

Valley Wilds

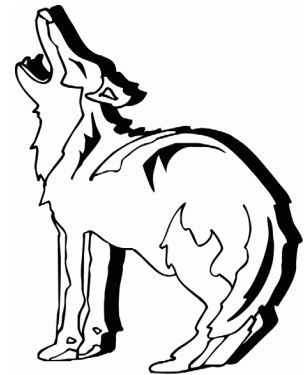
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Dances with Stars

By Ranger Pat Sotelo

“The coyote is a living, breathing allegory of want... always poor, out of luck, and friendless...even the fleas would desert him for a velocipede.” - Mark Twain



Mark Twain’s observations about the quixotic coyote mirror the ambivalent attitudes mankind has harbored about this incredibly intelligent animal. For years western settlers and ranchers were engaged in a nonstop, misguided, and ultimately futile war against the coyote.

Despite years of trapping, shooting, and poisoning, this tough, wild dog thrives throughout most of North America. The coyote has even expanded into territories formerly

occupied by its larger cousin, the wolf. As the wolf has been exterminated throughout most of its original range, the coyote has assumed its role of chief canine predator, the “top dog.”

The coyote is chiefly a solitary hunter and an important predator of small mammals such as voles, mice, squirrels, and rabbits. Carrion is a major component of its diet, especially during the harsh winter months. The coyote, ever the opportunist, will not pass up insects, worms, or seasonal berries and fruits from woodlands and orchards.

In the northern reaches of their range, where winters are severe, snow is deep, and small prey scarce, coyotes will band together in pairs or small packs to hunt larger game, mainly deer. They


will also follow elk and pronghorn herds, ready to dispose of the sick and frail who fall prey to winter’s wrath. The dead of winter provides life to the coyote.

The name coyote comes from the Aztec “coyotl”. How appropriate that the Indians have provided the coyote with its name, for many of the myths and legends of American Indians feature the adventures of the crafty coyote. Combining the attributes of a human, animal, god, and fool into a single, unfathomable entity, their Coyote tales present us with a complex mythic figure.

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 The Hitchhiker

Livermore Area Recreation and Park District

4444 East Ave. Livermore, CA 94550
www.larpd.dst.ca.us
Ranger Office: 925.960.2400

Visit Camp Shelly

Escape the heat of the valley by taking a quick escape to Camp Shelly, in beautiful South Lake Tahoe. Sites are still available for many August weekday nights and a few weekends.

Call (925) 373 5700 to make a reservation or visit http://www.larpd.dst.ca.us/camp_shelly/info.html

for more information.



Ranger-led Programs

Experience nature in a special way. Programs are generally 1 - 2 hours in length. A \$2 donation is requested. A \$5 parking fee is charged at both park entrances.

Quick Look:

Hot August Stars
Saturday, August 6
8:30 pm

Make a Splash!
Sunday, August 7
1:00 pm

A History of Veterans Park
Sunday, August 14
10:00 am

Turtles
Saturday, August 20
2:00 pm

Sunset Hike
Saturday, August 27
7:30 pm

Applefest!
Sunday, August 28
2:00 pm



August Programs

Hot August Stars

Saturday, August 6 8:30 p.m.

As this hot summer Saturday draws to a close the cooler night air moves in as the stars begin to shine bright! Come out to the park this evening for a walk into the park with frequent stops to observe the heavenly wonders of the night's sky. This year the Perseid meteor shower will be largely washed out by a full moon, but with some luck we will get to see a few early outliers. Please bring comfortable walking shoes; we will be going between 1.5 and 2 miles into the park.

Ranger Glen Florey

Sycamore Grove Park

Wetmore Road Entrance

Make A Splash!

Sunday, August 7 1:00 p.m.

Nothing like water to cool down a hot August day! Bring your water shoes, clothes that can get wet and a towel. We all get to be kids today as we "make a splash" in the creek. Nets and containers will be provided so we can catch critters and explore the world of wetness.

Ranger Patti Cole

Sycamore Grove Park

Wetmore Road Entrance

A History of Veterans Park

Sunday, August 14 10:00 am

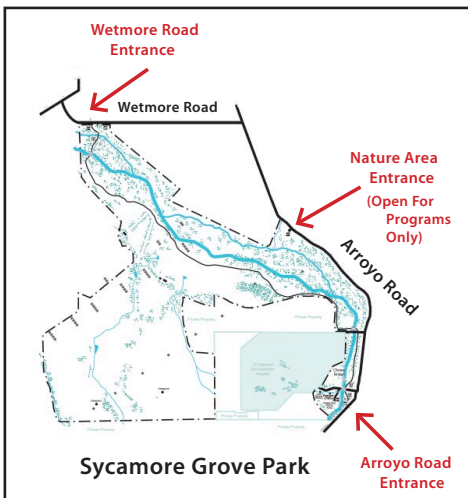
The area traditionally known as Veterans Park has had a long and storied history. Cowboys and Indians, pumas and padres, doctors and debutants, and a whole lot of wine. Join us for a slow paced one mile tour of the park as we sift through the layers of time. Bring water and a camera if you would like.

Ranger Darren Segur

Sycamore Grove Park

Arroyo Road Entrance

(5211 Arroyo Road)



Dances with Stars (Continued)

In many Indian cultures Coyote is a benefactor of humans, a wily creature who created the world, created the people to live on that world, who stole fire for the benefit of the people, and who provided delicious foods like salmon and acorns for all to enjoy.

Yet Coyote is also portrayed as the consummate fool who brings horrible (and comical) misfortunes onto himself through vanity, jealousy, and plain bad luck. Coyote reaches the height of his infamy as a result of his unquenchable lechery, scheming his way into the most bizarre, intriguing, and downright impossible situations during his escapades, many of which reveal unique and hilariously unsuccessful attempts at mating.

There is, however, a kind of comic nobility associated with Coyote, for it is Coyote the adventurer and dreamer who, through his wiles, bravado, and cunning, is able to climb to the sun, dance with the stars, rise from the dead, and mingle with the spirits from ancient times.

To many American Indians Coyote is a part of themselves, an inhabitant of the world they share with all the animals, and the principal figure of the myths and legends through which they define themselves and their place in the world. Imagine yourself lying under a canopy of stars, the stories of Coyote, performed that evening around the communal fire, dancing through your mind. Staccato barks break the stillness of the night. Piercing howls echo through the woods, as Coyote calls to the stars, begging them to fly down and dance with him. This midnight song, burned into our consciousness ever since man and coyote began their dance of life and death, signals the unseen presence of a familiar, yet ultimately mysterious and unknowable creature.

Coyote the trickster, the survivor, the fool, the maligned predator, the wise teacher, the giver of life, the creator of the world, the one chosen to dance with the stars, lives on in the wild and in our imaginations.



Photo by SigmaEye via Flickr

More August Programs

Turtles

Saturday, August 20th

10:00am

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.

Ranger Dawn Soles

*Sycamore Grove Park
Arroyo Road Entrance
(5211 Arroyo Road)*

Sunset Hike

Saturday, August 27th

7:30 pm

End the day off right by enjoying a sunset overlooking the beautiful Livermore Valley. We will hike from the Wetmore parking lot to Sycamore Grove's upper hills, so be prepared for some steep terrain. Afterwards we will walk back in the dark, listening and looking for nocturnal animals. No flashlights please.

Ranger Jamie Greco

*Sycamore Grove Park
Wetmore Road Entrance*

Applefest!

Sunday, August 28

2:00 pm

Join us at Ravenswood Historic Site for some old-fashion fun as we explore and taste our way through the antique apple orchard. We'll make cider, eat apples and play some old time games. You will also have an opportunity to tour the buildings of the historic estate with a Ravenswood docent. Good for all ages.

Ranger "Apple" Amy

*Ravenswood Historic Site
2647 Arroyo Road*

The Hitchhiker

By Ranger Eric Whiteside

Long ago in the dry heat of a small Spanish village, a young man toils away in the fields. He is fighting back the weeds to make room for crops. The main culprit is a grass widespread through the Mediterranean, *Bromus diandrus*, also called 'Ripgut Brome'. As he wades through the field of grass, the exceptionally adapted, yet painfully pesky, seeds burrow into his clothes. These seeds are lined with bristles that allow them to easily work their way into fabric and fur, and hold on for dear life when attempts are made to pull them out. After plucking handful after handful from his pant legs and boots, he decides he has finally had enough of this sticker-filled life. It's time to breathe the fresh air of the new world.

He boards the next ship headed for the Americas, leaving everything behind but the clothes on his back. Months into his voyage, he is seasick and land hungry. He looks down and finds one lonely grass seed lodged into his boot, and out of respect for his former home, he refuses to pick it out and toss it into the sea. As much contempt that he once held for those mischievous weeds, now it seems even that life of toil amongst the weeds was kinder to him than the endless swelling of the ocean.

At last, our sea hardened young pilgrim reaches his destination. As he settles into his new life, rejoicing in his decision to embark on such a bold journey, he notices once again that lone grass seed in his boot. The dry and painful memories of working that field full of aggressive weeds rush into his head, and at once he casts the seed along with his past away into the green hills of California. "I will never see those awful plants again in my life!" he yells.



And perhaps it was that very seed that introduced *Bromus diandrus* into the new world, and to this day it has flourished. With the help of many other invasive plant species, almost all of our native Californian grasslands have been decimated, overrun by foreign competitors. However, if you wander into the hills of Sycamore Grove Park there are remnant

patches of native grasslands to be found, rugged areas where *Bromus diandrus* has not been able to edge out the natives like *Nasella pulchra*, purple needlegrass. Watch for future ranger-led hikes to these difficult to find places. For the time being, you can get a closer look at some of the species of bunch grass that used to cover the California hills by visiting our native garden at the Arroyo Road entrance to Sycamore Grove Park.

Applefest!



*Apples, Cider, Games
and Family Fun!*

**Sunday, August 28th
Ravenswood Historic Estate
2647 Arroyo Road**

\$2 Donation per person Requested

