



## Interacting with Peafowl

At Ardenwood, the relative calm is suddenly filled with excited voices as a glossy peacock struts from the shadows into the sunshine. His scream, not unlike a crying infant, is as attention-getting as his plumage. Behold this magnificent bird from a respectful distance, and keep the peafowl at Ardenwood healthy and safe with the following rules:

**Please Don't:** Chase or feed peafowl.

**Please Do:** Take photos and enjoy watching the birds from a distance.



Photo: Lee Greengrass



2950 Peralta Oaks Court, Oakland, CA 94605  
1-888-EBPARKS or 1-888-327-2757 (TRS 711)  
[ebparks.org](http://ebparks.org)

## Visitor Centers

**Ardenwood Historic Farm**, Fremont  
510-544-2797, [awvisit@ebparks.org](mailto:awvisit@ebparks.org)

**Big Break Regional Shoreline**, Oakley  
Big Break Visitor Center at the Delta: 510-544-3050,  
[bigbreakvisit@ebparks.org](mailto:bigbreakvisit@ebparks.org)

**Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve**, Antioch  
510-544-2750, [bdvisit@ebparks.org](mailto:bdvisit@ebparks.org)

**Coyote Hills Regional Park**, Fremont  
510-544-3220, [chvisit@ebparks.org](mailto:chvisit@ebparks.org)

**Crown Memorial State Beach**, Alameda  
Crab Cove Visitor Center and Aquarium:  
510-544-3187, [ccove@ebparks.org](mailto:ccove@ebparks.org)

**Del Valle Regional Park**, Livermore  
510-544-3146, [svisit@ebparks.org](mailto:svisit@ebparks.org)  
Open summer weekends

**Garin/Dry Creek Pioneer Regional Parks**, Hayward  
510-544-3220 (Coyote Hills), [chvisit@ebparks.org](mailto:chvisit@ebparks.org)  
Open summer weekends

**Sunol-Ohlone Regional Wilderness**, Sunol  
510-544-3249, [svisit@ebparks.org](mailto:svisit@ebparks.org)  
Weekends only

**Tilden Regional Park**, Berkeley  
Botanic Garden: 510-544-3169, [bgarden@ebparks.org](mailto:bgarden@ebparks.org)  
Tilden Nature Area: 510-544-2233, [tnarea@ebparks.org](mailto:tnarea@ebparks.org)



*On the cover:* Indian peacock  
Photo: Jerry Ting



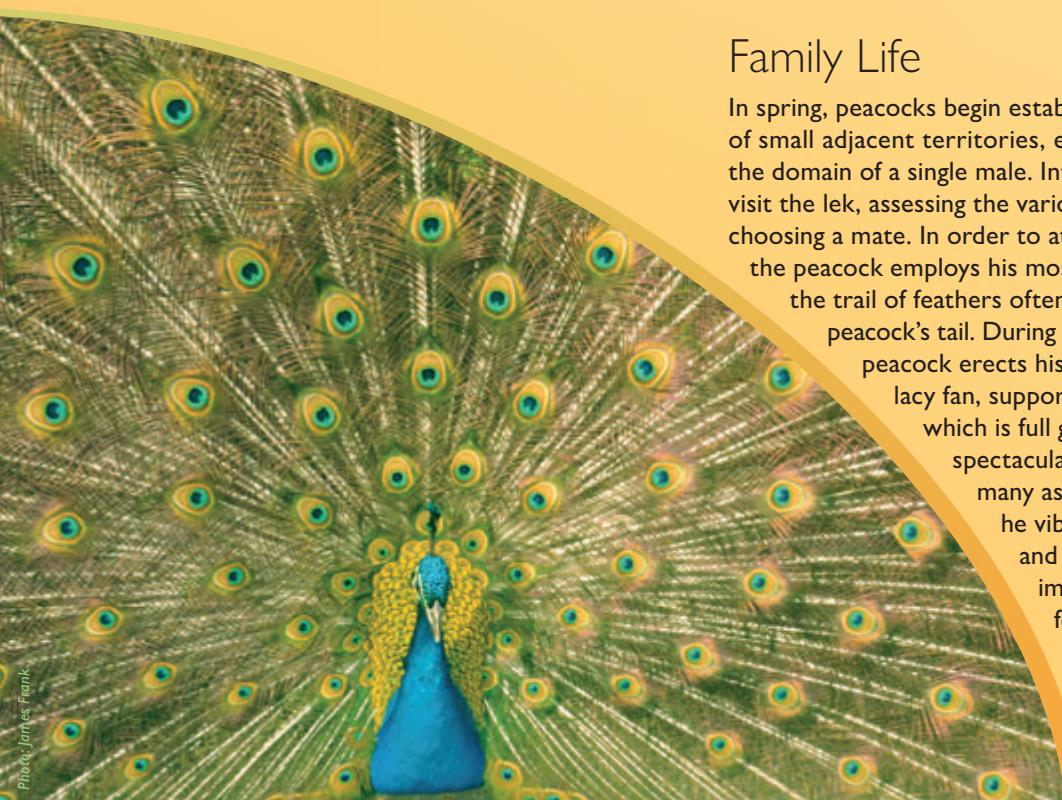
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## Peafowl on the Farm

Imagine the silhouettes of four large peafowl high in a walnut tree. Launching from their nighttime roost, three peahens glide on short, down-turned wings, their feathers ruffling in the cool morning air. They drop into a patch of sunlight within the safety of a willow thicket, the massive male close behind, his spectacular bustle of iridescent feathers shimmering. This is truly a bird of pharaohs, monarchs, and yes...farmers.

While we have no evidence that the Patterson family of Ardenwood Historic Farm kept peafowl, they would not have been out of place. Wealthy Victorian families often maintained manicured lawns and gardens, featuring exotic species. The Victorian garden was an extension of the parlor, and what better way to impress your visitors than with the ultimate living landscape ornament: the peacock.



## A Peafowl Portrait

The species of peafowl seen at Ardenwood is commonly known as the Indian peafowl. Native to the forests of the Indian subcontinent, it is the national bird of India, where it is known as sarang. There are two other recognized species of peafowl, hailing from Southeast Asia (the Javanese green peafowl) and central Africa (the Congo peafowl). Peafowl are in the pheasant family – relatives include grouse, quail, turkey, and the red jungle fowl, ancestor of all domestic breeds of chicken.

Like other pheasants, peafowl are adapted to a life of walking and foraging on the ground in search of seeds, plants, insects, and small reptiles to eat. Short flights are made to escape predators or to retreat to their evening roosts. Peafowl are social animals, usually roosting in groups. A group is commonly called a muster or an ostentation.

## Family Life

In spring, peacocks begin establishing leks, a group of small adjacent territories, each of which is the domain of a single male. Interested females visit the lek, assessing the various males before choosing a mate. In order to attract a peahen, the peacock employs his most striking feature, the trail of feathers often referred to as the peacock's tail. During breeding season, the peacock erects his trail in a massive lacy fan, supported by the true tail, which is full gray in color. This spectacular show features as many as 175 eyespots, which he vibrates as he struts and dances in hopes of impressing as many females as possible.

A peahen (left)  
and a peacock



Photo: Dwayne Mercado

Peahens conceal their nests, a simple scrape lined with grass, in thick vegetation. The eggs are laid every other day until a total of up to eight is reached, at which time the 28-day incubation period begins. Peahens are attentive mothers, but the peacock is not involved in raising his young. The next generation of peahens will be ready to reproduce at one or two years of age while the males need three years to develop a full train of display plumage. Peafowl are hardy birds and may live 20 years or more.



Photo: Davor Desai