

Valley Wilds

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The Gem of the North Valley

Sunrise reveals twinkling salt crystals, like miniature stars against the grey-green background of bird's beak and salt grass. The day heats rapidly to the delight of the well-adapted forbs, herbs and grasses. Trees are

not welcome here. This place thrives and survives on the baking-hot summer sun, the absence of shade, the limited seasonal rainfall, and the harsh yet unique soil chemistry. This is not the desert southwest. Welcome to the alkali sink of the North Livermore Valley. This vanishing remnant mosaic of grasslands, wetlands, iodine bush scrub and scalds, was once prevalent in the Central Valley but also found in the Livermore Valley.

Large ungulate herds were drawn here for the minerals their bodies required but were not found in

the plants they consumed. Tule elk, pronghorned antelope, and mule deer frequented this area for the "salt licks" provided by just the right combination of hydrology, soil types, and residual marine sediments.

The vast wetlands that once covered much of the surrounding I-580 corridor throughout the valley were a destination for huge flocks of waterfowl during the winter's rainy season. Reportedly if these swans, ducks, geese, and other marsh birds were startled, spontaneously sending thousands in flight, it would darken the sky as if at midnight. Today a vestige of this wetlands ecosystem can be found from the Arroyo Las Positas/Altamont Creek area of Springtown north to the foothills.

While some may view the open grasslands and summer-dry wetlands as a "wasteland," rest assured this area is truly an ecological raw diamond. It holds some of the last remaining wetlands in California and is home to numerous special status species including palmate-bract bird's beak (*Cordylanthus*

By Ranger Patti Cole



Palmate-bract Bird's Beak
Photo by Lech Naumovich

palmatus), Livermore tarplant (*Deinandra bacigalupii*, found only here), San Joaquin spearscale (*Atriplex joaquiniana*), as well as the sensitive natural community of iodine bush scrub.

Special status animal species include California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*), California red-legged frog (*Rana aurora draytonii*), Vernal pool fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta lynchi*), as well as sensitive species such as Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) and Western pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*). A lengthy list of raptors, song birds, and waterfowl can also be found here.

There is a concerted effort to ensure the future of at least one

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Livermore Area Recreation and Park District

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Ranger Office: 925.960.2400

Ranger-led Programs

Experience nature and history in a special way. Programs are generally 1 - 2 hours in length. A \$3 donation is requested. A \$5 parking fee is charged at both park entrances.

September Programs

Quick Look:

Mountain Lions	Saturday, Sept. 6	11:00 am
Dry Creek Walk	Saturday, Sept. 13	10:00 am
Applefest!	Sunday, Sept. 14	1:00 pm
Afternoon Hike	Saturday, Sept. 20	2:00 pm
Bears	Sunday, Sept. 21	2:00 pm
September Moonset	Saturday, Sept. 27	7:00 pm

Mountain Lions: Fact vs. Fiction

Saturday, September 6 11:00 am

Have you ever seen a mountain lion around the Livermore Valley? You might be surprised how many people answer "yes" to that question. This program will provide information on identification, natural history, how to stay safe in mountain lion country, and will include some truly amazing visual aids.

Ranger Patti Cole

Sycamore Grove Park, Wetmore Road Entrance Picnic Area

Dry Creek Walk

Saturday, September 13 10:00 am

It's been a long, dry, dusty summer. Sycamore Grove is looking more like a desert than a riparian paradise but if you look closely you can see that it's poised to come springing back as soon as the magic ingredient is added! Join us as we discuss the effects of the drought and what the future might hold in store for this jewel of the valley. This will be a 2-3 mile slow paced hike over even ground. Bring water (that magic ingredient) and a camera if you like.

Ranger Darren Segur

Sycamore Grove Park, Wetmore Road Entrance

Applefest!

Sunday, September 14 1:00 pm

Come to Ravenswood Historic Site to explore the apple orchard and taste antique apple varieties you can't find in stores. Learn about the history of apples, find out what an "apple slinky" is, help make (and drink!) cider and play old-fashioned games. Ravenswood docents will be leading tours of the historic buildings.

Ranger Amy Wolitzer

Ravenswood Historic Site, 2647 Arroyo Road

Afternoon Hike

Saturday, September 20 2:00 pm

Join Ranger Danny for a relaxed four-mile (round trip) hike to enjoy a September Saturday. We'll head up to the upper portion of the park and see what wildlife is hanging out at the cattail pond. On our way back down we'll see if we can find any birds or mammals eating walnuts along the row of historic walnut trees and what other signs of fall we can spot.

Ranger Danny Haberman

Sycamore Grove Park, Wetmore Road Entrance

More September Programs

Bears

Sunday, September 21 2:00 pm

Most of us have fond memories of bears from childhood: our teddy bears, Winnie the Pooh, or Yogi Bear going after a pik-a-nik basket. Real-life bears are popular too. They come in many sizes and colors and live all over the world. They are revered in some areas and feared in others. Join us today to talk about bears around the world today and from pre-historic times.

*Ranger Dawn Soles Sycamore Grove Park
Arroyo Road Entrance*

September Moonset

Saturday, September 27 7:00 pm

The sun may be setting earlier than it used to, but the evenings don't yet have that winter chill. Come out to Sycamore Grove Park this Saturday evening for a walk under the light of the setting crescent moon. We will be hiking approximately three miles total on both paved and unpaved trails stopping along the way to check out the park animals going to bed and the stars coming out for the night.

*Ranger Glen Florey Sycamore Grove Park
Wetmore Road Entrance*

Register Now!

Take a Kid Mountain Biking Day

Saturday, October 4 3:00 - 5:00 pm

Join community volunteers and LARPD Rangers for a family ride in Sycamore Grove Park in celebration of the International Mountain Biking Association's Take a Kid Mountain Biking Day. Three rides are offered: 1) Paved path (ok for preschoolers) 2) Beginner ride on dirt trails 3) Dirt trails with hills. Children must be accompanied by a responsible adult. All riders must wear a helmet and bring water. Email awolitzer@larpd.org or call the ranger office at (925) 960 2400 for more information or to register for this event. Include the number of people in your group and which ride(s) you are interested in. Free program but donations are appreciated.

Wetlands (continued)

section of this very special ecological area, the Springtown Wetlands Preserve. This City of Livermore-owned land is just less



than 300 acres, and includes most of the land bordered by Raymond Road to the north, Ames & Broadmoor to the east, Lorraine to the west and the asphalt trail/closed section of Hartford Road to the south. Representatives from the City, Zone 7, Friends of Springtown Preserve, California Native Plant Society, Ohlone Audubon, Tri-Valley Conservancy, and the Alameda County Resource Conservation District are working together to turn the tide on vandalism, trespassing, and destruction of the unique plants, animals and geologic features of the preserve.

The community's help is needed in this effort:

- Keep all motorized vehicles out of the area.
- Stay on the asphalt trail. Dirt trails leading into the preserve are NOT designated trails. They have been created by bicycles, ATVs, motocross bikes, remote controlled vehicles and others illegally entering the preserve.
- Respect all wildlife. Stay clear of nest sites, including burrows. Keep pets leashed. Don't harass or collect wildlife.

Let's work together to keep this rare gem, found right here in our own "backyard", for the natural wonder and beauty it provides, as well as an outdoor research laboratory for students of all ages, and for future generations to gain understanding of what once could be found not only in the Livermore Valley but throughout the state of California.

Watch the November Valley Wilds for information about Ranger Patti's annual fall bird walk in Springtown.

Meet the Ranger

Ranger Danny Haberman

Hey there, my name is Danny Haberman and I am one of your Park Rangers for the Livermore Area Recreation and Park District. Often out in the park I get confused for one of our other fantastic Rangers, Ranger Glen. Though in truth, Glen's beard is better than mine. I thought this would be a good time to do a short biography and let you all know who I am.

I was born in Cape Cod, Massachusetts. My family and I moved to California when I was the ripe age of six. I grew up and went to school here all the way to Livermore High. I have always had a passion for the outdoors and helping people. I am very fortunate to have a profession that involves both these passions and love interacting with the wonderful people who visit our parks.

After high school I worked at Mammoth Mountain for a winter season. I worked as a Lift Operator, ensuring the safety of people getting onto and off the lift. It was there I truly fell in love with being outdoors and I knew I wanted to make it my profession.

I graduated from the SLETP (Seasonal Law Enforcement Training Program) course at Santa Rosa Junior College where I was trained to work law enforcement for the National Park Service. Shortly after that, I took my Wilderness First Responder Class with Remote Medical International. Not long after graduating from those courses I began working for the Livermore Area Recreation and Park District Open Space Division. Previously, I had worked for LARPD in the "PAL" after school programs, and often I return there during the winter season. I have always enjoyed working with children and am very pleased to be



able to lead many programs for school groups here in Sycamore Grove Park and in their classrooms.

When not at the park I enjoy spending my time in the outdoors hiking, kayaking, backpacking and riding my bike. I also enjoy playing guitar and mandolin and have been in and out of bands since I was 13, and have been on tour twice! I have played guitar for 13 years and mandolin for about four and don't plan on stopping anytime soon. I also enjoy reading comic books (check out my awesome Spiderman article in the [July Valley Wilds](#)).

So next time you're out in the park, and you see me driving, or walking around please feel free to stop me and ask me any questions about the park, my education, or me in general! I thrive on speaking to people and hope I get to meet all of you soon.

Trivia Tidbit

What happens at the Autumnal Equinox?

- A) All the leaves turn brown
- B) The day and night are the same length
- C) The Northern and Southern hemispheres receive equal daylight
- D) Werewolves wander your local parks

Answer: C) At the time of the equinox the Earth is at a place in its orbit where the tilt of the earth is such that Northern and Southern Hemispheres receive the same amount of daylight. It is September 23rd this year. The Equilux is when the day and night are equal and, at our latitude, it will be a few days after the equinox.