
North American Ladybug



Asian Multicolored Lady Beetle

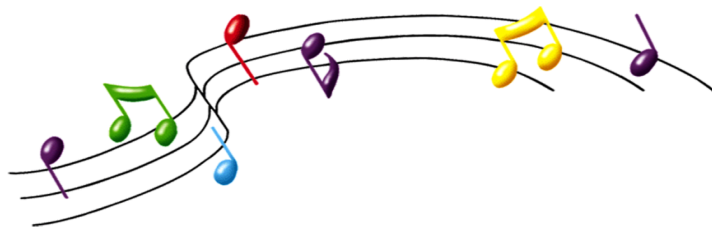
As a child I was told ladybugs brought you good luck. I loved to find them and try to catch them to hold them until they flew away. Even to this day when I see one I smile and feel lucky—perhaps just because I found one. For such a tiny beetle there are many folklore items associated with it. Below are some of those items.

- According to European folklore, ladybugs symbolize good luck. Many years ago aphids invaded farmers' grapevines. When the farmers prayed for help to the Virgin Mary, legend tells us that swarms of little red beetles appeared. They proceeded to eat the aphids and save the crops. The farmers named the beetles ladybugs in honor of Mary, Our Lady.
- Farmers believe that if many ladybugs are seen in springtime, crops will be abundant.
- Ladybugs are also thought to grant wishes and should one land on the hand, you will be married within the year.
- Counting the spots on a ladybug will tell you how many happy months you will have, how many children you will bear and also how much money you are about to come into.
- A common myth, totally unfounded, is that the number of spots on the insect's back indicates its age. In fact, the underlying pattern and coloration are determined by the species and genetics of the beetle, and develop as the insect matures.
- If a ladybug lands on your hand and flies away unassisted, you will receive good luck.
- Canadians say that if a ladybug lands on you, make a wish and when it flies away, the wish will come from that direction. This is when they sing the rhyme, Ladybug, Ladybug, Fly away home...
- Ladybugs are generally symbolic of positivity, good luck, and flourishing love.
- Ladybugs have been associated with luck and love. Usually if one sees one, it brings to mind having good luck that day or perhaps that year. Ladybugs also represent love in its purest form. If you see one on your windowsill, it might mean that a lover is dreaming of you and hoping that you're dreaming of him/her. If you find one on your door, a lover will be knocking soon.

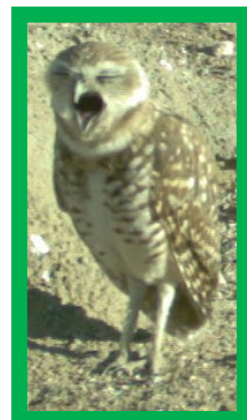
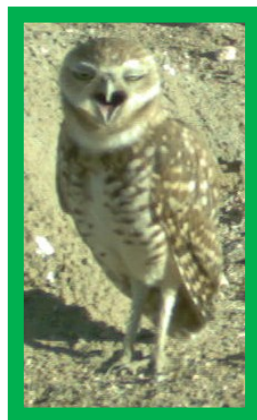
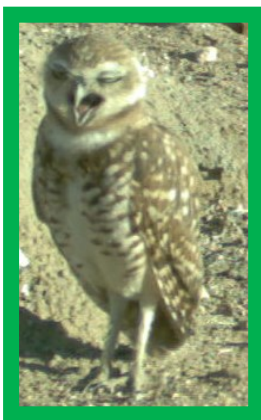




We wish you a Merry Christmas



and a



Happy

New

Year!