

What Good is an Oak Tree?

An isolated oak tree provides an island of food and shelter for individual insects, birds, mammals, mushrooms, mistletoe, and other kinds of life. Oaks clustered together in continuous woodland provide even greater ecological benefits and are one of the most biologically diverse plant communities in California.

In Alameda and Contra Costa counties, 60% of oak woodlands are on private property; the rest grow on public lands, like this East Bay Regional Park. Through public and private partnerships, we can ensure these vibrant woodlands will endure.

great horned owl



Even "messy" old oaks are valuable wildlife habitat. The loose bark of snags make snug roosts for bats. Fallen leaf litter creates a patch of increased soil fertility where countless invertebrates and fungi thrive. Understory shrubs, like poison oak, hide small mammals and birds from predators, and woodpeckers make homes and store food in the dead branches.

acorn woodpecker



scrub jay with acorn



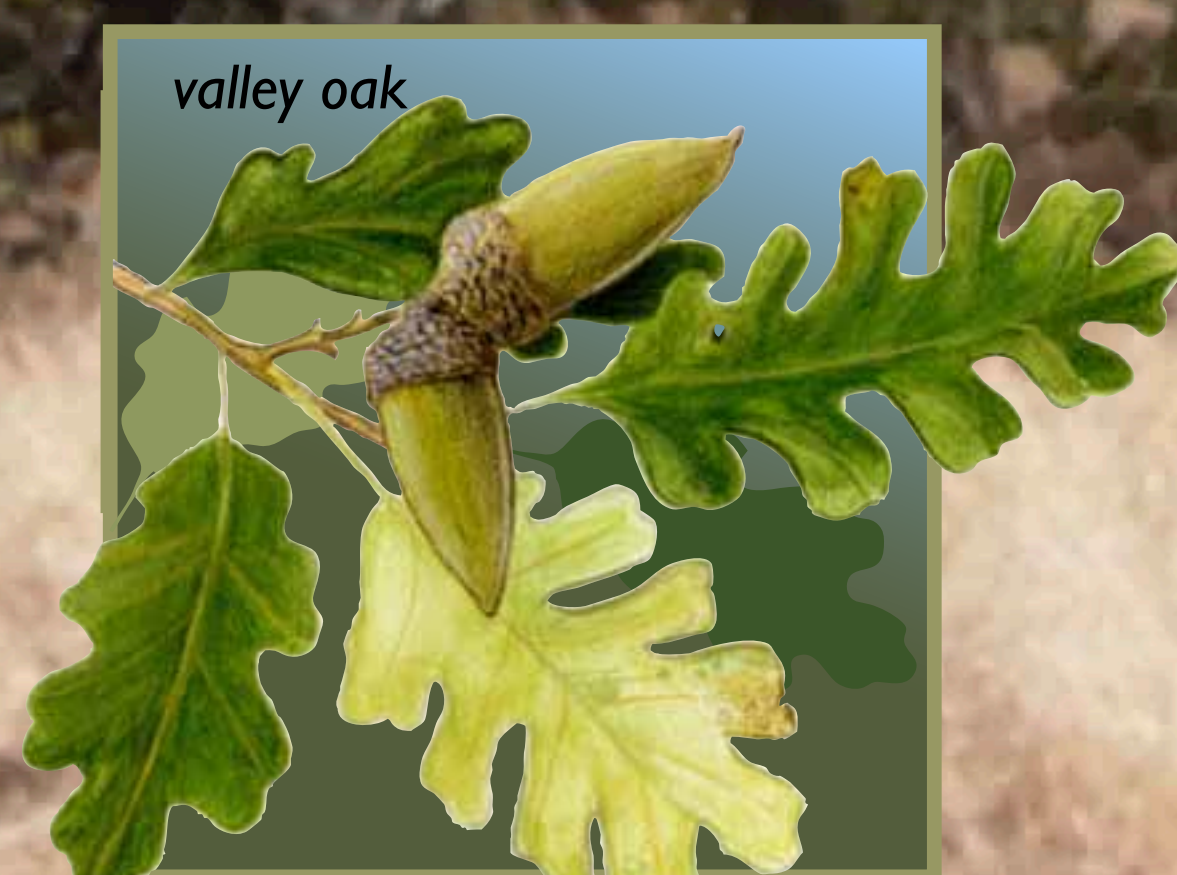
red cone oak gall on leaf and cynipid wasp



coast live oak



valley oak



blue oak



canyon live oak



black oak



Photo: Rick Kitamata, illustration: Doyle Wegner