
Death Valley National Park



Wildflower Update – March 2, 2010

The rainstorms keep coming to Death Valley with perfect gentleness and frequency. A storm at the end of February brought 0.44 inches of rain to Furnace Creek and 0.29 inches to Scotty's Castle. The "tiny specks of green" are now proper little plants in many locations, and are growing quickly with the warming air and soil temperatures. Additional seeds have sprouted between the original ones, which promises not only more flowers but also staggers the blooming time. At the current rate, the number of sprouts suggests the bloom may be thicker and more spectacular than anticipated earlier. The peak bloom should be at the end of this month into mid April.

In canyon mouths and washes where extra water has flowed, shrubs and perennials are showing early growth and flower buds. On alluvial fans, the creosote bush have lush foliage and their yellow flowers add a subtle touch of color.

Lake Manly may still be shallow, but the first kayakers have managed to ply its saline waters. A boat with a shallow draft and a willingness to wade out to launch are necessary for a successful below-sea-level voyage.

Rainfall Totals 2010

- Furnace Creek: 3.09 inches
- Scotty's Castle: 4.22 inches

Rainfall Totals 7/1/2009 to Present

- Furnace Creek: 3.18 inches
 - Scotty's Castle: 5.38 inches
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February 17, 2010

The wildflower sprouts are still just tiny specks of green among the gravel and have a long way to go before any flowers appear. The most growth is in the central part of Death Valley where visitors may actually notice a "fuzz" of green on some slopes as they drive by. We are still predicting late March to early April for the peak bloom.

The Amargosa River has been flowing steadily into Death Valley from the south for the last few weeks. Water now covers the lowest salt flats of Badwater Basin to create a shallow lake about 8 inches deep (not enough to float a kayak) but about 3 miles wide. Lake Manly has returned!

February 10, 2010

This week's storms have brought more rain to Death Valley, which increases the chances of a moderate wildflower bloom this spring. Tiny wildflower sprouts have started to appear in the lower elevations of the park and with the warmer temperatures predicted for later this week they should rapidly give a tint of green to the alluvial fans and hillsides. At this rate, peak bloom will likely be in late March to early April.

January 22, 2010

The first significant rainstorm this winter season brought several days of soaking rains to Death Valley, just what was needed to get wildflower seeds to sprout. If the El Niño storm pattern continues to bring additional rain as the spring season approaches, we could see a moderate bloom peaking in late March or early April. Both the northern part of the valley around Scotty's Castle and southern part south of Mormon Point still look the most promising due to rainstorms earlier in the season.

January 1, 2010

It's still a bit early for a reliable spring wildflower prediction, but this is what we know so far: There were no significant rain events in the autumn, so we can not expect a large wildflower bloom like we saw in 2005. The northern and southern ends of the park both received at least one significant rain event so far this winter but not enough to produce much of a bloom without additional rains. The rest of the park has been very dry, with less than 0.10 of an inch of rain accompanied by many days of drying winds. The National Weather Service is reporting a mild El Niño has developed in the Pacific Ocean. The El Niño weather pattern is often responsible for bringing significant rain to the Southwest and the Death Valley area. Often these rains do not start until late January to early February. In other words, it is still possible to have a spring wildflower bloom, but if the rain does not come it is unlikely we will see many flowers.