

POLECAT GULCH WILDFLOWER WALK

late March through April

Description: east segment Polecat Loop Trail from Cartwright Road trailhead to southern dogleg. Flowering plants are listed in likely order of occurrence from trailhead; some might not yet be in bloom, or present during a particular year. Difficulty: 3 miles roundtrip (out and back; slightly longer loop option available with few additional flowers), minor elevation gain. **Avoid when muddy!** * designates native plants

BELLY FLOWERS

Spring whitlow-grass (*Draba verna*) – tiny white flowers with notched petals

Jagged chickweed (*Holosteum umbellata*) – inconspicuous non-native

***Slender phlox** (*Microsteris gracilis* var. *humilior*)

***Cross-seed or slender poppercorn-flower** (*Plagiobothrys tenellus*)

***Miner's lettuce** (probably both *Claytonia*/*Montia perfoliata* [narrow basal leaves] and *C. rubra* [diamond-shaped basal leaves])

***Cleavers, bedstraw, stickywilly, goose-grass** (*Galium aparine*)

Desert alyssum (*Alyssum desertorum*) and/or **pale alyssum** (*Alyssum alyssoides*) – widespread non-natives, difficult to tell apart; also called madwort

***Sand fringe-pod** (*Thysanocarpus curvipes*)

***Watson's cryptantha** (*Cryptantha watsonii*), and possibly weakstem cryptantha (*C. flaccida*) and/or other *Cryptantha* spp., most difficult to distinguish

***Tansymustard** (*Descurainia* sp.) – native species difficult to distinguish, taxonomy in flux

***Blue-eyed Mary** (*Collinsia parviflora*)

***Longhorn plectritis** (*Plectritis macrocera*)

***Threadleaf phacelia** (*Phacelia linearis*)

***Fiddleneck** (*Amsinckia* spp.) – species difficult to distinguish

***Sinuate or rosy gilia** (*Gilia sinuata*)

***Whitestem blazingstar** (*Mentzelia albicaulis*)

***Annual or littlebells polemonium** (*Polemonium micranthum*)

***Idaho, pepperpod, or scalepod** (*Idaho scapigera*) – “perhaps the most unique and appealing of those members of the mustard family endemic to western North America” (Intermtn FI)

OTHER WILDFLOWERS IN BLOOM

***Woolly-pod milkvetch** (*Astragalus purshii* var. *glareosus*)

***Bulbous or early woodlandstar/prairie-star** (*Lithophragma glabrum*, formerly *L. bulbiferum*)

***Narrowleaf or Great Basin biscuitroot** (*Lomatium simplex*, previously included in *L. triternatum* as ssp. *platycarpum*, nine-leaf biscuitroot)

***Sagebrush buttercup** (*Ranunculus glaberrimus*) – can begin blooming in February

***Foothill or peak saxifrage** (*Micranthes/Saxifraga nidifica*)

***Pricklyleaf phlox** (*Phlox aculeata*) – intergrading with more diffuse longleaf phlox (*Phlox longifolia*) in Boise foothills

***Dwarf or low pussytoes** (*Antennaria dimorpha*)

Stork- or cranesbill, filaree (*Erodium cicutarium*) – non-native

***Aase's onion** (*Allium aaseae*) – rare regional endemic, locally abundant on this trail

***Larkspur** (*Delphinium* sp.) – species difficult to distinguish; some local plants don't fit existing species descriptions very well

***Hairy wildcabbage** (*Caulanthus pilosus*) – uncommon in Boise foothills

***Arrowleaf balsamroot** (*Balsamorhiza sagittata*)

SHRUBS (not in bloom)

- ***Rubber rabbitbrush** (*Ericameria* [formerly *Chrysothamnus*] *nauseosa*) -- var. *hololeuca* is the more common larger variety; the smaller, more spindly var. *oreophila* is mostly on plateaus
- ***Big sagebrush** (*Artemisia tridentata*) – most plants are ssp. *tridentata*, with some sporadic ssp. *vaseyana* (shorter plants with broader leaves, possibly planted)
- ***Bitterbrush, Antelope brush** (*Purshia tridentata*)
- [***Netleaf hackberry** (*Celtis reticulata*) – visible on opposite slope across Cartwright Road]

PRIMARY BUNCHGRASSES (mostly not in bloom, but evident)

- ***Threeawn grass** (*Aristida purpurea* var. *longiseta*)
- Bulbous bluegrass** (*Poa bulbosa*) – weedy non-native
- ***Squirreltail grass** (*Elymus elymoides*, formerly *Sitanion hystrix*)
- ***Sandberg bluegrass** (*Poa secunda*)
- ***Bluebunch wheatgrass** (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*, alternatively in *Agropyron* or *Elymus*) – both native-to-site and planted races from other sites probably present

SIGNIFICANT NOXIOUS WEEDS (not in bloom, but evident)

- Rush skeletonweed** (*Chondrilla juncea*)
- Medusahead grass** (*Taeniatherum/Elymus caput-medusae*)
- Cheatgrass** (*Bromus tectorum*) -- other annual *Bromus* also present
- St. Johnswort, Klamathweed** (*Hypericum perforatum*)

compiled by Barbara Ertter, 14 April 2018
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