

# Nature Notes

## Spring Beauty



Look to the wetter areas of the Kimberley Nature Park (KNP) shortly after the snow melts to glimpse this delicate early harbinger of spring. The patches of delicate red-veined, white, 5-petaled blossoms of the Western spring beauty (*Claytonia lanceolata*) brighten the landscape after the months of winter cloaking the ground. This low-growing plant has a few basal lance-shaped leaves while the flowering stalks rise as high as 20cm and carry a single pair of stalkless leaves just below the loose cluster of 3-20 flowers.

The leaves are sources of Vitamin A and C while the small corms were an important source of carbohydrates for Interior native peoples. Collected shortly after flowering, the corms taste much like potatoes when cooked,



*Claytonia lanceolata*

Photo: J Duncan

thus earning the name of Indian potato. The disturbed patches of spring beauty sites indicate that grizzlies and rodents have also discovered the nutritional value of the corms while ungulates value the flowers and leaves.

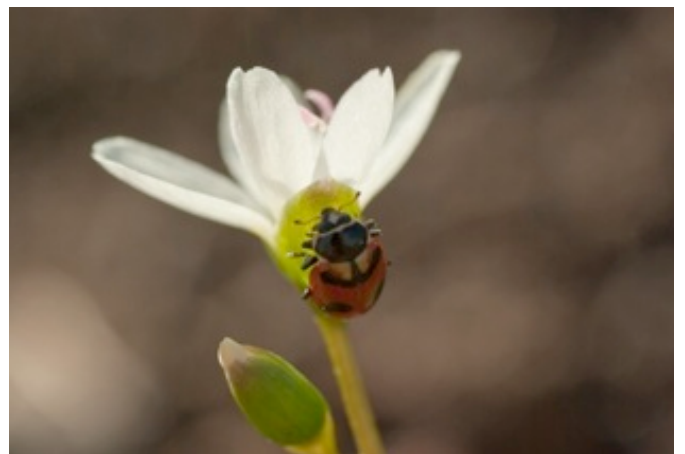
Western spring beauties are classed as spring ephemerals which are perennial plants that develop their



Leaves, stems & flowers Photo by L Grisdale

stems, leaves and flowers quickly early each spring to take advantage of the moisture, nutrients and sunlight available early in the season. After flowering, they quickly go to seed and die back to their underground corms for the remainder of the year.

Once the snow leaves the KNP, look quickly for these short-lived beauties!



Ladybug on *C. lanceolata* Photo: L Grisdale

Visit [www.rockies.net/kimberley/naturepark](http://www.rockies.net/kimberley/naturepark) for a hard copy or more information about Nature Park events.