

**The Signs of June**  
*at the*  
Community Nature Center  
of Prescott



*Whipple Cholla in Bloom*

1980 Williamson Valley Road  
Prescott, AZ

## Welcome to the Community Nature Center!

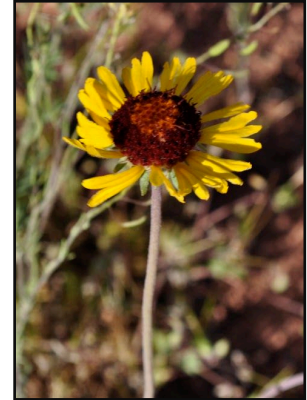
We hope you'll enjoy observing & contemplating the many wonders of this natural area.

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 after your pet.**

Guides are available for each month; we invite you to return again!

### HAVE YOU SEEN ...

...the **Hopi blanket flower**? You will find these colorful wildflowers with their yellow rays and rounded orange centers scattered throughout the "grassland" areas of the Nature Center. Like other members of the sunflower family, the Hopi Blanket Flower is actually a composite of many tiny flowers. Each yellow ray is an individual flower, as is each tiny orange circle in the central disk. When the rays drop and seeds have formed, an attractive rounded button-top remains.



*Hopi Blanket Flower*



*Bushtit*

...the **bushtits**? These very small (4.5" long) grey birds are common in the central Arizona Highlands and can be found in busy flocks that move through our shrubby areas and trees in search of aphids and other insects to glean from the branches. The small size, short bill, round body and long tail make them very distinctive, even though the grey-brown coloration is subtle. Listen for their light, bell-like calling. If you see a group, you can quietly approach them. They are fun to watch as they call and work together here in the Nature Center.

...the fledglings of **Western Scrub Jay, Spotted Towhee**, and other young birds clambering to be fed by their parents? Watch for these young, although at this stage, they are probably as large as their parents!



*Spotted Towhee*

## HAVE YOU SEEN ...



***Pancake Prickly Pear flower***

... the showy yellow, orange, pink or reddish **flowers of cacti**? Inside you will typically find several kinds of insects taking advantage of large quantities of pollen: honeybees, smaller native bees, and several different species of beetles. Also watch for **true bugs** with piercing-sucking mouthparts working on pads and outsides of the flowers. On some, nectaries (nectar producing structures) on the *outside* of flowers attract ants whose presence may dissuade robbing insects such as beetles. These robbers consume the pollen, and rarely serve as effective pollinators.

...the red, sticky **fruits of the Lemonade Berry**? Small mammals and birds in the Nature Center eat these sour fruit. Early human residents soaked them to make a sour lemonade-like drink.

The Lemonade Berry (also known as **Three-Leaf Sumac & Skunk Bush**) is in the cashew family and is closely related to poison ivy; its leaves can cause mild skin irritation in susceptible people.



***Three-leaf Sumac with fruit***



***Plateau Striped Whiptail***

...**Plateau Striped Whiptail Lizards**? You can often hear them before you see them, rummaging in leaves for insects. Six to seven stripes on a brown background are characteristic; throat, belly and underside are light, with a bluish cast. Tails in young lizards are bright blue. Whiptails prey on insect larvae & adults and other arthropods. A favorite food is termites.

These lizards are all female. Surprising! The species is believed to be of hybrid origin. They reproduce from unfertilized eggs making new lizards genetically identical to the parent.

**HAVE YOU SEEN ... Insects and Spiders?** Walking along the trail you will need to look closely to find **Arthropods**, animals with exoskeletons, segmented bodies, & jointed legs such as insects, spiders, and centipedes. But there are many, since these are the most numerous animals on earth! Once you really watch them, you will be fascinated by their abilities and their odd, striking beauty.

Butterflies are adored; spiders typically have a bad reputation. The reality is there are **only two spiders in Arizona that are of any danger to humans:** the

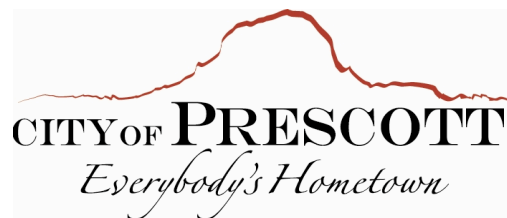


**Grass Spider on its funnel web.**  
[www.spiders.us](http://www.spiders.us)

Black Widow, and the UNCOMMON and timid AZ Brown Recluse. Along the trail you will find grass spiders and orb weavers; in the fall you may be lucky enough to see a tarantula. All of these are harmless, and truly beneficial. Why beneficial? They are insect control.

**Grass spiders** are common, harmless, and create webs on the ground. Like all members of the *funnel weaver family*, they spin dense, non-sticky, sheet-like webs with a funnel-shaped retreat where the spider lives and hides. As hunters, they are opportunists, eating insects or other spiders that cross their web. These webs are especially beautiful if you catch one with morning dew, or after a rain.

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



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This guide was updated in June 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.