



Western
Puente
Hills
Access
Guide



History and the Puente Hills

The hills were formed over millions of years as land along the north edge of the Whittier-Elsinore fault was pushed upward by seismic forces. The hills are also shaped by continuous erosion, caused by rain and wind. The hills rise from an elevation of approximately 400 feet in Whittier and Hacienda Heights, to a summit of more than 1,400 feet above sea level.

The First People

The Puente Hills and all surrounding lands were first populated by the Tongva, who came to be known as "Gabrieleños" (or children of Gabriel) by Spanish explorers and settlers. They preferred to live in valleys, building villages near reliable sources of water. The hills were revered for abundant wildlife resources, and regarded as sacred places.

The Age of Exploration

The Spanish expeditions of Gaspar de Portola and Juan Bautista de Anza passed through the San Gabriel Valley just north of the Puente Hills. The Portola expedition passed through the eastern Puente Hills, near Brea Canyon. Today, Los Angeles County's Schabarum Trail is a recreation route associated with the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail, a unit of the National Park Service.

Early Settlers

Under the era of Mexican government in California, the hills became parts of the vast ranchos tended by William Workman, F.P.F. Temple, John Rowland and Pio Pico.

The Modern Era

Rugged terrain, unstable slopes, limited access, and a lack of water made the hills difficult to develop in modern times, but the land's geologic history made it valuable for another purpose: oil extraction. Large tracts of land were conserved under the ownership of corporations such as Unocal, Chevron and Standard Oil. Some of those lands are now owned by the Habitat Authority.

Flora & Fauna of the Puente Hills

Wildlife in the Puente Hills includes distinct communities of plants which are uniquely adapted to the environment, and animals that depend upon these plants and other animals.

Flora, or plant life, consists of groups known to biologists as coastal sage scrub, chaparral, oak woodland, riparian vegetation (found along a creek or stream), and walnut woodlands.

Coastal sage scrub is a very threatened community in the southern California landscape. The hardy plants making up this community are commonly found on gentle, rolling, south-facing slopes with maximum exposure to the sun. These plants are shallow rooted and to get through the summer drought, go dormant and lose their leaves, developing a brown appearance in summer and fall. Plant species include purple and black sages, California buckwheat, California Encelia and California Sagebrush. This rare community is protected by state and federal regulations. The preserve includes splendid examples of coastal sage scrub in Sycamore Canyon, Hellman Park, the Arroyo San Miguel, and Powder Canyon.

CALIFORNIA SAGE



TOYON

Chaparral grows under the same conditions as Coastal Sage Scrub, yet includes large, woody shrubs that often grow in dense thickets. Individual species include elderberry, laurel sumac, lemonade berry and toyon. The best stands of chaparral are found in the Hacienda Hills, Arroyo San Miguel and Powder Canyon.

Oak woodlands are comprised of tall coast live oaks growing along the slopes and flat grasslands of Powder Canyon, Hacienda Hills, and the Arroyos along Colima Road.



COAST LIVE OAK LEAF & ACORN



WESTERN SYCAMORE

Riparian forests grow where water flows. Dense tree cover and lush growth might include coast live oak, western sycamore, arroyo willow and mulefat. Sycamore Canyon, Hacienda Hills, Arroyo Pescadero and Arroyo San Miguel include these species along streambeds.

Walnut woodlands exist in pockets, with the California black walnut being predominant, sometimes growing amongst chaparral species such as toyon and elderberry. These plants provide important food sources for birds and other wildlife. Walnut woodlands are found in Powder Canyon.



CALIFORNIA BLACK WALNUT

Fauna, or animal life, includes numerous varieties of insects, reptiles, birds and mammals. The Puente Hills are part of a biological system that extends from Whittier Narrows and San Gabriel River, to the Chino Hills, Santa Ana River and Mountains.



Mammals vary from rodents, such as the California ground squirrel, dusky-footed woodrat, and brush rabbit, to small carnivores including the gray fox, coyote and bobcat, and large carnivores like the California mountain lion. The mule deer is the largest herbivore found in the Puente Hills. These are all shy and secretive creatures by nature, but if you look carefully, you may find evidence of their presence.

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Please observe the following...

Stay on trails. Decades of ranching and oil extraction have damaged these lands, which are gradually returning to normal health. Please allow time and other natural processes to restore plant life and reclaim lands. Plants include poison oak and cactus, which may cause injury to humans.

Trails include pre-existing service roads, but were not developed to accommodate wheelchairs or strollers.

Bicycles are prohibited at Arroyo Pescadero and Hellman Park, but permitted elsewhere on lands owned or maintained by the Habitat Authority.

No smoking, fireworks, matches, or other flammable items, whether fire season is current or not.

Bring your own water. Water is generally not available on the premises.

Dogs are not permitted in Sycamore Canyon, but are welcome elsewhere when leashed and restrained from harming wildlife and visitors. Please help protect land and water resources by removing animal waste dropped by your pet.

Motor vehicles are not permitted.

Camping is not permitted.

Habitat Authority lands are **open** to the public from **sunrise to sunset**.

Rocks, trees, flowers, and other objects or artifacts must not be removed or disturbed, so that others may enjoy these resources.

Possession of firearms, bows and arrows, compressed air guns and other weapons is prohibited.

Access to park lands is prohibited within 48 hours after rains.

Wild animals may be dangerous. Children and pets should be accompanied and supervised by an adult at all times.

Pack it in? **Pack it out.**

Habitat Authority lands are actively patrolled and protected by law enforcement officers.

24-hour ranger emergency number:
(562) 698-1446

About the Puente Hills Landfill Native Habitat Preservation Authority

The Puente Hills Landfill Native Habitat Preservation Authority (Habitat Authority) is a joint powers agency with a Board of Directors comprised of representatives from the City of Whittier, County of Los Angeles, the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County and Hacienda Heights Improvement Association.

The purpose of the Habitat Authority is to acquire, restore and maintain open space in the Puente Hills as permanent protection for the native habitat. As of October 2002, more than 3,770 acres have been preserved.

The Habitat Authority works to preserve and protect native habitat, ensure wildlife crossings, and work with the community to provide public access. The Habitat Authority supports environmental education for children and adults.

The Habitat Authority was created in 1994 from a mitigation fund generated by "tipping" fees collected at the Puente Hills Landfill.

The Puente Hills consist of rugged topography, steep hillsides and deep canyons. The ecosystem is connected through the eastern Puente Hills to the Chino Hills and Santa Ana Mountains by habitat linkages and corridors that allow wildlife to continue to move through the landscape.

Hikers, cyclists, bird watchers and equestrians of all ages enjoy the trails that the hills have to offer, and enjoy spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean, Catalina Island, and San Gabriel Valley and Mountains.

For more information, please contact:



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