

Field Note

May 3rd – 7th



By Jeff Clarke



Beaver Feast: The tree shown in clips of beaver gnawing finally fell. Beavers have gnawed at this massive cottonwood since before we first saw it. I thought they would never get through it...they may have had similar thoughts too. On Monday evening Mother Nature came to their rescue and blew the weakened tree to the ground. The colossal fall took three mature aspens with it.



The magnificent larkspur has been on display for the past few weeks. Look, but don't consume, for they are they are known to kill more cattle than any other western genus. Maybe this wicked flower is the culprit for some of the numerous bovine skeletons on the ranch.



Monday's rains storms produced a few isolated pockets of morels in the riparian cottonwood stands. They blend in with last years leaves and decaying woody debris. Some hard hunting combined with good fortune produced 30 mushrooms this week. They sure are tasty.



Our region has been slammed with rain storms for the past few weeks...Somehow, most of the precip. has evaded the ranch. We watch it poor down on all sides of us. Vegetation study plots and the planted trees will continue to receive supplemental water until the rain comes.



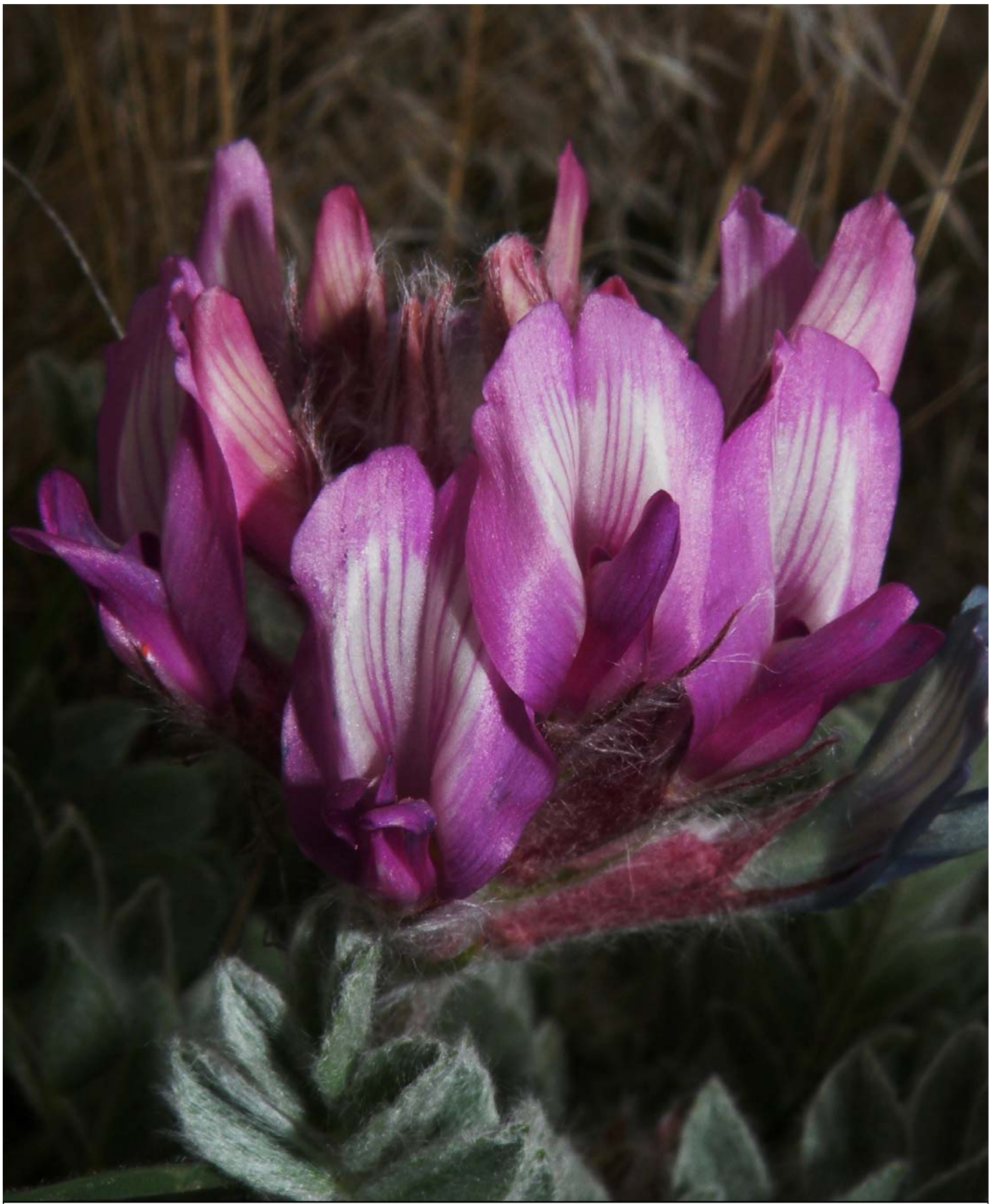
We have several variations of violets of the ranch. All the parts on all the violets are edible. They are plentiful, therefore, I don't hesitate to grab a handful to munch on while I work.



I've watched this Northern Harrier make several swoops over the ground squirrel colony near the corral. It flies a few feet off the ground and makes sudden stops to hover (photo). As the bird approaches, the squirrels sound their alarm...“pint, pint pint,” and they all dart for cover.



The windstorms threw several robin eggs from their nests. I observed at least ten throughout the week. Most were unbroken. They should be a tasty snack for a lucky non-human passerby.



Silvery Lupine popped this week. When they are young, their banner petal (narrow upright) has a white spot that lures pollinators, usually bees. As they age, the white fades. Bees skip these low-reward flowers.



This goose stood like a statue atop a broken cottonwood. The tree's typical hollowed center should make for a safe nest location. Once hatched, the goslings will take a leap of faith from 30 feet and head for water. We've already seen goslings in a slew adjacent to the ranch.

Stink Bug
(*Chlorochroa granulosa*)



Stink Bugs, have a gland in their thorax that produces a foul smelling liquid. This deters predators. *Chlorochroa granulosa* is the most common species I've observed.



The large mound of dirt and claw marks around this ground squirrel hole show signs of a frustrated badger. Their large paws and nearly 2 inch claws can excavate a hole in a hurry.



Serviceberries are the first bushes to bloom. Soon they will boast berries that will feed many.