

Wildlife

This parkland has a diverse array of wildlife habitats typical of the inner coast ranges, including grassland, seasonal wetlands, stock ponds, perennial and ephemeral drainages, northern coastal scrublands, and oak woodlands, with some low rock outcrops.



California quail

The parkland provides an important ridgetop link between the Park District's ridgeline parks to the north and south (Garin, Pleasanton Ridge, Mission Peak, Sunol). This makes it an important corridor connecting habitats for threatened species, allowing genetic mixing between populations and encouraging their recovery.

The ponds in Vargas Plateau provide habitat for several special-status species, including

the threatened California red-legged frog and the Alameda whip-snake, and for the federally threatened California tiger salamander.

Ground squirrels proliferate in the highest elevations of the plateau. Their burrow chambers may be inhabited by the California tiger salamander and the California red-legged frog, and by reptiles such as the Pacific gopher snake and the Northern Pacific rattlesnake. Many insects also utilize the burrows, including crickets, ants and beetles, which serve as food for non-breeding tiger salamanders. The ground squirrels' presence, along with the California meadow vole, attracts a wide array of predators such as the white-tailed kite and Northern harrier.

Wetland habitats within Vargas Plateau include several ponds and seasonal wetlands. Upland, tributary drainages serve as the headwaters of various streams, all of which drain into Alameda Creek.

The dense stands of coast live oak and interspersed California bay located in the drainages and on the plateau's steep slopes support a wide array of species, including the gray fox, black-tailed deer, dusky-footed woodrat, red-tailed hawks, Cooper's hawks, the great-horned owl and tiny pygmy owl, and wild turkeys.

The park's steep topography has contributed to the plateau remaining somewhat isolated from major human encroachment, save for mostly agricultural uses such as ranching and dryland farming. This in turn has preserved the plateau's integrity as a favored foraging area for golden eagles and other raptors, and for far-ranging mammals such as coyotes, bobcats and mountain lions.

Ours to Explore, Enjoy and Protect

Please enjoy the Regional Parks safely and help protect and preserve the parklands by following all park rules and regulations.

Safety

- Stay on trails. Shortcuts are dangerous and damage natural resources.
- Bring plenty of water to prevent dehydration.
- Be prepared for sudden changes in weather conditions.
- Trails can be slippery, rocky and steep. Proceed carefully at your own risk.
- Keep parks clean. Pack out what you pack in.
- Inform someone where you are going and when you will return.
- Save our 24/7 Dispatch Center number on your cell phone: **Emergency (510) 881-1122; Nonemergency (510) 881-1833.**

Rules

- Dogs must be leashed in parking lots, 200 feet from any trail or park entrance or as posted, in picnic areas, developed areas. Dogs must be under voice control at all times. Clean up after your pet: bag it, bin it.
- Horses have the right-of-way on trails.
- Bicycles are permitted on designated trails only.
- State law requires that all bicyclists under age 18 wear an approved helmet while riding on trails and roadways. Equestrians and bicyclists are also strongly encouraged to wear helmets at all times.

The following are prohibited:

- Wading and/or swimming in undesignated areas
- Consuming alcohol in non-designated areas/parks
- Releasing animals into parklands
- Feeding or approaching wildlife
- Damaging plants, geological, or archaeological features
- Smoking/vaping
- Drones

Visitors are responsible for knowing and complying with park rules (*Ordinance 38*). See ebparks.org/rules.



Vargas Plateau Regional Park

2536 Morrison Canyon Rd., Fremont, CA 94539

East Bay Regional Park District

2950 Peralta Oaks Court, Oakland, CA 94605
1-888-EBPARKS or 1-888-327-2757 (TRS 711)
ebparks.org



Regional Parks Membership
RECEIVE FREE DAY-USE PARKING, SWIMMING,
DOG PASS, AND MORE. 510-544-2220
REGIONALPARKSFUNDATION.ORG



Cover photo: Kevin Fox

Vargas Plateau Regional Park

FREMONT

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East Bay
Regional Park District

Healthy Parks Healthy People

Vargas Plateau Regional Park

Year Dedicated: 2016 **Acres:** 1,249

Highlights: Hiking, biking, horseback riding, birdwatching, Bay Area Ridge Trail, panoramic views.

History

This regional park, opened in 2017, provides magnificent views from its setting in the Fremont Hills. The plateau rises quickly and steeply from the bay plain to an elevation 1,000 feet above the streets below, overlooking Niles Canyon, Fremont, Union City, Newark, and the San Francisco Bay beyond. Atop the plateau, a pastoral landscape predominates with golden eagles, hawks, deer, bobcats, frogs, snakes, and a variety of other animals making their home in the open grasslands, ponds, and steep wooded canyons. These features, together with the Bay Area Ridge Trail along the ridgetop, make the park a great place for outdoor recreation and nature appreciation on the urban/wildland threshold.

The Ohlone-speaking Tuibun and Causen tribes thrived here in the Fremont Plains and Sunol Valley respectively, for many generations. Following the 1772 and 1776 arrival of Spanish expeditions, the native people were introduced to and endured struggles with religious conversion and indentured labor at Mission San Jose; and continued laboring on what became Mexican land grants, which included land given to Juan B. Alvarado and Andres Pico in 1846, of which Vargas Plateau was part. With California statehood in 1850, the land was used as a horse-breeding ranch, and by the turn of the century it was subdivided. In 1909, Antonio F. Vargas purchased 444 acres of the "lower ranch," and later, his brother Manuel and nephew Edward purchased 550 acres of the "upper ranch."

The Tavares family inherited Edward Vargas' property in 1978. The families used the land for sheep and cattle ranching and dryland farming.

Between 1993 and 1996, the Park District purchased some of the Vargas and Tavares land, and added the Rose and Comcast properties in 2010, bringing the total acreage to 1,249 acres.

Photo: Jeff Poskanzer

Western bluebird: Jerry Ting

