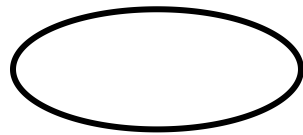




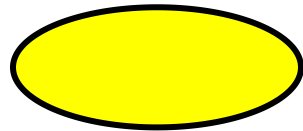
Snake River Birds of Prey  
National Conservation Area  
Wildflower Field Guide

## Introduction

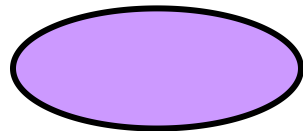
This guide is an introduction to the wildflowers of the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA), and includes common plants and one rare species. Although this guide's primary focus is plant species within the NCA, this guide is also useful throughout the desert and foothill region of Southwestern Idaho as it features common plants found over a large range. The guide is organized by flower color, with white flowers appearing first, yellow second and purple and blue flowers third. Other flowers that are not white, yellow or purple are at the end of the guide. It is estimated that the Snake River Birds of Prey NCA has over 400 plant species, many of the more common and conspicuous species are presented here.



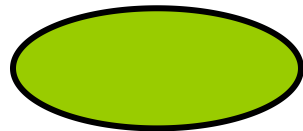
: White Flowers



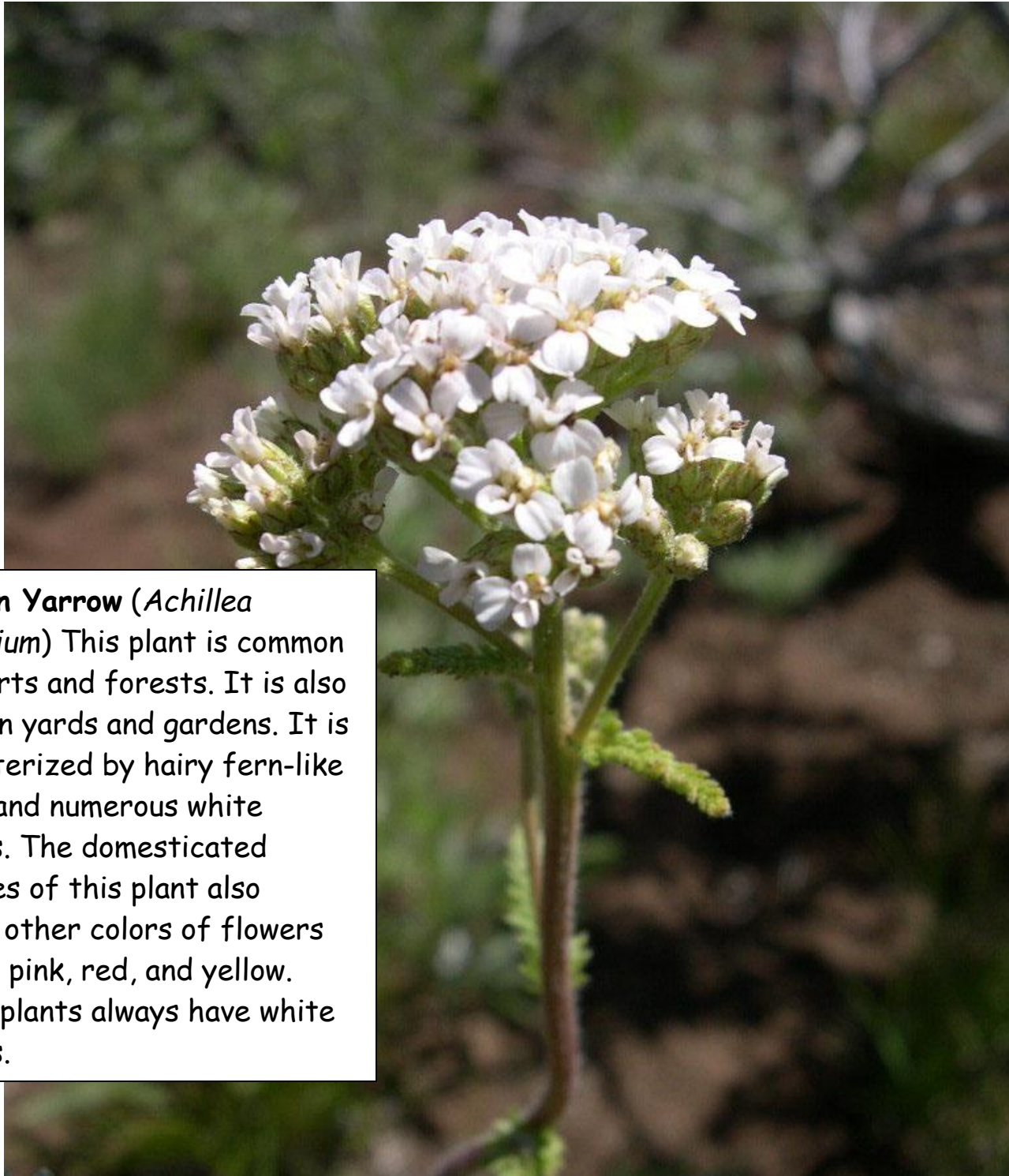
: Yellow Flowers



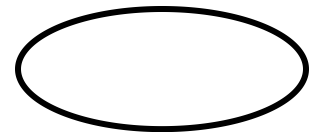
: Purple and Blue Flowers

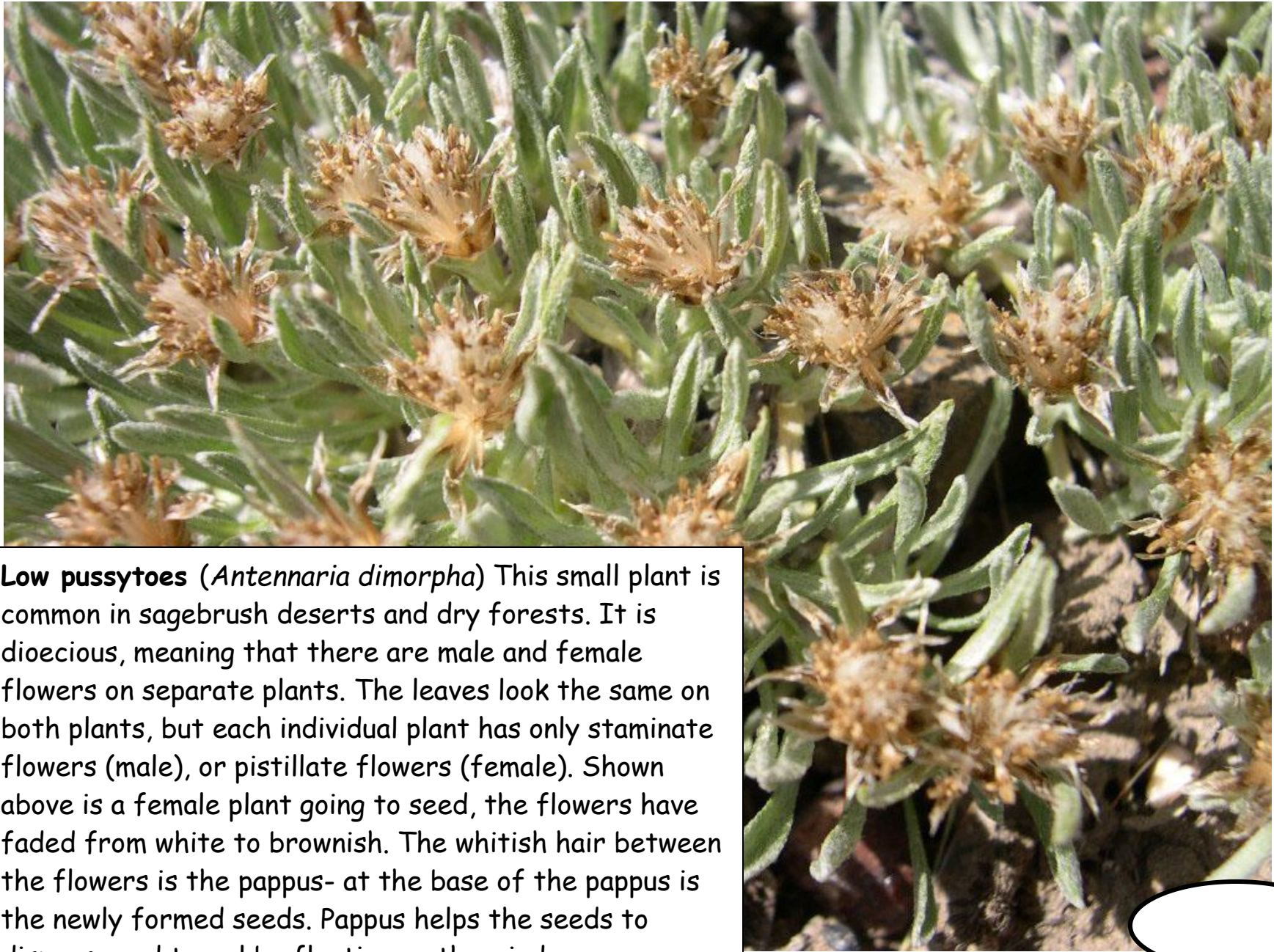


: Other colors of flowers



**Common Yarrow** (*Achillea millefolium*) This plant is common in deserts and forests. It is also grown in yards and gardens. It is characterized by hairy fern-like leaves and numerous white flowers. The domesticated varieties of this plant also include other colors of flowers such as pink, red, and yellow. Native plants always have white flowers.





**Low pussytoes** (*Antennaria dimorpha*) This small plant is common in sagebrush deserts and dry forests. It is dioecious, meaning that there are male and female flowers on separate plants. The leaves look the same on both plants, but each individual plant has only staminate flowers (male), or pistillate flowers (female). Shown above is a female plant going to seed, the flowers have faded from white to brownish. The whitish hair between the flowers is the pappus- at the base of the pappus is the newly formed seeds. Pappus helps the seeds to disperse and travel by floating on the wind.



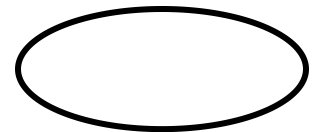
**Bruneau mariposa lily**  
(*Calochortus*  
*bruneaunis*) There are  
about 65 species of  
mariposa lilies, all of  
which are native to  
western North America  
and Central America.  
This species of  
mariposa lily was first  
described in 1912 from  
plants found on the  
East Fork of the  
Bruneau River.  
Although it is called  
the Bruneau mariposa  
lily, it ranges from  
eastern California  
through Nevada to  
southern Idaho and  
southwest Montana. It  
can be found on dry  
plains and foothills.





**Douglas' dustymaiden**

(*Chaenactis douglasii*) This plant is common throughout arid western North America. It is mainly found on sandy to gravelly slopes. This plant can either be annual or biennial depending on environmental conditions and the genetics of the plant.





**Greygreen thistle**

(*Cirsium canovirens*)

Although this thistle looks like a weed, it is actually native. One of the few white flowered thistles, it can be distinguished by the color of its flower and white ribbed flower bracts. The seeds of thistles are a good food source for wildlife. The plant also benefits from wildlife which help to disperse the seeds.



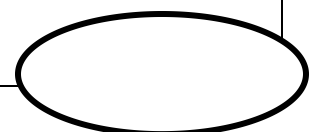
**Slickspot peppergrass**  
(*Lepidium papilliferum*)

This is the rarest plant species that grows within the Snake River Birds of Prey NCA, and only occurs in southwestern Idaho. Populations of this plant have been declining; the rate of population loss is the highest of any plant in the state of Idaho.

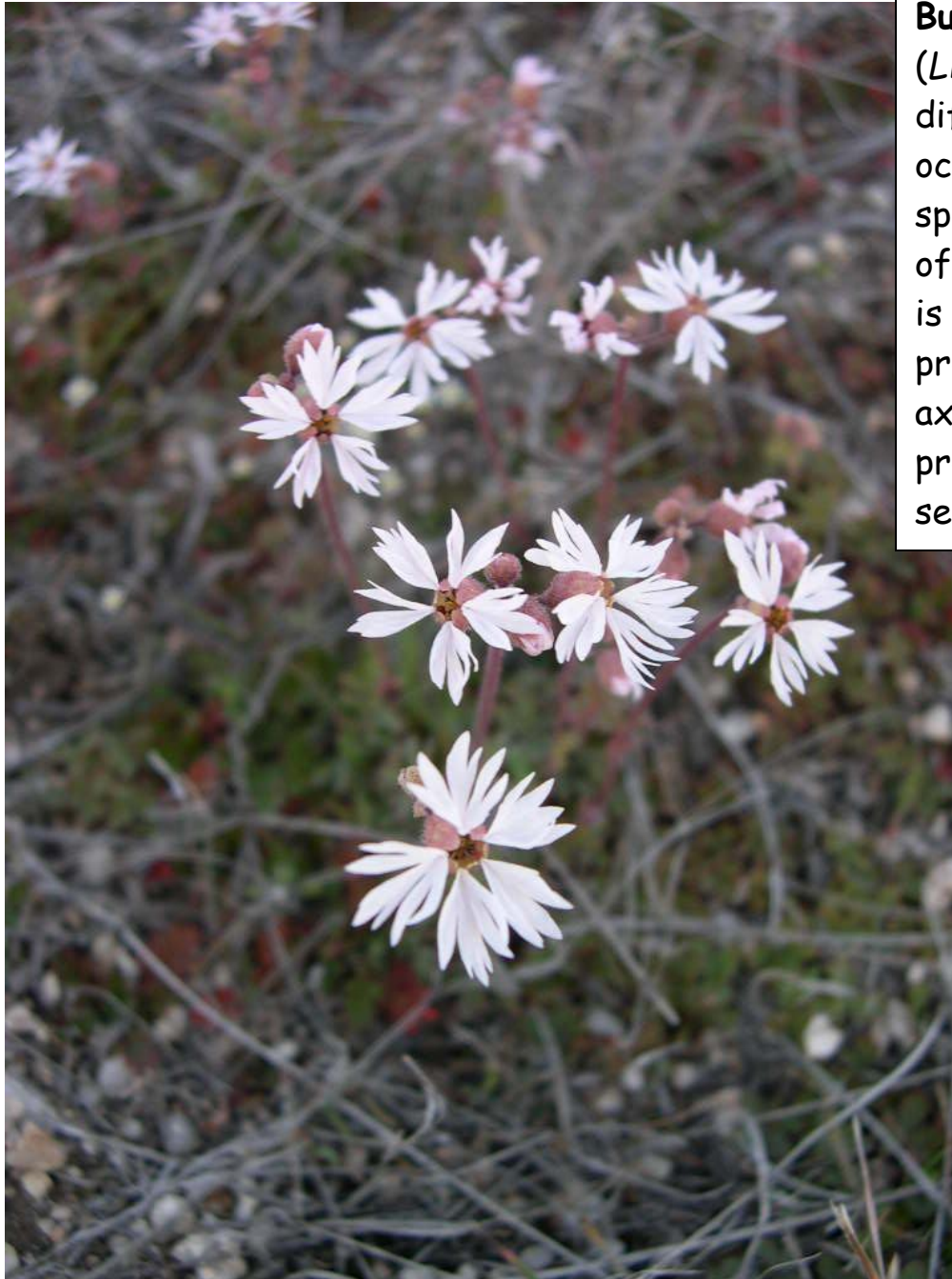
Threats to the plants include wildfire, weed invasion, land development, OHV use, and livestock trampling. The BLM is currently working with other partners including private landowners, ranchers, the State of Idaho, the Idaho Army National Guard, and the U.S. Air Force to insure conservation and recovery of this species.



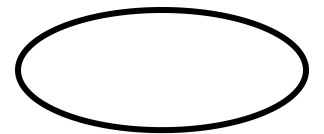
Slickspot peppergrass can be an annual or a biennial depending on genetics of the plant and environmental conditions. The plant shown in the photo is an annual. Its habitat is unique and specialized- it only grows in areas in lower elevation sagebrush that are called slickspots. Slickspots are small naturally occurring playas which have more clay and salt content than the surrounding soils. These spots hold a thin layer of water at the surface after rains and winter snow melt. One of the reasons this plant is so rare is because of this specialized habitat which is also rare.



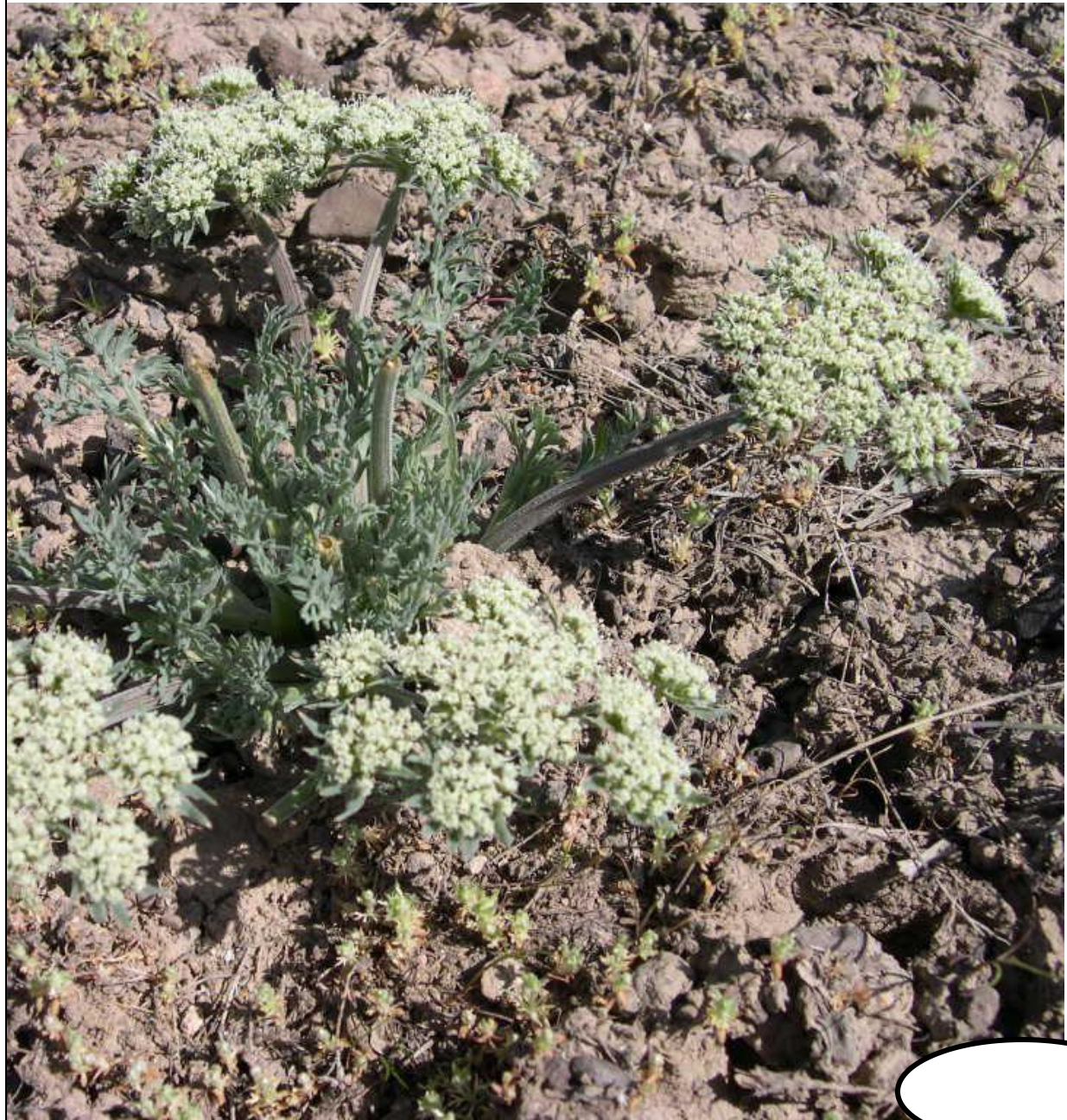




**Bulbous fringe-cup, woodland star** (*Lithophragma glabrum*) There are 12 different species of woodland star, all occurring in western North America. This species is common in dry areas, and is one of the first flowers to bloom in spring. It is called bulbous fringe-cup because it produces vegetative bulbils in its leaf axils. The bulbils can break off and produce new plants without pollination or seeds. It can also reproduce from seeds.

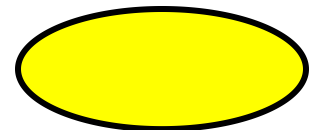


**Bigseed biscuitroot** (*Lomatium macrocarpum*) Biscuitroots are in the same plant family as carrots, parsley, and dill. Like some of its' relatives, most biscuitroots are also edible. This plant is also a relative of violently poisonous plants such as poison hemlock, and identification of plants within this family is difficult. Eating or taste testing any wild plant is not recommended. This *Lomatium* species, like many others, was also utilized by Native Americans for food. The thickened roots of this plant were peeled and eaten raw, or roasted then eaten. These plants were so valued for food that seasonal movements of prehistoric Native Americans were timed to coincide with the flowering times of various species of biscuitroot.



**Western mugwort**

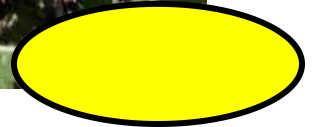
(*Artemisia ludoviciana*) This plant is one of the most commonly seen herbaceous sagebrushes. It grows around moist areas- typically in stream beds, and at the base of shady basalt cliffs. Like other sagebrush- the leaves, when crushed, smell pungently like sage. The leaves of this plant are silvery hairy, with entire or toothed tips. It can grow up to 3 feet tall and spreads by creeping rhizomes.





**Hooker's balsamroot**  
(*Balsamorhiza hookeri*)

This plant has bright yellow sunflower-like flowers and dissected fern-like leaves that are often hairy. This plant is typically found in rocky areas with fine clay soils. Another species- Arrowleaf balsamroot has similar flowers, but has large arrow shaped leaves and grows in areas with deeper soils.

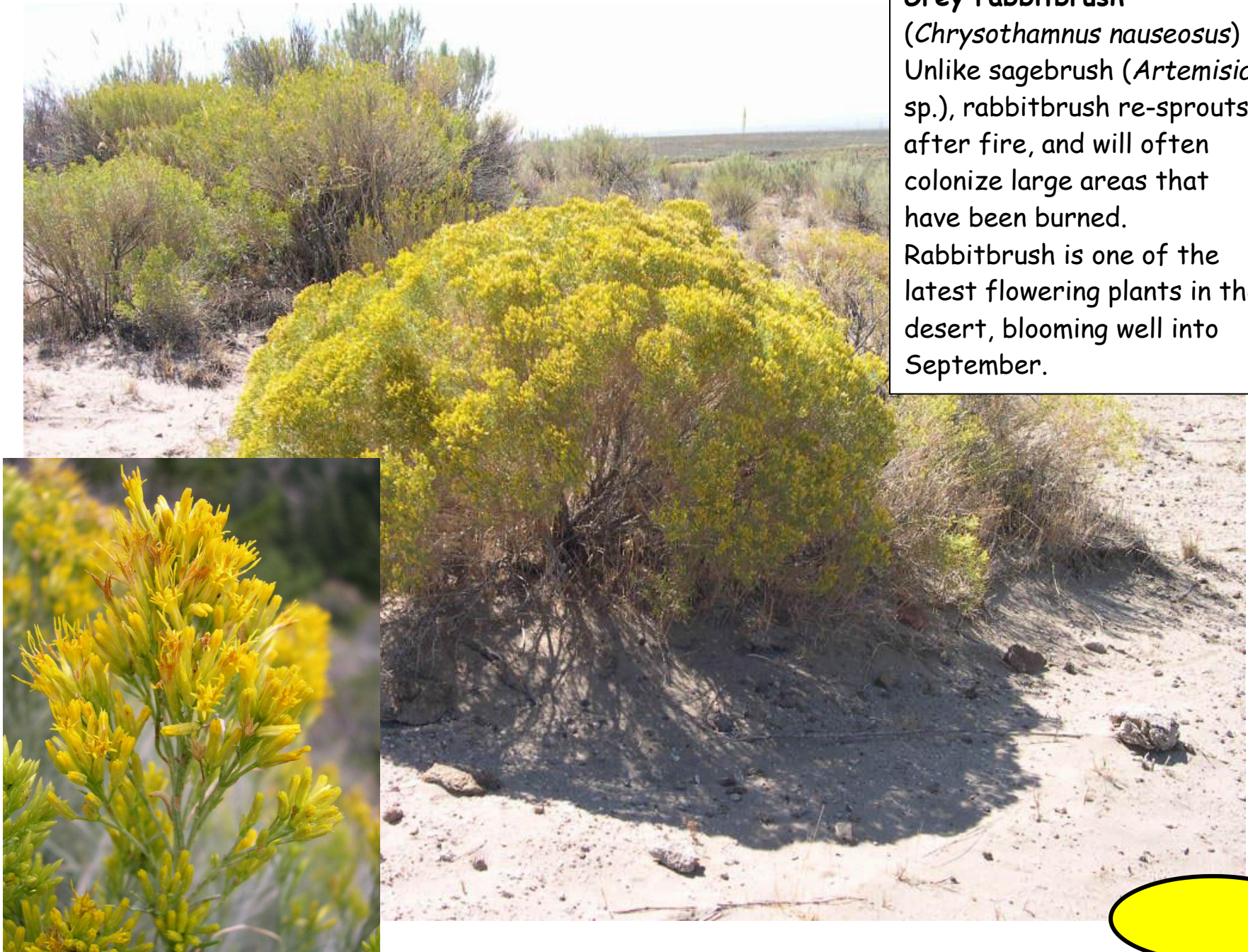


**Grey rabbitbrush**

(*Chrysothamnus nauseosus*)

Unlike sagebrush (*Artemisia* sp.), rabbitbrush re-sprouts after fire, and will often colonize large areas that have been burned.

Rabbitbrush is one of the latest flowering plants in the desert, blooming well into September.



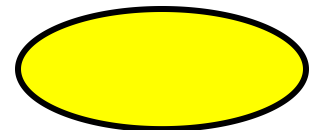


**Oregon Sunshine, Woolly Sunflower**  
(*Eriophyllum lanatum*) Perennial tufting plants that grow in dry open places, the woolly sunflower can be seen from lower elevations on the Snake River Plain, to above timberline in the mountains. Its leaves can vary from unlobed to tri-lobed near the ends of the leaves similar to big sagebrush. It is also woolly (tomentose) as the common name of this plant implies.



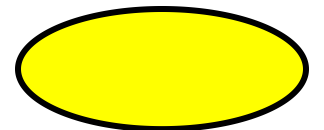
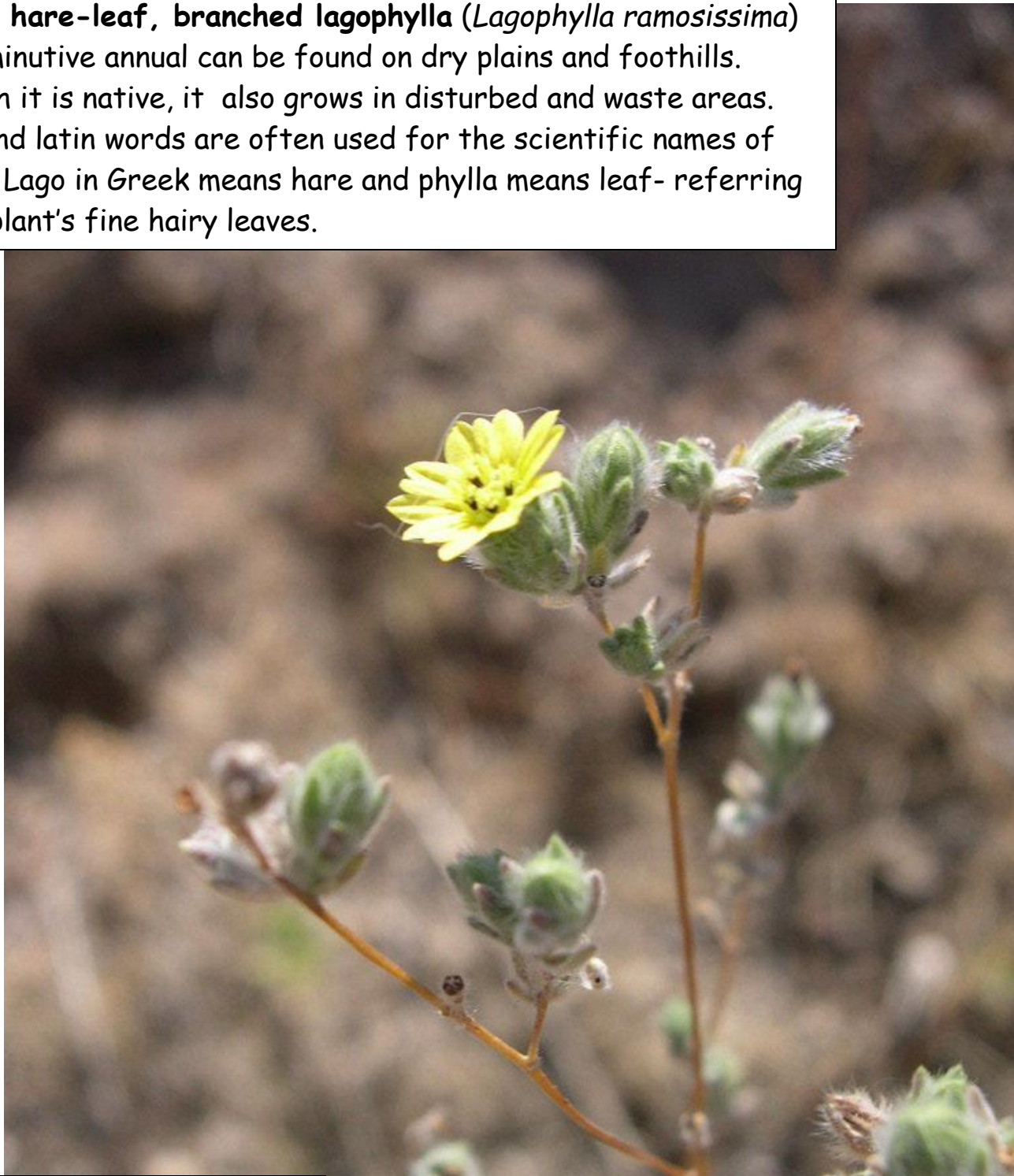
**Common sunflower**

(*Helianthus annuus*) This familiar flower- although native to North America- is not native to Idaho, and is a widespread weed. It grows mainly in disturbed areas such as roadsides, fence rows, pastures and waste areas. In August, when most other plants have long since flowered, common sunflower colors the interstates and highways of southern Idaho in yellow and green. Cultivated for thousands of years in America, this plant is the genetic source of the sunflowers that we grow in gardens and buy at stores.



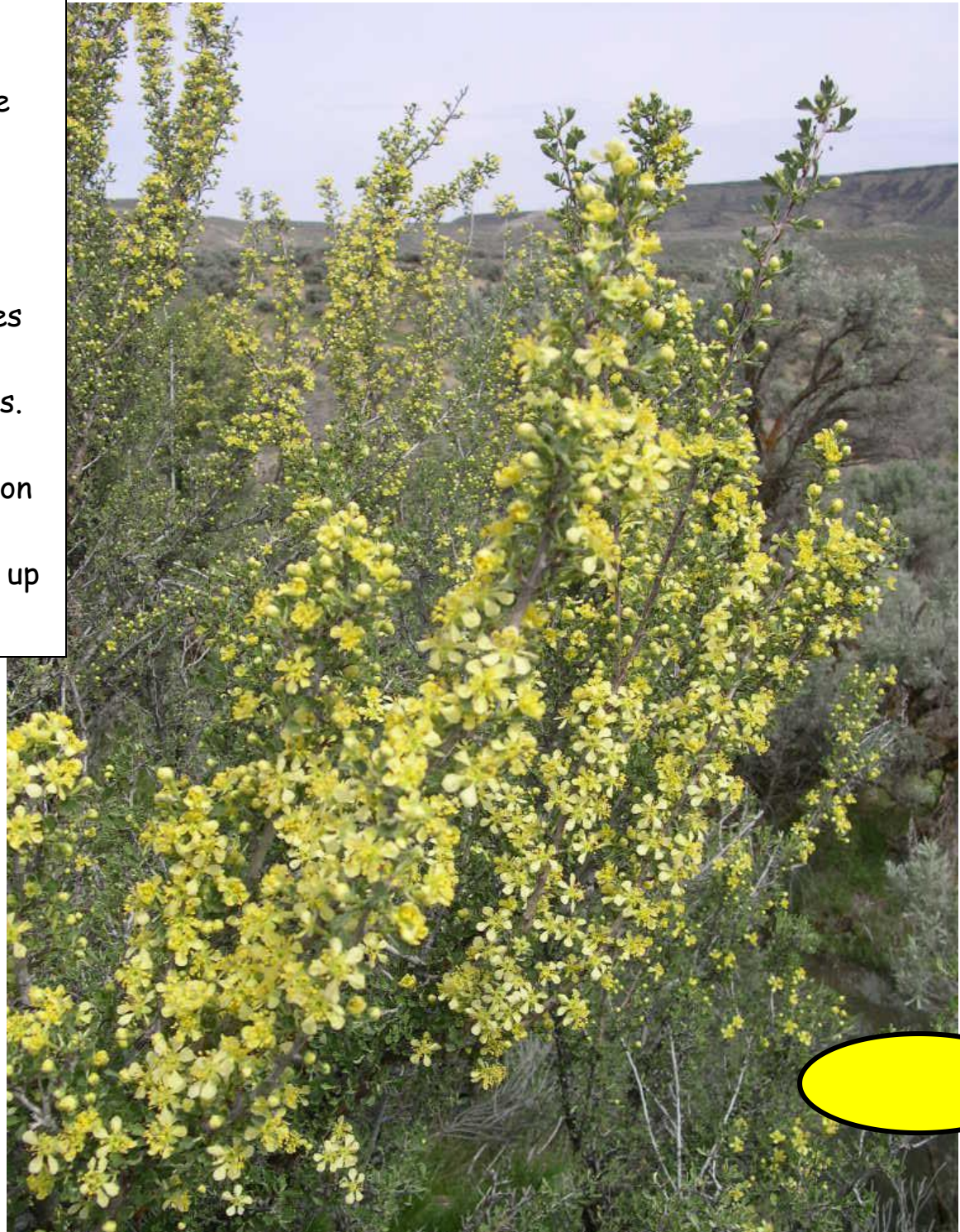
**Common hare-leaf, branched lagophylla (*Lagophylla ramosissima*)**

This diminutive annual can be found on dry plains and foothills. Although it is native, it also grows in disturbed and waste areas. Greek and latin words are often used for the scientific names of species. Lago in Greek means hare and phylla means leaf- referring to this plant's fine hairy leaves.



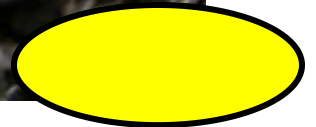


**Antelope bitterbrush** (*Purshia tridentata*) This shrub is the second most common shrub in the Great Basin (the most common is big sagebrush). It is extremely important for antelope, deer and elk, who browse the highly nutritious and protein laden leaves and twigs. The bitter seeds are prized by rodents, ants, and birds. This plant also colonizes rocky unstable habitats, reducing erosion and increasing soil and organic materials. A single shrub can live up to 160 years old.

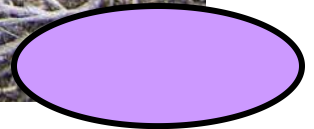




**Sagebrush buttercup**  
(*Ranunculus glaberrimus*)  
Common throughout the west, this is one of the first plants to bloom in early spring. In Nevada it has been seen blooming as early as January 5<sup>th</sup>. *Glaberrimus* means very smooth, referring to the smooth leaves and petals of this plant.



**Woollypod milkvetch (*Astragalus purshii*)** This plant is called woollypod milkvetch because of its extremely hairy seed pods which ripen by mid-summer. In early spring it is distinguished by purple pea-like flowers and a low clump of grayish leaves. The genus *Astragalus* (milkvetch or loco-weed) occurs all over the world and in a variety of habitats and climates. There are over 2000 different species of *Astragalus* worldwide, and about 380 species in North America alone. Woollypod milkvetch is one of the most common and recognizable of the many *Astragalus* species that occur in southern Idaho. Many species are identifiable only by expert botanists, and only after careful measurement, inspection of features with a magnifying glass or microscope and consultation with numerous floral keys and identification books.

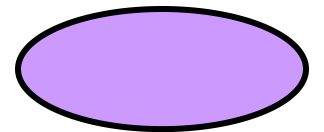


**Sand dune penstemon**

(*Penstemon acuminatus*)

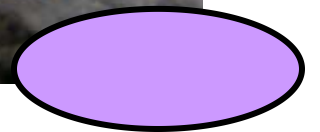
Penstemons, or beardtongues, are one of the most diverse and beautiful groups of plants endemic to North America.

There are over 250 different species. In Idaho alone there are about 45 different species of penstemon. They grow from sea level, to over 10,000 feet in deserts, plains, forests, and mountains. Sand dune penstemon is common in western Idaho in dry sandy or gravelly areas. It also occurs in Washington, Oregon and Nevada.





**Annual phlox, slender phlox** (*Phlox gracilis* var. *humilis*) This diminutive annual flower is often smaller than a nickel, and is easily overlooked. It flowers in early spring, and is unique among other phlox species in that it is an annual, instead of a perennial. Annual phlox is common from arid deserts to conifer forests throughout western North America. Like other species of phlox, it has five petals which are connected at the base and form a tube. Another distinguishing characteristic is that it has notched petals. The petal color in this species varies from almost white to pink to purple.





**Wyoming big sagebrush** (*Artemisia tridentata* var. *wyomingensis*) There are three varieties of big sagebrush, Wyoming big sagebrush is the most common variety at lower elevations in Idaho. Big sagebrush is a key component of desert ecosystems, providing food and shelter for a variety of animals and plants, including sage grouse. Sagebrush may provide up to 75% of sage grouse diet and is eaten throughout the year. Sage grouse is considered a sensitive species because numbers have declined dramatically in the past century, largely due to habitat loss. Wildfire is one of the greatest threats to sagebrush throughout the West. Fire kills the shrubs and makes it easier for non-native species to invade. The non-native species tend to be annual species, which dry out early in summer and make it more likely that the area will burn again in the future.



### **Winterfat**

*(Krascheninnikovia lanata)* Winterfat is another common shrub throughout arid western North America. The leaves of this shrub are unlobed, and the shrubs tend to be smaller in size and lighter in color than big sagebrush. The common name for this plant is winterfat because it is an important forage plant for livestock and wildlife, especially during winter when forage is scarce. Winterfat is a good source of digestible protein and vitamin A. Winterfat grows well on salty or alkaline soils- commonly found in areas with little moisture.



## **Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area Wildflower Field Guide**

Produced by:  
Thayne Tuason, Botanist  
Bureau of Land Management  
Boise District  
Four Rivers Field Office  
3948 Development Ave. Boise, ID 83705  
(208) 384-3300

May 2005 Version