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WHAT'S BLOOMING AT THE TALLGRASS PRAIRIE?

—Van Vives

The month of April has seen the awakening of many wildflowers. The first flowers seen in the first part of April were the smaller flowers, like Spring Beauties, Bluets, False Garlic, and Yellow Star Grass. Then toward midmonth the larger flowers started blooming, like the Cream False Indigo, Fringed Puccoon, Prairie Iris, Verbena, and Wild Hyacinth. Let's look at some of these flowers and others now blooming.



Jack-in-the-pulpit, Arisaema triphyllum, by Van Vives

Jack-In-The-Pulpit, *Arisaema triphyllum*: This flower is growing along the creek path and can be seen on both sides of the concrete bench. The picture shown does not have the brownish purple

stripes usually seen. Each leaf is divided into three leaflets, which are lance-shaped and up to seven inches long. The Chippewas used the bulb to treat sore eyes. The Pawnees made a powder from the bulb and applied it to the head for headache. It was used also for treatment of snakebite, ringworm, stomach gas, rheumatism, and asthma. The raw bulb is poisonous, but it can be boiled and eaten as food. A tea from the roots was used to treat colds, fever, snakebites, diarrhea, lung ailments, and constipation.



New Jersey Tea, Ceanothus americanus, by Van Vives

New Jersey Tea, *Ceanothus americanus*: There is a large patch of this flower about a mile from the entrance, on the left side of the road. A

slight hill near the road obscures its presence and one has to get out of the car to view it. The flower is white, with some pink and some red in the stems. It is a small shrub that grows up to three feet tall. The leaves are alternate and up to four inches long and two and a half inches wide. The leaves are used to make tea. Native Americans showed the colonists how to make the tea as a substitute for black tea during the American Revolution on the East Coast. The leaves are eaten by white-tailed deer and the fruit by wild turkeys.



White Wind Flower, Anemone caroliniana, by Van Vives

White Wind Flower, *Anemone caroliniana*: This is a member of the Buttercup Family. It grows up to eight inches tall and has long-stalked, deeply cut, basal leaves. The stems are hairy and each stem carries one flower. They grow where the grasses are short or sparse, thus we see them along the walking trail.

Whitlow Grass, *Draba brachycarpa*: This plant is not a grass, as the name infers. It grows up to ten inches tall and the stems are hairy. The leaves are mostly at the base of the plant.



Whitlow Grass, Draba brachycarpa, by Van Vives

Prairie Ragwort, *Senecio plattensis*: The plants are branched only at the tops and it seldom grows over one and a half feet tall. Leaves are oval or oblong and toothed. It is considered poisonous. It was used by Native Americans for treatment of kidney stones and lung problems. It was also used to increase perspiration.

Cream Wild Indigo, *Baptisia bracteata*: This plant has been prominent on the areas where the grass was burned this spring. The bushlike plant has hairy stems and grows up to two feet tall. The flower spikes are heavy and often droop or lie on

the ground. Native Americans used the plant to treat fever and cuts. The Pawnees pulverized the seeds and mixed it with buffalo fat to apply to the stomach for colic. The dried seed pods were used as rattles.



Prairie Ragwort, Senecio plattensis, by Van Vives



Common Vetch, Vicia sativa, by Van Vives

Common Vetch, *Vicia sativa*: The stems are weak and the plant spreads or climbs. The leaves have eight to fourteen leaflets and a terminal branching tendril. Flowers are bluish-purple and about an inch long. It is a member of the Bean Family.

Prairie Iris, *Nemastylis geminiflora*: This plant is also known as the Celestial Lily. The lavender blue flowers are one to two inches wide and open in the late morning and close in the early afternoon.



Cream Wild Indigo, Baptisia bracteata, by Van Vives

Fringed Puccoon, *Lithospermum incisum*: This flower was very evident where the prairie has been burned this spring. The plants are hairy and grow up to fifteen inches tall. The yellow flowers grow in clusters at the end of the stems. The flower petals are ruffled on the edges. The early flowers are often sterile and the later blooms are self-

pollinating. “Puccoon” is an Indian name for this plant.



Prairie Iris, Nemastylis geminiflora, by Van Vives



Fringed Puccoon, Lithospermum incisum, by Van Vives

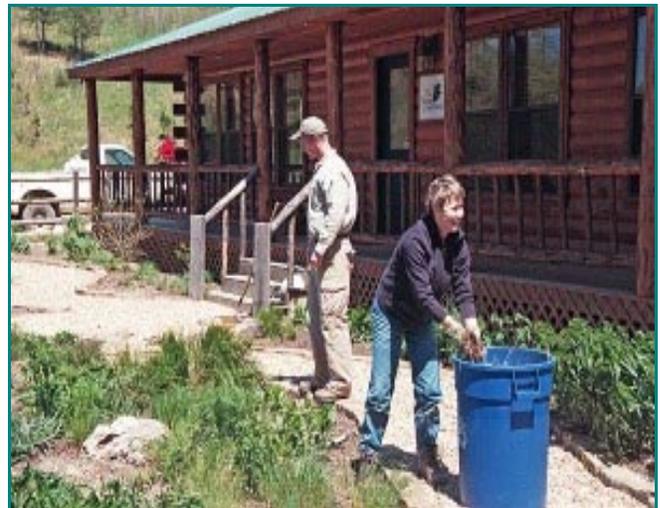
The Blue Wild Indigo is starting to bloom. The plant that looks like asparagus that is coming up in the tub at the Gift Shop is the White Wild

Indigo. The month of May should be a great month for the wild flowers.

NICKEL PRESERVE SPRING WORKDAY

—George Pierson

Saturday, April 23rd was the spring work day at the Nickel Preserve. About fifteen volunteers spent a beautiful day working on a variety of projects. One team took out about a half-mile of old barbed wire fence and removed wire cages from about twenty-five bradford pears. The pears are not native to the area and will be removed later. Another group picked up trash on the Pumpkin Flats road and at Bathtub Rocks. The rest of us spent the day weeding and cleaning up the wild flower gardens at the headquarters building. Once the work was done, several of us spent a couple of hours birding and identifying spring wild flowers. Watch the Oklahoma Chapter calendar on the web for future Nickel events.



Nickel Preserve Spring Workday, by George Pierson

SEE THE ELK AT THE NICKEL PRESERVE

—George Pierson

Twenty elk were released at the Nickel Preserve in early April. They have now spread out over the preserve. Two seem to like Pumpkin Hollow, eight have taken up residence at the large pond on Pumpkin Flats and the rest are in the north east section of the preserve. The easiest to observe are the eight at the pond on Pumpkin Flats. They can normally be seen near the Pumpkin Flats road.



Elk at Pumpkin Flats Pond, by George Pierson

NICKEL PRESERVE FLORA

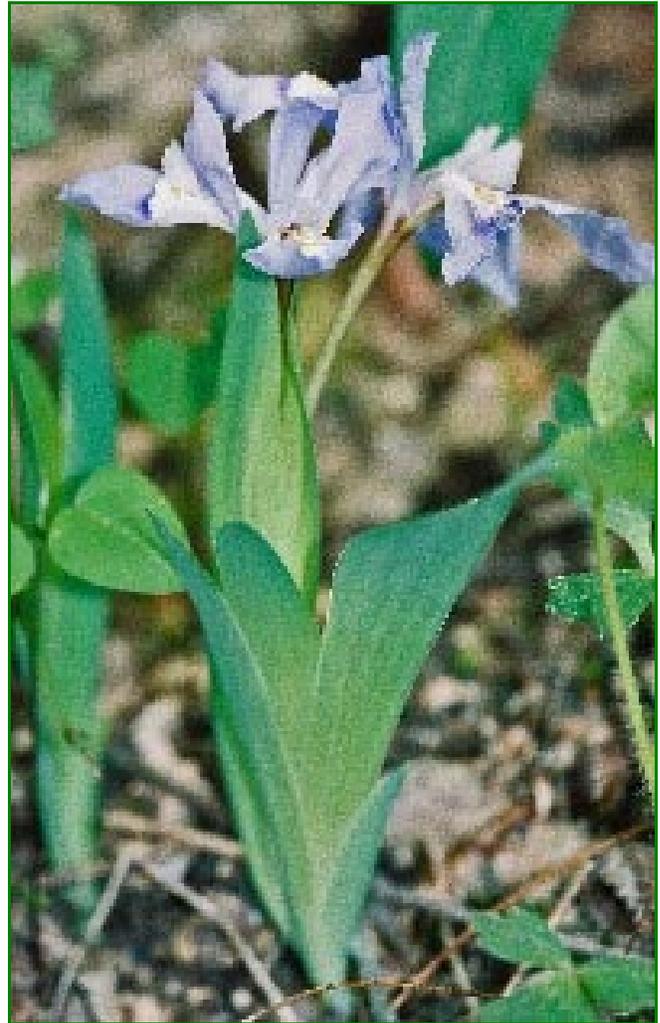
Each month George Pierson provides us with a few pictures of blooming plants at the Nickel Preserve. His selections are interspersed through the newsletter.

BUTTERFLIES

—John Fisher

I've looked for the 'Olive' Juniper Hairstreak

over the last year or so on the south end of the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve without any luck.



Dwarf Crested Iris, by George Pierson

On April 16th I checked out the Eastern Red Cedars growing along Pond Creek on the northeast part of the preserve. After walking a mile or so along and up & down the ridge I found what I had been looking for. This is the first time this little beauty has been sighted on the Preserve

since Walter Gerard & Nora Jones found it near the antenna farm up the hill from the Visitors Center. Since it's rarely found far from its larval host, the Eastern Red Cedar, they disappeared from that area after a controlled burn cleared out the cedars from that location. There are still plenty of scattered Eastern Red Cedars on the Preserve so they are likely to be found in other places.



Cream Wild Indigo, by George Pierson

We did find the Jack's Silvery Blue, *Glaucopsyche lygdamus jacki*, at the Four Canyon Preserve. They wouldn't sit still long enough for a photo when we were there in mid-April. Hopefully I'll get a good shot next week and maybe even add a few more species to the preserve list.

I'll be making a weekly survey of the butterflies at the J.T. Nickel Preserve this summer. By alternating between Sawmill & Dog and Tulley

& Cedar Hollows we should be able to get a better sense of what is on the preserve and when it flies.



*Appalachian Silvery Blue,
Glaucopsyche lygdamus nittanyensis,
J.T. Nickel Preserve Apr 3, 2005, by John Fisher*



*Golden Banded-Skipper, Autochton cellus
J.T. Nickel Preserve, May 9, 2005, by John Fisher*

On April 27th, during the first of these surveys, John Nelson & I found a Henry's Elfin in Tulley Hollow which brings the preserve species count to ninety-two.



mating Little Wood Satyrs, Megisto cymela
J.T. Nickel Preserve, May 11, 2005, by John Fisher

A Golden Banded-Skipper was a special treat since neither one of us has seen that many of these beautiful creatures. The following Monday while checking out the trail in Sawmill Hollow I found eleven more and a couple of days after that George Pierson and I spotted nineteen. With a little luck a few might still be around during the butterfly count next month.



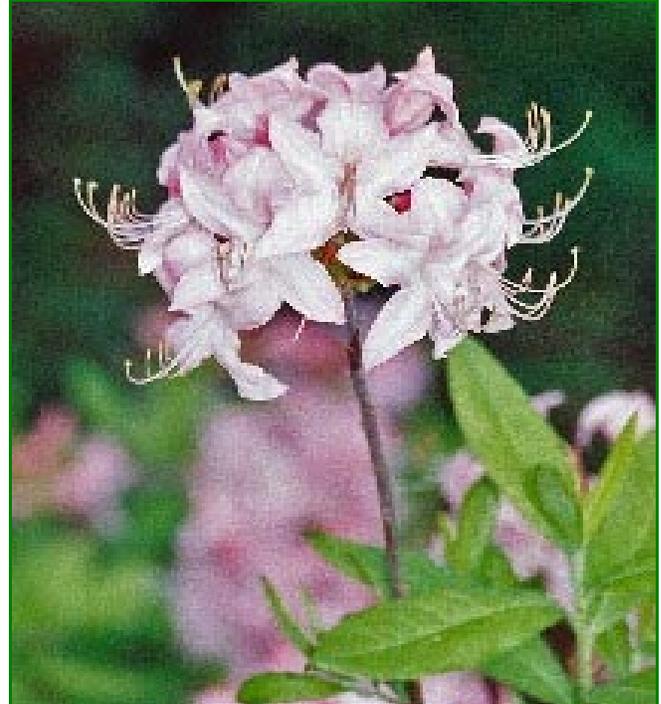
Henry's Elfin, Callophrys henrici
Keystone Ancient Forest Preserve,
Apr 2, 2005, by John Fisher



Larkspur, by George Pierson



Wild White Indigo, by George Pierson



Wild Azalea, by George Pierson

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