

April 2023

# Valley Wilds

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A publication of the LARPD Open Space Unit

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## POISON OAK

BY RANGER DANNY HABERMAN

When you're out hiking along the many trails here in Sycamore Grove, you will notice many wonderful plants and different wildlife. You can see wildflowers, twisting and turning beautiful Sycamore trees, a plethora of grasses and shrubs. These native plants are incredible to see in the park all year round in many different stages of their lives. Right now, in Sycamore Grove Park, you can see the one plant most people get concerned about, poison oak, beginning to bud, bloom, and leaf out.

Pacific poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*) is all over Sycamore Grove Park. There is no need to concern yourself with it as long as you stay on trail since the Rangers work diligently to keep it off of the hiking trails. However, right off trail, in certain spots, you can see this member of the sumac family growing. It's important to be able to identify these plants because they can cause irritation to the skin. The poison oak plant produces an oil called *Urushiol oil* that, according to the University of California Agriculture & Natural Resources, 75% of adults have a reaction to this oil and the reaction varies for each person. The oil is produced on the surface of the leaf and can be active year round.

Learning to identify the plants can be tricky, especially if there are no leaves on them. The common trick is "leaves of three, let it be." The shrub will typically grow anywhere between 1-6 feet tall in woodland areas with lots of sunlight. They will also grow in shaded areas as vines and move their way up other plants, sometimes reaching 75 feet tall! The leaves of this plant will have a glossy shimmer to them and vary in color from greens to reds.

This plant often gets mistaken for the blackberry plant. The best way to tell the difference is the blackberry plant will have spines on the vine. A good way to remember this is the phrase: "If it's hairy, it's a berry."

Poison oak is not all gloom and doom. Many animals such as our black-tailed deer, birds and insects rely on this plant for sustenance. The leaves and berries are great food sources for these animals and help to sustain the wide variety of birds in the area.

If you come in contact with poison oak you should be careful not to spread the oils anywhere else than the already contacted area. Then, as soon as possible, wash with cool water and an over the counter treatment such as Tech-nu.

So next time you're out in Sycamore Grove be aware of these plants and watch the wildlife enjoy the tasty meal it provides.



Poison oak leaves. Notice the shine, the lack of hairs, and the little bit of red on some of the leaves.





Poison oak with red leaves growing up a pine tree.





Blackberry brambles for reference.

## April Ranger Programs



**Saturday, April 1st**  
**~~10:00 AM, 11:00 AM, 12:00~~**  
**~~PM, 1:00 PM, 2:00 PM~~**

*Sycamore Grove Park,  
 Reservable Picnic Area  
 (5035 Arroyo Road)*

Come out to Sycamore Grove Park and join the Rangers for a Springtime egg-stravaganza! We will learn all about



**Saturday, April 1st**  
**2:00 PM**

*Amphitheater,  
 Sycamore Grove Park,  
 Wetmore Road Entrance  
 (1051 Wetmore Road)*

Bigfoot, Loch Ness Monster, Chupacabra and many others! Come join Ranger Seth and we will discuss

egg-cellent adaptive eggs! We will have five different start times for egg hunts, a look at some of our local bird nesting habits, and egg specimens, and some egg-citing eggs-periments! Candy and other prizes will be awarded for eggs gathered. Only Egg Hunt participants need to register and pay the fee – but all minors must be accompanied by an adult. Cancelled if raining.

**Register online!**

(Click the times above to register for that time slot.)

where these myths meet the truth within these cryptid animals. You might actually be surprised to learn how some of these origins came to be. Then at the end Ranger Seth will tell you about his encounter with one of these BIG myths.

What better way to celebrate April Fool's Day in Sycamore Grove Park?

**Register online!**

## Cattail Pond Hike Sycamore Grove Park

**Sunday, April 2nd  
9:00 AM**



**Sunday, April 2nd  
9:00 AM**

*Sycamore Grove Park,  
Wetmore Road Entrance  
(1051 Wetmore Road)*

Come take a nice morning 3 mile walk up to Cattail Pond with Ranger Danny. We will learn about the turtles in the area and whatever other wildlife decides to join us for our morning jaunt! Bring water and snacks if needed.

**Register online!**

CALLING ALL NATURE LOVERS!



# SPRING NATURE CAMP

AT SYCAMORE GROVE PARK

**APRIL 3-7** **AGES 7-10**

**Monday - Friday  
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM**

**April, 3rd - 7th  
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM**

*Sycamore Grove Park,  
Reservable Picnic Area  
(5035 Arroyo Road)*

Calling all nature lovers! Join us at Spring Nature Camp during one of the most beautiful and fun times of year at Sycamore Grove Park. See birds building nests, hunt for ladybugs in the grass, and stop to smell the wildflowers all while learning about the natural world around us through age-appropriate programs and activities.

**Register online by clicking the links below!**

**Oaks Group  
Sycamores Group**





**Saturday, April 8th  
2:00 PM**

*Amphitheater,  
Sycamore Grove Park,  
Wetmore Road Entrance  
(1051 Wetmore Road)*

Let's make some art using the plant powerhouse, leaves! Join Ranger Vickie for a drop by opportunity to make your own Sycamore Grove inspired art to take home with you and learn a bit about the different leaf adaptations around the world.

**Register online!**

# SPRING NIGHT HIKE

**SATURDAY, APRIL 8TH**

**SYCAMORE GROVE PARK**

**7:30 PM**

**REGISTER ONLINE**



**Saturday, April 8th  
7:30 PM**

*Sycamore Grove Park,  
Wetmore Road Entrance  
(1051 Wetmore Road)*

Come out and enjoy Sycamore Grove Park after hours with Ranger Gilbert. We will be taking a nice stroll (approx. 1 mile) in hopes of catching a glimpse of some of the park's nocturnal inhabitants. Bring a comfortable pair of shoes and a warm jacket!

**Register online!**



**Saturday, April 15th  
2:00 PM – 3:00 PM**

*Sycamore Grove Park,  
Arroyo Road Entrance  
(5049 Arroyo Road)*

Enjoy a water-themed storytime then walk down to the creek with an LARPD Ranger to learn about water and the wildlife found there. Please wear sturdy



**Saturday, April 15th  
9:00 AM – 12:00 PM**

*Sycamore Grove Park,  
Wetmore Road Entrance  
(1051 Wetmore Road)*

Every 3rd Saturday of the month, join Ranger Seth for a volunteer work day in the park. From removing invasive plants to litter pick-ups to trail maintenance,

shoes that you don't mind getting wet. For more information, please call (925) 373-5500 or contact Librarian Caitlyn Lung at [cmlung@livermoreca.gov](mailto:cmlung@livermoreca.gov).

volunteers will help maintain Sycamore Grove Park as a beautiful and healthy place for both visitors and wildlife. For more information and **to register**, please **sign up here**.

## Earth Day at Sycamore Grove Park

**Saturday, April 22nd**

**10:00 AM  
to 2:00 PM**



**Register  
online!**

**Saturday, April 22nd  
10:00 AM – 2:00 PM**

*Sycamore Grove Park,  
Wetmore Road Entrance  
(1051 Wetmore Road)*

There is no Planet B... so best we take good care of this one! This Earth Day, come celebrate at Sycamore Grove Park while taking action to help protect our planet. We'll have drop-in crafts and activities for kids and adults, guided hikes in the park, and volunteer projects to directly better our local ecosystems.

**Register online!**

## ROCK TALK AT SPRINGTOWN LIBRARY!



**TUESDAY, APRIL 25TH  
6:00 - 7:00 PM**

**Email Librarian  
Caitlyn Lung  
at [cmlung@livermoreca.gov](mailto:cmlung@livermoreca.gov)  
to register.**

**Tuesday, April 25th  
6:00 PM – 7:00 PM**

*Springtown Library*

Meet the Rangers at the Springtown Library for some fun geology activities before going outside to admire some local geological features: Brushy Peak and Mount Diablo. For more information, please call (925) 373-5500 or contact Librarian Caitlyn Lung at [cmlung@livermoreca.gov](mailto:cmlung@livermoreca.gov).

# FLOODS

**BY RANGER GILBERT RODRIGUEZ**

Here on Earth, there are threats of natural disasters like earthquakes or tornadoes, but there is one that occurs more often than most and the results can be catastrophic. It is not very surprising that bodies of water have been an important part of people's lives throughout history. Creeks, rivers, and lakes supply resources essential to life, like food, fresh water, and fertile land for growing crops; without them, life on Earth would be bleak. Even though these bodies of water help us, when excessive rains or rapid ice melting occurs, water levels rise and turn these bodies of water into a destructive force.

Floods are usually categorized into three distinct types; river floods, coastal floods, and flash floods. River floods occur when water levels run over riverbanks because of heavy rainfall or rapid snow melting, or a barrier holding back water fails, causing the water to release. Coastal



floods are caused by heavy rainfall, intense winds, and hurricanes. Flash floods are the most dangerous of the three, usually occurring within 6 hours. It is caused by excessive rains and when underwater water systems and drainage overflow. This type of flood is known as the most dangerous because it occurs with little warning. In California, all types of floods can occur, though 90% are caused by river flooding in lowland areas. Throughout California's history, the state has endured several destructive floods dating all the way back to 1605 where a massive flood submerged substantial portions of California, potentially the largest flooding event of the prior 2,000 years! However, between December 31st, 2022, and January 25th, 2023, massive floods struck California. Periods of heavy rainfall caused by multiple atmospheric rivers, most notably the reoccurring Pineapple Express atmospheric river, affected parts of southern California, the California central coast, northern California, and even Nevada. Over 200,000 homes and businesses lost power and 6,000 individuals were ordered to evacuate prompting the governor of California to declare a state of emergency.

During the storm, Sycamore Grove Park did not make it out unscathed. Here in Livermore, there was a recorded 2 inches of rain in a 24-hour period prompting the California Department of Water Resources to release water from the neighboring Del Valle Dam at a rate of 3,000 cubic feet (about the volume of a one car garage) per second. This massive flow of water flooded the Arroyo Del Valle which flows directly into Sycamore Grove Park causing damage throughout the area. A large section of the heavily trafficked Arroyo Del Valle Regional Trail and sections of the single-track trails paralleling the creek washed away during the floods causing Livermore Area Park District Park Rangers to close the park for several weeks.

But even though things may seem like a disaster on the surface, floods can bring many benefits like transporting vital nutrients, such as nitrogen, phosphorus, and organic material, to the surrounding land. After the flood has passed and the water recedes it leaves sediment and nutrients behind. This becomes a rich natural fertilizer that improves soil quality and promotes plant growth! Floods may also replenish depleted underground aquifers which are especially important to cities like Livermore where we depend on these water supplies during long dry spells. Also, floods play a role in bringing life back to wetlands, like LARPD's Garaventa wetlands, which provide food and habitat for 40% of the world's animal species and act as a water filter, flood mitigator, and a carbon sink which is extremely beneficial to the ecosystem as it absorbs more carbon dioxide than it releases.

Floods are an unstoppable force of nature; they can be extremely destructive to humans and the environment, but are essential in the function of many ecosystems here on Earth. So, whether you think floods are good or bad, one thing is for certain: life would look a lot different without them.





A high water release in Arroyo Del Valle in Sycamore Grove Park.  
(Almost 3,000 cfs)





Flooded section of the paved trail on the Arroyo Road end of Sycamore Grove.  
(Almost 3,000 cfs)





Flooded section of the paved trail on the Arroyo Road end of Sycamore Grove.  
(3,000 cfs)

## May Ranger Programs



# Backpacking 101

Saturday, May 6th

2:00pm - 3:00pm

LARPD & Livermore  
Public Library



FOR MORE  
INFORMATION:

CALL CAITLYN LUNG:  
(925)373-5500

EMAIL CAITLYN LUNG:  
CMLUNG@LIVERMORECA.GOV

**Saturday, May 6th**

**2:00 PM – 3:00 PM**

*Livermore Civic Center Library*

Ever wanted to get into backpacking, but weren't sure how? Meet the Ranger at the Civic Center library to learn how to get started with backpacking and some local parks to backpack in. For more information, please call (925) 373-5500 or contact Librarian Caitlyn Lung at [cmlung@livermoreca.gov](mailto:cmlung@livermoreca.gov).

**LARPD Community  
Service Day  
At Sycamore Grove  
Park**

**Saturday, May 6th**

**8:30AM - 11:30AM**

**Register online!**



**Saturday, May 6th**

**8:30 AM – 11:30 AM**

*Sycamore Grove Park,  
Wetmore Road Entrance  
(1051 Wetmore Road)*

Help out native wildlife by removing invasive plants at Sycamore Grove Park. Light hiking to the weed pulling site required (0.5 - 3 miles depending on group). Physical labor involved: volunteers may need to bend over, be on their knees, and use gardening equipment. LARPD will have a limited number of gloves and trowels to borrow. If you have your own, it is highly recommended that volunteers bring heavy duty rubber or leather gardening/work gloves, in addition to water, snacks, and sun protection. Thank you for supporting local wildlife!

**Register online!**

**Mamas and Poppies:  
A Flower Hunt  
Sycamore Grove Park  
Sunday, May 7th  
12:00PM - 2:00PM**



**Sunday, May 7th**

**Campfire Cooking Class**

**Sycamore Grove Park**

**Saturday, May 13th**

**7:00 PM - 8:30 PM**

**Register online!**



**Saturday, May 13th**



**12:00 PM - 2:00 PM**

*Sycamore Grove Park,  
Nature Area Entrance*

In a pre-celebration of Mother's Day, join Ranger Mae for a hunt through the Nature Area to locate golden poppy flowers and learn unique facts along the way. We will NOT pick any live flowers, only admire them up close. Feel welcome to stay after the hike for a floral arts and crafts activity. This program may be rescheduled in the event of rainy weather conditions.

**Register online.**

**7:00 PM - 8:30 PM**

*Sycamore Grove Park,  
Reservable Picnic Area  
(5035 Arroyo Road)*

Come out to Sycamore Grove Park and join Ranger Seth around a campfire where we will be learning how to cook up something good using cast-iron and fire. We will be making tasty campfire cheesy bread as well as learning Ranger Seth's famous campfire chili recipe. Don't forget to leave room for dessert! We will be also making peach cobbler.

**Register online!**

## ***Bird Adaptations***

***Sycamore  
Grove Park***

***Saturday, May 13th***

***2:00PM - 3:30PM***

***Register Online***

**Saturday, May 13th  
2:00 PM- 3:30 PM**

*Sycamore Grove Park,  
Reservable Picnic Area  
(5035 Arroyo Road)*

Come by the park and join Ranger Vickie as we explore bird adaptations. We will discuss the different ways they eat and nest.

**Register online!**

**COME VOLUNTEER AT  
SYCAMORE GROVE  
PARK!**

**Saturday, May 20th**

**9:00 AM to  
12:00 PM**

**Register online at  
[www.larpd.org/volunteer](http://www.larpd.org/volunteer)**

**Saturday, May 20th  
9:00 AM – 12:00 PM**

*Sycamore Grove Park,  
Wetmore Road Entrance  
(1051 Wetmore Road)*

Every 3rd Saturday of the month, join Ranger Seth for a volunteer work day in the park. From removing invasive plants to litter pick-ups to trail maintenance, volunteers will help maintain Sycamore Grove Park as a beautiful and healthy place for both visitors and wildlife. For more information and **to register, please sign up here.**



**Sunday, May 21st  
9:00 AM**

*Holdener Park  
(2995 Hansen Road)*

Join Ranger Danny for a hike around the Holdener hills! We will be looking for wildflowers and some great views of Livermore from the hill tops!

**Register online!**



**Saturday, May 27th  
12:00 PM – 12:45 PM**

*Sycamore Grove Park,  
Reservable Picnic Area  
(5035 Arroyo Road)*

Come out to Sycamore Grove Park where we will be having a brief discussion on two animals that are often mistaken for one another; reptiles and amphibians!

**Register online!**

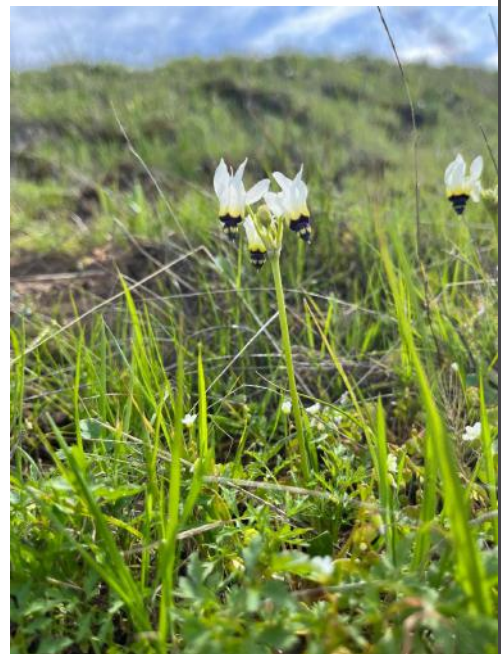
## Letter from the Editor

Hello,

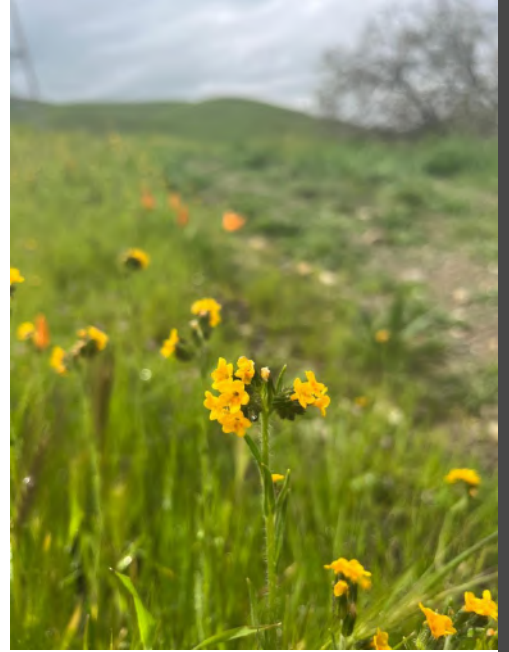
It's hard to believe it is already April! The year is going by so fast! LARPD Open Space Staff wants to remind you that registration for Summer LARPD Programs is happening! (March 29th is the first day of open registration for Livermore residents!) Here at Sycamore Grove we offer a Summer Nature Camp for kids aged 5 - 12. It is a fun program filled with adventure, games, and crafts! Additionally, general registration for Camp Shelly begins on April 25th! For all your Camp Shelly questions and important dates please visit our website!

Keep your eyes peeled for other fun Summer Ranger Programs the LARPD Park Rangers are offering as well!

Thank you,  
Dora O'Brien  
LARPD Naturalist  
Valley Wilds Newsletter Editor







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