



SPRING 2014 NEWSLETTER

Hello Four Rivers Association Members,

As spring draws near I usually begin to get a little "itchy" to get out of the house and begin hiking in the nearby hills. This year unfortunately we are in the midst of a very serious drought. The normally verdant green hillsides where I hike are just barely turning green. If we do not get more rain soon we shall not have much of a wildflower season and the wild animals will have an even worse summer.

Now that waterfowl season is over it is a great time to view the surrounding waterfowl before they begin their northward migration. Many songbirds will begin arriving back from their winter vacations in Central America. And for the fishermen, spring is always a great time for your sport. So I want everybody to get out there and enjoy your favorite State Park. -David Milam, editor



San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area General Plan

The San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area General Plan was approved by the State Parks Commission on Friday August 9, 2013. This plan had been in the works for well over a decade. Since the land is actually owned by the Federal government they were closely involved as well and having the State Department of Water Resources operate the actual water storage/movement was another item to be considered. This document addresses the next 25-30 years of park operations and development. Congratulations!



The above article got me thinking about issues that a general plan covers, particularly the protection of any rare, threatened or endangered flora or fauna in the park. San Luis Reservoir SRA has the California Tiger Salamander and San Joaquin Kit Fox within its boundaries.



Did you know that Great Valley Grasslands State Park has at least four; the Vernal Pool Fairy Shrimp, the Vernal Pool Tadpole Shrimp, the California Tiger Salamander, and the Delta Button-celery.



Pacheco State Park has California Red-legged Frogs and Hospital Canyon Larkspurs.



Finally, Caswell Memorial State Park is home to Riparian Brush Rabbits.

All of these animals and plants require a specialized place to live and our parks provide them that. That is one of the reasons why certain areas in many of our parks are not developed but left in their natural state.



Dinosaur Point Recreation Area

During my 30+ years working at San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area and Pacheco State Park there was one question that repeatedly came up every year. How did Dinosaur Point get its name? (And the related question: Where are the dinosaur bones?) To answer the second question first, there were no dinosaur fossils found there. In fact, at the time of the dinosaurs the Dinosaur Point area was under the Pacific Ocean and no dinosaur's ever lived there. So why did the State Parks decide to call this area Dinosaur Point? The most likely

answer is that it is a catchy name they took from one of the nearby stock ponds found in Pacheco State Park - Dinosaur Lake. If you look at a map or aerial photo of Dinosaur Lake you will notice that it has a slight resemblance to a three-toed dinosaur footprint (think of the T-rex muddy footprint from Jurassic Park). I have seen maps from the 1920's that show Dinosaur Lake so the "dinosaur" name long pre-dated the San Luis Reservoir. - article by David Milam, retired State Park Ranger.



Our last mystery item was a wasp known as a Velvet Ant, also called a Cow Killer Ant.



Sometimes instead of orange-red hairs they have yellow-tan colored hairs or a mixture. They are called Cow Killers

because of their painful sting. The wingless females scurry across the ground looking for other ground dwelling bee's nests. When found, the female will enter and lay her egg inside the other bee's pupae where it will then hatch and devour the pupae. Adult Velvet Ants eat nectar. The males are winged. There are about 400 North American species and 3000-5000 species worldwide.



Next mystery item:



Upcoming Special Events:

Path of the Padres Hikes - these popular hikes will again take place beginning Saturday, March 8. Reservations required and may be made by calling 209-826-1197.

Wildflower Day at Pacheco State Park - Scheduled for March 22. The event begins at 9:30 a.m. with a birding hike led by local birder John Fulton. At 10:00 a.m. a two-mile wildflower hike will be led by retired State Park Ranger David Milam. The event will run until 1:00 p.m. For more information call 209-826-1197.

Kite Day at Pacheco State Park - this popular family event will take place in June. When the date is set I will email everyone. Bring your own kite to fly or just come on up and enjoy watching all the colorful kites flying around. The only cost is the \$10 Day Use fee.

Springtime Nature Hikes at Pacheco State Park - these hikes take place weekends in April. Retired Ranger David Milam will lead longer hikes beginning at 0900 on Saturday the 12th, 19th and 26th. Interpreter Jennifer Morgan will lead the shorter self-guided hike each Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 12 noon except Easter Sunday. No reservations required. Just show up at the start time, pay the \$10 parking fee and be ready to hike. Be sure to bring plenty of water and a trail snack. A good hat and sunscreen is also recommended as is a camera and binoculars.

Kids Fishing and Fun Day at San Luis Creek Area - gather up your kids and come on out to the San Luis Creek picnic area for a great way to share some quality time. The date is not yet set but will be sometime in May. For further information call Jennifer Morgan at 209-827-5353. The only cost is the Day Use entry fee.

Your Newsletter Editor,
David Milam