




Come Discover Nature Guidebook





“This is your open space, so come discover it, enjoy it, and help protect it.”

ANDREA MACKENZIE, GENERAL MANAGER

 Open space lands are yours to explore and enjoy! Those of us lucky enough to live in Santa Clara Valley are surrounded by exquisite landscapes teeming with wildlife and natural beauty. This Guidebook is your key to discovering the amazing plants and animals that thrive within our open space preserves. Use it as a tool to identify the unique landscapes, wildlife, and plants that can be found in our region.

INTRODUCTION

The Open Space Authority strives to provide everyone with opportunities to connect with nature by establishing parks and preserves, providing outdoor activities, protecting open spaces, and much more! Your vote for Measure Q in 2014 allowed the Authority to expand its protection of open space and working lands, water and wildlife, and invest in urban open spaces throughout Santa Clara Valley. Since our start, we have preserved more than 22,000 acres for public benefit. The Open Space Authority was created by passionate, engaged citizens and established by the California legislature in 1993. We proudly serve the cities of San Jose, Campbell, Santa Clara, Milpitas, and Morgan Hill, and unincorporated areas of Santa Clara County.

PHOTOGRAPHING & RESPECTING NATURE



You don't have to be a pro to take beautiful photographs in nature! You can even take great photos with your phone. Here are some photography tips:

- Photograph moving wildlife in action or sport mode
- Early morning or evening is the best time to spot animals and birds
- Hike to the top for full landscape shots
- Get up close to wildflowers along the trail to capture the intricate details
- **Please be respectful of the plants and wildlife that you find. Give wildlife their space and don't go off trail for any reason.**

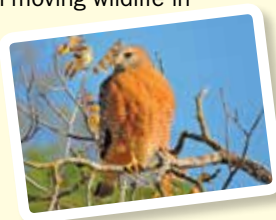


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KEY



Hard to find



Rare,
threatened, or
endangered
species

Please honor these sensitive species and the habitat they call home by keeping a safe distance.





OPEN SPACE AUTHORITY PRESERVES

Sierra Vista Open Space Preserve

- Panoramic views
- More than 10 miles of trails
- Protected ponds for threatened California tiger salamander

Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve

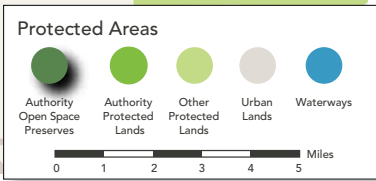
- Rare serpentine rocks
- Protected habitat for threatened Bay checkerspot butterfly
- Tule elk
- Breathtaking wildflowers in spring

Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve

- Hot spot for raptor sightings
- 4 miles of trail
- Historic site for the Juan Bautista de Anza Expedition

Rancho Cañada del Oro Open Space Preserve

- More than 12 miles of trails
- Woodlands and creeks
- Beautiful meadow with lupine





Sierra Vista Open Space Preserve

Located in the eastern foothills of Santa Clara County, this preserve offers sweeping views of the valley and the opportunity to stroll through diverse landscapes, including oak woodlands, rolling grasslands, and chaparral communities. Perched above Alum Rock Park, the area provides watershed protection for Penitencia Creek and is home to a number of protected wildlife species including the California red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, American badger, Western burrowing owl, and Golden eagle. Other species include Coyote, Mountain lion, Bobcat, and Gray fox. Open until a half-hour after sunset, the preserve's staging area is a spectacular place to watch the sunset over the Bay Area.

5341 Sierra Road, San Jose, CA

Protected March 2000



1,611
Acres



10
Miles
of trails



Open 8:00
am to a half
hour after
sunset



Blazing Star



Sam Drake

Scientific name: *Mentzelia lindleyi*

Description: This brilliant annual flower appears in late spring along the rocky outcroppings of Sierra Vista. Standing a little over a foot tall, this five-petaled flower can be up to 3 inches wide and full of stamen. Each plant can have a number of flowers and when in bloom it's a stunning display!

COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE

Bright yellow petals

WHERE TO FIND

Sierra Vista Trail

BEST TIME TO FIND

Late spring through early summer

IN OTHER PRESERVES

Rancho Cañada del Oro



Blue Eyed Grass



Philip Bouchard

Scientific name: *Sisyrinchium bellum*

Description: Blue eyed grass is a perennial (year-round) plant which flowers from January to July. Although it's leaves are grass-like, this plant (which can grow as tall as 2 feet) is not a grass and is part of the Iris family. Its 1-inch flowers can range from purple to true blue with yellow centers. It can be found in open, grassy areas or woodlands that are generally moist.

COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE
Purple or blue flowers

WHERE TO FIND
Lower Calaveras Fault Trail

BEST TIME TO FIND
March through May

IN OTHER PRESERVES
Coyote Ridge in spring
Coyote Valley
Rancho Cañada del Oro



Coyote



OSA Archive

Scientific name: *Canis latrans*

Description: Coyotes are 20-45 pounds and have a narrower muzzle than domestic dogs. They eat rodents, rabbits, and other small mammals. Their large ears help them detect prey in underground burrows. They can sometimes be seen pouncing on them when the animal emerges.

COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE

Tan and brown with a fluffy, black tipped tail, pointed face, and big upright ears

WHERE TO FIND

Calaveras Fault Trail

BEST TIME TO FIND

Early morning, year-round

IN OTHER PRESERVES

Rancho Cañada del Oro
Coyote Ridge
Coyote Valley





Western Burrowing Owl



Tom Ingram

Scientific name: *Athene cunicularia*

Description: One of the few owl species that can be spotted during the day, they prefer open areas covered in short grasses that lets them see predators while they eat small insects and mice. They live underground in squirrel dens. The species is rapidly declining in the Santa Clara Valley. Please observe these birds from far away to not disturb them.

COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE

Only 8 inches tall with bright yellow eyes, and long, yellow legs

WHERE TO FIND

Aquila Loop Trail or the staging area

BEST TIME TO FIND

Year-round at twilight

IN OTHER PRESERVES

Coyote Ridge





California Tiger Salamander



John Cleckler-USFWS

Scientific name: *Ambystoma californiense*

Description: These black or dark brown spotted salamanders are 7-8 inches long as adults. This endangered species thrives in Sierra Vista because the preserve offers ponds where they breed and grasslands habitat. They live underground in burrows during the dry months and they are most likely to be spotted during wet weather.

COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE

Black or dark brown with white or yellow spots and a wide mouth that appears to be smiling

WHERE TO FIND

They live underground in homes created by other animals and migrate to ponds to breed

BEST TIME TO FIND

Rainy nights





Turkey Vulture



Christina Schell

Scientific Name: *Cathartes aura*

Description: These large, majestic birds soar in the sky and use their excellent sense of smell to find dead animals. Turkey vultures can often be seen in the morning basking in the sun, wings out and feathers spread so the sun can more easily warm them.

COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE

Large and black, with a red bald head and white or yellow beak, when they fly, they look wobbly

WHERE TO FIND

Soaring above the preserve

BEST TIME TO FIND

Sunny days

IN OTHER PRESERVES

Coyote Ridge
Coyote Valley
Rancho Cañada del Oro



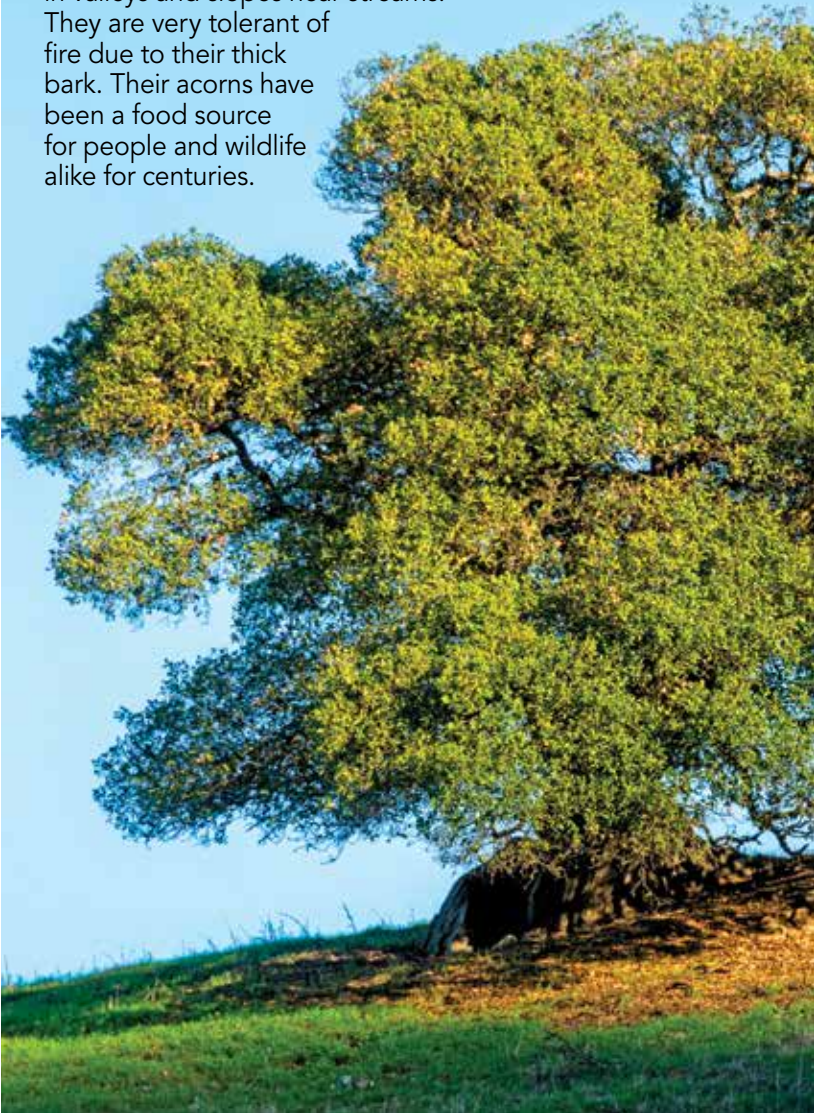
SIERRA VISTA

Coast Live Oak

Scientific name: *Quercus agrifolia*

Description: These majestic oaks live to be 125 to 250 years old and provide habitat for a wide variety of birds, mammals, reptiles, and invertebrates. Coast live oak trees are often found in valleys and slopes near streams.

They are very tolerant of fire due to their thick bark. Their acorns have been a food source for people and wildlife alike for centuries.





COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE

This evergreen tree has a thick trunk and a rounded canopy, leaves are waxy-coated, often cupped and have spiny edges

WHERE TO FIND

Calaveras Fault Trail

BEST TIME TO FIND

Year-round

IN OTHER PRESERVES

Coyote Ridge
Coyote Valley
Rancho Cañada del Oro



Rancho Cañada del Oro Open Space Preserve

Located on the edge of San Jose and Morgan Hill, this preserve is a hidden treasure for hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding. With over 12 miles of trails, this preserve includes beautiful oak woodlands, creek-side riparian areas, oak savannas, and chaparral habitat for wildlife. Wildflowers adorn the meadow and hillsides in the spring, but this preserve has surprises year-round.

4289 Casa Loma Road, Morgan Hill

Protected December 2000



4,823
Acres



12
Miles
of trails



Open 4/16-9/15
6am to sunset &
9/16-4/15 7am
to sunset



Western Sycamore



OSA Archive

Scientific name: *Platanus racemosa*

Description: This deciduous tree grows 65 to 80 feet tall. The trees create shade along creeks in the summer and the leaves turn brilliant colors in the fall. In Santa Clara County sycamore woodlands are rare and threatened.

COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE

White bark with tan and gray patches and broad, palm-shaped green leaves

WHERE TO FIND

Along creeks on the Llagas Loop Trail or the Mayfair Trail

BEST TIME TO FIND

Summer and fall

IN OTHER PRESERVES

Sierra Vista along creeks and ravines





Lupine



Robert Haddock

Scientific name: *Lupinus sp.*

Description: Lupine is a genus of flowering shrubs and herbs in the pea family. Their distinctive leaves are palm-shaped and they have showy, dense flowers that are often purple or blue. This plant captures nitrogen from the soil and turns it into a form that plants can use as fertilizer. It is often found alongside California poppies and Fiddlenecks.

COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE

Green palm-shaped leaves with purple, blue, and sometimes white flowers on stalks

WHERE TO FIND

Llagas Meadow Loop Trail

BEST TIME TO FIND

Spring

IN OTHER PRESERVES

Coyote Ridge
Coyote Valley



California Poppy



Cait Hutnik

Scientific name: *Eschscholzia californica*

Description: Hardy and prolific, the California poppy was adopted as the California state flower in 1903. These flowers cover hillsides and meadows in open spaces from winter through fall. They grow about 2 feet tall, and the seed pods grow from the center of the flower. Upon drying they “pop” open and scatter the seeds in the wind.

COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE

Pale green parsley-shaped leaves and bright orange or yellow flowers

WHERE TO FIND

Llagas Meadow and the hillsides along the Mayfair Ranch Trail

BEST TIME TO FIND

Winter through fall

IN OTHER PRESERVES

Coyote Ridge
Coyote Valley
Sierra Vista



Purple Needle Grass



Jean Pawek

Scientific name: *Stipa pulchra*

Description: California's official state grass, Purple needle grass is a waist high bunch grass with seed heads that turn purple and droop over. This grass is perennial (year-round) and has roots that grow as deep as 20 feet, making the grass more tolerant of drought.

COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE

Tall green bunch grass with purplish seed heads that look like needles

WHERE TO FIND

Llagas Meadow, Mayfair Ranch Trail

BEST TIME TO FIND

Spring

IN OTHER PRESERVES

Coyote Ridge
Sierra Vista
Coyote Valley



Bobcat



Gary Chock

Scientific name: *Lynx rufus*

Description: Bobcats are small wild cats, at 15-18 pounds they are 2 to 3 times larger than a typical housecat. Like most wild cats, bobcats are solitary and territorial, though they care for their 2-4 kittens in dens for a few months. They live in a wide range of habitats and are primarily nocturnal, hunting small animals at night.

COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE

Yellow-brown fur with black spots, short bobbed tail, black tips on their ears and eyes lined in white

WHERE TO FIND

Llagas Meadow, Catamount Trail

BEST TIME TO FIND

Dawn and dusk

IN OTHER PRESERVES

Coyote Ridge
Coyote Valley
Sierra Vista





Tarantula



Andres Campusano

Scientific name: *Aphonopelma eutylenum*

Description: A generally slow-moving spider about 5-6 inches across. You are most likely to see the males when they venture out to find females that live underground. Males die young, but females can live up to 25 years. Tarantulas eat crickets, small bugs, worms, and small rodents.

COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE

Dark brown or black with a large body covered in hair and long legs

WHERE TO FIND

Along the creek of the Llagas Loop Trail, Longwall Canyon Trail

BEST TIME TO FIND

Late in the day in early fall

IN OTHER PRESERVES

Sierra Vista



Southwestern Pond Turtle



OSA Archive

Scientific name: *Actinemys pallida*

Description: These turtles can be seen basking in the sun on branches and rocks in ponds and along creeks. They grow to be about 8-10 inches long and 6-8 inches wide. They are aquatic but lay their eggs in nests in surrounding hillsides. They eat aquatic plants, worms, frog and salamander eggs and larvae, crayfish, carrion, and occasionally, frogs and fish.

COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE

Dark cream-colored shell and black and yellow speckled neck and tail

WHERE TO FIND

Along the creek in Llagas Meadow and docent-guided hikes to Hidden Lake

BEST TIME TO FIND

Spring and summer

IN OTHER PRESERVES

Sierra Vista





Mountain Lion



OSA Archive

Scientific name: *Felis concolor*

Description: Mountain lions can weigh as much as 220 pounds and be up to 8 feet long (tail included). The males are larger than the females. Most people will never see a mountain lion because these large cats are primarily nocturnal and shy around humans. You are most likely to find their tracks along the trails.

COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE

Large cat with tawny yellow fur and a long black-tipped tail; tracks have four toes and an M-shaped heel pad with no claw marks

WHERE TO FIND

Spot their tracks along trails, especially after it rains





Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve

Only twenty miles south of downtown San Jose, where the western edge of the Coyote Valley touches the eastern foothills of the Santa Cruz mountains, lies a gem of nature. Coyote Valley is one of the top ten priority natural and working landscapes remaining in Santa Clara County that are critically important to protect from development. Coyote Valley's many conservation values include a rich cultural history, valuable water resources, exceptional recreational opportunities, farm and ranchland, and critical wildlife linkages that allow wildlife to pass between the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Diablo Range. The Arrowhead Loop Trail leads from savanna grassland, past hills of green serpentine, to a ridgetop with stunning views of Mt. Hamilton, Mt. Umunhum, and the entire Coyote Valley.

550 Palm Avenue, Morgan Hill

Protected April 2010



348
Acres



4
Miles
of trail



Open
sunrise to
sunset



COYOTE VALLEY

Valley Oak



Scientific name: *Quercus lobata*

Description: The Valley oak may be the largest of North American oaks and can grow up to 100 feet tall. Like many oaks, the Valley oak has a high tolerance for wildfires. These trees are found in dense riparian forests, oak savannas, and woodlands. Mammals and birds feed on their acorns in the fall. Valley floor habitat near water sources, where Valley oaks were once fertile, have mostly disappeared in California due to development.

COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE

Large, deeply lobed leaves, thick grooved bark, and a round crown with drooping branches; they are deciduous and lose their leaves in the winter

BEST TIME TO FIND

Year-round

IN OTHER PRESERVES

Rancho Cañada del Oro

WHERE TO FIND

Arrowhead Loop Trail



California Bay Laurel



Stephen Rosenthal

Scientific name: *Umbellularia californica*

Description: This evergreen tree has a wide, short trunk with spreading branches that creates a 40 to 50-foot tall rounded silhouette. Loving moisture, they grow in canyons and along creeks and springs. Their leaves are fragrant when crushed. Yellow flowers appear in late winter and early spring.

COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE

Light brown bark with dark green, spear shaped leaves; their fruit looks like a tiny avocado

WHERE TO FIND

Arrowhead Loop Trail

BEST TIME TO FIND

Year-round

IN OTHER PRESERVES

Rancho Cañada del Oro



Yellow-Billed Magpie



Tom Ingram

Scientific name: *Pica nutalli*

Description: These distinctive birds are found only in the oak savannas of California. More cooperative than competitive, Yellow-billed magpies nest in loose colonies, building massive 3-foot diameter stick spheres in tall oak trees. They forage on the ground for grasshoppers or acorns and occasionally steal food from other species.

COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE

Large, black and white with a yellow beak and an iridescent purplish green tail

WHERE TO FIND

Valley floor trails and staging area

BEST TIME TO FIND

Year-round

IN OTHER PRESERVES

Rancho Cañada del Oro



Red-Tailed Hawk



Beth Hamel

Scientific name: *Buteo jamaicensis*

Description: The most common and widespread hawk in North America. This bird of prey is 20-25 inches long, has a wingspan of up to 49 inches, and weighs up to 2.4 pounds. Red-tailed hawks have a distinctive cry - a long, mournful scream followed by shorter chirps in decreasing volume.

COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE

Dark brown with a reddish-brown lightly barred tail

WHERE TO FIND

They nest in the tops of tall oak trees, but can be seen flying over the preserve or perched on telephone poles

BEST TIME TO FIND

Year-round

IN OTHER PRESERVES

Rancho Cañada del Oro
Sierra Vista
Coyote Ridge



Western Fence Lizard



Ellen Srearns

Scientific name: *Sceloporus occidentalis*

Description: The Western fence lizard is about 3 inches, not including their tail. Their bodies are textured, not smoothed by their scales, allowing for better camouflage. They have long, thin, pointed toes with claws at the end that allow them to climb rocks and trees.

COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE

Blue stripe along each side of their belly and a blue throat with a black chin

WHERE TO FIND

Sunbathing on downed wood or rocks alongside the trails

BEST TIME TO FIND

Spring through fall

IN OTHER PRESERVES

Rancho Cañada del Oro



Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve

This preserve is part of a 7,000-acre, 12-mile stretch of rare serpentine grassland. This habitat is vital to the threatened Bay checkerspot butterfly, endangered Metcalf Canyon jewelflower, and other rare and endangered plants and animals. The preserve's nearly 1,400 acres of serpentine grassland makes for spectacular docent-led hikes in the spring, where visitors can witness the hillside covered in wildflowers. Groups can request private hikes on the Authority's website at openspaceauthority.org/events.

Located along the Diablo Range

Protected October 2015



1,859
Acres



5.25
Miles of existing
roads currently
used as trails



Preserve is by
reservation
only



Most Beautiful Jewel Flower



Ellen Stearns

Scientific name: *Streptanthus glandulosus* ssp. *glandulosus*

Description: Thin pale green plant, bristly at the base, that can grow up to 3 feet tall. This flower is known for its wavy-edged petals that form an urn shape. The flowers alternate every inch from the end of the stem. Jewel flowers are a member of the mustard family.

COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE

White and lavender urn-shaped flowers

WHERE TO FIND

Serpentine habitats, barren slopes, and grasslands

BEST TIME TO FIND

April through June

IN OTHER PRESERVES

Rancho Cañada del Oro





Santa Clara Valley Dudleya



Tom Jack

Scientific name: *Dudleya abramsii* ssp. *setchellii*

Description: A perennial (year-round) succulent. Its flowers can range from yellow to pale cream, rising on pinkish stalks from a cluster of thick green to reddish-pink leaves. This plant thrives in serpentine soil and has adapted to dry weather.

COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE

Green thick leaves in a cluster around the base of a stalk with small yellow or white flowers

WHERE TO FIND

Rocky serpentine formations

BEST TIME TO FIND

Found year-round but flowers in late spring

IN OTHER PRESERVES

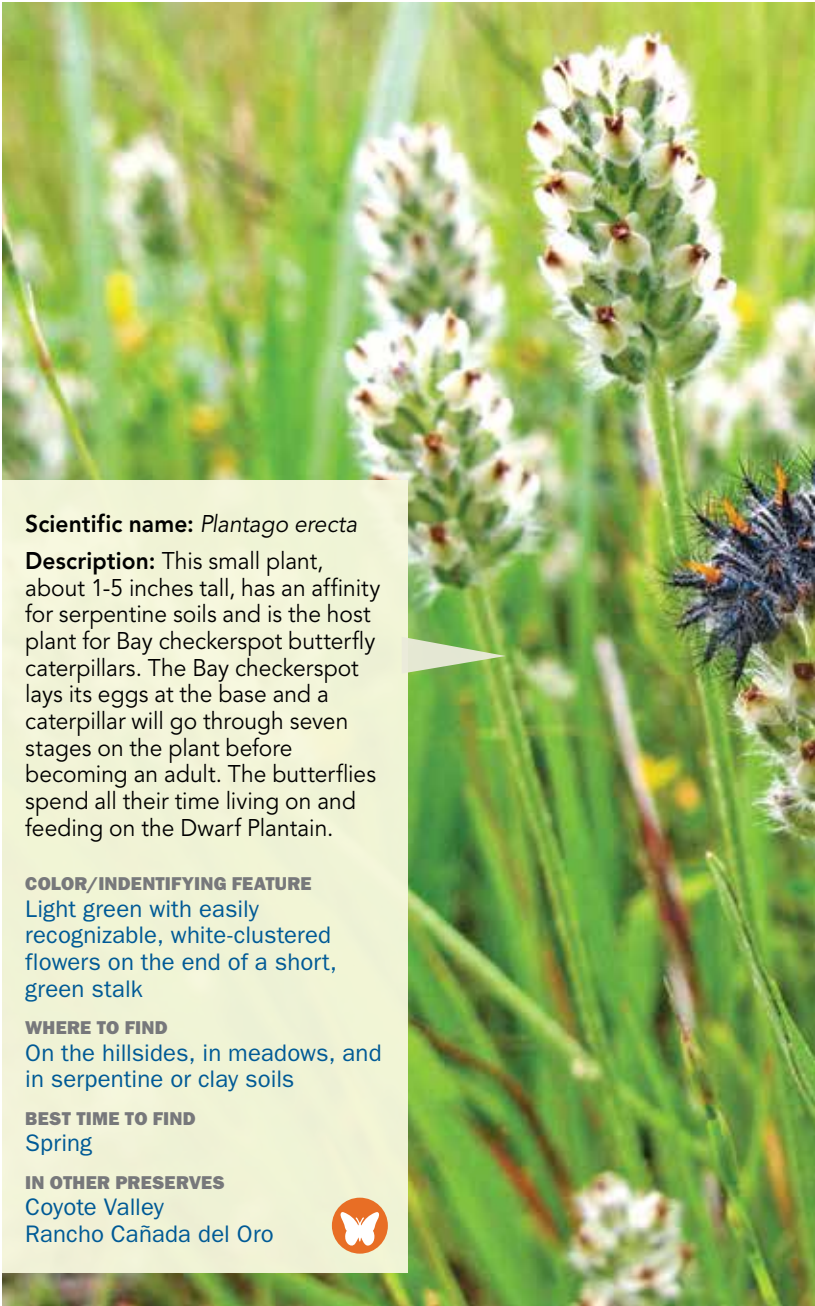
Rancho Cañada del Oro
Coyote Valley





COYOTE RIDGE

Dwarf Plantain



Scientific name: *Plantago erecta*

Description: This small plant, about 1-5 inches tall, has an affinity for serpentine soils and is the host plant for Bay checkerspot butterfly caterpillars. The Bay checkerspot lays its eggs at the base and a caterpillar will go through seven stages on the plant before becoming an adult. The butterflies spend all their time living on and feeding on the Dwarf Plantain.

COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE

Light green with easily recognizable, white-clustered flowers on the end of a short, green stalk

WHERE TO FIND

On the hillsides, in meadows, and in serpentine or clay soils

BEST TIME TO FIND

Spring

IN OTHER PRESERVES

Coyote Valley
Rancho Cañada del Oro





Bay Checkerspot Butterfly



Scientific name: *Euphydryas editha ssp. bayensis*

Description: The Bay checkerspot butterfly is a medium-sized butterfly with a wingspan of slightly more than 2 inches. It is part of the brush-footed family. The insect's forewings are marked with black bands along the veins of the wing's upper surface. This black banding gives the Bay checkerspot its unique appearance and its name. The preserve's extensive serpentine grassland habitat is essential for the recovery of the Bay checkerspot butterfly, which is currently thriving on Coyote Ridge.

COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE

Black, orange, red, and white checkered pattern

WHERE TO FIND

In patches of Dwarf Plantain

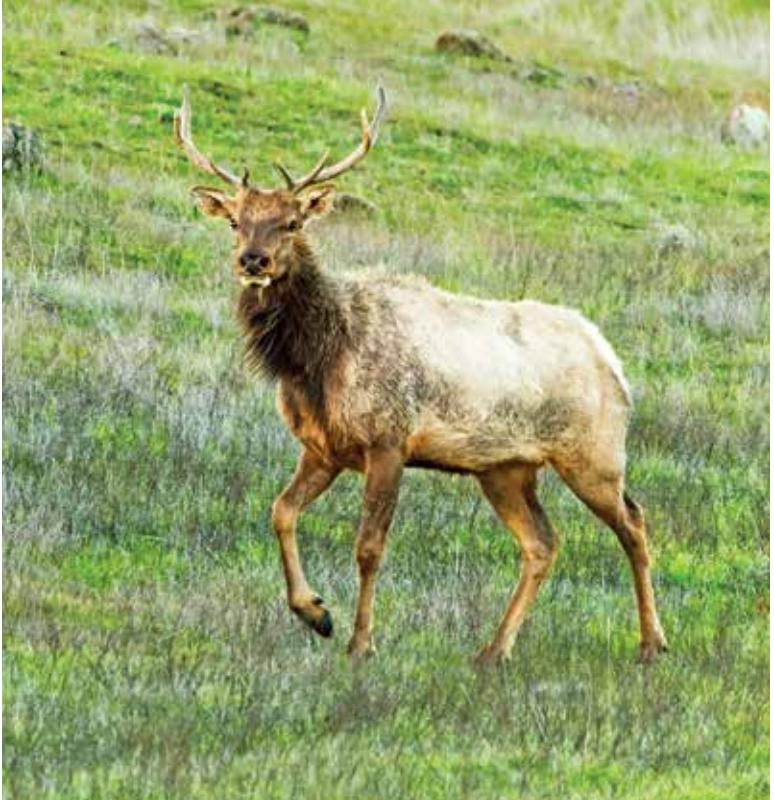
BEST TIME TO FIND

March and April





Tule Elk



Derek Neumann

Scientific name: *Cervus canadensis nannodes*

Description: The Tule elk is a subspecies of elk that lives only in California. The elk can be found from the grasslands and marshlands of the Central Valley to the grassy hills on the coast. Breeding season, called the rut, occurs primarily in September, when males compete to mate and claim possession of a group of females.

COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE

Light-beige coat with a dark brown mane surrounding their neck with a white to light tan rump

BEST TIME TO FIND

Year-round

WHERE TO FIND

Along the ridge tops





Western Meadowlark



Steve Byland

Scientific name: *Sturnella neglecta*

Description: This bird is about the size of a Robin, but chubbier and with a short tail. Meadowlarks prefer dry, grassy meadows, where they hunt for insects and forage small seeds. They can often be seen sitting atop serpentine rocks. Listen for their bright, whistling warble. Their white outer tail feathers are easy to spot when they fly.

COLOR/IDENTIFYING FEATURE

Bright yellow belly, chest, and chin with a dark black bib

WHERE TO FIND

Grassy meadows

BEST TIME TO FIND

Spring

IN OTHER PRESERVES

Coyote Valley



GET INVOLVED

YEAR-ROUND EVENTS

We offer a vibrant event program where you can enjoy Docent-led hikes, look through a telescope at the stars in the sky, or bring your friends and family to discover all that nature has to offer. Every month brings something new to explore. Each program takes you to the great outdoors, whether it be for learning, for your health, or for its exquisite beauty.

We partner with local parks and agencies to offer various programs such as Healthy Parks Healthy People. Every program is free to attend. We encourage you to get outside and discover nature! Sign up to receive our monthly event calendar and start planning your outdoor adventures!

Visit openspaceauthority.org/events today!





VOLVED

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteering at the Open Space Authority offers you beautiful settings in which to work and have fun. Whether helping visitors, improving habitat, or leading interpretive hikes, volunteers play a pivotal role in our mission. For more information on joining the volunteer team, visit our website at:

openspaceauthority.org/volunteers.



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website, and newsletter! Send us your pho



Openspacea



PHOTOS WITH US

Photos on our social media,
photos of wildlife, hiking, and enjoying nature!



authority.org



Derek Neumann, Bill Adams, Stephen Joseph, Samsudin Kamis



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