

June 2019

Volume 28 | Issue 6

Dear Nature Lovers,

We are trying something new this month. The entire newsletter is contained in this email. There is no pdf to view. Please let us know how you feel about this format change by emailing valleywilds@larpd.org.

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

A Trail-Build to Remember by Ranger Eric Whiteside



Photos by Greg Davis

On April 20th and 21st, V-O-Cal (Volunteers for Outdoor California) set up a small tent city in the Reservable Picnic Area of Sycamore Grove Park. With the

help of nearly 100 amazing and dedicated volunteers, they built a gorgeous half-mile trail in a matter of hours. The new but not yet named trail departs from the Arroyo Del Valle Regional Trail, just beyond the Arroyo Road Entrance. From there, it begins a steady climb up into the "Eastern Extension" -- a parcel of land that the Tri-Valley Conservancy (TVC) purchased in 2009 with financial assistance from LARPD and the East Bay Regional Park District. The western portion of this piece of land was recently developed as the Harrier Trail (also built by V-O-Cal!), but most of the lower portion had been all but untouched since LARPD acquired the land from TVC in 2015.

Ranger Matt, our Open Space trail guru, and others on our staff have been mapping out different variations of this trail for years, always wondering if one day it would come to fruition. The hilltop where the completed trail now terminates is a favorite lunch spot of ours. Just a quick stroll from our office, it offers a wonderful view up the Arroyo Del Valle watershed from under the shade of two beautiful, wind-sculpted blue oaks. It wasn't until we heard from Craig Fish that Matt really buckled down and began to commit to a permanent route. Craig, one of the many inspiring figures who make up the backbone of V-O-Cal, said they were interested in doing another trail-build in Sycamore Grove Park.

The hypothetical trail took a major turn for the better one day just few months ago. Matt and I were trying to envision the three grueling switchbacks (nobody likes a switchback!) we needed to reach the top of the very steep first stretch of trail. Matt gazed longingly at thicket of black sage and lowered the clinometer. He said, "Hang on a sec..." and proceeded to bushwhack his way thru the wall of brush. Confused and a little worried for his sanity, I followed him through.



Slowly Matt's vision became apparent to me: we could eliminate two of the three brutal and boring switchbacks by carving the trail into the steeply graded cliff. It wouldn't be an easy task, but V-O-Cal trail-builders love a good challenge. On the day of the build, Matt and I could hardly believe our eyes as we watched this section completely transform from a precarious, loose, soiled mess of chaparral into a picture-perfect trail cut. Our dreams were literally brought to life. Volunteers under the direction of V-O-Cal crew leaders anchored in cut-to-size railroad ties to serve as steps, keyed in huge boulders to stabilize the ground, and laughed and joked all the while. Work stopped only now and then to perhaps usher a Blue Belly fence lizard out of the work area or to simply admire a Red-tailed Hawk soaring above.

The hard-working crew kept at it from the early morning stretch and safety talk until late afternoon when a Pulaski (a specialized digging and chopping tool) broke up the final bit of stubborn earth. V-O-Cal volunteers love what they do, and few moments went by that weren't filled with genuine smiles and laughter. Of course,

everyone was even more light-hearted after the tools were cleaned and stored, a gourmet meal was served, and the keg was tapped. Exhausted volunteers then gathered for a ceremony to honor hard-core V-O-Cal-ers who were presented with metal Pulaski pins -- one for every five trail-builds they had attended. Some of these folks wear hats that are weighed down by 10 or 15 pins! Stories were told around the campfire, and this year we even took a windy night hike before we finally hit the sack. There was more trail to dig in the morning!



The temporary tent city near of the LARPD ranger office

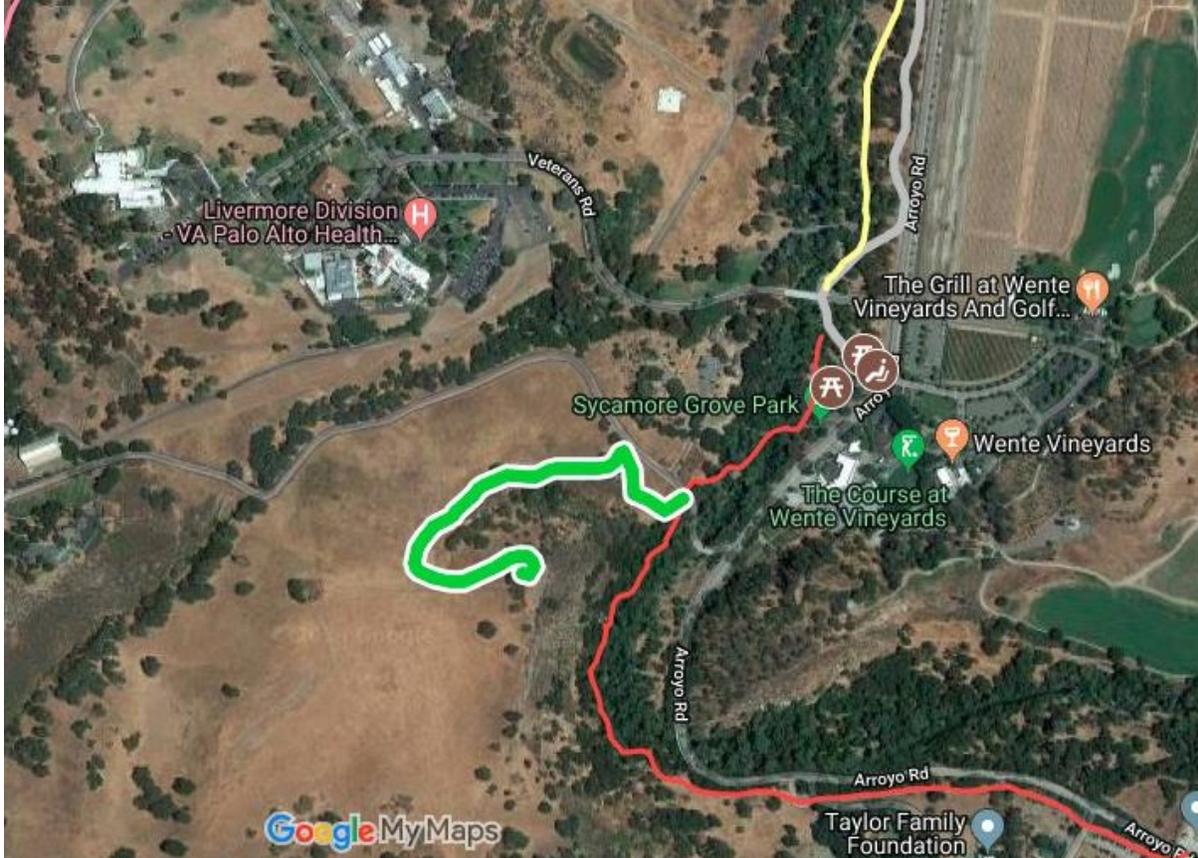
Trail-building may seem simple on the surface - just dig until you have a flat surface wide enough to walk on, right? But to V-O-Cal the task is full of gentle nuances that can separate a trail that lasts for generations from a genuine maintenance nightmare. Many of the trails in Sycamore Grove Park are old ranch roads that we inherited when the land was acquired by LARPD. I'm sure many of you have seen what shape they end up in after a few big rainfalls. The huge ruts carved by running water and massive puddles with nowhere to drain are all signs of a poorly designed trail. V-O-Cal crews know how avoid these flaws. They have been digging trails all over the Bay Area and beyond for nearly 15 years, and they have the expertise to make long-lasting trails.



One of the many trail crews posing on their personal section of trail-to-be

Come out to Sycamore Grove Park and let the lovely new trail speak for itself! Smell the aroma of the Black Sage lining the cliff as you climb up the stairs carefully installed by volunteers. Look for the tall flower stalks of evening-blooming soaproot (come 5 pm or later to see these ghostly-white flowers). Admire the rolling grasslands and look for fawns hiding in the shade as you pass under the vibrant blue oaks and live oaks. As you near the top of the hill, look for all kinds of native wildflowers that bloom there every year: yarrow, blue-eyed grass, violets, wally baskets and many more! Sit on the bench to catch your breath and think about the back-breaking work that went into the trail's construction. And please think about signing up for a future V-O-Cal event! Their webpage is v-o-cal.org. You will be amazed at how rewarding it is to give some of your time to make something the community will enjoy every day for years to come. Imagine hiking on a trail you helped build!

Location of new trail:



Access the new trail (green with white outline on map) by parking at the Arroyo Road Entrance (5049 Arroyo Road). Instead of heading out on the paved path, walk towards the kiosk and down to the creek. Cross the wooden footbridge (seasonal) and follow the dirt single-track that goes towards the Del Valle staging area (red trail on map). Immediately after crossing a paved access road, you will see the new trail heading up the hill on the right.

Changes to Ranger-Led Programs

Starting this month, we are requesting pre-registration for most ranger-led programs. You are encouraged to sign up for these programs at larpd.org or by calling LARPD's main office at (925) 373-5700. Visitors can also drop in to a program and pay there (exact change appreciated), but by registering in advance, you can help ensure that the program you wish to attend will be held. **Programs are subject to cancellation if there are not enough people pre-register.** We welcome your comments on these changes - email valleywilds@larpd.org.



June Programs

(click on underlined program title for more info / registration page)

			<p>Summer Stargazing</p> <p>Look through a telescope and hear stories</p>	
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Sat	6/8	8:00 pm	about the constellations! We will walk into the park as the sun sets, enjoying the crescent moon as it follows the sun below the western horizon. We'll stop at our telescope to enjoy a closer view of some celestial objects. The walk will be approximately two miles round-trip on paved and unpaved trails. Class# 7150	\$10 per adult / \$1 per child
Sat	6/15	8:00 am	Beat the Heat Hike Wildlife doesn't like the heat any more than we do, so let's get an early start and see who's out and about in the Sycamore Grove Nature Area. This will be a one-to-two mile walk on trails over level ground. Bring water and a camera if you like. Class #7152	\$5 per adult / \$1 per child
Sun	6/16	7:00 pm	Howl at the Moon Hike Join us for a hike where we will howl at the rising (almost) full moon! We'll go about five miles round-trip and return after dark. Kids age 8 and up are welcome. Class #7001/7002	\$10 per adult / \$1 per child
Sun	6/23	2:00 pm	Snakes Some of these animals have a horrible reputation, but most of the time is it based on myth and not reality. Snakes are under-appreciated for the role they play in nature. Join me today to learn about these slithering (but not slimy!) critters. There will be live specimens for us to see and enjoy. Class #7003/7004	\$5 per adult / \$1 per child

Please show your support for our ranger-led programs by registering in advance of the program date! If you have difficulty with the online registration system, you can call the LARPD main office at (925) 373 5700 and register over the phone.

July Program Preview!

(click on underlined program title for more info / registration page)

THUR	7/4	8:00 pm	4th of July Hike in Sycamore Grove Join Ranger Glen on a hike to one of the highest hills in the park to get a different perspective on the fireworks show in the Tri-Valley and maybe see nocturnal wildlife! We will be hiking four miles round-trip, including a moderate hill climb. Bring a blanket or camp chair Class #7123	\$5 per person
			Creek Crawl	

Sun	7/14	2:00 pm	<p>Let's cool off in the creek! Fun exploration for all ages. Wear clothes and shoes that can get wet. Meet Ranger Amy at the Wetmore Entrance to Sycamore Grove Park.</p> <p>Class #7005 Age 18+ Class #7006 Age 2-17</p>	\$5 per adult / \$1 per child
Sat	7/20	10:00 am	<p><u>The Way of the Ohlone</u> What was it like to live in the Livermore Valley before the Europeans arrived? Join Ranger Darren to catch a glimpse into the daily life of the original inhabitants of the area and unlock the secrets of how they survived and thrived for thousands of years. We will start with a slow-paced walk and then look at some replicas of tools and baskets.</p> <p>Class #7014 Age 18+ Class #7015 Age 5-17</p>	\$5 per adult / \$1 per child
Sun	7/21	2:00 pm	<p><u>Turtles</u> They come in different shapes and sizes. They live in different environments, from the ocean to the desert and everywhere in between. Some are small and some are the size of a small car. Join us today to learn about that charming group of reptiles - the turtles. There will be live specimens for us to look at.</p> <p>Class #7007 Age 18+ Class #7008 Age 2-17</p>	\$5 per adult / \$1 per child
Sat	7/27	10:30 am	<p><u>Nature Storytime (no reg. needed)</u> Learn about aquatic wildlife at a special storytime in the park with a Livermore librarian. Then explore the pond with an LARPD Naturalist! Wear closed-toe shoes and clothes you don't mind getting wet. This program meets at our tricky-to-find Sycamore Grove Reservable Picnic Area - look for the blue picnic table on this map and remember to turn on the road to the Veterans Medical facility.</p>	FREE for all ages!

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Check out the
Valley Wilds Archives!

*Receive this email from a friend?
Click [here](#) to join our email list. We only send one email a month and don't
share your info with anyone!*

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

STAY CONNECTED:

