

The Signs of May
at the
Community Nature Center
of Prescott



Two-tailed Swallowtail

1980 Williamson Valley Road
Prescott. AZ

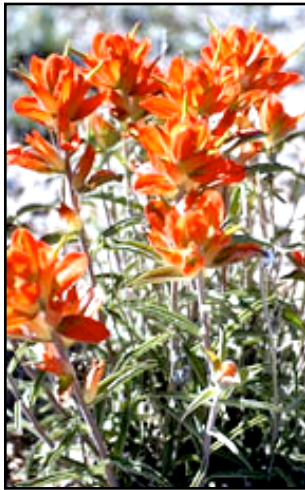
Welcome to the Community Nature Center!

We hope you'll enjoy observing & contemplating the many wonders of this natural area.

To help us preserve this special place, **please stay on the trails & leave plants and animals undisturbed.** Remember, footprints made on the fragile grassland, woodlands & trailside do not heal quickly in our dry Highlands! **Also please keep dogs leashed and pick up pet waste.**

New guides are available each month; we invite you to return again!

HAVE YOU SEEN ...



... **the brilliant orange bracts of the Indian Paintbrush?** It is the bract, a modified leaf, which is colored red. This grows beneath and around each inconspicuous flower. The color catches attention, both ours, and that of potential a pollinator, particularly the hummingbird. A member of the snapdragon family, the Indian Paintbrush is a perennial, that is, a plant that lives for many growing seasons. This plant is partially parasitic, obtaining much of its nutrition and water from the roots of other species, including the grama grass. Because of this association, the Indian Paintbrush is difficult to transplant or to establish from seed.

Colorful Bracts

... **Lizards doing pushups?** These movements are not part of the lizard's daily exercise routine; they are a territorial display. Watch carefully, you will see many different species of lizards in the Nature Center, including the "horny toad," the Greater Short Horned Lizard. How many different species of lizards can you find? It is fun to watch lizards carefully, but please **do not pick them up.** They are easily damaged.



Horned Lizard



Oak Flowers

... the new, soft, pinkish leaves at the tips of the branches of the oaks? Throughout the Highlands region, oaks can be seen shedding their old leaves at this time of year. Although most of our oak species remain evergreen through the winter, once their flowers begin to form, the leaves are shed, facilitating wind pollination.

Look for the pendulous catkins of the male flowers and the tiny petal-less female flowers that form toward the ends of the branches. It is from these female flowers, once pollinated, that the tiny acorns will begin to form.



Acorns



Candles

... the new candles and small developing cones at the top of the pinyon pine? Pinyons are monoecious (separate male and female reproductive parts occur on the same tree). The female cones will be fertilized by wind-borne pollen during the first year, but it is usually not until the second year that a mature cone and seeds develop to produce future generations of trees. A variety of animals eat the delicious seeds: jays, acorn woodpeckers, ravens, chipmunks, squirrels, coyotes, foxes & humans!

Notice that throughout the Nature Center we have lost many pinyons. The drier, warming climate stresses trees and makes them more susceptible to insects like the pinyon needle scale. These tiny black insects can be found on most needles of pinyons in the Prescott area.



***Two-tailed Swallowtail adult
& Larva***

... insect life fluttering around us?

Of all the insects, it seems the metamorphosis of **butterflies and moths** is the best known. With their nectar-sipping, retractable, “soda straw” mouthparts, they look carefree as they dance from flower to flower. However, once they are ready to lay eggs, adult females may have to fly long distances to find an appropriate plant.



Why this long search? Because adults have a different food source than larvae, and the larval food source is typically very plant species specific. Adults primarily eat nectar; the voracious young caterpillars use strong chewing mouthparts to consume leaves. This is actually a fine adaptation and can have importance for survival; using different foods diminishes the chance of overconsumption of one source.



For more information on the City of Prescott’s Open Space and trails:
<http://cityofprescott.net/services/parks/parks>.

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Updated in May 2013 from original **Signs of the Month** written in 1993 by Nichole Trushell for the Community Nature Center of Prescott. Photos with permission, or by Nichole Trushell or Steve Morgan.