



September 2019

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Dear Nature Lovers,

We hope you will enjoy this issue of the *Valley Wilds* and your open space parks this month!

Sincerely,

The *Valley Wilds* and LARPD Open Space Staff

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Park News

CLOSING TIME: It's that time of year! While Sycamore Grove and Holdener park are currently open until 8 pm, the sun keeps setting earlier as we move into fall. Park hours will be adjusted accordingly:

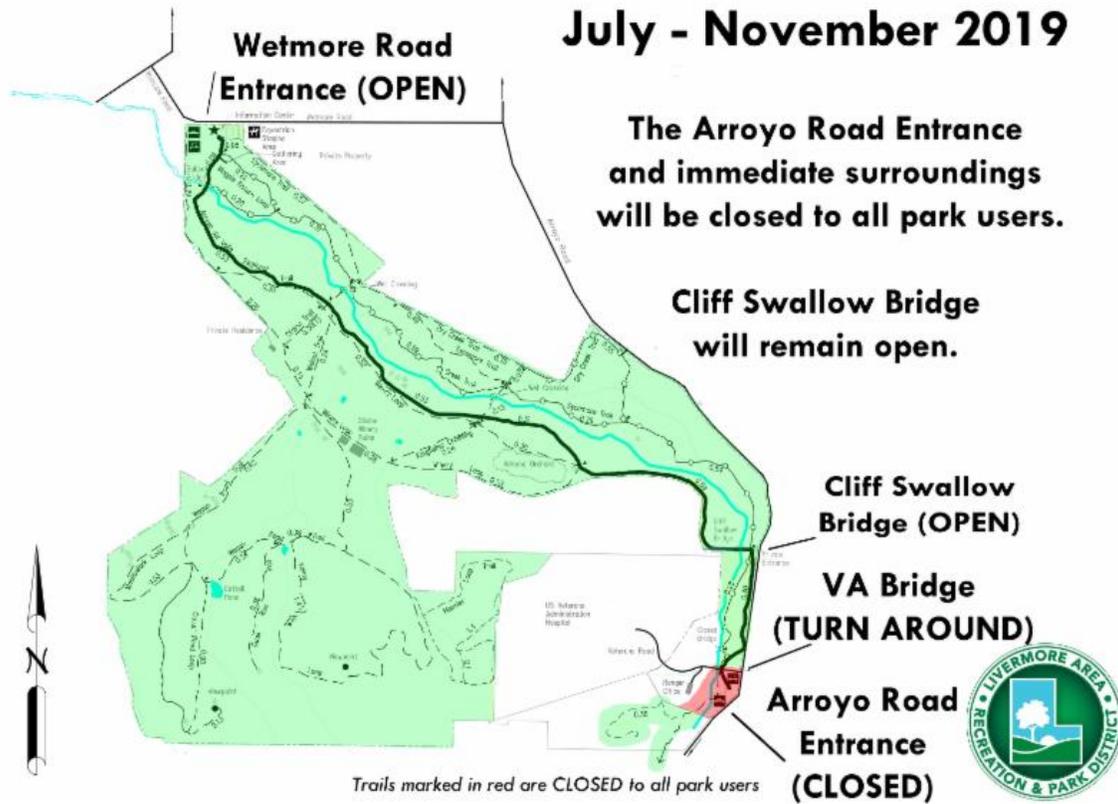
Sept. 1 - Sept. 8	7:00 am - 8:00 pm
Sept. 9 - Sept. 29	7:00 am - 7:30 pm
Sept. 30 - Oct. 20	7:00 am - 7:00 pm
Oct. 21 - Nov. 2	7:00 am - 6:30 pm
Nov. 3 - Dec. 31	7:00 am - 5:30 pm

BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION UPDATES:

Tri-Valley Conservancy's project to build an all-season, ADA-accessible bridge in Sycamore Grove Park just upstream of the Arroyo Road entrance is moving along. If all goes according to plan, the bridge should be installed late this month or early in October. After the bridge is installed, a number of additional tasks will need to be completed including finishing pathways and revegetating disturbed areas with native plants. We hope to reopen this area as soon as construction is completed. Until then, the Arroyo Road Entrance area remains closed. The map below shows areas that are open and areas that are closed. We thank our park visitors for their patience during this important project.

Sycamore Grove Park Bridge Construction Closure

July - November 2019



Born of Fire

by LARPD Ranger Aide Nikki Delaney

Wildfires have long been considered destructive, uncontrollable, and unpredictable. But what most people forget or choose to ignore is that wildfires are natural. Even though fire may seem harmful at first glance, when examined further, it can be seen as an integral part of maintaining the health of our forests and grasslands. As a matter of fact, many plant species in fire-prone regions have adapted to survive, thrive and, in some cases, depend on fire.

So, how exactly do they do it? Unlike the local wildlife, plants don't have the luxury of running, flying, creeping, or crawling away from an approaching fire; instead, they have had to find interesting ways to adapt.



Giant Sequoia with burn scar
Photos by Nikki Delaney

FIRE-RESISTANCE

Some plants have adapted to be more fire-resistant. While there is no such thing as a fire-proof plant, some plants have certain qualities that make them less prone to catching fire and burning. Plants with fleshy leaves have a higher internal water content thus making them less likely to burst into flame or burn for long periods of time. Succulents, such as agave, aloe, and jade, will broil or bake rather than burn, and will not carry fire in the same way woody plants will. Many

California native and drought-tolerant plants also have a greater ability to store water and have deeper-reaching, more extensive root systems that can access groundwater. In addition to helping these species survive in hot, dry climates, such adaptations help protect them against the threat of fire.

Additionally, many native trees, such as the Giant Sequoia and Coast Redwood, have adapted to the threat of wildfires by developing thicker bark that doesn't burn or catch fire easily and protects the vital inner tissues that transport water and nutrients.

Other qualities of fire-resistant plants include little to no accumulation of dead vegetation, slow-growth, an open-branching habit and little to no sap or resin. Ceanothus, honeysuckle, currant, monkey flower, and California fuchsia are California native and drought-tolerant plants that display most or all of the above qualities.

RESPROUTING

Many species have the ability to grow new shoots even if the above-ground portions of the plant are burned or destroyed in a fire. Geophytes, or plants that have an underground storage organ like corms, rhizomes, true bulbs and tubers, have this ability. Underground portions of the plant are protected and insulated from lethal temperatures by the soil, and the water and nutrients stored in those underground organs allow for quick resprouting. Other plants, including many chaparral species such as toyon and coyote brush, have the ability to resprout from the root crown.



Coyote Bush resprouting after being charred during a prescribed burn in SGP.

REPRODUCTION

Other plants have adapted to use fire as a means of reproduction. Some conifer trees will produce serotinous cones. These cones are covered in a resin that essentially glues them shut. The cones will stay in the canopy of the tree long after the seeds have matured instead of opening up and dropping. When a wildfire burns through the area, the resin will be melted and the seeds will fall. Fire also clears out debris, allows for more sunlight to reach the forest floor, and returns nutrients to the soil—all of which aid in the newly-dropped seeds' survival.

Other plants have developed fire-activated seeds. After dropping off the parent plant, the seeds can lay dormant in the soil for years, remaining viable but not germinating. In order for the dormancy of these seeds to be broken, their tough seed coat must be scarified, or damaged. During a wildfire, the seed coat cracks in the extreme heat, allowing water to reach the seed and germination to begin.



*The seeds of the California native Matilija Poppy (*Romneya coulteri*) will only germinate if exposed to the heat of a fire. Nurseries induce germination by burning pine needles on the top of a freshly sown flat of seeds to simulate a forest fire.*

On the surface, wildfire appears deadly and destructive and, in many ways, especially as temperatures rise and human activity moves further into fire prone regions, it can be. But just remember that even when the land looks scorched and there appears to be nothing left, life can still find a way to persevere and grow out of the rubble.



Upcoming Ranger-led Programs

Please RSVP for ranger-led programs by emailing valleywilds@larpd.org or calling the LARPD Ranger Office at (925) 960 2400. Programs are subject to cancellation if there are not enough advance RSVPs. Payment may be made at the program by cash (exact change is appreciated), credit card, or check. Children under 18 must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

<p>EVENING HILL HIKE Sunday, Sept. 8 7:00 pm <u>Sycamore Grove, Reservable Picnic Area</u> Join Ranger Amy for a short hike to a hilltop with a beautiful view! The trail is steep but short (less than one-mile round trip). Bring water, a jacket, and a snack if you want to reward yourself at the top of the hill! Recommended for ages 4+.</p>	<p>Fee: Adults \$5 Ages 4-17 \$1</p> <p>Call or email to RSVP.</p>
<p>FALL NATURE HIKE Saturday, Sept. 28 10 am <u>Sycamore Grove, Reservable Picnic Area</u> The year is winding down, the temperature is dropping, and the fall colors are beginning to appear. Join Ranger Darren for a walk through the park as we observe these changes and, hopefully, observe some of the resident wildlife getting ready for the winter season. This will be a one- to two-mile hike over more or less level ground. Bring water and a camera if you like.</p>	<p>Fee: Adults \$5 Ages 2-17 \$1</p> <p>Call or email to RSVP.</p>
<p>PUMPKIN CARVING CAMPFIRE Sunday, October 13 4:30 pm <u>Sycamore Grove, Reservable Picnic Area</u> Halloween is fast approaching... join us to celebrate! Bring a pumpkin (and carving tools if you have them) as we carve our squashes into works of art... or horror. Carving stencils (and a few tools to borrow) will be provided. The BBQ will be ready if you would like to bring dinner to cook. After carving, we'll sit around a campfire to hear the history of Halloween and enjoy some sing-a-longs. Hot chocolate and s'mores fixins' will be provided.</p>	<p>Fee: Adults \$5 Ages 2-17 \$1</p> <p>Please call or email to RSVP by October 6!</p>
<p>TRICK OR TREAT IN THE PARK Saturday, October 26 Drop-in between 5pm-7pm <u>Sycamore Grove Park, 1051 Wetmore Road</u> Wear your favorite costume and enjoy this family-friendly Halloween adventure! You'll be sent on a one-mile stroll through the park. Several spooktacular stations along the way will have candy for those in costume and neat things to see! Children under 18 must be accompanied by an adult.</p>	<p>Fee: Adults \$5 Ages 2-17 \$1</p> <p>Call or email to RSVP.</p>
<p>OAKS AND ACORNS Sunday, October 27 2 pm <u>Sycamore Grove, Reservable Picnic Area</u> Join Ranger Amy to learn about different oaks that grow in Livermore. We will discuss how California Indians made these nuts edible and taste acorn porridge! Please RSVP no later than October 21.</p>	<p>Fee: Adults \$5 Ages 2-17 \$1</p> <p>Please call or email to RSVP before Oct. 21.</p>

* RSVP by emailing valleywilds@larpd.org, or calling the LARPD Ranger Office at (925) 960 2400

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Livermore Area Recreation and Park District | Ranger Office: (925) 960 2400 |
<https://www.larpd.org/departments/openspace>

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