

WELCOME TO PLEASANTON RIDGE

THE PARK AND TRAILS Pleasanton Ridge currently comprises 4,085 acres of wilderness and open space. Development has been intentionally limited to preserve the pastoral, and indeed pleasant, atmosphere of the park. Parking and horse staging are accommodated at the Foothill Staging Area off Foothill Road. The size and terrain of the park offer visitors both wide-open spaces and hidden recesses.

A 25-mile multi-purpose trail system provides access to canyon views, ridgetop vistas, and remote, deep-canyon streams.

The park occupies Pleasanton Ridge and beyond. To the northwest it spills down off Pleasanton Ridge into upper Kilkare Canyon, where it continues up onto Sunol Ridge, finally terminating at its westernmost point in Stonybrook Canyon. To the northwest, the park encompasses most of the upper Sinbad Creek watershed, lying between Sunol Ridge to the southwest and Main Ridge to the northeast.

Inside the park, Pleasanton Ridge attains elevations above 1,600 feet. The northern sections of the Ridgeline Trail afford magnificent panoramic views to the north, east and south. The San Ramon, Pleasanton and Livermore valleys lie spread out below while Mount St. Helena and the Diablo and Hamilton mountain ranges appear in the distance. To the south, unbroken views of ridgetops extend to Sunol Valley and then rise back up to Mission and Monument peaks.

Thermalito Trail runs along the west side of the park, overlooking Kilkare Canyon. The trail is named after the Thermal Fruit Company, which cultivated non-irrigated orchards of apricot, cherry, prunes and almonds in the southern area of Pleasanton Ridge above the town of Sunol. The company operated from 1904 until the early 1930s, producing dried fruits. In that area of the park one can still see the faint marks on some hillsides from the now-gone rows of trees, or of vineyards that also existed at various times.

Oak Tree Trail gently ascends from the Foothill Staging Area to the southern end of Pleasanton Ridge and interconnects with the Ridgeline Trail and the Thermalito Trail. Woodland Trail roughly parallels Oak Tree Trail, providing an alternate route for hikers and equestrians only. Olive Grove Trail, running just north of the intersection of Ridgeline and Thermalito trails, passes through lovely historic olive tree orchards. The orchards were planted between about 1890 and the 1920s. There is no historic record of who planted the trees. The Park District is currently working with a concessionaire to restore the orchard through which the Olive Grove Trail passes.

To the northwest, Ridgeline Trail connects with the Sinbad Creek Trail, which descends from the ridgetop

heights down into the heavily wooded and riparian depths of upper Kilkare Canyon. Please respect private property and the natural environment by staying on the designated trails.

In the upper Sinbad Creek watershed area, the Northridge Trail lies along the top of Main Ridge. Shady Creek Trail, Loop Trail, Turtle Pond Trail and Mariposa Trail all provide connections down to Sinbad Creek Trail.

GEOLOGY Millions of years ago there was no Pleasanton Ridge and no Sunol Ridge—there were no coastal ridges or ranges as we know them. Approximately 14 million years ago the Pacific Ocean extended far beyond our present shorelines into the area of the current Central Valley. As highlands to the east gradually eroded away, deposits of silt, sand and gravel gradually filled this inland sea. By nine million years ago no traces of the inland sea remained in the East Bay area.

During the past 5 million years, most of the areas of the present coast ranges, including Pleasanton and Sunol ridges, have uplifted. Geological faulting (the radical breaking that occurs between adjacent rocks or land masses when they move or have moved relative to one another) intensified, causing sedimentary strata (the erosion deposits of an earlier time) to fold, overturn and break up. In the last two to three million years, Pleasanton Ridge, as well as other neighboring ridges, came into being as a great folding of marine sediments. Parallel faults lie on both sides of Pleasanton Ridge—the Stonybrook-Palomares fault to the west and the Calaveras and Sunol faults to the east. Most of the sandstone and cobble-gravels that form the rocks of Pleasanton Ridge derive from 15- to 70-million-year-old marine formations that were eroded and whose sediments were deposited in the inland Pacific sea 11 to 16 million years ago. A variety of clam, oyster, scallop, mussel and sand dollar fossils, as well as fossils of marine-dwelling snails, have been and continue to be recovered in and around Pleasanton Ridge Regional Park.

VEGETATION Grassland is the dominant plant community of Pleasanton Ridge Regional Park, comprising about 40 percent of the land area. Grasslands occur along Pleasanton and Sunol ridges and on drier south- and west-facing slopes. Park grasslands support an abundant variety of wildflowers, which blossom throughout the late winter and spring months. A handful of hearty, late-flowering species appear among the ripened stalks of golden-brown grasses that characterize the summer and early fall landscape. The cycle of growth is repeated with the onset of the autumn rains, resulting in a new carpet of green vegetation.

The woodland communities in the park are made up of individual or mixed stands of coast live oak, California bay laurel, blue oak, black oak, valley oak and Oregon oak. Other trees like California buckeye, bigleaf maple and toyon may be present. Like the grassland, the

woodland undergrowth contains numerous grasses and wildflowers. Common shrubs found in these locations are coyote brush, poison oak, California sagebrush, ocean spray and bush monkeyflower.

Riparian woodland occurs in a narrow band along Sinbad Creek and in some steep canyons and ravines. Of particular note are the large, magnificent, mottle-barked sycamores that grow where ground or surface water is accessible along the stream course. The various ponds and springs in the park provide valuable habitat for plant and animal species that require water or a wetland environment for all or part of their life stages.

WILDLIFE Each plant community supports diverse native species, some of which are migratory and use the area seasonally. In the grasslands one might see meadow larks, horned larks, Western bluebirds, and overhead, soaring turkey vultures, red-tailed hawks and golden eagles. Ground squirrels, alligator lizards and western fence lizards may also be seen, along with various spiders and insects. Snakes, such as gopher snakes, king snakes and rattlesnakes, are an important part of the natural system and should be observed from a distance and not molested in any way.

The wrentit, California quail and California thrasher reside in the interspersed brushlands, where the threatened Alameda whipsnake may be seen in pursuit of western fence lizards on rocky outcrops.

The woodland plant community hosts Coopers hawks, sharp-shinned hawks and various species of owls, along with brush-dwelling birds such as the California quail, rufous-sided towhee and song sparrows. Many cavity-nesting birds such as the acorn woodpecker, northern flicker and white-breasted nuthatch may also be seen. The riparian woodland is home to red-shouldered hawks, garter snakes and newts, as well as aquatic insects in the creeks. The park's springs and ponds support many of the above species, and may also support the Western pond turtle, Western toad, chorus (Pacific tree) frog and the threatened California red-legged frog. Many of the ponds contain large populations of bullfrogs, a non-native species that threatens the California native species.

Mammals range throughout the park, and include opossums, raccoons, skunks, coyotes, black-tailed deer, grey foxes, bobcats, mountain lions and numerous rodent and bat species.

The East Bay Regional Park District is dedicated to preserving and protecting the wildlife heritage that remains in our parklands. To do this, it is very important for you, the public, to not release rabbits, cats, frogs, turtles, snakes, fish or any other domestic or wild animals into the parklands. Please enjoy the wildlife without disturbing it and minimize your impact on their home.



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