

The Signs of April
at the
Community Nature Center of Prescott



Blue Dicks

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

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 & pick up after your pet.**

HAVE YOU SEEN ...



Blue Dicks

... **the Blue Dicks?** These small but showy flowers can be found scattered among native grasses of the Nature Center.

Although delicate, their purple flowers and long stems make them fairly easy to find. These plants are perennials and grow from an underground corm; they reproduce from these corms or from seed (which takes a very long time). Plants thrive in open disturbed environments, and are a common post-fire species.

Blue Dicks occur over a wide range of the southwest and inhabit a wide variety of plant communities including grasslands, chaparral, coniferous forests, and juniper woodlands. It is likely pollinated by butterflies and possibly hummingbirds.

Native Americans in the Southwest gathered corms; they were an important source of starch in their diet. Gathering sites were visited each year, and plants were carefully tended to assure they would continue to thrive. Corms are also eaten by a variety of mammals such as mule deer, rabbits, black bears and pocket gophers. This is a **protected plant** in Arizona; it is illegal to collect them for any reason.



... or HEARD the Gambel's Quail?

Gambel's Quail can walk surprisingly fast through shrubs. Explosive flight of groups has an effective startle factor against predation.

In the spring, Gambel's Quail pair off from larger coveys. Adults are typically monogamous. The female lays numerous eggs in a simple scrape concealed in vegetation, often at the base of a rock or tree. The precocious chicks, tiny replicas of their parents, leave the nest with their parents within hours of hatching and voraciously eat insects.

Gambel's Quail

... cool season **Mutton Grass**? This attractive perennial bunch grass produces flowers in narrow panicles. The plant is dioecious -- male and female flowers grow on separate plants. Yes, grasses have flowers. Flowers are tiny not showy for attracting insects, they are wind pollinated.



**Lobeleaf
Groundsel**

Most of our perennial grasses are “**warm season**”; their new growth responds strongly to summer’s warmth and rain. Spring in the Highlands is not as vibrant! The bright green grasses you see on the site are annual, non-native, **invasive** Bromes.



Mutton Grass

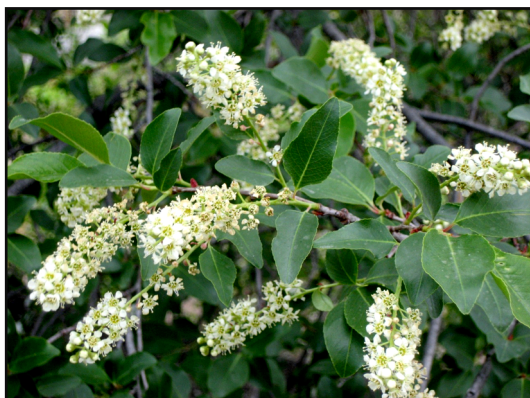
Later in the month of April and into May, you will find **Lobeleaf Groundsel** in bloom. Look closely at the flower; this plant is a member of the Sunflower family. The flower is a “head”, a **composite** of many tiny flowers. This species of groundsel blooms in the spring, different species with similar flowers bloom in summer in response to the monsoon rains.

HAVE YOU SEEN ...

... the glossy green leaves and delicate clusters (racemes) of white flowers of the chokecherry that is growing by the cabin?

The chokecherry is a member of the rose family. Typical of this family, flowers are fragrant, have five petals and numerous stamens.

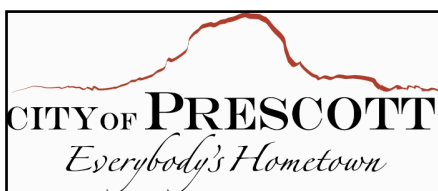
Chokecherries are an excellent nectar source for butterflies, and are a



Chokecherry Racemes

caterpillar food (host plant) for Two-tailed Swallowtails.

Toward fall, the purplish-black chokecherries that develop from fertilized flowers will ripen. Although many birds here in the Highlands of central Arizona find these fruits delicious, they are sour to human taste. Their pits, like their relatives, peaches, plums and almonds, contain enough cyanogenic glycosides to be poisonous if humans or our pets chew them. Birds, however, just pass them through.



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

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