



SAN DIEGO HABITAT CONSERVANCY (SDHC)

MANAGES THE VALLECITOS RIDGE PRESERVE

Please contact SDHC if you have any questions about the purpose and restrictions associated with the preserve, or if you would like to report any illegal activity within the preserve. We appreciate your willingness to support our stewardship activities and to help protect the natural resources and beauty that surround your home.

Contact:
 Don Scoles, Executive Director
 Vince Rivas, Habitat Manager
 (619) 365-4839
 sdhc@sdhabitat.org
 www.sdhabitat.org

LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

As the managers of the Preserve, it is SDHC's responsibility to ensure that the habitat is healthy and free of disturbances for the plant and animal species that rely on these natural resources.

SDHC's management duties:

- Triennial Monitoring & Reporting
- Vegetation Mapping
- Special Species Surveys
- Invasive Plant Control
- Trash Removal
- Fence Inspection
- General Coordination
- Public Outreach



Wild Cucumber
 Photo by Neal Kramer

SENSITIVE BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Habitat and Plant Communities

Vallecitos Ridge Preserve consists of primarily Diegan coastal sage scrub, with less than half an acre of disturbed habitat. Diegan coastal sage scrub is a common vegetation community in San Diego County, and is host to a vast number of sensitive plants and animals in the region. The health and integrity of these habitats is critical to ensuring the sustainability of threatened and endangered species. Protection of the preserve is not only important for the entire San Diego ecosystem but also improves the beauty and serenity of your neighborhood, providing a visual buffer typical of the topography and vegetation unique to San Marcos.



Sonoran Bumblebee
 Photo by Andrew Rosales

Sensitive Wildlife Species

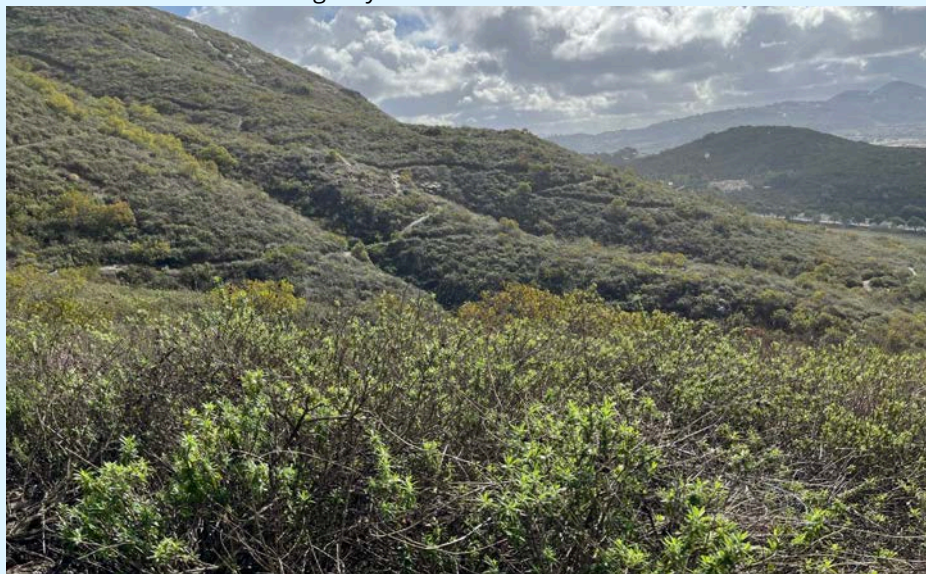
A number of sensitive wildlife species occupy or forage over the Preserve, including Cooper's hawk, coastal California gnatcatcher (federally threatened), northern harrier, rufous-crowned sparrow, orange-throated whiptail, and red-diamond rattlesnake.

VALLECITOS RIDGE PRESERVE

CITY OF SAN MARCOS

Your home is near the Vallecitos Ridge Preserve! This Preserve was set aside to offset impacts to native habitat resulting from construction of the Vallecitos Ridge community. These impacts were mitigated for by the preservation of approximately 34.65 acres of sensitive habitat. The preserve is comprised of two parcels separated by Borden Road; Lot F (25.34 acres) to the south; and the Raza Parcel (9.31 acres) to the north. San Diego Habitat Conservancy (SDHC) has been managing this valuable piece of our local ecosystem since 2009. The natural resources that are being

preserved are important to our local ecosystem and regulated by the City of San Marcos, California Department of Fish & Wildlife, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Regional Water Quality Control Board, and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.



CONNECTION TO SAN DIEGO ECOSYSTEMS

The preserve's northern parcel is surrounded by open space land managed by other land trusts and the southern parcel is adjacent to SDHC's Palomar College Preserve. Vallecitos Ridge is part of a regional vision to link open space preserves throughout the area and is within the County's Multiple Habitat Conservation Program (MHCP). The MHCP sets the goal of establishing a preserve system of over 20,000 acres throughout the Cities of Carlsbad, Encinitas, Escondido, Oceanside, San Marcos, Solana Beach, and Vista.



Chamise
 Photo by W. Juergen Schrenk



Golden-crowned Sparrow
 Photo by Terry & Julie

2024 PRESERVE UPDATE

This year SDHC assessed the vegetation communities within the preserve parcels and updated mapping to reflect habitat boundaries. Overall, the preserve is healthy with low weed cover. This task occurs every five years, with the next update in 2029.



Collecting transect data in the previously burned area

Unfortunately, some areas have been invaded by harmful nonnative species, such as mustard. These disturbed areas have continued to be a target for weed control efforts, but new areas of trespasser damage have continued to be an issue. SDHC will assess the need for revegetation efforts in these areas.



Recent trespasser trail

RATTLESNAKE INFORMATION AND SAFETY

The preserve is home to many species that are part of our local ecosystem. It is possible that some of the animals living in the preserve will make their way into the developed area surrounding your residence. The southern pacific rattlesnake, red diamond rattlesnake, and speckled rattlesnake are the only local snakes in the San Diego region that are venomous to humans. An average adult rattlesnake is about 2½ feet long, but can grow to as large as 4 to 5 feet in length. These rattlesnakes are ight gray or brown and shed their skin about 3 to 4 times a year, usually getting a new rattle segment each time. Rattlesnakes eat rodents such as mice but also forage on birds, reptiles, and amphibians. The benefit they provide in rodent control far outweighs their potential danger to humans. Please respect them from a safe distance and let them do their job.

WATCH OUT FOR RATTLESNAKES

In case of emergency, call 911 or go directly to a hospital.



PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

Access and Pets

Access to the preserve is prohibited due to the sensitive nature of the habitat and the species that dwell and forage there. Hiking, biking, camping or any human recreational activity is strictly prohibited. Dogs and cats are prohibited in the preserve. Please respect the natural condition of the open space ecosystem and enjoy it from afar to ensure that these resources are around for all time.



Trespassing within the Raza Parcel has been an ongoing issue, with unauthorized trail use and dirt jump construction. SDHC continues to dismantle these jumps and post signage, but please help us by staying out of the preserve area and notify the authorities if individuals are seen entering the preserve.

HOW YOU CAN HELP THE PRESERVE

Trash & Hazardous Materials

Please help keep the preserve healthy by disposing of trash in receptacles. If you see trash along or in the preserve, help us out by disposing of it or calling SDHC to address it. Hazardous materials, including vehicle fuel and oil, household cleaning products, paints, and solvents are extremely detrimental to the health of the preserve. Please call SDHC if you observe illegal dumping or signs of hazardous materials in the preserve.

Use Humane Pest Control

Poisonous chemicals such as rodenticides used at your home can have an indirect harmful effect to wildlife that live in the area. Whether consumed by target pests or other native mammals, such as squirrels or skunks, these poisons can cause secondary poisoning when the poisoned animal is consumed by predatory species, such as coyotes or owls. In an effort to protect wildlife within the preserve, please consider more humane forms of pest control.



Volunteer Today!

Help protect the preserve by joining us in the field to remove non-native plants and trash, and learn about the sensitive resources in your community.



BIOLOGICAL THREATS

Invasive Plants

Native plants in the preserve are sensitive to invasive species. Invasive species are not native to the San Diego area and if left unchecked will choke out native species, drastically decreasing the biodiversity and health of the ecosystem we are trying to preserve. A large part of our role is to control and remove the invasive plant species that continue to invade the native habitat. SDHC requests your assistance in making sure that ornamental plants or exotic species are not discarded into the native habitat, and that any houseplants are kept within your property to avoid introducing new invasive species. To the right are some of the common invasive plant species within the preserve and their impacts.

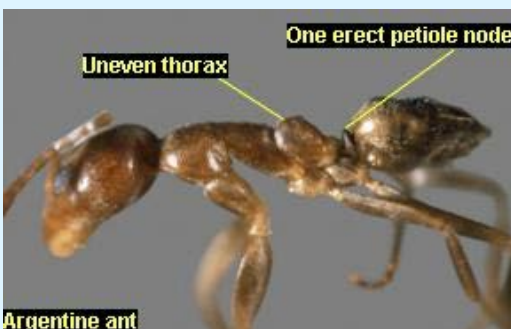
Invasive Pests

In addition to the invasion of nonnative plant species, invasive animal species can cause harm to our native flora and fauna as well. Some of the pests found within the region include; brown-headed cowbird, which uses nest parasitism to outcompete and reduce native bird species; shot hole borer beetle; which can decimate mature forests by farming fungi within trees; and the Argentine ant; which you can help us to control!



Brown-headed cowbird (male and female)
Photo by Patricia Pierce

A small but detrimental pest, the invasive Argentine ant (*Linepithema humile*) is known to eat the young of various species including birds, rabbits and snakes. They alter entire insect communities and spread bacteria and viruses through their waste. Argentine ants range from light to dark brown, they measure about 2.2 to 2.8 mm long, and their antennae have 12 segments. We are monitoring the infestation in the preserve and will be installing control measures. Neighboring residents can help by controlling ants inside your buildings with a commercially available boric acid solution (see <http://www.kmantpro.com>). Please feel free to contact us with any questions regarding pest management.



Argentine ant
Photo from University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources

Below are the common invasive plants found within the preserve that we are working to remove. Control of each species requires a unique treatment method, such as hand removal or treatment with a specific herbicide. For additional information please visit Cal-IPC.

SHORT-POD MUSTARD



PHOTO BY GARY MCDONALD

Short-lived perennial herb that grows and spreads quickly in disturbed habitats. Produces seeds in large numbers which can live in the soil for several years.

FOUNTAIN GRASS



Photo by Adrienne Simmons

Perennial grass that is well adapted to fire and can recover to pre-burn density, or even increase in density, following a burn. Contributes to type conversion of shrublands to grasslands by increasing potential fire frequency.

POISON HEMLOCK



PHOTO BY ZOYA AKULOVA

Biennial forb toxic to humans and animals when ingested; handling plants can cause contact dermatitis in some people. Outcompetes native plants by over-shading.

TREE TOBACCO



PHOTO BY MICHAEL O'BRIEN

Tree/shrub that outcompetes and displaces native plant species. Forms dense monodominant stands due to its high rate of fruit and seed set. All parts of the plant are poisonous.

FENNEL



PHOTO BY NEAL KRAMER

Perennial herb that can exclude or prevent native plant establishment and can alter the composition and structure of many plant communities. Outcompetes native species for light, nutrients, and water

CASTOR BEAN



PHOTO BY TOUTCHA LEBGUE-KELENG

Herbaceous plant or semi-woody large shrub or small tree. Grows quickly in mild climates. Contains ricin, an extremely toxic chemical that can kill an adult when small amounts are ingested. Handling foliage and seeds can cause severe dermatitis.