

Valley Wilds

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Barking Dog

Coyotes, or *Canis latrans*, meaning “barking dog,” are members of the *canid* or dog family, which includes wolves, jackals, and foxes, as well as domestic dogs. Coyotes are among the larger predators found in our

our open space parks, and they can sometimes be seen in the more secluded areas, usually at dusk or dawn, while out hunting for a meal.

Native to North America, coyotes are about the size of a large dog - 32 to 37 inches long plus another 16 inches for the tail, and weighing in at around 40 pounds. The coloration of coyotes varies from grayish brown to yellowish on their upper parts, with lighter (white) throats and bellies. One way you can tell a coyote from a dog is by how it holds its tail. A coyote will hold its tail below its back when running, whereas

dogs will usually hold their tails high. Also, the coyote has very pointed ears and muzzle. Its long tail, which is half its body length, has a black tip. Coyotes are sometimes mistaken for wolves; but not in this area, as there are no wolves living here.

Coyotes have very highly developed senses, particularly their sense of smell. As scavengers, coyotes will eat just about anything, including rabbits, hares, rodents, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, invertebrates, carrion, fruits, and vegetables. They usually hunt alone, but they may gather in small groups called packs to hunt larger prey such as deer. Coyote parents will sometimes supply live mice to their pups for hunting practice. The great majority of coyotes don't prey upon livestock. However, in some areas coyotes killing farm animals can become a problem. If this occurs, removal of the offending coyote is often recommended.

Few animals will prey on or attack an adult coyote. Their predators include bears, wolves, and man.

By Ranger Vickie Eggert



Photo by Ranger Dawn Soles

These canines can attain speeds of 40 miles per hour, jump more than eight feet in the air, and travel up to 400 miles in a day. They also swim well.

Coyotes communicate in a number of ways. Like most dogs, they use their urine to mark their territory. Vocalizations include the more familiar howls, yelps, and high-pitched cries, as well as barks, growls, wails, and squeals. At dawn or dusk coyotes will often gather together to howl in a chorus.

Coyotes are able to mate after about two years of age. Coyotes mate once a year, between late January and March. Once the female chooses a partner, the animals may remain paired for years. Young are born after a gestation of about 60 days. The average litter size is six pups. The young are born blind and open

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Livermore Area Recreation and Park District

4444 East Ave. Livermore, CA 94550
www.larpd.org
Ranger Office: 925.960.2400

Ranger-Led Programs

Experience nature and history in a special way. Programs are generally 1 - 2 hours in length. A \$3 donation is requested. A \$7 parking fee is charged at Sycamore Grove Park.



Quick Look:

Altamont Creek Walk	Saturday, July 7	5:00 pm
Cool off in the Creek	Sunday, July 8	2:00 pm
Creekside Storytime	Sunday, July 15	10:00 am
Turtles	Sunday, July 22	2:00 pm
Creek Exploration (RSVP)	Wed, July 25	9:30 am
Mammal Madness (RSVP)	Saturday, July 28	10:00 am

Altamont Creek Walk - Birds and More!

Saturday, July 7 5:00 pm

Take a slow-paced, one-mile walk along a paved path to look at the plants and animals that call this area home. We will have binoculars for participants to use during the program. Meet Ranger Vickie at the Altamont Creek Park playground. We encourage people of all fitness levels to attend this program!

Ranger Vickie Eggert Altamont Creek Park (6725 Altamont Creek Drive)

Cool off in the Creek

Sunday, July 8 2:00 pm

What will we find lurking in the shallows of the creek? Wear clothes and shoes that can get wet and join Ranger Amy to explore! Our walk to the creek will be less than ¼ mile. Adults may want to bring a camp chair to sit on the shore while the little ones play in the creek. All ages welcome.

Ranger Amy Wolitzer Sycamore Grove Park, Wetmore Road Entrance (1051 Wetmore Road)

Creekside Storytime with the Livermore Public Library

Sunday, July 15 10:00 am

LARPD rangers and librarians will entertain families with children's books about nature. After storytime, we'll explore the creek. Wear closed-toe shoes and clothing that can get wet. Please email valleywilds@larpd.org and ask for directions to our meeting location – it's not normally open to the public. For other questions, please call the Library at (925) 373-5504.

Naturalist Heather Day Reservable Picnic Area (5035 Arroyo Road)

Turtles

Sunday, July 22 2:00 pm

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 this charming group of reptiles – the turtles. There will be live specimens for us to look at. If you haven't been to the Reservable Picnic Area before (up the road to the Veterans Hospital) please call (925) 960-2400 for directions.

Ranger Dawn Soles Sycamore Grove Park, Reservable Picnic Area (5035 Arroyo Road)

Barking Dog (Continued)

their eyes after about 10 days. Coyotes can breed with both domestic dogs and wolves - a coyote-dog mix is called a "coydog". Coyotes have been known to live 10 to 15 years in the wild, and longer in captivity.



In lore and cultural depictions, the coyote has many roles. Coyote is depicted as a trickster, either causing trouble or being helpful. They were respected in Mesoamerican cosmology as a symbol of military might. After the European colonization of the Americas, coyotes began to be reviled as cowardly and untrustworthy.

These animals are an important part of our park and ecosystem. If you do see a coyote, please observe it from a distance and respect its space. If it notices you and alters its behavior, you are too close. If you take an evening or morning walk in Sycamore Grove Park and you just might see or here one of our "barking dogs".

More Ranger-Led Programs

Creek Exploration

Wednesday, July 25 9:30 am - 11:30 am

We'll take a one-mile round-trip walk on a dirt trail to a fun spot to play in the creek. Strollers with rugged wheels may be ok but be prepared to push on uneven, rocky, surfaces. Wear closed-toed shoes and clothes that can get wet. Bring extra clothes and shoes to change into after the creek. Extreme temperatures may cancel. RSVP recommended by calling (925) 960-2400 so participants can be informed if program is cancelled due to heat or if the meeting location needs to be changed.

*Naturalist Heather Day Sycamore Grove Park,
Wetmore Road Entrance (1051 Wetmore Road)*

Mammal Madness

Saturday, July 28 10:00 am

Are you a mammal? What is a mammal and what are the things that make it a mammal? Help us explore the advantages and disadvantages of the mammalian lifestyle. We will also compare them to other critters like birds and reptiles. Good for ages

5 and up. Please RSVP by calling (925) 960-2400. I promise you will see at least one mammal at this program!

*Ranger Darren Segur Sycamore Grove Park,
Arroyo Road Entrance (5049 Arroyo Road)*



Started in the 1980s as an extension of LARPD's Summer Nature Camp, Sierra Rendezvous has become a central part of my summers. The idea behind Sierra Rendezvous was to get local teens out in the mountains to learn about camping and hiking, which was a natural fit for Camp Shelly, the park district's campground in South Lake Tahoe. To do this, we take two vans full of teenagers up to Tahoe on a Monday morning in July, and we stay for four nights in tents that the kids set up themselves.

Over the years, we have tried many different activities, but when I went to the camp as a kid in the 1990s, rock climbing was a highlight.



Hiking has always been an important part of Sierra Rendezvous. In 2011, a particularly ambitious crew of SR campers and staff summited Mount Tallac, the peak that towers over Camp Shelly! This hike is 10 miles round-trip, and involves a 3,500 feet elevation gain to reach the 9,735 foot peak! This expedition has become part of the yearly routine since then. Staff works with campers to access their abilities, and a contingent of those not up for the full trek stop at one of two mountain lakes along the trail before heading back to camp.

Sierra Rendezvous (continued)



In the past decade, kayaking has replaced rock climbing as the most anticipated adventure.



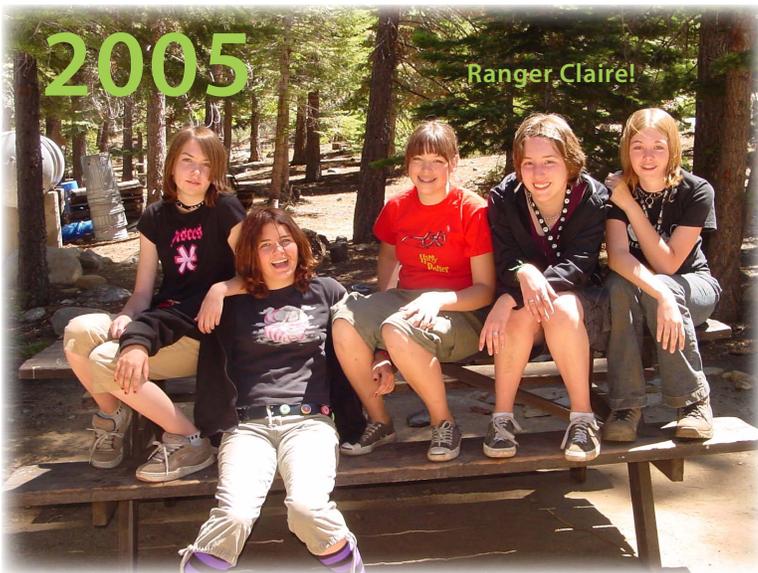
Setting up tents and helping with dishes is a part of camp tradition.



The kids help with cleanup, but meal prep has always been a job the leaders take seriously!

Sierra Rendezvous (continued)

And, what camping trip would be complete without campfires and stargazing?



While much of the time is filled with activity, there is always time to hang out around camp.

While a lot has changed over the years (finding places to charge cell phones wasn't much of a problem when I attended Sierra Rendezvous as a camper in the mid-1990s), much of the program and many of the traditions remain. One of my favorite things about the program is how many of its participants have gone on to work for LARPD over the years. See how many you can spot in the pictures above!

This year, I was excited to learn that Sierra Rendezvous won the Outstanding Innovative Program award from CARPD, the California Association of Recreation and Park Districts! We want to continue being innovative and are already preparing for this year's exciting Sierra Rendezvous.

Watch for the LARPD summer brochure next April to find out about dates and fees for Sierra Rendezvous 2019. Scholarships may be available for qualifying families! If you have questions you can call the ranger office at (925) 960-2400 or email gflorey@larpd.org.