OTAY VALLEY REGIONAL PARK

The Otay Valley Regional Park (OVRP) is located in the southern part of San Diego County four miles north of the international border with Mexico and eight miles south of downtown. San Diego. The OVRP offers its visitors a relaxing sense of well-being in a natural river valley. The park map depicts various trail segments for hikers, bikers, and equestrians.

A Park is Created

The Otay Valley Regional Park has a rich history of human occupation and resource use. Over 9,000 years ago, prehistoric Kumeyaay Native Americans were early inhabitants, taking advantage of the abundant natural resources found in the valley. In the 1770s, Father Junipero Serra chose the Otay River Valley as his first campsite as he traveled north to establish the missions in what is now California. In the early 1800s, vast Spanish ranchos covered the area and cattle grazed on the gentle mesa surrounding the river. In the 1900s, Otay Dam was built to support the growth in San Diego and the length of the river has been a source of sand and gravel since the 1920s.

In the 1990s, the County of San Diego, City of San Diego and the City of Chula Vista entered into a Joint Powers of Agreement for the coordinated planning, acquisition, design, maintenance, and operation of the Otay Valley Regional Park. The planning area for the park (8,869 acres) extends 13 miles through the plant which occurs in the coastal sage scrub. The plant’s unique seeds have been found to travel up to six miles down and within the pond areas.

Native Plants & Animals

The park is rich in natural history as it is in human history—and many of the resources found in the park are protected and shall not be harmed or removed from the park. Coyote, gray fox, raccoon, desert cottontail and American badger are some of the various animals found in the park. Over two hundred species of birds can be spotted during the year within the park. Great blue heron, snowy egret, American coot and several species of ducks can be found at the ponds along the trail. Riparian woodland provides habitat for the endangered Least Bell’s Vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher. The coastal gnatcatcher (picture below), a threatened species, can be found in coastal sagewrack and other habitats found in the OVRP. The upper part of the river valley is home to the white-tailed kite, northern harrier, and the red-tailed hawk.

Not all winged creatures are birds; many butterflies and moths live in or pass through the park. Especially interesting is the Quino checkerspot butterfly, which has been observed in the eastern part of the park. The Hermes copper butterfly can be found near the spiny red raspberry plant which occurs in the coastal sage scrub. The Pacific tree frog and garden salamander live near ponds and within the pond areas.

Supporting the abundant wildlife is a mixture of maritime succulent scrub, southern cottonwood willow riparian forest, alkali marsh, and Diegan coastal sage scrub. The Orcutt’s bird’s-beak is localized in several areas along the river valley and is the largest known population of this rare plant in the United States.

Facilities

The Otay Valley Regional Park offers multi-use trails for hiking, biking and limited equestrian riding. Currently there are seven official staging/parking areas located on Rio Avenue, Mace Street, Beyer Way North, Beyer Boulevard, Old Hollister Street and Saturn Boulevard. The Beyer Boulevard staging area features the Ranger Station, which visitors can meet with a ranger and get additional information. The Ranger Station also contains an interpretive panel that gives a brief overview of the different parts of the river valley and the wildlife in those areas. The Mace Street Multi-Use Staging Area includes equestrian parking. Anglers can fish for bass and bluegill at Hollister, Fenton, and Le May Ponds only (California Fish & Game laws do apply).

Tips for Hikers

Take the time to enjoy your outdoor experience. Binoculars will help you observe the plants and animals as you walk along the trails, and a camera will preserve memories of your visit.

Carry water and a snack. Otay Valley can be very hot and dry in the summer months; there is no drinking water available on the trails. For a full day’s hike in moderate temperatures, expect to bring at least one gallon of water. Do not drink from any of the ponds. If you are planning a longer hike, carry light trail snacks to maintain your energy.

Wear suitable clothing and footwear. Sturdy shoes and a hat are indispensable and sunglasses, sunscreen, and insect repellent are highly recommended.

Use caution when crossing streets.

Tell a friend or family member about your hiking plans. Be specific about your route and what time you should return. Hike with a companion and a cell phone. If you are unsure about a particular trail and have questions, talk to a park ranger at the Beyer Boulevard Ranger Station, or call (619) 424-0463.

Stay on the trails. The natural resources of Otay Valley Regional Park are fragile. Their survival and your safety depend on correct trail etiquette.

Emergencies: If you have an emergency, call 911 and be prepared to describe where you are in the park. Native animals should never be fed, approached or harmed in any way. Keep your dog(s) on a leash at all times, and carry a small first aid kit with you.

See reverse side for trail map.