

“Living Close to Nature”



Wildlife Viewing from Your Back Yard



Western fence lizards depend on the sun for warmth and may disappear during the winter. They and all other local lizards prey on crawling and flying insects. The blood of this species kills the Lyme disease bacterium carried by ticks.



The most abundant animals in coastal sage scrub are spiders and insects, including beetles, moths, and butterflies. In the fall, wilderness edge gardens may be visited by scary-looking but harmless tarantulas searching for winter burrows. Large black wasps with bright orange wings, known as tarantula hawks, blow in from the desert on Santa Ana winds. These predatory wasps paralyze tarantulas with venom, then stuff them into burrows as food for young wasps.



The great horned owl is often heard hooting after dark in canyon and ridgeline neighborhoods with lots of trees. A top carnivore, this large owl hunts after dark for anything rabbit-sized or smaller, including cats. The remains of its prey are coughed up in pellets of fur and bones, which are deposited on the ground under a favorite roost tree.

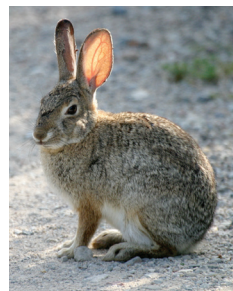


Before producing eggs, female ticks need a meal of blood from a bird, lizard, deer, dog, or human, depending on the tick. Ticks take up to several hours to attach themselves, during which time they may fall off your pet someplace in the house, crawl upwards on a curtain or piece of furniture, and await the next animal or human.



Also known as packrats, two kinds of these big-eared woodrats live locally. The desert woodrat is light-colored, smaller, and tends to live in cactus patches or rocks. Dusky-footed woodrats usually live in large stick nests under oak trees. These inquisitive rodents are vegetarian and are distinguishable by their large ears and hairy tails.

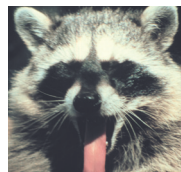
Opossums are primitive marsupial mammals that resemble large, white-faced rats. Fairly recent arrivals in California, these omnivorous creatures will carry their young into your garden to feast on your fruit crop.



Two local species of rabbits are the desert cottontail found in grassy areas, and the smaller brush rabbit in shrubby areas. Rabbits are likely to be common if the open space near your home has large grassy patches. Gardening can be a challenge if rabbits are plentiful.



More often smelled than seen, skunks are fearless hunters of small game (insects, snails, mice, snakes), venture readily into gardens, and may attempt to live under your home. Keep 15-20 feet away to avoid being sprayed.



Raccoons are omnivores that have become chronic garbage feeders in many neighborhoods. In the wild they eat whatever the environment provides, from insects to nuts to bird eggs and nestlings. Well fed, urbanized animals can weigh 35 lbs. and have long sharp claws.



The coyote is a largely nocturnal hunter that eats small mammals and a surprising amount of berries and fleshy fruit. An important member of the natural community, the coyote protects native bird populations by deterring smaller predators such as foxes, cats, raccoons, etc.



Mule deer visit gardens for water and succulent plant food when natural sources are scarce. In areas regularly visited by deer, any small tender plant will have to be protected, and it may not be possible to grow some kinds of plants, including vegetables, without elaborate fencing.

Controlling the Wilderness Edge

The population size of wild animals fluctuates in response to vegetation, weather, and season of the year. Animal sightings and problems may wax and wane over the years. During drought years, overall numbers of local wildlife decline, and more animals than usual seek water and food in gardens. Cold or wet winters may encourage mice and rats to look for dry quarters around your house.

In late spring, young animals and birds leave the nest or den and look for new territories. As with teenage humans, juveniles make a lot of noise, take chances, and sometimes blunder into unusual places. If that includes your backyard, don't encourage the animal with food and water or attempt to touch it. The animal may abandon its usual food sources and start foraging through other back yards. Also, encouraging ground birds such as quail out of the wildlands may actually be luring them into great danger from neighborhood cats and dogs.

Wild animals are naturally shy and fearful of human contact. In the long run it's better for them, and you, if they stay that way.

All animals, including birds and insects, have four essential needs: water, food, shelter, and protected nest or den sites. Generally, you can encourage or discourage wildlife use of your garden by controlling these elements.

Tips:

- **Feed your pets inside** and don't leave other food out overnight. Clean any remaining food and sauce off your barbecue immediately after use. Skunks are very fond of BBQ sauce and will knock over even a hot grill.
- **Keep your garbage from becoming a food source.** Use receptacles with locking lids, or store them in the garage rather than outside.
- **Screen any openings under your house.**
- **Avoid brush or rock piles** close to the house.
- **Hire someone to live-trap and remove a nuisance animal** if other methods fail.

Pets and Wildlife

Tips:

- **Keep wildlife and pets away from each other.** As with people, good fences make good neighbors.
- **Protect all pets within a fenced back yard** for their overall safety. Vaccinate dogs and cats regularly against rabies.
- **Keep all pets inside at night, especially cats and small dogs.** Enclose bird or rabbit pens on all sides, including the top (install roof or secure chicken wire).
- **Bury wire walls of large enclosures one foot in the ground** to prevent raccoons and other animals from tunneling underneath. A 12-inch-high concrete wall around the perimeter of your yard will deter snakes. Check the perimeter frequently. Accept that raccoons and herons will eat the fish in your ornamental pond if it is less than 5 feet deep.
- **Never release unwanted cats, dogs, fish, frogs, birds, etc. into a park or natural area.** Abandoned pets usually starve to death or are eaten. Released pets may introduce disease to wild animal populations.

Our pets are urban dwellers, biologically and behaviorally unprepared for the dangers of the wildlands. Wild animals do not respond in a friendly manner to an inquisitive pet. Encounters between pets and larger wildlife, such as raccoons, opossums, or bobcats, can result in claw and bite wounds requiring medical attention. Dogs and cats allowed to roam will be treated as prey by coyotes and mountain lions searching for food. Even large dogs are not safe from coyote packs.

Unrestrained pets can cause problems for themselves and small local wildlife. Even leashed dogs are not allowed in wilderness areas because their scent can be disruptive to deer and other animals.

Dogs and cats roaming in open lands can easily pick up ticks and fleas carrying serious diseases such as Lyme disease or Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Well-fed cats and dogs allowed to run free in wilderness areas can wreak havoc on wild bird populations and harm or kill other wildlife.

Snakes

Snakes are predators, hunting small mammals, frogs, lizards, and birds. In turn, they are prey for large carnivorous birds like red-tailed hawks. If you absolutely must exclude snakes from your garden, a 12" wall around the entire perimeter is usually sufficient to keep snakes out.



The largest local snake is the harmless and beneficial gopher snake. This yellow-and-brown patterned snake preys on a variety of mice, rats, and gophers. If handled improperly, gopher snakes (and most others) can bite but cannot inject venom. A common garden snake is the small western ring neck snake, named for the bright orange ring behind the head. The black and yellow-white banded king snake hunts and kills rattlers.

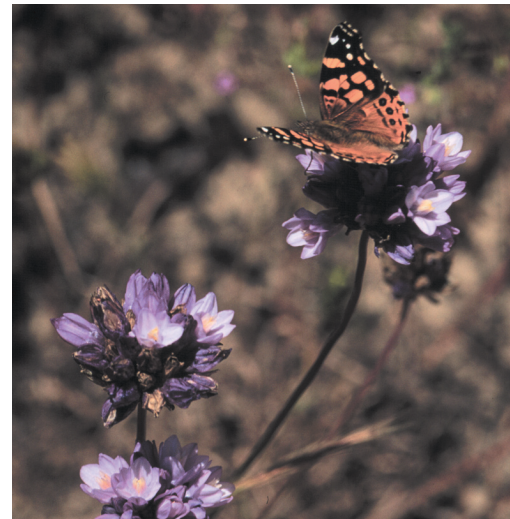
The only dangerous snakes locally are rattlesnakes, but many people fear all snakes. If you live on the edge of a wild area, someday you will find a snake in the garden. After the initial surprise, back off, take time to observe, and try to determine if it is a rattlesnake.

Rattlers, even small ones, have a large, roughly triangular shaped head that is distinctly wider than the neck of the snake. No other local snake has this characteristic. In addition, rattlesnakes have one or more rattles on the end of their tail. Very young ones have a button instead. All other snakes' tails end in pointed tips.



Do not try to pick up an intruding snake. Shoo it towards an open door, or if in the garden, let it find its own way out. Keep inquisitive pets away.

If you have determined that the snake is a rattlesnake, keep pets and people away and call the local animal control officer or police to remove it.



The best way to ensure the survival of butterflies is to protect all stages of their lives.

Butterflies

Colorful, erratic visitors to most gardens, butterflies are attracted by a wide variety of flowers, both native and cultivated. A growing number of people around the country plant butterfly gardens – mixtures of colorful, nectar-rich flowering plants. Some stores sell butterfly feeders that you fill with a sugar water solution.

The butterfly is the last of four distinct stages: egg, caterpillar or feeding stage, pupa or resting stage, and adult butterfly. Besides feeding the adults, if you really want to help butterflies, plant caterpillar food plants. Unlike the adult, the caterpillar can feed on only one or a very few types of plants. The monarch caterpillar eats only plants in the milkweed family. Some varieties, such as Indian milkweed, are handsome plants with attractive clusters of flowers.

Many caterpillar plants, like wild anise, wild mustard, and cheeseweed, are non-native and considered weeds, so a butterfly garden may work best in a corner that doesn't have to look neat all the time. Most importantly, help butterflies complete their life cycle by looking out for the resting stage, the pupa, before clearing weeds, leaf litter, or other debris.

Gardening is for the Birds and Butterflies

Stretch the Wilderness with Native Plants in Your Garden

Our protected natural areas are not large enough to ensure that all local wildlife populations will thrive. By providing habitat, you can help “stretch” the wilderness and encourage birds and butterflies to make their homes in your garden. Begin by providing a reliable source of water, then plant their favorite native trees and shrubs for food and shelter. Choose native plants for the bulk of your landscaping if you want attractive, low-maintenance, drought-tolerant, fire-retardant plants. You may have to alter your gardening techniques slightly to accommodate them.

Avoid invasive plant species. After a rainy winter, you may find small “volunteer” plants in your garden that turn out to be native species from adjacent wildlands. Conversely, many garden plants escape into the wildlands, where they displace native plants but do not provide food or proper shelter for wildlife. Certain non-native plants are notoriously invasive and harmful: pampas grass, fountain grass, Spanish and French broom, giant reed, and tamarisk are the worst, but many others, such as ice plant, can pose a threat to small patches of rare native plants.

Many native plants are unusually attractive but not well known to gardeners. Visit a nursery or arboretum specializing in Southern California plants, or a plant sale by the California Native Plant Society, to learn about the variety and beauty of these plants. On the next page is a short list of native plants suitable for the wilderness edge garden.

Tips:

- **Increase spatial and plant diversity.** Choose a variety of plants of different heights and plant them in casual groupings around open areas animals can use for foraging.
- **Leave some leaf litter on the ground for food and shelter.** Natural vegetation is not neat, but it provides food for birds and lizards – for example, seeds and insects that accumulate under leaf litter. Leaf litter or other mulch also protects the surface of the soil from the sun, softening it, retaining moisture, and allowing beneficial earthworms to flourish. California sycamore leaves are particularly desirable.
- **Practice organic gardening.** Limit or eliminate the use of toxic chemicals in your garden. Birds and lizards need insect food.
- **To start a butterfly garden, plant larval food plants, preferably local natives, needed by our local butterflies.** Try to identify any butterfly in your garden with a butterfly field guide. Some common butterflies and their larval food plants are: American painted lady–cheeseweed (non-native), anise swallowtail–wild anise (non-native), monarch–common milkweed, mourning cloak–willow, tiger swallowtail–California sycamore.
- **Reduce the amount of lawn and increase the amount of trees and shrubs in the garden.** The more cover and variety of food your garden provides, the more birds you will have.

Birds



Gardening with native plants can help you create a backyard environment that enhances your quality of life.

In semi-arid Southern California, water is the single most important attraction for native birds. Hanging or pedestal style birdbaths are widely available, and there are even styles for decks. Situate a standing birdbath away from shrubs and clumps of dense vegetation that could hide a crouching cat, a major danger for birds. If cats are not a problem, a small fountain or pond is an attractive way to provide water for birds, but expect other wildlife visitors as well.

Plant native trees and large bushes. Toyon, live oak, California sycamore, elderberry, and lemonadeberry provide food and shelter all year to wild birds. Familiar native plants will help draw local birds into your garden. A diversity of plants will provide food at different seasons.

Consider providing bird feeders for seed-eating birds until food plants grow. Native seed-eaters such as goldfinches, towhees, white crowned-sparrows, grosbeaks, mourning doves, scrub jays, and possibly quail, will appear at feeders and gardens located near patches of native vegetation. Insect- or fruit-eating birds will be more common in gardens with native shrubs that provide those kinds of food.

What difference can an ant make?

Native harvester ants are effective dispersers of seeds for native plants and are an important food source for the Coast horned lizard. These and



many other native ant species are very sensitive to the small, black Argentine ants (the small common ant that invades our homes) and to the red imported fire ants and will disappear from areas where the aggressive alien ants have invaded. Moist irrigated soil on the edge of the Reserve will encourage the Argentine ant and the red imported fire ant to invade the natural habitat, thus displacing the native ant.



The gentle coast horned lizard has a distinctive flat body. Two horns at the back of the head are larger than the surrounding spines. Frequenting a variety of habitats, the Coast horned lizard requires warm, open areas for sunning, patches of fine, loose soil to bury itself, and ants to eat. Harvester ants make up more than half its diet.

The Cycles of Life and Fire in the Southland



Many native shrubs such as lemonadeberry respond with vigorous new growth after a fire.

Southern California’s climate is characterized by mild, wet winters and warm, dry summers. Native plants adapt to these conditions with a variety of seasonal strategies. Winter rains trigger vigorous new growth, leading to a green winter landscape and spring flowers. During the long summer months, many plants die back and their metabolism slows, allowing them to conserve scarce water and energy. The cycle of growth and die-back produces a layer of dry leaves and stems that will ultimately be recycled by fire.

Wildland fires are as much a part of Southern California’s natural history as earthquakes. While both of these forces can produce catastrophic results for humans, they play an integral role in shaping this region’s extraordinarily complex landscape. During our lifetime, many of the open space lands that surround our communities will burn. The vegetation that occupies Southern California’s canyons and hillsides is not only accustomed to fire, but in most cases needs fire and responds with vigorous new growth. If you live in a newer community, your home is protected by a “fire break” or “fuel modification zone” along the wilderness edge. This area contains fire-resistant native plants and is maintained by your homeowners’ association or other similar entity.

Native plants, adapted to our semi-arid climate, are naturally drought-tolerant. To survive the warm, dry summer, some species lose their leaves and become dormant. However, plants recommended for wilderness edge landscaping will stay green all year with a minimum of water. Their ability to withstand drought and keep high moisture levels in leaves and branches is what also makes them fire-retardant.



Recommended Native Plants for the Garden in Areas Adjacent to Wilderness*

Non-native plant species can invade wilderness areas, crowd out native plant species, block sunlight and absorb the available water and nutrients without providing food or habitat to local wildlife.

Cactus & Succulents

Coastal prickly-pear
Coast cholla
Lance-leaved dudleya †\$
Chalk-live-forever
Spanish bayonet
Bear grass

Wildflowers

Wooley blue curls †
Blue-eyed grass

Evergreen Trees

Coast live oak †\$
Toyon (Christmas berry) †
Elderberry †
Scrub oak

Deciduous Trees

California sycamore †\$
Big-leaf maple

Small-Medium Shrubs

California fuchsia †
Chaparral honeysuckle †
Bladderpod †
Bush monkeyflower \$

Bunchgrasses

Purple stipa
Foothill stipa

Large Shrubs

Lemonadeberry †
Laurel sumac †
Coffeeberry †\$
Coyote bush †
Hollyleaf cherry †
Hollyleaf redberry †
California lilac
Chaparral currant
Fuschia-flowered gooseberry †

Notes:

* Plants growing in Orange County’s natural areas. Many other plants are native to California but are not found locally in the wild. All species are considered to be drought and fire-resistant.

† Recommended for bird gardening.

\$ Food plant for butterfly larvae.

Living with Wilderness at Your Back Door



For your comfort and protection:

Dress the part. Increase your comfort level on the trail by being prepared. Avoid sunburn with sunscreen, a shirt, and a hat. Wear sturdy shoes, and take water and a snack.

Travel with a partner whenever possible. Use the buddy system to minimize the dangers of mishap. Children in particular should never go into the wilderness alone.

Be alert to your surroundings. Awareness is the key to preventing accidents such as falls and snake bites. Rattlesnakes are often found in the shade around rocks and fallen logs. Look before you put a hand or foot down.

Using and Enjoying the Open Space

Explore the trails in the coastal area, which consists of Laguna Coast Wilderness Park, Aliso and Wood Canyons Wilderness Park, Bommer Canyon, Crystal Cove State Park and Mason Regional Park.

Wilderness areas in central Orange County consist of Weir Canyon, Fremont Canyon, Limestone Canyon and Anaheim Wilderness Area, Irvine Regional Park, Peters Canyon Regional Park, Santiago Oaks Regional Park, Whiting Ranch Wilderness Park, and the Cleveland National Forest.

Choose from docent-led hiking, cycling, and equestrian-led tours or self-guided activities on designated trails. In some cases advance reservations are required. To ensure entry when desired, call the appropriate number listed on the back page in advance of your planned visit.

Can’t make up your mind? Take a docent-led tour for a great introduction to the wilderness. Let the specially-trained volunteers point out highlights of natural history as they guide you through Orange County’s most scenic places. Docents offer a range of tours generally suitable for ages 7 – 70 and most physical conditions.

For more information about the open space on the Irvine Ranch, including activities, programs, events and volunteering, visit irlandmarks.org

Wilderness Trail Etiquette and Safety

Keep yourself and the wilderness areas healthy:

Use park entrances and travel on designated trails. It doesn’t take much off-trail activity to beat down sensitive vegetation, whether you are traveling on foot, horseback, or bicycle. Stay off sandstone rock outcroppings to avoid harming the special plants there.

Respect wildlife. Travel quietly to be more aware of your environment and to avoid disturbing wildlife or other people on the trail. All wild animals are unpredictable. For their safety and yours, keep your distance. Keep small children close by.

Leave the dog safely at home. Deer and other wildlife tend to avoid areas with dog scent and droppings, thus shrinking their available habitat. Dogs roaming in open country can easily pick up harmful ‘foxtails’ (the seed heads of certain grasses) or ticks and fleas carrying serious human diseases such as Lyme disease or Rocky Mountain spotted fever.

Leave what you find, and add nothing. Your enjoyment of wildlands is due in part to a multitude of plants and animals organized into natural communities. To remove any single component of this complex web of life is to weaken the entire system. Pack out any litter.

Maximize your enjoyment and minimize your impact. If possible, avoid crowded weekends and holidays and other times when the environment is particularly fragile, such as after heavy rains when trails are muddy.

Respect closed areas and usage restrictions designed for habitat protection and your safety. Some open space is not open to the public for part or all of the year. When allowed, public access will always be clearly marked.



Volunteer opportunities abound in your local wilderness. Contact an organization you would like to assist for more information.

IRVINE RANCH NATURAL LANDMARKS



Local Wilderness Destinations

Coastal Area

ALISO AND WOOD CANYONS WILDERNESS PARK

(949) 923-2200 Managed by the County of Orange. Open daily, 7 AM to sunset. Hiking, cycling, equestrian; no pets.

CRYSTAL COVE STATE PARK

(949) 494-3539 Managed by the State of California. Open daily, 6 AM to sunset. Hiking, cycling, equestrian; no pets except on Pelican Point bicycle trail.

THE IRVINE RANCH NATURAL LANDMARKS

For more information about the open space on The Irvine Ranch, including activities, programs, events and volunteering, visit irlandmarks.org

LAGUNA COAST WILDERNESS PARK

(949) 494-9352 Managed by the County of Orange. Wilderness access every Saturday and Sunday 7 AM to 4 PM. Hiking, cycling, equestrian; no pets. Docent-led hikes available. Reservations required.

JAMES DILLEY PRESERVE

Open some Saturdays 9 AM to 2 PM. Hiking only; no pets.

Central Area

THE IRVINE RANCH NATURAL LANDMARKS

For more information about the open space on The Irvine Ranch, as well as activities, programs, events and volunteering, visit irlandmarks.org

SANTIAGO OAKS REGIONAL PARK

(714) 973-6620

PETERS CANYON REGIONAL PARK

(714) 973-6611

WHITING RANCH WILDERNESS PARK

(949) 923-2245 Managed by the County of Orange. Open daily, 7 AM to sunset. Hiking, cycling, equestrian; no pets. No unaccompanied minors.

IRVINE REGIONAL PARK

(714) 973-6835 Managed by the County of Orange. Open daily, 7 AM to sunset. Hiking, cycling, equestrian, zoo; pets on leash.

Visit www.ocparks.com for additional outdoor recreational opportunities.

For Assistance and More Information

Native Plants

- **California Native Plant Society.** Plant sales, guidelines for native plant gardening, field guides. The Orange County Chapter website is www.ics.uci.edu/~hamson/CNPS/ or call Sarah Jayné at (949) 552-0691.
- **Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden,** Claremont. (909) 625-8767. Native plant gardens, sales, bookstore.
- **Southern California Botanists,** Dept of Biology, CSU Fullerton. (657) 278-7034. Ask for Alan Romsper.
- Most nurseries stock native plants and seeds.

Wildlife

- **Acorn Naturalists,** Tustin. website: acornnaturalists.com or (800) 422-8886. Call for catalog. Large selection of science and nature books, kits, videos, etc.
- **Living With Wildlife** (California Center for Wildlife, 1994) Sierra Club Books.
- **Orange County Natural History web page:** <http://mamba.bio.uci.edu/~pjbyrant/biodiv/>
- **Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center of Orange County,** (714) 374-5587. Care for sick or injured wildlife.
- **Xerxes Society,** Portland, Oregon, 503-232-6639. Non-profit organization for the preservation of habitats for butterflies and other invertebrates.
- **Pacific Wildlife Project,** (949) 831-1178. For all injured birds except raptors.
- **Orange County Vector Control,** (714) 971-2421.

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