



Enhancing public awareness of the importance of maintaining and restoring the unique natural habitat within Chino Hills State Park through
interpretive and educational activities.

Pretty Flowers Hiding a Dark Secret



CHSP hillside with Black Mustard

Each spring, Chino Hills State Park (CHSP) is bright with colorful flowers. Some of the prettiest are hiding a dark secret. [Read More](#) (Scroll Down)



From the Desk of the
Interpreter

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Help the Park and Donate to CHSPIA



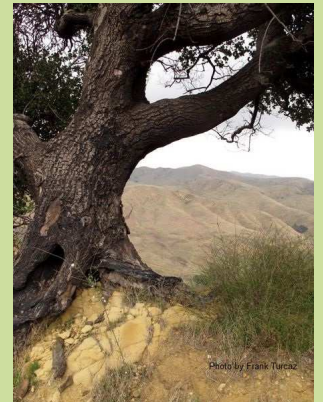
The word is getting out! Chino Hills State Park, surrounded by cities and urban development, is the right place to go to quickly experience vast open spaces, trails, and scenic vistas. [Read More](#) (Scroll Down)



What are those?

Rattlesnakes!

[Read More](#) (Scroll Down)



Do you have something to share for the next Newsletter?

Do you have something you want to share about an experience in the Park, such as a special sighting of an animal or bird or plant, or maybe a romance or a friendship you made while in the park?

Contact Eric at eric@chinohillsstatepark.org.

Pretty Flowers Hiding a Dark Secret

Each spring, Chino Hills State Park (CHSP) is bright with colorful flowers. Some of the prettiest are hiding a dark secret. The three biggest offenders in CHSP are mustard, radish and thistle. All are invasive. All are non-native. And all cause problems for the natural environment.

The yellow bloom of *Brassica nigra*, better known as black mustard, covers the hillsides throughout much of Southern California and the West. This plant germinates in early winter before the native plants have established themselves. It shoots up to over 6 feet tall crowding out the sunlight. The deep roots take up water leaving very little for the native plants. These weeds dry up in the hot summer months and serve as kindling for wildfires. The plants produce thousands of seeds which quickly sprout after a fire. While edible for humans, black mustard is toxic to animals if eaten in large quantities. In small

quantities it can cause indigestion in some animals. For those reasons, the wildlife of CHSP don't eat them. It is thought that mustard plants were intentionally planted by Spanish missionaries to mark the path along the El Camino Real which connects the California missions.

Wild radish (*Raphanus raphanistrum*) is a flowering plant in the family Brassicaceae. Its flowers can be white, pink, purple, blue or yellow, and it is not uncommon to see multiple colors on one plant. This invasive plant, with its delicate-looking petals, blooms in early spring and spreads rapidly taking up the resources that native plants need to thrive. Wild radish can host a number of pests and diseases and can cause animal health problems.

Milk Thistle (*Silybum marianum*) is an aggressive invader that threatens native vegetation which is beneficial to wildlife. A single plant can produce about 6,000 seeds that can stay viable for nine years. Milk thistle will form dense patches that outcompete native plants for moisture, sunlight, and nutrients. One of the worst things about milk thistle invasion is that it accumulates nitrates and can poison wildlife. The flower is typically about two to four inches across and is surrounded by one to two-inch spines.

All three of these invasive flowers are lovely to look at, but are not welcome in CHSP. Sadly, eradication is not possible due to the sheer number of acres that these plants have invaded. These "pretty flowers" can be admired for their beauty and resilience and yet despised for the damage they do to the native plants and animals of CHSP.



Milk Thistle



Black Mustard



Wild Radish



hillside of invasive plants

Help the Park and Donate to CHSPIA

The word is getting out! Chino Hills State Park, surrounded by cities and urban development, is the right place to go to quickly experience vast open spaces, trails, and scenic vistas. Within the last few years, the number of visitors at CHSP has been increasing and will continue to do so. Along with this love of the park and increased use, comes challenges that require the help of dedicated individuals to ensure the park remains beautiful, clean, and maintained.

One way to help is to **donate to the Chino Hills State Park Interpretive Association (CHSPIA)**. Your funds go directly towards supporting and enhancing the Park. While CHSPIA applies for and receives one-time grants, these funds are for specific programs, such as buses for school field trips, and they are not sustainable funding sources. We still need help with

other items, such as supplies for interpretive programs or barbed wire removal efforts. It is only through donations from individuals that we are able to provide support for these programs. The more that we receive, the more that we are able to do for the Park. You can donate at www.ChinoHillsStatePark.org or by using the QR code at the bottom of this newsletter.

A good place to start to learn more about the Park and the different ways that you can help out is to visit us at www.chinohillsstatepark.org.

From the Desk of the Interpreter

Don't be a jester! Springtime is the best time for the lords and ladies to be out and about, however, this land is reigned by snakes! The serpent king is the rattlesnake. Please be mindful and stay on the trail. Don't make yourself look like a jester by being off trail or bitten by a snake.

There are some "best practices" that this crown knight has picked up over the years. Pack outdoor essentials. Always pack water, a light snack, a layer for warmth, a hat or sunscreen for the sun, a map or compass (your phone has a compass setting). Wear comfortable shoes and pants if you can.

Know your ability! The flowers will be at multiple sites throughout the park. Please ask staff where the easy trails are. Follow all staff directions for safety. Most importantly, come with time on your side. We all know the White Rabbit is always late. DON'T BE THE WHITE RABBIT! Entry can take a long time. Hiking will take longer. Be patient and mindful and we will all enjoy the crown!

This Spring, weekends at 10 am, participate in hikes lead by the royal stewards, Mike and Shelly. Learn about the regency of the flora, the commons of the fauna, and the sovereign, Mother Nature, that keeps us all in wonder.

What are those? - Rattlesnakes!

Chino Hills State Park is home to a wide variety of beautiful animals, reptiles, birds, and insects. State Park visitors often ask if there are rattlesnakes in the Park and the answer is a resounding "Yes!" Learning about the Park's different snakes is a fun and valuable activity, but most importantly every person who comes to enjoy Chino Hills State Park should know snake safety rules and what to do in the rare event of a snakebite.

Usually, a Park visitor will hear a rattlesnake before they see it! The most common rattlesnakes people will encounter here are the Southern Pacific Rattlesnake (*Crotalus oreganus helleri*) and the Red Diamond Rattlesnake (*Crotalus ruber*). There are other non-venomous snakes, too, such as King Snakes (*Lampropeltis getula californiae*) and Gopher Snakes (*Pituophis catenifer*). The non-venomous snakes do not have rattles.

Southern Pacific rattlesnakes are usually dark-brown to olive-brown in ground color, but they will adapt their coloration to their surroundings and may have a greyish or greenish tint. They have lighter colored spots in a repeating pattern along their thick bodies that become bars closer to the tail. They are active during the evening and at night on excessively hot days but will be active during the daytime when temperatures are moderate. During the cooler months, they are not active, but people should still be cautious. Their diets consist of rodents, squirrels, rabbits, lizards, and birds.

The Red Diamond rattlesnakes can have pink, reddish-tan, reddish-brown, or brick-red ground color. Their backs have diamond-shaped blotches usually with light edges along their thick bodies. These snakes have similar activity patterns and diets to the Southern Pacific rattlers.

Rattlesnakes use their rattles to warn when they feel encroached upon. Often, you will hear them while not seeing them and, in

that moment, you may be too close. You should calmly and quickly move back in the direction you came while looking for the snake's location. If you do physically see a rattlesnake on the hiking trail, you should stop and wait until the snake leaves the area. The sensitive snake senses people approaching from the vibrations made from walking on the trail and will typically slither away into the safety of vegetation. If it does not leave, turn around and notify a park employee or volunteer who will move the snake to a safer location. Do not try to relocate the snake yourself. Absolutely do not take a selfie with the snake!

Remember that snakes truly do not want to interact with you, but if you or someone else is bitten please DO follow these steps:

- Dial 911 and inform State Park staff when able
- Stay calm as a rapid heartrate can increase venom transport
- Wash the bite area gently with soap and water
- Remove watches, rings, and anything which may constrict swelling & cause injury
- Immobilize the affected area
- Transport the victim safely to the nearest medical facility
- If the doctor is more than 30 minutes away, keep the bite below the heart, and then try to get to the doctor as quickly as possible

Things to NOT DO after a snakebite:

- DON'T apply a tourniquet
- DON'T pack the bite area in ice
- DON'T cut the wound with a knife or razor
- DON'T use your mouth to suck out the venom
- DON'T let the victim drink alcohol

The Chino Hills State Park Discovery Center at 4500 Carbon Canyon Rd, Brea, CA 92823 has an excellent exhibit about snakes and other Park reptiles. Stop in and talk to the Park's Interpreter, Shelly Imler, and the many Volunteers who would love to teach you about snakes and snake safety. A knowledgeable Park visitor helps to keep all the Park's inhabitants safe and happy!

Referenced Material for this article and to learn more:

1. Chino Hills City Website Rattlesnake Safety Document:

<http://www.chinohills.org/DocumentCenter/View/18045/Rattlesnake-Safety?bidId=>

2. CHSPIA website, Natural Resources: Reptiles:

<https://www.chinohillsstatepark.org/natural-resources/reptiles>

3. CaliforniaHerps.com website on the Southern Pacific Rattlesnake:

<https://californiaherps.com/snakes/pages/c.o.helleri.html#description>

4. CaliforniaHerps.com website on the Red Diamond Rattlesnake:

<https://californiaherps.com/snakes/pages/c.ruber.html#description>

5. Chino Hills State Park Brochure:

<https://www.parks.ca.gov/pages/648/files/ChinoHillsFinalWebLayout2018.pdf>









www.ChinoHillsStatePark.org

Donate to help CHSPIA support Chino Hills State Park



CHSPIA is a non-profit volunteer-based organization that assists the California Department of Parks and Recreation in maintaining and restoring Chino Hills State Park. Through interpretive programs and volunteer support designed to enhance visitor experiences, CHSPIA fosters appreciation and the enlightened use of the State Park. All funds raised go directly to CHSPIA to support interpretive activities, events and other programs.

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