



NATURE NEWS

Welcome to Nature News

Through this quarterly newsletter we hope to encourage you to **CONNECT** with us through our many programs, **EXPLORE** the wonders of nature, and help us **PRESERVE** Orange County wildlands. Enjoy!



Rambles About Nature

We All Belong Among the Wildflowers

Every summer my family camps for a week in Yosemite National Park. We camp with a group of about 5 other families. Some families we know, and some we don't until we get there. We all live in different cities, grew up in different areas, and as a group we span 5 generations. What we have



Volunteer Corner



in common is our love for the outdoors and sharing experiences in nature with our family and friends. And for each of us, adult and child alike, there are different trails, viewpoints, and activities that connect each of us to the park.

And we are not alone in our quest to hike to waterfalls, to watch the glow of Half Dome at sunset, or to marvel at the reflection of the mountains on Mirror Lake. Each year Yosemite, like many of our national parks, is filled with people from all over the country, and all over the world. A whole host of humans with a common goal much like ours, to experience the beauty of this natural area, and hopefully understand the importance of the conservation of natural areas.

And just like the diverse ecosystems that make up the park, these diverse groups of humans who experience and connect with the park, also contribute to the conservation of the park. By bringing a wide range of audiences and visitors, preserved natural areas from national parks and national forests to smaller scale nature reserves like ours, benefit from diverse perspectives, knowledge, and experiences in and about nature.

Part of understanding diversity in the outdoors and how diverse visitors can help conservation efforts begins with reshaping our views of what an “outdoorsy” person looks like.

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Laura's Line



Map Attributed to: National Environmental Education Foundation

The Nature Reserve: Preserving Biodiversity in the California Floristic Province

When you search the term “biodiversity”, AI will tell you that biodiversity is short for “biological diversity” and refers to the variety of life on Earth encompassing all living organisms from genes and species to ecosystems. Biodiversity can be further broken down into “species diversity” referring to the abundance of different species in a specific area, “genetic diversity” meaning the variety of genes within a species which influences the ability of that species to adapt to changing environments and “ecosystem diversity” which is defined

Diverse Programming Brings Diverse Volunteer Opportunities

The Nature Reserve volunteer program strives to offer opportunities for all, so that no matter the background, skill set, or experience with nature, there is something available for every volunteer to connect and create community. Together with our volunteers, we continue to follow a “Culture of Care,” preserving the land for ecological, educational, charitable and recreational uses.

Our volunteers help with school and community education programs, outreach at local festivals, trail maintenance, supporting hikes as trail sweeps, and even training new volunteers.

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Staff Picks



New Staff Spotlight

Katie Fung is our newest staff member at The Nature Reserve at Rancho Mission Viejo. In her position as Field Naturalist she supports the school programs, leading field trips for students in kindergarten through high school. This summer, she was

as the variety of habitats, communities and ecological processes at work within a given area.

Biodiversity hotspots are areas that contain at least 1,500 vascular plants found nowhere else on Earth (these are known as endemic species) and also have lost 70 percent of their primary native vegetation. Worldwide there are 36 such recognized hotspots of which the California Floristic Province (CFP) is one. The CFP includes most of California and extends to Northern Baja California. Species as big as the giant sequoia tree and as small as the Laguna Beach liveforever are endemic to the CFP.

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Species Spotlight

Coast Horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*)

The Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) is a State-listed Species of

Special Concern and a Covered Species under the Southern Subregion Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). They are found in California, along the Pacific coast from the Baja California border west of the deserts and the Sierra Nevada, north to the Bay Area, and inland as far north as Shasta Reservoir. This small, spiny lizard ranges from 2.5 – 4.5 inches in length and is named for the large crown of horns or spines displayed on its head, with the two center horns being the longest. Coast horned lizards have a flat, oval-shaped body that is colored reddish, brown, yellow, or gray, with dark blotches on the back and large dark spots on the sides of the neck to camouflage into surrounding rocks and soil. The belly is covered with smooth scales that are cream, beige, or yellow, usually with dark spots.

The species inhabits open areas with loose, sandy soil and low-growing vegetation in valleys, foothills, and semi-arid mountains and can often be found in lowlands along sandy washes with scattered shrubs and along dirt roads. Habitats for this species include alluvial fan sage scrub, coastal sage scrub, chaparral, open grasslands, and open woodlands.

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instrumental in guiding 6-11 year olds during our Summer Day Camps.

She loves connecting people with nature through immersive experiences.

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Outdoor Explorers



Biodiversity Investigators

According to conservation biologist, Dr. David Bowles, “In conservation biology, you can’t protect something if you don’t know it’s there.” Children are keen observers given the opportunities, tools, and mentors who encourage, explore and learn alongside them. One activity outdoor explorers can do to understand the natural world around them is a “BioBlitz Survey”.

A “BioBlitz” is an event where natural resource staff, professional scientists, teachers, students, and community scientists work together to find and identify as many different species within a natural area as possible using scientific methods. This information then supports decision making for management and monitoring practices.

The best part is that anyone can participate in a local “BioBlitz”! Learn more [here](#) from iNaturalist. Kids can start

Community Connections

Ladera Ranch Library Summer



Nature Programs

The month of July marks the 8th summer of nature programs with The Nature Reserve and the OC Public Library in Ladera Ranch. This collaboration and partnership bring our

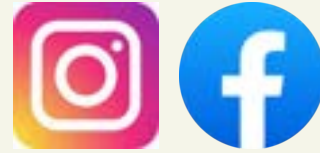
programming into one of the most important spaces in our community – the library. The focus on serving and helping others learn about the world and their local community is something we both share. Libraries are vital community resources that have evolved beyond books and children’s storytime hour. They provide access to internet and meeting spaces for a variety of groups and activities that strengthen ties to the community they serve. As the summer heats up, many come in to enjoy a place where everyone is welcome. This partnership gives The Nature Reserve an opportunity to bring attention to the wildlife and history of the local community.

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practicing their survey skills using this easy "BioBlitz Survey" activity linked below.

["BIOBLITZ" SURVEY FOR KIDS](#)

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