

## Welcome to the Hidden Valley Nature Trail

### A self-guided interpretive trail

Typical Walking Time: 45 Minutes

Description: A level trail, with the exception of one short, steep grade, which must be walked both down-hill and up-hill.

- ❖ Please take care while walking on the trail.
- ❖ Hats and water bottles are recommended.
- ❖ Please stay on the trail so that you do not disturb the plants or animals.
- ❖ Adults are requested to monitor all children, and ensure that they stay on the trail, do not enter the ponds, and do not throw rocks or other objects.
- ❖ Note the arrows on the trail posts which will guide you through the trail. The numbers on the posts correspond to the numbers in this guide.

#### Post 1 – Top of the hill

Below you flows the Santa Ana River, which originates in the San Bernardino Mountains near Big Bear. It travels 96 miles through the Santa Ana Canyon and along State Route 91 before emptying into the Pacific Ocean at Huntington Beach.

Follow the trail to your right, past the Nature Center's Native Garden for a more gradual descent to the wetland ponds. Watch for cottontail rabbits in the brush, footprints on the trail, and for side-blotched lizards on the right-hand side. Both the rabbits and lizards are

difficult to see since they camouflage well. Off to the left you might see Jimsonweed-datura, recognizable by its large white flowers. Although the plant is poisonous, it was used in ceremonies by the local Native Americans, the tribe known as the Tongva.

#### Post 2 - Benches

Enjoy the view and the solitude from the benches, found halfway down the grade. On a clear day you can see Cucamonga Peak to the north. Above, you may see a red-tailed hawk or a turkey vulture soaring, and lizards may be sunning themselves near where you sit. Farmers till the soil adjacent to the County Park land. A grain crop is grown in the fall specifically for the migrating Canada geese. The Canada geese make the river bottom their winter home, feeding on the young shoots of the crop and sleeping on the ponds. The ponds below this vantage point are wildlife ponds. These are a part of the system of ponds that begin upstream, and are used to filter nitrates in the treated sewage water from the city of Riverside. Continue on the trail down the hill.

#### Post 3 – Bottom of the hill

The small nesting boxes are built for western bluebirds, but are often used by wrens, sparrows and bushtits as well. During spring, watch for parents feeding their babies. In late spring and early summer look for gold finches. In front of you is the elderberry tree. It is called the tree of music because the Native Americans used it to make flutes and clappers. The roots, stems and leaves are poisonous. The berries are poisonous when still green. Tea from the flowers was used for fever, upset stomachs, colds and the flu. Continue on the trail to your right.

#### Post 4 – Wetlands pond

Notice the cattails in front of you. In the spring, look and listen for red-winged blackbirds. Their nests are cuplike, and are attached to the cattails, hidden safely above the water and away from predators. The males are black, with bright, red-orange shoulders. Cattails were used by Native Americans for food, medicine, and construction material. The roots were used medicinally to heal bleeding wounds. Dried roots of the cattail were ground into meal. The shoots, spikes, and pollen were also used as a food source.

Look around the pond and you may see a large white bird in the water or the surrounding brush. These are egrets, and are typically looking for fish, frogs or gophers. In the winter you may also see white pelicans on the pond. The tree tobacco is a shrub or small tree with yellow, tubular flowers and is poisonous to humans. Hummingbirds use their long beaks to drink the nectar in the flowers. Continue left along the trail. To your right is an inlet to the pond. Often you will see silvery fish in the canal. These are mosquito fish. They eat mosquito larva from the water and greatly aid in mosquito abatement. Occasionally you will see a large catfish, carp, or bass swimming lazily along. When the water level is low, look for raccoon tracks in the mud.

#### Post 5 – Native village site, under development.

\* Please do not enter \*

This is the site of the Park's planned "Tongva Village," which is being developed. This village will be a re-creation of the life-style of the Native Tongva, also referred to as the San Gabriel Band, who lived here before the arrival of Europeans. Tongva means "people of the earth" in the Tongva language.

#### Post 6 - Bulrushes

The tall tubular plant is the bulrush-tule. Its stalks were woven together to make mats, baskets and hats. Its roots, seeds and pollen are edible. The roots were ground into flour by the Native Americans while its seeds were gathered and either eaten raw or ground into mush. Cakes were made from the pollen.

#### Post 7 - Platform with benches

Sit if you wish, and enjoy the shade and the view of the pond. Look for mallard and wood ducks, as well as moorhens, coots and great blue herons, on the pond. In the winter there may also be widgeon, black-capped night herons, and other migratory waterfowl.



#### Post 8 - Benches overlooking the pond

On your left is an animal tracking area, which is described later on your tour (Post no. 14). On your right are more benches and the wildlife pond.

#### Post 9 - Along the edge of the pond

What did the Native Americans use to build a house, weave baskets, and brush their teeth? The sandbar willow! Its branches were tied together with stinging nettle fibers to form the frames for their houses and its twigs were used to clean their teeth. The natives also utilized the bark to make "aspirin tea". The willow tree has long, narrow, deep green leaves. It usually grows near water and its seeds float on cottony parachutes.

Turn right here, and before you cross the bridge notice the wild grape vines to your left. The Native Americans used the wild grape as a source of food. Many of the birds and mammals such as skunks, opossums and coyotes enjoy them as well. In the late spring, listen for the deep "jug-o-rum" of the bull frog. Cross over the bridge to the bank of the island and turn right.



Post 10 - Nesting boxes

The large boxes over the water are for wood ducks to nest. Screech owls will occasionally nest in the boxes as well. Look across the pond, and you might spot night herons during the winter, and turtles on warm days.



As you continue along the trail, stay to the right and you will cross over another bridge.

Post 11 - West end of the pond

At this point, you have a choice... you can continue to your right to look at the ponds from another vantage point.

Or, you can turn left and shorten your walk.

Post 12 - Parking and horse staging area

To your left is the horse staging and parking area. To your right is another view of the pond. Relax on the bench if you would like, and enjoy the sounds of the wind, the ducks and coots, and the other sounds of the wildlife ponds.

As you continue back on the trail, you may find poison hemlock and stinging nettle.

**DO NOT TOUCH EITHER PLANT!**

Post 13 - Near the tracking area

Look up high and to the right, at the bluff on the south wall. Do you see a hole? In the spring, if there are white markings (guano) below the hole, there are barn owls nesting in it.

Post 14 - Tracking area



To your left is the tracking area. Look in the soft dirt and you may find tracks of raccoons, coyotes, cottontail rabbits, grey foxes, opossums, or long-tailed weasels. Many of these animals are nocturnal.

Post 15 - Edge of meadow

Can you find a tree with a leaf that looks like this? This is a Cottonwood tree. Native Americans used this tree as a type of aspirin and to make skirts. In the late spring, the female tree produces seeds which look like bits of white cotton, floating in the air.

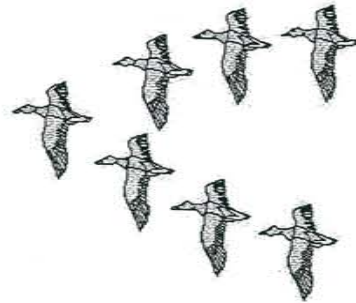


Post 16 - California Black Walnut Tree

This tree has been used by natives as a source of protein, for various medical uses, as a dye, and the nuts were even used for games!

This is the last observation point. The trail up to the Nature Center is steep, and you may want to take the more gradual trail to the left, which will take you by the Native Plant Garden.

Thank you for visiting Hidden Valley's Nature Trail. We hope you have enjoyed your walk. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask us at the Nature Center.



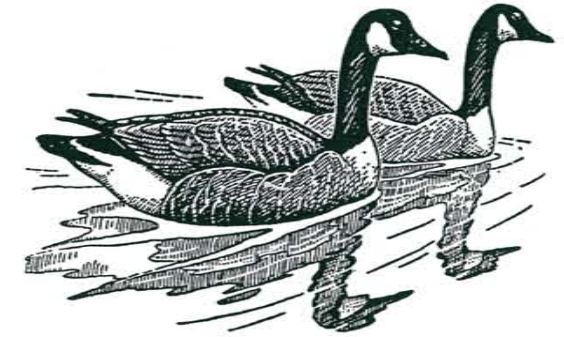
This self-guided nature trail was originally established in 2004 as an Eagle Scout community service project of a Boy Scout from Troop 127, Corona, Ca.

The trail markers, this guide and the trail map were revised and expanded in 2010 as an Eagle Scout project of a Boy Scout from Troop 270, Riverside, CA.

Hidden Valley Wildlife Area  
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## Nature Trail Guide

