

Healthy Parks Healthy People

# COMPASS

WINTER 2020

  
REGIONAL PARKS  
Foundation  
Supporting East Bay Regional Parks



## For the Birders

← BIRD LOVERS FLOCK TOGETHER  
TO ENJOY THE WEALTH OF  
WATCHING OPPORTUNITIES  
IN THE PARK DISTRICT



## FABULOUS 50



What a year this has been!

The Regional Parks Foundation and East Bay Regional Park District both marked major milestones in 2019. The Park District commemorated its 85th anniversary with events throughout the year, while the Foundation's 50th anniversary gala at Casa Real at Ruby Hill Winery on Oct. 10 was a true Night to Remember, with guests celebrating the RPF's past and future

at the sold-out event. A special thank you to our gala partners, including Presenting Sponsor Kaiser Permanente; Premiere Sponsors East Bay Regional Park District and the Oakland A's; Platinum Sponsors Chevron, Marathon Petroleum Corporation and Waste Management; Golden Sponsors Cargil, Fremont Bank, John Muir Land Trust, Pacific States Environmental Contractors, Inc., Save the Redwoods League and Shell; and Silver Sponsors Beets Hospitality Group, Clif Bar & Company, Phillips 66, Save Mount Diablo, Sierra Club, Taylor Family Foundation and Wendel Rosen, LLP.

The Foundation's mission to support the East Bay Regional Park District through universal access, environmental stewardship, education and recreational programs, and the acquisition of parklands would not be possible without our amazing Members and staff. Here's to all of you—and the next 50 years.



**Carol Johnson**  
Executive Director  
Regional Parks Foundation

**Robert Doyle**  
General Manager  
East Bay Regional Park District

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## PARK PICKS

Foundation staffers share their favorite spots



Leona Canyon. I love the trees, flowers and creek that line the main trail, and I can always hear birds chirping there. It's my own little urban oasis.

**Catherine Bernal**  
Foundation Administrator



I am amazed by all of the activities and programs that the EBRPD offers and am committed to spending more time in our parks with friends and family.

**Anna Huang**  
Foundation Finance Manager



Coyote Hills. I enjoy walking in nature, visiting the nectar garden, and picnicking with family and friends.

**Michele Kageura**  
Membership Development Officer



Del Valle, Sunol and Brushy Peak. The wildlife and opportunities for camping, hiking, biking and kayaking make these parks my go-to destinations.

**Juliana Schirmer**  
Foundation Development Director



## Outdoor Advocate

Member Esther Weaver loves to spread the word about the regional parks

The only thing longtime Member Esther Weaver enjoys more than talking up the regional parks is spending time in them.

From hosting parties (Weaver's now 53-year-old son had his first birthday party in Redwood Regional Park) to regular weekend walks in the parks with friends, Weaver has spent decades enjoying all that the Park District has to offer.

"I have so many memories of time spent in the parks, and I continue to make more," says the 79-year-old, who currently lives in Benicia after years as an Oakland resident. Weaver cites Radke Martinez Regional Shoreline, Redwood Regional, Ardenwood Historic Farm, Tilden Regional Park, Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline and Point Pinole Regional Shoreline as favorite parks.

"I like to go to different parks depending on the weather. I like going to Black Diamond Mines during wildflower season," Weaver says. "I am always bragging about the parks. There are so many activities to take part in, for families and people of all ages."

Before retirement, Weaver worked as an allergy technician

"I am always bragging about the parks. There are so many activities to take part in, for families and people of all ages."

—ESTHER WEAVER

at Kaiser Permanente for 55 years and regularly encouraged co-workers to take wellness walks or spend time in the parks.

Weaver is also a Trails Challenge devotee and has taken part in the challenge for over two decades. "I am always wearing the T-shirts because I have so many of them; I give them away and tell people they have to do the challenge, too," she says.

"I like to see how many parks I can do, and exploring the new trails and parks," Weaver adds. "There is so much beauty and variety in God's creation."



## TRAILS CHALLENGE 2020

The annual Trails Challenge kicks off on Jan. 6, 2020. Every year, more than 10,000 people participate in this free self-guided hiking and bicycling program, exploring the regional parks and enjoying the health benefits of activity in nature. The Trails Challenge is co-sponsored by the Regional Parks Foundation, Kaiser Permanente and the East Bay Regional Park District. Visit [www.ebparks.org/trailschallenge](http://www.ebparks.org/trailschallenge) to find out more, including details about picking up your free T-shirt, commemorative pin (while supplies last) and guidebook. The trails featured in the 2020 challenge are also available on the AllTrails app.

KAISER PERMANENTE® **thrive**



Students enjoy virtual park tours using cardboard viewers and the Timelooper app, as well as a VR headset on the mobile visitor center.

# Virtual Reality Check

Students make a high-tech, interactive connection with the parks through the use of VR

Imagine standing on rugged Rocky Ridge, near the 2,024-foot summit of Las Trampas Wilderness Regional Preserve in San Ramon.

You turn, enjoying striking 360-degree views of the surrounding peaks and grassy hillsides, as you hear about the region's geological history and wildlife—all without stepping foot into the park itself.

Thanks to EBRPD's Parks to People program, students, seniors and those with mobility issues will get new opportunities to visit the parks through the wonders of virtual reality (VR).

"Part of the Parks to People program is making sure that the people who can't get into the parks have the ability to have some experience or connection to them," says Kevin Damstra, supervising naturalist.

The idea of using VR technology was initially incorporated in the development of a new mobile visitor center last year. With the support of the Regional Parks Foundation, an Oculus Rift headset was built into the mobile visitor center van, allowing users to explore the parks virtually. Damstra and his staff then expanded the concept further, working with a company called Timelooper to create experiences easily viewable through the Timelooper smartphone app and cardboard VR viewers. Another grant from the Foundation will allow for the expansion of the program into area schools next year.

The existing experiences include a look at the future Concord Hills park and a virtual journey through the Alameda Creek watershed, an area that is normally off limits due to endangered species concerns. Future plans include experiences from the top of Mission Peak and at the Ohlone Village at Coyote Hills.

"The VR experience allows kids to connect in different ways," says Damstra. "We can go into a classroom with a PowerPoint presentation and a slideshow, but it's not the in-depth, interactive experience that a lot of people are looking for."

One striking example of the technology at work occurred when Damstra and his team brought the VR experience to a school in Castro Valley.

"There was a class with a number of students who had cerebral palsy and were wheelchair bound. We had the classroom assistants hold the viewers and spin the chairs," Damstra recalls. "This was the first time that these kids were able to be in a place like this, to make the connections that many children get when they come on a field trip. It gave them an experience that they'd never seen before."



➤ Download the Timelooper app at Google Play or the Apple App Store to see the experiences for yourself.

# Healing Under the Stars

Young burn survivors enjoy an unforgettable camping trip in Del Valle Regional Park

**W**hen young people go on their first camping trip, it can be an empowering experience. Seeing wildlife firsthand, learning new skills and enjoying camaraderie with others can open a kid’s eyes like nothing else. This is especially true for youth with disabilities or challenging medical conditions, and the East Bay Regional Park District is committed to giving them every opportunity to spend time in nature.

This past June, a very special group of young people participated in a pilot program at Camp Arroyo, in Livermore’s Del Valle Regional Park (read more about the camp’s outdoor education program on page 6). Some 50 youths between the ages of 6 and 17, all of whom are burn survivors, attended the weeklong Firefighters Kids Camp, now in its 27th year of promoting healing, growth and character development.

The free camp was developed by the Sacramento-based Firefighters Burn Institute, which recently partnered with the Taylor Family Foundation to move the program to Camp Arroyo (it was previously held in the Tahoe area). To further enhance the kids’ experience, the Park District, under the leadership of Aquatics Manager Pete DeQuincy, coordinated a memorable outing during the week: an overnight, pitch-your-own-tent-in-the-wilderness excursion to the nearby Wild Turkey campgrounds.

Staffed with skilled burn nurses and counselors, the camp offers all the activities you’d expect—swimming, hiking, kayaking, arts and crafts, and much more—while also managing the campers’ special needs such as wound care and physical limitations. The result is a uniquely healing and bonding experience.

“The campers become like a family,” says Kara Garrett, programs manager at the Firefighters Burn Institute. “When they



Burn survivors savor their time in nature.

get together and see other burn survivors making it through life, they just blossom. It is just so cool to see who they turn into.”

Garrett notes that “the biggest thing” this year was the overnight camping trip. “Seeing the kids set up their own tents was fantastic. They just learned so much.”

With generous support from the Regional Parks Foundation, which provided supplies such as tents, sleeping bags and headlamps as well as other assistance, the campers’ night under the stars was an unequivocal success.

“We were thrilled with the outcome and hearing how much this meant to the children; we look forward to supporting more such programs,” says Juliana Schirmer, Foundation development director. “We’d welcome the chance to host this group again and other special needs groups, too. Nothing could make us happier than to help even more special young people grow and thrive.”



Participants at the Firefighters Burn Institute campout in Del Valle Regional Park.

FIREFIGHTERS BURN INSTITUTE





INTO THE  
WILD

THE OUTDOOR EDUCATION PROGRAM  
AT CAMP ARROYO INTRODUCES YOUNG  
LEARNERS TO THE JOYS OF NATURE



Students at Camp Arroyo experience hikes, animal encounters, gardening and composting, and communing with nature.



estled in the oak-studded hills of Livermore, Camp Arroyo is a 138-acre wilderness wonderland on the edge of Del Valle Regional Park. It is here, in this spectacular outdoor classroom, that fifth- and sixth-graders from Alameda and Contra Costa counties learn about science, nature and sustainability. But these kids aren't just checking off academic requirements. They're hiking, gardening and composting. They're going on night safaris and baking nachos in a solar oven. They're learning about teamwork and communication (and there's not an iPad in sight).

Owned and maintained by the East Bay Regional Park District, Camp Arroyo has been ushering kids into the great outdoors since 2001. It was in the late '90s that EBRPD joined forces (and funds) with the Taylor Family Foundation to build a residential camp on the site of what was once the Alameda County Tuberculosis Sanitarium. Housing up to 144 campers and staff, the facility includes six 24-person cabins, as well as a pool, medical clinic, arts yurt and an outdoor amphitheater. With an eye to the environment, the camp was constructed with existing buildings and foundations where possible, straw bale insulation in the dining hall, recycled glass countertops in the bathrooms, and metal roofs that catch rainwater for irrigation.

Today, the overnight camp hosts 3,000 kids with life-threatening illnesses and disabilities in the summer months (funded and organized by the Taylor Family Foundation) and 4,000 student participants in the environmental education program throughout the rest of the year.

### ● UNDER NEW LEADERSHIP ●

For 16 years, Camp Arroyo was run by the YMCA, but in June 2019 the reins were handed to a new operator, United Camps, Conferences and Retreats (UCCR), a Petaluma-based nonprofit that has managed programs nationwide for 50 years.

"UCCR has a 50-year history of running camps like Camp Arroyo with attention to important details like customer service and communication—making sure the campers, their parents, school administrators and teachers all feel welcome and included during their engage-





ment with our camp,” says Anne Kassebaum, chief, interpretation and recreation at the Park District. “I’ve been impressed in a short time with UCCR in how they set a nurturing tone with students, especially those who may be a bit stressed about being in nature.”

Web of Life Field (WOLF) School, UCCR’s nonprofit education division, now runs all of Camp Arroyo’s naturalist-led outdoor science programs. But WOLF does more than just science. It prides itself on teaching kids personal development, teamwork, community commitment and responsibility. “When I first learned what WOLF does to connect kids to nature, I was completely moved,” says Laura Chamberlin, director of marketing at UCCR. “But WOLF also teaches kids about community and what it looks like to take care of and respect each other. It teaches them what stewardship means and how we can respect all forms of life.”

Camp Arroyo is where many disadvantaged kids meet nature for the first time. The Regional Parks Foundation provides more than \$180,000 a year to fund scholarships (known as “camperships”) so that 1,000 students from underfunded schools in the East Bay can attend the camp each year. “The camperships are tremendously important,” says Kent Chapple, director of programs at Camp Arroyo. “We want to serve as many students as we can, and I know there are schools that have come here that wouldn’t have been able to do so without that funding.”

## ● FINDING COURAGE IN NATURE ●

When students first arrive at Camp Arroyo, some won’t even sit on the ground. Many have never set foot on a hiking trail, let alone gone camping or searching for owls and bats in the dark.

“Just sitting on the grass or dirt can be a huge step outside of their comfort zone,” says Chapple. “But once they realize it’s OK, that nobody is going to yell at them for getting their clothes dirty,

**“OUR KIDS BENEFIT TREMENDOUSLY FROM BEING ABLE TO GO OUTSIDE OF THEIR COMMUNITY AND VENTURE INTO WHAT SEEMS TO BE A SECLUDED, FAR-OFF PLACE IN NATURE, EVEN THOUGH IT’S JUST 15 MINUTES AWAY.”**

—Jennifer Pennybacker,  
*fifth-grade teacher, Marilyn Avenue Elementary School*

then all of a sudden their challenge zone becomes their comfort zone and they are able to do things that they might not have even considered possible.”

By the end of the week, these same kids are smearing mud on their faces, catching bugs in the creek and sifting through compost for invertebrates. They’re even flying along a zip line and summiting a climbing wall.

“The camp really helps our students find bravery inside themselves,” says Jennifer Pennybacker, fifth-grade teacher at campership recipient Marilyn Avenue Elementary School in Livermore. “Our kids benefit tremendously from being able to go outside of their community and venture into what seems to be a secluded, far-off place in nature, even though it’s just 15 minutes away.”

Accompanied by teachers and adult chaperones, students typically spend between three and five days at Camp Arroyo. In small groups, they learn about plants, animals and the importance of water conservation. They might do a water study that involves collecting aquatic insects to determine the health of the creek or learn about the Ohlone people’s relationship with the



Adventure awaits with zip lines and climbing walls.

environment. The students may learn how they can integrate conservation into their daily lives and hone their team-building skills on a ropes course or by performing skits together onstage.

One of the biggest personal achievements for many of the kids at Camp Arroyo is the Cresta Blanca hike. A 3-mile loop, the trail climbs through groves of oak trees and past rock formations before cresting with sweeping views of Lake Del Valle, Mount Diablo and a carpet of vineyards below. The students might see turkey vultures, bald eagles or acorn woodpeckers, as well as learn about geologic change and erosion.

The hike is also a chance for students to bond. "It can be daunting, and a lot of kids have anxiety over it," says Chapple. "Before the hike, we set ourselves up as a team that supports each other. We talk about what that means so that the kids are empowered to help each other out when one of their classmates is struggling."

Sometimes the hike includes a trust challenge where the students are blindfolded, then, holding a rope in one hand and a friend's shoulder in the other, inch along a section of the trail. "It was a bit scary but worth it," says Anirudh, a fifth-grader from San Ramon's Coyote Creek Elementary School. "I felt proud that I accomplished it. Like I had conquered the mountain. It was a very good feeling."

For many city kids, this first exposure to nature can be scary. A simple hike may be intimidating; a walk in the dark, even more so. With owls hooting and coyotes howling, camp leaders take the kids on night excursions, talking about animal adaptations such as how a fox walks quietly or a deer hears so well. They discuss astronomy and have fun chewing on glow-in-the-dark candy.

"There's a lot of adjustment that happens with these kids, thinking about what's dangerous and what's not," says Heather Butler, director of WOLF School. "There are animals and strange noises; the ground isn't smooth. But we want them to make a direct connection with nature and the earth. When they start to realize it's not scary, then they start to care about [nature] and want to learn about it."

## ● INSPIRING STEWARDSHIP ●

Empowering students to be environmental stewards is a big part of Camp Arroyo. Staff members make a point to tell campers that the open space belongs to them, that it's their territory to explore, enjoy and take care of. "The kids take that ownership seriously," says Chapple. "They see trash on the trails and take it personally. They get pretty passionate about it and see it as something they can fix. It might seem simple, but when we're talking about how to empower kids to be stewards, picking up trash and not littering are things that they can actually do."

Another big change the students can effect is reducing food waste. After a long day outdoors, it's easy to overload your plate during the camp's family-style dinner. A lesson in sustainability, the "garbology program" asks kids to ponder how much they really need to eat to sustain themselves.



**"WHEN [KIDS] START TO REALIZE IT'S NOT SCARY, THEN THEY START TO CARE ABOUT [NATURE] AND WANT TO LEARN ABOUT IT."**

—Heather Butler,  
director of WOLF School

"We talk about portions," says Butler. "We explain that the goal is to identify how much you need and not take more than that. You can take a little bit the first time and go back for seconds or thirds, but don't take a giant burrito and then leave most of it."

The students are presented with a pile of leftover food that has been scraped from their plates. The leftovers get weighed and the students conduct a report on how much food was wasted. "We graph it and then we have the kids set goals," says Chapple. "For the rest of the week, before meals, we talk about strategies and the power to choose. Kids see the challenge and really get into it because they want to see those piles go down."

But Camp Arroyo leftovers are never wasted. The kids escort them down to the compost bins where they will eventually be used to nourish fruit and vegetables growing in the garden. "We'll show them the different stages of decomposition in the compost bins," says Chapple. "We've got a thermometer so you can see how hot it gets. We talk about the FBI (fungus, bacteria and invertebrates) that break everything down. In some lessons, we'll grab compost and investigate what critters are in there."

Providing pounds of food to the dining hall every year, the camp garden is laden with tomatoes, limes, persimmons and



Campers benefit from bonding with peers and expanding their horizons.

artichokes. There are chickens walking among apple trees and a nearby solar oven that bakes snacks such as nachos, s'mores, pies and even bread while the students work. Perhaps most significantly, they get to pick and taste produce fresh from the garden.

"For a lot of kids, that's a new thing," says Chapple. "To see what part of the plant they're eating and where it comes from. Kids don't think they like broccoli, but pulling off pieces straight from the plant is a pretty different experience for them and they give it another chance. I tell parents that their kids might come back liking their vegetables!"

By camp's end, the students' attitude toward vegetables isn't the only change. Teachers say the kids often return home more independent and working better with their peers. Others bring a newfound love and respect for nature back to their families and communities.

"We hope kids go home feeling better about being outside," says Butler. "We hope they're more active and, maybe, that they want to be stewards of the parks."

➤ **To find out more about supporting youth development programs, visit [www.RegionalParksFoundation.org](http://www.RegionalParksFoundation.org).**


# WINGED

# WOND



Long-billed curlew

# ERS



## A USER'S GUIDE TO BIRD-WATCHING IN THE REGIONAL PARKS

**W**ith its vast acreage and varied ecosystems, the Park District offers a paradise for bird-watchers. Whatever captures your interest—be it shorebirds, raptors, woodland birds or waterfowl—there are accessible places to observe these marvelous creatures.

And winter is a perfect time to get out and enjoy the variety. Because the Bay Area is a critical part of the Pacific Flyway—a 4,000-mile-long superhighway of sorts for migrating birds—many feathered travelers stop here during their journey to rest, forage and drink. Some even make this their southernmost stop, setting up a seasonal home before heading back north.

**FOLLOWING ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS  
TO GET STARTED ON YOUR  
AVIAN ADVENTURES.**

### ★ WALK THIS WAY ★

For fledgling birders, participating in an organized walk is an ideal first step in learning to recognize birds, both by their appearance and by their calls. Beginners needn't feel intimidated about taking part in a walk, says Anthony Fisher, a naturalist at Tilden Regional Park. "We always have a mix of expertise on our walks—experienced birders, newcomers, families with kids," he says. Fisher leads a free bird walk in one of the regional parks every Monday morning. The outings typically cover 3 to 5 miles and last about three hours. (See sidebar for a list of his upcoming walks.)

You don't need to register ahead of time. Just show up and join the group. "It's very informal," Fisher says. Although most folks bring binoculars, fellow birders are happy to loan a pair if they have a spare. "We give each other tips and share information. We have a good time," says Fisher, who has been fascinated

by birds since the age of 9 and knows the calls of most birds he encounters. Unlike many lifelong birders, he doesn't keep a list of what he's spotted. Rather, he takes pleasure in simply hearing and watching them. "I enjoy their little antics," he says.

Out in the Delta, Michael Moran, supervising naturalist at Big Break Regional Shoreline, leads raptor baseline bird walks on the last Thursday of every month, except in November. The walks last two to two and a half hours, with a relaxed pace. Some of the birds you might spot are falcons, hawks, golden eagles and burrowing owls.

"Raptors like this area because it's very breezy," says Moran. "They can cruise on the currents without needing to flap their wings so much." The grasslands provide ample foraging opportunities with abundant ground squirrels and rabbits to tempt hungry birds.

The baseline walks have been taking place for decades and provide vital information about bird behavior. "We document where the birds are spotted, what time of day we see them, how many there are and what they're doing," Moran says. "The information we compile helps inform land-use issues such as the size of wind farms and where to site wind turbines safely." But even though the walks serve a serious purpose, they're focused on enjoyment as well, with beginners always welcome. "Everyone is very open, sharing tricks of the trade. There's a great exchange of information," Moran says.

## ★ BIRD'S-EYE VIEWS ★

You might think that you need to go to a remote area if you hope to see anything, but Fisher says, "In our parks, which have an urban interface, animals have experience with humans and act accordingly." Typically, the birds are not overly reactive to people passing by—they're pretty good at ignoring walkers and even bicyclists.



Coyote Hills naturalist Francis Mendoza leads a birding hike.



## BOOK SMARTS

A good field guide is invaluable for learning to identify birds. Here are two of the most popular, suited to both novices and veterans.

### THE SIBLEY GUIDE TO BIRDS

By David Allen Sibley

(Sibley also offers a phone app that includes birdcalls, but Michael Moran cautions against playing the calls to attract birds when out in the field. "It's discouraged," he says, "because it can disrupt mating or foraging.")

### NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA, 7TH EDITION

By Jon L. Dunn and Jonathan Alderfer

Interestingly, it's sometimes birders, who stop moving and make eye contact, that give the birds pause, Fisher says. That's why binoculars are valuable, allowing you to keep your distance.

**Here are some spots that offer prime viewing. To avoid disturbing nesting birds, always stay on designated trails and observe all posted rules. Be aware that in many areas, dogs must be leashed, and in some areas they're prohibited entirely.**

- ★ **Coyote Hills** in Fremont is a birder's paradise, says Moran. There is a large variety of species year-round, and the trails are mostly flat. The varied terrain includes brackish wetlands, salt marshes, grasslands and woodlands, providing foraging and nesting habitat for a host of birds.
- ★ **Cogswell Marsh**, part of the **Hayward Regional Shoreline**, is a 250-acre tidal saltwater marsh that once was used for salt harvesting. A restoration in the 1980s brought a plethora of birds back to the area. Be sure to bring a hat, as there is no shade on the trail.
- ★ A stone's throw from the Oakland International Airport, 50-acre **Arrowhead Marsh** at **Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline** serves as a stopover on the Pacific Flyway. As some of the last remaining marshland along San Leandro Bay, it's part of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network.
- ★ Both Moran and Fisher put **Crown Beach** in Alameda on their short list. The **Elsie Roemer Bird Sanctuary** at the park's southern end is an ideal spot to see waterfowl and shorebirds, especially in late fall and winter.
- ★ Also worth a visit in the colder months is **Dotson Family Marsh** at **Point Pinole Regional Shoreline**, a good location to spot migrating flocks, as well as birds spending the winter in the Bay Area.
- ★ You'll find excellent birding along **Alameda Creek** in **Sunol Regional Wilderness**, with acorn woodpeckers, black phoebes, titmice, turkey vultures and golden eagles commonly sighted.
- ★ At **Brushy Peak Regional Preserve**, look for raptors, grassland birds and woodland birds. Bonus: Federally protected red-legged frogs live here, too.
- ★ In Pleasanton, **Shadow Cliffs Regional Recreation Area** is home to a growing water bird colony in the park's more secluded lakes.

So hit the trail and get to know these fascinating creatures. As Anthony Fisher says, every park in the District has something to offer the bird lover.



## MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THESE UPCOMING BIRD WALKS

**WEEKLY WALKS LED BY ANTHONY FISHER**  
9 a.m.–noon. Free. No registration necessary.

**Monday, Dec. 16, 2019**

Point Pinole Regional Shoreline  
Where to meet: Dotson Family Marsh  
Birds you'll see: raptors, shorebirds

**Monday, Dec. 23, 2019**

Point Pinole Regional Shoreline  
Where to meet: Atlas Road Staging Area  
Birds you'll see: waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors

**Monday, Dec. 30, 2019**

Radke Martinez Regional Shoreline Park  
Where to meet: end of North Court Street  
Birds you'll see: raptors, waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls

**MONTHLY RAPTOR BIRD COUNTS**  
LED BY MICHAEL MORAN

9–11:30 a.m. Free. Registration required;  
register at [www.ebparcs.org/activities](http://www.ebparcs.org/activities).

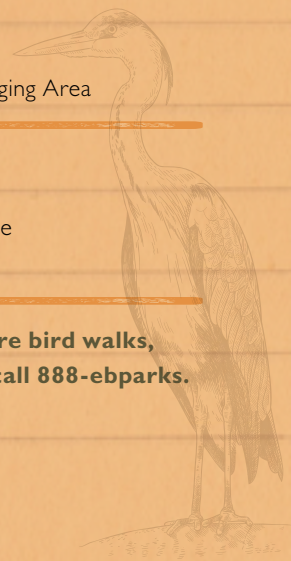
**Thursday, Dec. 26, 2019**

Marsh Creek Regional Trail  
Where to meet: Cypress Road Staging Area

**Thursday, Jan. 30, 2020**

**(open for registration Jan. 2)**  
Morgan Territory Regional Preserve  
Where to meet: main parking lot

▶ For information about more bird walks, visit [www.ebparcs.org](http://www.ebparcs.org) or call 888-ebparcs.





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2



3

# Cutting-Edge Camping

Elevate your outdoor excursion with some high-tech gear

A camping trip usually means unplugging from the world, but mixing in a bit of advanced gadgetry can make that time spent in nature a little easier. Bring some comfort and convenience to your next campout with these high-tech items (available at REI, a longtime Regional Parks Foundation partner).



8



4



7



6



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## 1 BioLite Wood Burning CampStove 2 with FlexLight (\$129.95)

Cook a wood-fired meal and charge your devices at the same time. The light provides 100 lumens of task lighting, while the smokeless combustion creates 95 percent fewer smoke emissions compared to a regular wood fire.

## 2 Petzl NAO+ Headlamp (\$199.95)

Shed some light on your night hikes and campsite tasks with this powerful, multibeam headlamp with Bluetooth capabilities. Customize burn time (up to 12 hours), brightness and beam patterns with the free MyPetzl Light app.

## 3 Big Agnes Copper Spur Tent (\$549.95)

There's no need to chill out in the dark with this spacious tent that features integrated LED lighting on the interior. The battery-powered LEDs are flexible and durable enough for repeated packing, and the hardy yet lightweight tent is easy to pitch.

## 4 SteriPen Ultra Water Purifier (\$109.95)

Potable water is vital when hiking in the backcountry, and this UV water purifier safely sterilizes clear water in 48 seconds. The device may be used up to 8,000 times and its internal battery can be recharged from any USB power source.

## 5 NEMO Helio Pressure Shower (\$99.95)

There's nothing better than a refreshing shower after a long trek. The Helio's 2.9-gallon tank provides up to seven minutes of steady water pressure, while its 7-foot hose should accommodate most heights.

## 6 Thermacell Radius Mosquito Repeller (\$49.95)

Fend off those annoying swarms of mosquitoes with the touch of a button. The Thermacell uses heat to diffuse a metofluthrin-based repellent, forming a 110-square-foot zone of protection and operating for more than six hours on a single charge.

## 7 goTenna Mesh Text and Location Communicator (\$179)

Stay connected wherever you are with this set of two devices, no cell service needed. The product pairs with your phone and allows you to relay texts and GPS locations between other goTenna devices for up to 4 miles in point-to-point range.

## 8 Duluth Daily Carry Multi Tool (\$32.95)

For a gadget that has plenty to offer, even without the tech bells and whistles, try this handy multitool. A bit over 4 inches long, it fits in your pocket and comes with 14 functional tools including pliers, saw, can opener, screwdrivers, knife and fish hook remover.





# A Mine of Information

A new exhibit at Black Diamond Mines hopes to bring coal mining history to modern-day visitors

The miners came from Wales, Italy, China, Austria and other points near and far when coal was first discovered on the side of Mount Diablo in the 1860s. Robust towns sprang up in the neighboring region, home base for the men and boys mining nearly 4 million tons of coal from the seams deep within the earth. It was dark and dangerous work, but it provided a major source of energy for California.

By the turn of the century, however, the coal industry in the area was no more, as other sources of energy became readily available. During the 1920s, Black Diamond Mines—once the location of California’s largest coal mining operation—became a source of silica sand used in glassmaking; it ceased operation in 1949.

While contemporary visitors to the Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve can get an in-depth look at sand mining through

“This exhibit is a way to bring that era to life. Rather than just talking about coal mining, we will be able to bring people into the section of coal mine we have re-created so they can experience it for themselves.”

—Ira Bletz,

*regional interpretive and recreation services manager*

guided tours of the Hazel-Atlas Mine, information about coal mining has been limited to archival photos and interpretive exhibits at the visitor center.

This spring, a new exhibit at Black Diamond Mines hopes to breathe new interest into that little-known chapter of East Bay history.

The Park District has been hard at work developing an exhibit that will give visitors a historically accurate experience of an 1860s coal mine, complete with lifelike mannequins, sound and ambient lighting. The Regional Parks Foundation helped the Park District get funding to augment the project, which is currently under construction, with plans for a grand unveiling in 2020.

“Black Diamond is pretty unique, and a key part of the story is coal mining,” says Ira Bletz, regional interpretive and recreation services manager. “This exhibit is a way to bring that era to life. Rather than just talking about coal mining, we will be able to bring people into the section of coal mine we have re-created so they can experience it for themselves.”

The exhibit depicts a working coal seam, staffed by four replica miners and nobs (young boys who pushed coal for the miners). Sounds such as water dripping, mining noises and miners talking add to the immersive nature of the exhibit, which was produced by Weldon Exhibits.

According to Bletz, Weldon Exhibits even recorded a background soundtrack featuring Welsh-accented English and Welsh-language dialogue with the aid of native speakers in Wales for authenticity. The Park District also leaned heavily on historic photos and archives to help inform the design.

“It’s been an exciting collaboration with a number of different departments in the Park District,” says Bletz. “I think it is going to be a huge attraction; there is no place like it in California.”



**Above:** The coal mine exhibit under construction off-site. **Left:** Park District staff referenced historic photos for the exhibit.



## Fun and Festivities

Celebrating major milestones, conservation efforts and community events in the Park District



**1** Volunteers perform trail maintenance during REI's Dirt, Sweat and Beers event at Sunol Regional Wilderness. **2** State Sen. Steve Glazer, the recipient of the 2019 Radke Championing Advocacy Award (pictured third from left), with Park District board of directors members (left to right): Dennis Waespi, Beverly Lane, Ellen Corbett, Colin Coffey, Dee Rosario and General Manager Robert Doyle. **3** What's Brewin' in the Parks at Ardenwood offers all-ages fun. **4-6** Gala attendees celebrate the Regional Parks Foundation's 50th anniversary. **7** FAM Fest participants enjoy kids activities, live music, art exhibits and more.



Vasco Caves Regional Preserve

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Bring family and friends to these highlighted EBRPD programs and activities—perfect for nature- and fun-lovers of all ages. To view complete listings of EBRPD events, visit [www.ebparks.org/activities](http://www.ebparks.org/activities).

### ▶ SPECIAL EVENTS

#### Ardenwood Monarch Programs

Discover the amazing life cycle of these tiny creatures and how they survive the winter in the Bay Area. Interpretive programs are offered on weekends throughout **January and into mid-February** at Ardenwood Historic Farm in Fremont. Check dates at [www.ebparks.org](http://www.ebparks.org).

#### Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service

On Monday, **Jan. 20**, the Park District will celebrate its annual Day of Service, an event that continues Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision to improve lives, bridge social barriers and connect the community. Volunteers will assist staff at Martin Luther King Jr. Shoreline with litter cleanup, restoration work and invasive plant removal. 8:30 a.m.–noon. Register for yourself or a group at [www.ebparks.org/activities/volunteer](http://www.ebparks.org/activities/volunteer) or call 888-327-2757, option 2.

#### Youth Job Fairs

Come work for the East Bay Regional Park District! Whether you like spending time outdoors, working with kids, aquatics or public safety, the Park District has something for you. The fairs are for ages 15 to 24. Saturday, **Jan. 25**, 10 a.m.–noon, Hayward Area Senior Center (22325 North 3rd St., Hayward), and Saturday, **Feb. 1**, 10 a.m.–noon, Pleasant Hill Senior Center, 233 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill.

#### Vasco Caves Regional Preserve Tours

Hike through this windswept land, which is sacred to local Native American communities and a seasonal refuge for golden eagles, fairy shrimp and tiger salamanders. The preserve is accessible only through guided tours. For participants 10 years and older. Tours will be offered **Feb. 2, 9, 16, 22, 23 and 29**, 9 a.m.–2 p.m. Fee: \$35 (nonresident: \$40). Reservations required. Call 888-327-2757, option 2.

#### New Coal Mining Exhibit Opens at Black Diamond Mines

Watch for the grand reopening of the Hazel-Atlas Mine and Greathouse Visitor Center, tentatively scheduled for early **March**. The new Black Diamond coal mining exhibit, built into the existing Hazel-Atlas silica sand mine, will be an immersive experience taking visitors into a re-created 1870s coal mine, part of California's largest coal mining operation. For information on the grand reopening schedule, visit [www.ebparks.org/parks/black\\_diamond](http://www.ebparks.org/parks/black_diamond).

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Your investment of \$21 a month (\$250/year) will enroll you in the 1-in-a-Million Donor Circle. Together, 4,000 donors will raise \$1 million annually to fund environmental restoration and protection of open space.



IMAGE BY: Joanna Salazar