

# Valley Wilds

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## Doing the Right Thing

*As spring arrives so does the next generation of wildlife. It is one of my favorite times of the year as our park animals have babies. They are adorable and fun to watch as they learn and grow. This time of year also brings many, many calls to the ranger office when park visitors encounter*

these young ones. Every year we get calls from concerned people regarding lost or abandoned baby animals. We have even had some folks walk into our office carrying baby animals they have found. All these people are well-meaning, wanting to help, and thinking they are doing the right thing. Unfortunately, when it comes to wildlife, the right thing to do is not always as it may seem. Baby wild animals might seem like they need our help, but unless the animal is truly orphaned or injured, they are best left alone.

Determining whether an animal

is orphaned or needs help depends on age, species and behavior. Babies of some species are left alone all day and rely on camouflage for protection, while others are closely supervised by their parent(s). Below is some information to help determine whether or not a baby animal needs help.

### Baby Birds

If the baby is featherless or nearly featherless and is on the ground it has most likely fallen from the nest. If the nest is visible and can be reached, safely place the baby back into the nest. It is a myth that birds will abandon their young if a person touches them. If the nest is too high or otherwise located in a location that is not safe to reach, or the nest has been destroyed, the baby will need help.

If the baby is fully feathered or nearly so it may be a fledgling (an adolescent bird that has left the nest). You may see them hopping around on the ground unable to fly. This is normal. Birds learn to fly from the ground up. Fledglings might remain on the ground for a few days or even a

By Ranger Dawn Soles



Photo By Qatar&Me via Wikipedia

week, supervised and fed by their parents a few times each hour before they get the hang of flying. You can watch from a distance to see if the baby is being visited by its parents.

### Rabbits (the cottontail type)

A rabbit that is 4 inches long, hops well and has open eyes is independent from its mother and should be allowed to fend for itself. They may be tiny and appear to be very vulnerable or too young to be on their own, but they are quite able to survive. Uninjured baby rabbits in an intact nest should also be left alone. Baby rabbits may look abandoned but mother rabbits visit their dependent young only a few times a day to avoid attracting predators. If the nest has been disturbed, lightly cover it with natural materials you find around the nest. Avoid touching the babies and leave the area. The mother will not return if you are there.

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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.

## March Programs



### Quick Look:

<b>Late Winter Birds</b>	<b>Saturday, March 5</b>	<b>8:30 am</b>
<b>Twilight Jaunt (RSVP)</b>	<b>Sunday, March 6</b>	<b>5:30 pm</b>
<b>Creepy Critters</b>	<b>Saturday, March 12</b>	<b>10:00 am</b>
<b>Wildflowers at Holdener</b>	<b>Sunday, March 13</b>	<b>10:00 am</b>
<b>March Madness</b>	<b>Sunday, March 20</b>	<b>10:00 am</b>
<b>Beginner Bike Ride</b>	<b>Sunday, March 20</b>	<b>2:00 pm</b>

### Late Winter Birds Saturday, March 5

**8:30 am**

As the seasons shift from winter to spring there are changes to see in birds, too. Some winter visitors start to pack up and move north. Others move in for breeding season, while resident birds put on their finest spring fashions to impress potential mates. This walk will last about 2 hours and will be on dirt and rocky trails. If you have binoculars please bring them; we'll have some you can borrow if not. Beginning birders are welcome. Please call (925) 960 2400 if you need directions to the Nature Area Entrance.

*Ranger Patti Cole*

*Sycamore Grove Park, Nature Area Entrance*

### Twilight Jaunt (RSVP) Sunday, March 6

**5:30 pm**

Join us for a walk in Sycamore Grove after hours. We'll talk about some of the critters we may see as the sun goes down and then take a stroll through the park. Be prepared to walk up to two miles on paved and unpaved trails. Cancelled if raining. Please call (925) 960-2400 for reservations.

*Ranger Dawn Soles*

*Sycamore Grove Park, Wetmore Road Entrance (1051 Wetmore Rd.)*

### Creepy Critters Saturday, March 12

**10:00 am**

This is the time of year when the hills are green, trees begin to bud and wildflowers appear. Snakes, spiders and ticks are also waking up. Get the lowdown on these sometimes feared and often misunderstood critters as we learn about their niche in the web of life. Cancelled if raining.

*Ranger Darren Segur*

*Sycamore Grove Park, Arroyo Road Entrance (5049 Arroyo Rd)*

### Wildflowers at Holdener Park Sunday, March 13

**10:00 am**

Join Ranger Amy at Holdener Park for a walk to admire native wildflowers like blue dicks, fiddleneck, johnny jump ups and more! We will be walking less than a mile but trails are narrow and moderately steep in some sections. Cancelled if raining heavily; we'll walk if it's only sprinkling. We'll meet in the parking lot by the water towers at the east end of Hansen Road.

*Ranger Amy Wolitzer*

*Holdener Park (3401 Hansen Road)*



## Doing the Right Thing (con.)

### Hares (aka Jackrabbits)

It can be very difficult to tell if a jackrabbit baby is orphaned. Jackrabbits are precocial, meaning they are born fully furred with their eyes open. They will start nibbling on greens within a week. The main defense of a baby jackrabbit is to freeze. This behavior is often mistaken as the animal being calm. This is not the case - the baby jackrabbit is frozen with fright. Unless you are absolutely positive that the baby is orphaned back away from it and leave it alone. Animals can undergo enough stress from fright to die. Mother jackrabbits separate their litters for a better chance of babies surviving. There is no nest! The babies will stay hidden in the grass, shrubs, or other ground-level growth where the mother leaves them. The mother will only come to feed the young two or three times a day. Even if you are watching you may not see the mother return. The babies may wander a bit as they get a little older. When the mother returns to the area she will call to her young so they can return to her and nurse.

### Deer

Fawns, especially the very young ones, rely heavily on camouflage for survival. They will lie still, curled up in vegetation even when mom is not nearby. A doe only visits and nurses her fawn a few times a day to avoid attracting predators. Unless you know the mother is dead, leave the fawn alone. Although mother deer are wary of human smells



Mule Deer Fawn

Photo by Glen Florey

they still want their babies back. If you already handled the fawn, quickly return the fawn to the exact spot where



Soggy Owlet Photo by Glen Florey  
you found it and leave the area. The mother deer will not show herself until you are gone.

If an animal truly needs help it will need to be brought to a person trained to provide proper care. It isn't an easy job. For example, raising a wild bird takes 2 to 4 months of intensive care. Nestlings must be fed every 20 to 30 minutes from dawn to dusk every day. Skipping any feedings or feeding the wrong diet can result in irreversible deformities that may not be seen until the bird is a juvenile. Each species has specific caloric and natural diet needs. Raising a baby animal is a tremendously challenging process and one that should not be entered into lightly. Please don't try it yourself.

If you encounter a baby (or an adult) animal in the park that you think needs help please call the ranger office at (925) 960-2400. If we are not in the office please leave us a message including what you have observed and the location as well as your name and a call back number. The rangers are in and out of the office all day and we will respond as soon as we get the message. Even the babies of some of our critters can cause significant injuries to you or even to themselves if handled improperly. Please do not try to handle any wildlife, young or old, on your own.

## Nature Programs (Con.)

### March (Wildflower) Madness

**Sunday, March 20 10:00 am**

How many species of plants in bloom will we find? Last year we found an even 50! Can we top it this year? The full hike will be about 5 miles and take 3 hours. Participants are welcome to join us at 10 am and turn back early if they'd rather not be out that long. Bring lunch or a snack if you're coming for the full hike. Cancelled if raining heavily; we'll walk if it's only sprinkling.

*Ranger Amy Wolitzer*

*Sycamore Grove Park, Wetmore Road Entrance*

### Beginner Mountain Bike Ride

**Sunday, March 20**

**2:00 pm**

Join us for a five-mile round trip mountain bike ride to the Cattail Pond. Appropriate for beginner to intermediate riders on fat tire bikes with gears and hand brakes. Children are welcome if accompanied by an adult on a mountain bike. Tough adults with kids on trail-a-bikes are also welcome. Optional: Join us at 1:30 pm for help with basic bike maintenance. We will have a tire pump and some tools for adjusting brakes and shifting as needed. All riders must wear helmets. Cancelled if raining.

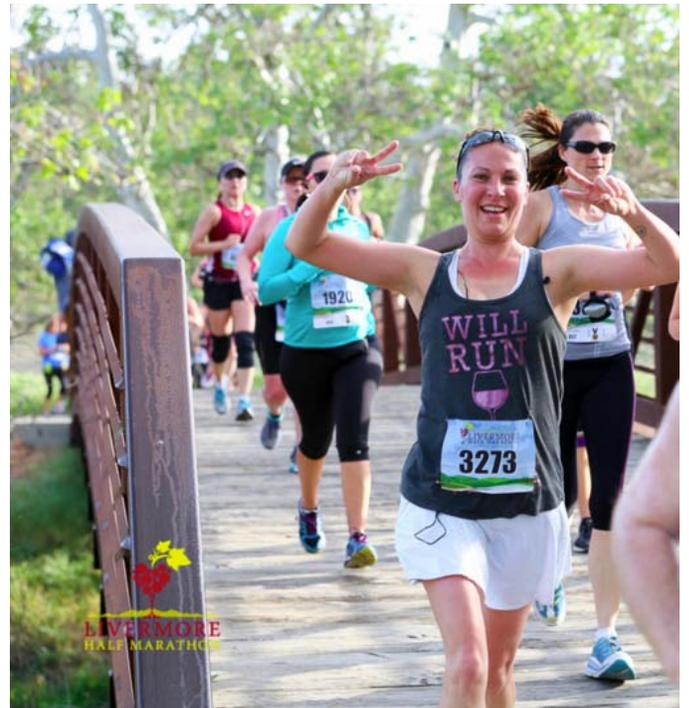
*Ranger / Naturalist Heather Day*

*Sycamore Grove Park, Wetmore Road Entrance*



## Half Marathon - Park Closure

Saturday, March 26 Sycamore Grove Park will be **CLOSED** until noon



Sycamore Grove Park will be **closed** the morning of Saturday, March 26 due to the Livermore Half Marathon. The park will open at noon that day.

Please note that the Livermore Half Marathon course will impact several streets from downtown Livermore through the South Valley, including L Street, Concannon Blvd., Holmes St., Wetmore Road, and Arroyo Road. These impacts could range from lane closures to entire sections of streets being closed that morning.

Additionally, segments of the South Valley Regional Trail system are included in the race course: from Arroyo Road to Marina Avenue (through Holdener Park); along Marina Avenue to Wentle Street and Concannon Blvd. and through Robertson Park. For event details and a course map go to <http://runliv.com/>

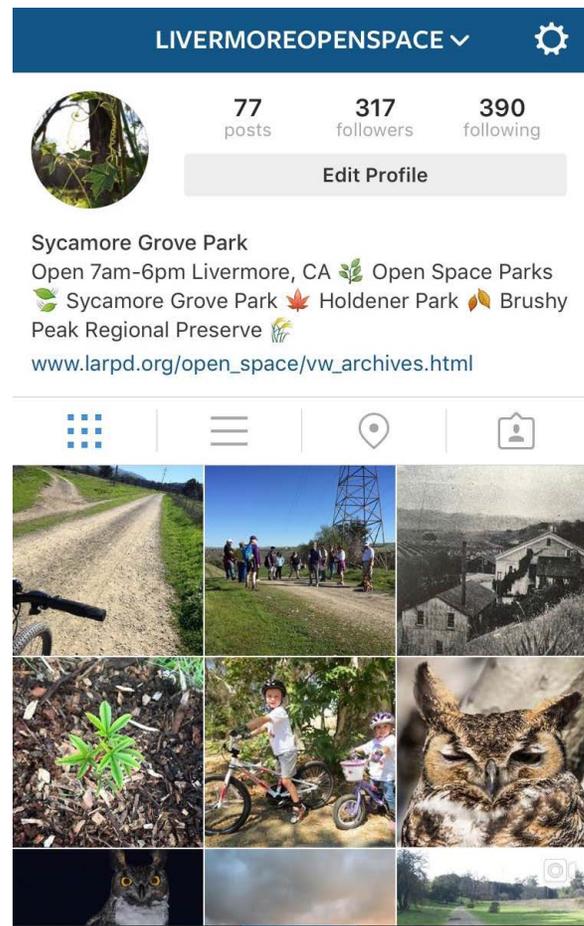
# Sycamore Goes Social

By Ranger Claire Girling

We recently opened social media accounts for the Open Space unit on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Ranger Amy runs the Facebook [facebook.com/SycamoreGroveLivermore](https://facebook.com/SycamoreGroveLivermore) while I handle Instagram (@LivermoreOpenSpace or [instagram.com/LivermoreOpenSpace](https://instagram.com/LivermoreOpenSpace)) and Twitter (@LivOpenSpace or [twitter.com/LivOpenSpace](https://twitter.com/LivOpenSpace)). These accounts can be viewed via mobile apps or on your computer.

We will feature a little bit of everything – program reminders, nature photos, behind the scenes, trivia tidbits, etc. We'll post helpful info too - you'll see updates about later closing times as we move into spring. In summer we'll post and let you know if we close for extreme fire danger.

We welcome feedback and would love to know what you're enjoying on our accounts or what you wish there was more of! We also encourage you to tag us in your posts if you have any questions or want help identifying things like wildlife or plants, or maybe you're just wondering where a trail goes. We hope to see you there!



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