

COMPASS

Healthy Parks Healthy People



What's Got Her Attention?

And how are we making sure it's an East Bay Regional Park?



THE JOYS OF STEWARDSHIP



Given this festive season and the new year on the way, we in the Regional Parks Foundation (RPF) family—staff, supporters, members, the crew at your house—have lots to celebrate.

It's a time for us all to fully appreciate where we're so lucky to live and what wondrous parks, recreation areas and trails we all can explore. We should be especially mindful that we're situated on the most marvelous side of the bay—home to the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), which is the largest in the nation and quite possibly the best neighbor on the planet.

It's also an opportune time for us to recognize who, exactly, is responsible for safeguarding EBRPD's treasures—wildlife, vegetation, open spaces—for today's enjoyment and for future generations. That vital role rests, of course, with each of us.

For our good fortune to persist, we all must be both diligent and vigilant, making wise choices and taking bold steps that balance the priorities of recreation and preservation. Take pride in knowing your RPF membership helps accomplish just that. Please make sure to keep yours current and spread the word to family and friends.

Remember this as well: RPF memberships make terrific gifts for the holidays and occasions throughout the year. Your loved ones will applaud your strategic shopping and generosity. Be assured that RPF, EBRPD and the entire East Bay community will too!



Carol Johnson
Executive Director
Regional Parks Foundation

Robert Doyle
General Manager
East Bay Regional Park District

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Supporting East Bay Regional Parks

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On the cover: Six-year-old Zahara of Oakland, a participant in a SHINE outing at Temescal Regional Park.

DID YOU KNOW?

Fun facts about the East Bay Regional Park District



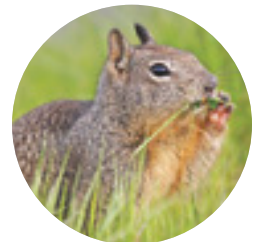
DOUBLE DUTY

Crab Cove Visitor Center was formerly used as the base infirmary to support the U.S. Maritime Service Officers School, a training base during WWII for Merchant Marine commanders.



IN OUR CARE

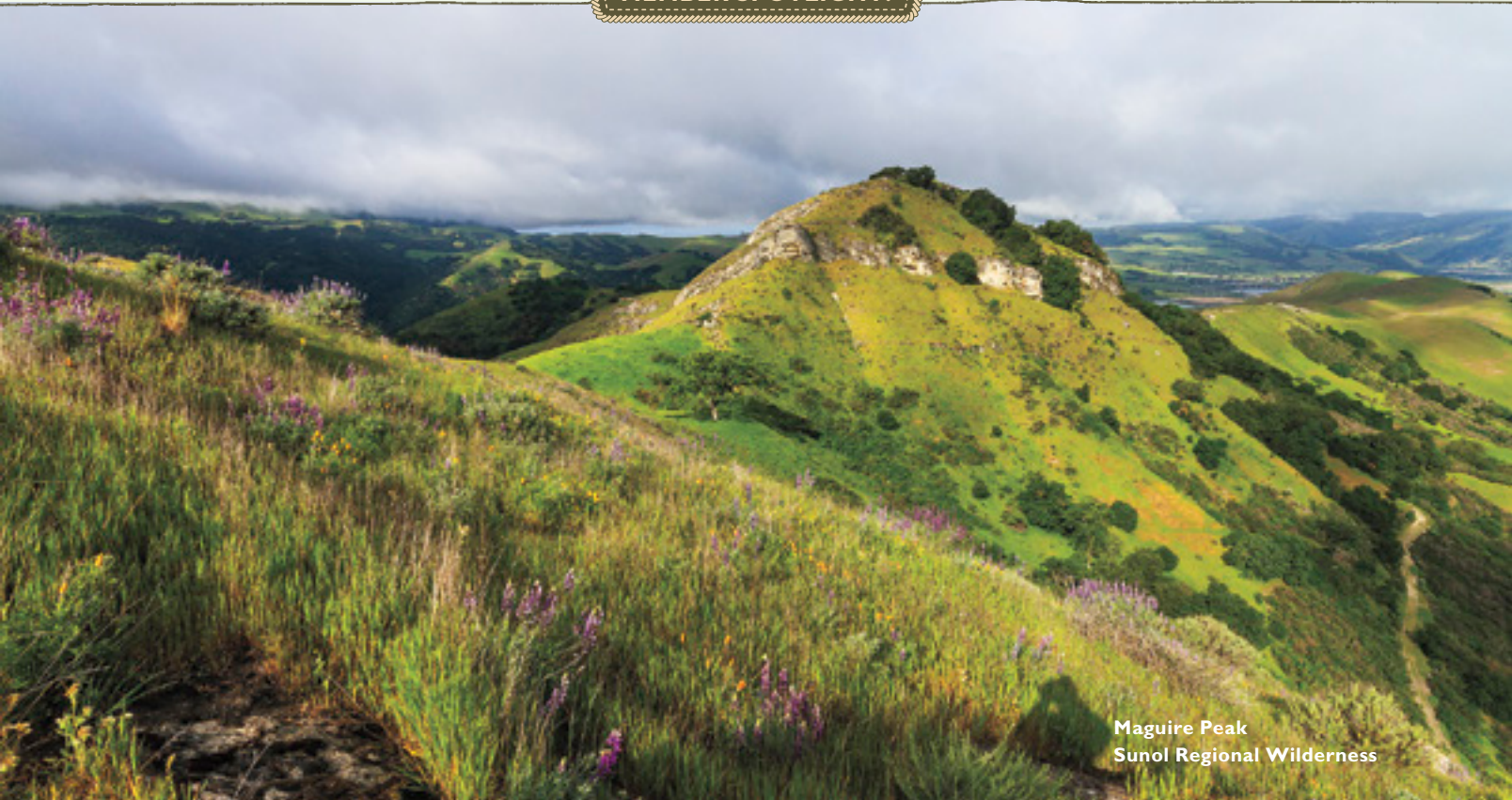
There are 11 federally listed endangered wildlife species found in East Bay Regional Parks.



FRISKY AND FEISTY

Adult ground squirrels are immune to rattlesnake bites.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT!



Maguire Peak
Sunol Regional Wilderness

We Hear You!

Thanks to your responses to our Member survey, we're making changes!



Many thanks to the nearly 1,300 Members who took time to respond to our recent Member survey and share your thoughts and suggestions. In response to your collective ideas, this is what we have in the works for 2016 and beyond:

- **Member Appreciation Events:** We're going to start hosting Member appreciation events. Watch for your invitation in the mail and/or email.
- **Park Guidebook:** Members will receive a comprehensive guidebook of all 65 Regional Parks/Trails.
- **Camping Enhancements:** Del Valle Regional Park and Anthony Chabot Regional Park will undergo camping enhancements.

Other suggestions are currently under review, such as Membership Sales Terminals for Member convenience in the parks and membership fulfillment improvements for faster turnaround time.

The bottom line: Your opinion does count and truly helps us to improve our programs and services. We will pass on kudos and areas of improvements to all appropriate departments.

Thank you again!

"The East Bay Regional Parks are what allow me to stay in the Bay Area. They are my retreat and sanctuary. Over the last 30 years I have been on every trail in the District as well as the trails between the parks. Thank you for all the work you do to keep the parks the jewels they are."

"The parks are one of the greatest gifts that we can give to future generations. We are so fortunate to have such a wonderful and unique 'gift' here."

"I love supporting the Regional Parks. I appreciate them, and membership is a way I can 'give back' to the parks!"



STOP BY CRAB COVE VISITOR CENTER

Bring your family to enjoy a guided low-tide exploration, or check out an “adventure pack,” from the visitor center, which includes information to help identify different species, with magnifying glasses and other fun tools. The visitor center aquariums and exhibits show you what might be lurking under the rocks and mud and convey their importance to our ecosystem.

For more details on guided explorations and other programs, call the Crab Cove Visitor Center at 510-544-3187 or visit www.ebparks.org/crab_cove.



HIDDEN TREASURE

Crab Cove Marine Protected Area

The quarter-mile-long protected estuary offers beachcombers of all ages a chance to meet and greet local crustaceans in their natural habitat

In the Bay Area, it's a rare treat to interact directly with wildlife, but at the aptly named Crab Cove Marine Protected Area, part of Crown Memorial State Beach, it's an everyday occurrence.

Families love combing the beach for crabs, explains Morgan Dill, a naturalist at the Crab Cove Visitor Center. “And we definitely encourage them to check out the local species.” Here are a few species you might see while there. (Note: Exploration is encouraged, but collecting or harming creatures within the protected area is strictly prohibited.)

- **Green shore crab:** Peek under a rock and you might find a dozen of these tiny crabs scurrying around. Adults of this species are no bigger than a quarter, while babies can be as small as a pencil eraser. Feel free to scoop them up for a closer look, Dill says. “Their pinchers are too small to actually hurt you.”
- **Lined shore crab:** Also known as the striped shore crab, these eye-catching crabs are reddish in color and feature distinctive stripes on their backs. Less common than the green shore crab, they are also larger—about the size of the palm of your hand when fully grown. “Even so, I don’t hold them in the palm of my hand,” Dill jokes. That’s because a pinch from them can hurt, so be careful!
- **Dungeness crab:** Better known as a popular delicacy, these large crabs can grow to be as big as your head. But despite their size, sighting one on land (or outside of the kitchen) is rare. “You’ll more likely find their molts [that have washed ashore],” Dill says, since the rocks on the beach are too small for them to hide under. However, they occasionally will show up when the tide comes in, so keep an eye out.

REMEMBER: Exploration is encouraged at Crab Cove, but collecting or harming creatures within the protected area is strictly prohibited.

Hit the Road With Kids

Explore these three child-friendly EBRPD trails

Here, Dave Zuckermann, EBRPD regional interpretive and recreation services manager, recommends great options for family fun among the 20 trails that are featured this year in Regional Parks Foundation's free Trail Challenge—our annual, self-guided tour.



1 Don Castro Regional

Recreation Area, on the boundary between Hayward and Castro Valley: 1.25-mile loop, suitable for younger kids. Flat, scenic (goes around Don Castro Lake) and easy to navigate in a half-hour.



2 Oyster Bay Regional

Shoreline, San Leandro: 2.25-mile loop, mostly flat. Part of the trail runs along the bay with eye-catching views, but there are also spectacular, kid-pleasing glimpses of planes landing at Oakland International Airport.



3 Miller/Knox Regional

Shoreline, Richmond: 4.4 miles (out and back), part of the San Francisco Bay Trail. Incredible look-sees of the Golden Gate Bridge. Completely paved, ideal for bike rides too. Nearby, there's also a play area; historic Ferry Point, original terminus for the transcontinental railroad; tours of the World War II-era ship SS Red Oak Victory (run by the Richmond Museum Association).



Participating in Trails Challenge is now easier than ever in 2016. No registration needed. Receive your official 2016 Trails Challenge guidebook and T-shirt FREE at any EBRPD visitor center (one per person—while supplies last). Commemorative pins provided upon completion of five trails. Show your support for the outdoors and get out and hike! Check our website, www.ebparcs.org, for details.

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COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS
AMONG EBRPD, RPF AND
LOCAL HEALTH PROVIDERS
BRING THE JOY—
AND HEALTH BENEFITS—
OF NATURE TO THOSE
WHO SORELY NEED IT

“IF PATIENTS *lack food*, WE CAN GET THEM FOOD STAMPS. IF
THEY HAVE *housing problems*, WE CAN TRY TO REFER THEM
TO SPECIFIC SERVICES. BUT WE DIDN'T HAVE A DIRECT REFERRAL
FOR A *lack of access to nature* BEFORE. NOW WE *do.*”

— DR. NOOSHIN RAZANI, UCSF BENIOFF CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OAKLAND



"I loved being free."

Anybody who has experienced the peace and tranquility of being in nature can easily relate to that feeling. But for many kids in the Bay Area, the great outdoors is simply not something they are exposed to on a regular basis, if at all.

Which is why the above statement is so encouraging. It's just one of a number of overwhelmingly positive responses from kids surveyed after visiting Crab Cove Visitor Center in Alameda as part of the Stay Healthy In Nature Every day (SHINE) program, a program of the Primary Care Clinic at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland. The East Bay Regional Park District and the Regional Parks Foundation are partnering with the hospital to help encourage primary care patients to get out into local parks as part of the Park Prescriptions initiative.

In what they're calling the First Saturday SHINE Program, RPF and EBRPD have provided free shuttle service every first Saturday since last May so patients and their families can travel from the hospital's outpatient clinic to different East Bay Regional Parks and spend the afternoon together. Once there, a

Pages 6–11: Families enjoy activities at First Saturday outings. Dr. Nooshin Razani (at right, in the center) partnered with EBRPD and RPF to envision a collaborative health intervention in parks, and worked closely with park staff to develop the SHINE program. She leads a team of enthusiastic health care providers at UCSF Benioff Oakland's Primary Care Clinic who are piloting the program with EBRPD.



healthy lunch is provided, in addition to a guided educational walk. For EBRPD, it's a great way to introduce an underrepresented demographic of kids to the park system and is a natural extension of the national Healthy Parks Healthy People initiative that promotes parks as a pathway to health.

Sharol Nelson-Embry, supervising naturalist at Crab Cove, has helped lead several First Saturday walks and witnessed the positive effects they can have firsthand. "One thing that I've noticed is that it's a very diverse group that really represents Oakland both culturally

and socioeconomically,” she says. “And it’s always amazing to have a kid that’s maybe never even been to the bay, to come see it for the first time. You’ll see them chasing crabs and having all these great outdoor experiences. You can see their eyes light up when they find something they’ve never seen, just heard about, and they’re able to actually pick it up and hold it. It’s kind of magical.”

“IT’S ALWAYS *amazing* TO HAVE A KID THAT’S MAYBE NEVER EVEN BEEN TO THE BAY, TO COME *see it* FOR THE FIRST TIME. YOU CAN SEE THEIR *eyes* *light up* WHEN THEY FIND SOMETHING THEY’VE NEVER SEEN, JUST HEARD ABOUT, AND THEY’RE ABLE TO ACTUALLY PICK IT UP AND HOLD IT. IT’S KIND OF *magical.*”

— SHAROL NELSON-EMBRY, EBRPD

Getting up close and personal with flora and fauna: EBRPD and RPF provide shuttles from UCSF Benioff Oakland to Regional Parks for patients and their families.

HEALTH BENEFITS OF OUTDOOR ACTIVITY

The truth is, this sort of initiative is not just a nice thing to do. According to Dr. Nooshin Razani, who led a team at UCSF Benioff Oakland to envision, develop and implement the SHINE program within the Primary Care Clinic, there is mounting evidence that getting into nature can have measurable physical and mental health benefits, ranging from combating depression and diabetes to improving motor strength, attention levels, cognition and even long-distance vision.

“The idea of promoting healthy active living has been around for a long time, of course, but the concept of nature being uniquely beneficial is a little newer for traditional Western medicine,” Razani says. “For example, there’s quite a bit of literature about ‘green exercise’ done in nature. Research shows an added benefit to exercising in a green setting—added stress relief, improved emotion, blood pressure and anxiety compared to doing the same exercise indoors.”

As part of its SHINE program, doctors at UCSF Benioff Oakland’s Primary Care Clinic are encour-

HEALTHY PARKS HEALTHY PEOPLE: *Increasing Access to our parks*

Healthy Parks Healthy People is an initiative designed to promote the health benefits of nature and encourage easier access to the outdoors for communities that most benefit from it or are underrepresented. Here are examples of programs organized by EBRPD and RPF that are doing just that.

- **MULTICULTURAL WELLNESS WALKS:** EBRPD hosts around five of these walks per year, which are sponsored by Kaiser Permanente. Organizers work with community leaders in the East Bay to draw from various ethnicities—including Latino, African-American and Asian—that have historically been underrepresented in terms of visiting local parks. Outings include educational walks; lunch; and rotating culturally themed activities that have included music, yoga and educational demos.
- **KIDS HEALTHY OUTDOORS CHALLENGE:** This program introduces children to local parks through classroom-based activities. EBRPD partners with teachers in 120 classrooms in Alameda and Contra Costa counties to integrate park/nature-related content into curriculum for 3,000-plus kids, as well as organize a field trip to an East Bay park.
- **PARKS EXPRESS:** This transportation outreach program provides discounted, low-cost transportation to Regional Parks for low-income schools and groups serving children from low-income families, as well as seniors and people with disabilities in Alameda and Contra Costa counties. EBRPD begins accepting applications in December for the following calendar year.



aged to screen patients who might not have the opportunity to be in nature on a regular basis—often due to lack of transportation or disposable income—and refer them to the First Saturday outings. This lack of nature experiences isn't for lack of desire. The majority of patients responding to a recent survey at UCSF Benioff Oakland's Primary Care Clinic say that increasing time in nature is a priority for them.

But the physicians aren't just encouraging patients to get into nature; they're also bringing it to them. Several clinic areas have been renamed after Regional Parks, and informational pamphlets for accessing the park system are available throughout. In addition, visual displays featuring East Bay parks have been installed throughout the primary care clinic's interior, including 16-foot displays of redwood trees—providing a soothing environment and also a way to help educate and inspire families to use parks on their own.

“What we have done through this collaboration is unique in that nature is really being integrated into the way we practice medicine. Having the parks as our partner is a great resource,” Razani says. “If patients lack food, we can get them food stamps. If they have housing problems, we can try to refer them to specific services. But we didn't have a direct referral for a lack of access to nature before. Now we do.”

BOOSTING ADULTS' MENTAL HEALTH

Not surprisingly, Razani says she has seen parents get just as much out of the First Saturday park outings as their children. (“Happy, blessed, like I could breathe deep! Inhale and exhale without fear!” is the way one enthusiastic parent described a trip to Crab Cove.)

Based on their partnership with UCSF Benioff Oakland, EBRPD and RPF launched a program of quarterly guided park walks earlier this year for adult patients in the Contra Costa Health Services system who suffer from mental health issues such as anxiety and post-traumatic stress syndrome. Jaimee Rizzotti, EBRPD outreach coordinator, participates in these walks and says they have proved extremely therapeutic.

“I know personally how anxiety-reducing being out in nature can be, and I've seen the same thing happen on these walks,” she says. “You can see this weight being lifted from people so that they're able to enjoy themselves.”

One recent study, published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* earlier this year, seems to back this up. Stanford scientists found that walking

THE **hope** IS THAT IF RESEARCH RESULTS PROVE COMPELLING, THE PARTNERSHIP CAN SERVE AS A MODEL FOR **park districts** AND **hospitals** ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

Throwing cares away (below): “Research shows an added benefit to exercising in a green setting—added stress relief, improved emotion, blood pressure and anxiety compared to doing the same exercise indoors,” says Dr. Razani.





Feeling at home: The goal of the SHINE program isn't simply to facilitate one-time visits to Regional Parks but instead to spark in every child and family a lifelong enthusiasm for the outdoors and ongoing commitment as active stewards.

in nature, versus in a city environment, significantly increased mental well-being by reducing obsessive and negative thoughts.

APPLYING THE RESULTS OF RESEARCH

In a related inquiry, UCSF Benioff Oakland and EBRPD are jointly funding an ongoing study of their own to back up their anecdotal evidence from the more than 200 people who have participated in the program. The study aims to scientifically measure the health benefits of these park trips for patients. While the link may seem obvious to some—Razani jokes that “it’s kind of like proving that your mom’s love is good for you”—the hope is that if research results prove compelling, the partnership can serve as a model for park districts and hospitals across the country.

Another important aspect of the study is to measure how effective the collaboration between EBRPD and UCSF Benioff Oakland has been in encouraging participants to access nature on their

own. Because ultimately, the goal isn't just to bring kids to one park one time but instead to encourage and inspire them to keep going back so they continue to take advantage of health benefits as they get older—and, moreover, become future stewards of East Bay Regional Parks in the process.

“One thing we really emphasize at the end of every program is to let people know that these parks are for them and this doesn't have to be the last time they're there,” says Morgan Dill, a naturalist who has led several Saturday walks. “We want so much for them to come back to these parks—to love them and let them heal them and give them peace and have them be a place for fun and exploration. I think that's the biggest thing we want them to leave with—yes, it's an hour and a half of a little less stress, but this is also a place where they can come to in the future.”



YOU CAN HELP

We encourage you to support the Regional Parks Foundation's efforts to increase access to and stewardship of EBRPD. For more info on the park's Healthy Parks Healthy People initiatives, go to www.ebparks.org/activities/hphp. To donate to RPF, go to www.RegionalParksFoundation.org.





An Insider's Guide to Tilden Nature Area

↓ Get the scoop on two terrific destinations at this 740-acre preserve just north of Tilden Regional Park: the renowned Environmental Education Center, headquarters for the area's interpretive programs, and the historic Little Farm





EBRPD naturalist James Wilson has grown up at Tilden Park. He became a junior ranger at age 9. Upon completing his degree in environmental studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz, he was hired as a full-time naturalist in 2009. Now, his 3-year-old daughter likes to explore the EEC exhibits and venture onto trails in the Nature Area.

DID YOU KNOW?

Most of Wildcat Creek's 13.4 miles are bone dry in the summer, according to Wilson. Both Lake Anza and Jewel Lake have been affected by the drought. According to Wilson, Jewel Lake is evaporating and looks more like a pond nowadays than a lake. Efforts are underway to control the silt runoff, he says, and help safeguard this human-made ecosystem.

Watershed Moments

The Environmental Education Center helps local visitors draw connections between their neighborhood and the Wildcat Creek watershed—and between themselves and Mother Nature

As naturalist James Wilson tells dozens of schoolchildren on any given day, everyone has a watershed.

“No matter where you live, rain flows downhill, and where it collects, that’s your watershed,” says Wilson, a naturalist at Tilden Nature Area’s Environmental Education Center (EEC) in Berkeley.

For many schoolchildren, it’s the moment their world gets a little bit bigger. They realize that where they live—from Fairfield to Fremont—is connected to the vast ecosystems of the East Bay Regional Park District, including the Wildcat Creek watershed and beyond. For the EEC’s four naturalists, it helps open the door to environmental topics children don’t hear about every day, such as ecosystems, habitats and environmental issues like storm drain pollution.

“I tell kids that the water you see today is going to make it down to the city of Richmond,” Wilson says. “It’s a fun way to talk about land and open space and makes it easy to talk about forests, ponds, creeks. It’s all part of them understanding the entirety of things—the entirety of nature.”

Crowd-Pleasing Exhibits

Nestled next to Little Farm, the Nature Area’s EEC is a bustling center of activity that hosts thousands of schoolchildren, teachers, families and nature lovers every year.

The main attraction is the 140-foot Wildcat Creek Watershed model, built in the early 1990s. A mock creek, often referred to the public as the “cave,” takes visitors on a self-guided tour exploring the cultural and natural history of the Wildcat Creek watershed.

Originating on Vollmer Peak and eventually draining into San Pablo Bay, the actual Wildcat Creek watershed encompasses the whole of Tilden Park and beyond through the city of Richmond, where it meets the San Francisco estuary (or bay). The exhibit follows the creek’s path L



TOP: EAST BAY REGIONAL PARKS DISTRICT; BOTTOM LEFT TO RIGHT: CLARK MILLER

through Big Springs, Lake Anza, Laurel Canyon and Jewel Lake, all within Tilden Regional Park, and is filled with a variety of interpretive and interactive exhibits, including an aquarium. Its inhabiting varieties of fish vary but have in the past included Sacramento perch, three-spined sticklebacks and rainbow trout.

During the school year, the EEC typically hosts two school field trips per day for about 200 children, Wilson says. For many of them, it's a breath of fresh air—literally. "If you're stuck in a classroom all day, it's nice to know there is a place like this," he says. "I often talk to the kids about the oak forest. I ask, 'Have you heard of the city of Oakland?' Hearing their city's name gives them a sense of pride. They can come to Tilden Park and imagine themselves in Oakland 200 years ago."

And chances are, Wilson says, the very students who visit the EEC and the watershed exhibit will be inspired to go outside and experience the real thing for themselves.



Families take delight in visiting the Little Farm's residents: three shorthorn cows, two Berkshire pigs, two Guernsey calves, seven French Alpine goats, 16 black Welsh mountain sheep and an assortment of chicks, ducks, geese and rabbits—all heritage breeds.



↓ Little Farm. BIG SURPRISES.

Come to Tilden Nature Area's Little Farm with lettuce and celery, the only two foods allowed, and leave with a deeper appreciation for pre-industrial agricultural animals and lifestyles

Did you know the Little Farm, located north of Tilden Regional Park's Nature Area, is one of a few farms left in California that's raising and protecting what are known as heritage breeds?

These breeds from pre-industrial agriculture have dwindled to a few hundred or few thousand animals apiece in the United States, says Stanley Ward, the Little Farm's farmer. Nowadays, more farms with heritage animals exist on the East Coast, he says, but in California, where the agricultural industry reigns supreme, it's nearly impossible to raise heritage breeds for profit. It's just too difficult for small farms to withstand the heavy competition.

Benefits of Heritage Breeds

The good news: At Little Farm, children and adults can take advantage of the rare opportunity to get direct experience with these endangered livestock and poultry breeds that helped shape the modern-day U.S.

Take Cordelia, Lily and Snowdrop, for example, three milking shorthorn cows, whose ancestry can be traced back to 1822. Shorthorns are a triple-purpose breed, valued for their meat, milk and muscle power—and most revered for pulling wagons out west during the pioneer days. They fared well in tropical climates and also were sent all around the world during the heyday of European colonization.

According to Ward, the Little Farm's shorthorns are from the last herd of shorthorns in California. He acquired Snowdrop's great-grandmother



Milking shorthorn cows are red, white and roan (a combination of red and white) and stand tall at the tailhead.

According to Farmer Stanley, most young livestock that have been bred at the Little Farm are sold to other pedigree breeders and small family farms.



WHEN YOU VISIT

- Bring only lettuce or celery for feeding inhabitants.
- Feel free to feed all animals, except the rabbits (they have a special diet).
- If you like small crowds, arrive when the Little Farm opens at 8:30 a.m. (Leave dogs at home—they're not permitted in Tilden Nature Area.)
- Pack a lunch and eat outside the Environmental Education Center.
- Prepare to have big fun!
- Plan on returning in March to view the baby chicks and in April–June when lambs, kids and calves are usually born.

cow 15 years ago from a farm in Davis, which has since relocated to Orland, California. Ward, who is affectionately called “Farmer Stanley” at the Little Farm, says it’s important to continue raising heritage breeds—like shorthorns—so future generations will have them available as genetic resources and as an example of best practices in agriculture from an earlier era.

“Modern black-and-white cows [Holstein-Friesian breed] can produce huge amounts of milk, but they also consume huge amounts of water. Shorthorns can live off the grass on a hillside,” Ward says. “When we shift away from carbon-based agricultural practices, such as large-scale factory farming and single-breed and monoculture farms, we will need to rely on less intensive forms of livestock management.”

Note: In the agricultural world, diversity, uniqueness and adaptability are major keys to success. Heritage breeds tell stories of the past caretakers and places they were raised—something Ward appreciates and cherishes. Color patterns, sizes, traits, horns, fur, feathers, disposition and even the sounds they make were all selected and bred for a purpose, Ward says. “These purposes and ease of management have since gone by the wayside and are not needed in the modern day. However, they are beautiful evidence of advances in the ways humans obtain their food.”

Peak Experiences

Beyond these three highly cherished cows, the farm is also home to two Berkshire pigs, two Guernsey calves, seven French Alpine goats, 16 black Welsh mountain sheep and an assortment of chicks, ducks, geese and rabbits—all heritage breeds. At the Little Farm, active steps are taken to help sustain these lineages, explains Ward. In a typical year, the Little Farm plans in the winter for spring births of lambs, calves, piglets and kids. So check in with the farmer to see who’s expecting for the next year.

In addition to visitors’ treasured experiences, the Little Farm hosts an extraordinary volunteer program for 9- to 15-year-olds (with a long waiting list to match). Volunteers care for animals and take them on walks around the farm every Sunday morning. This is a great time to drop by.

“Look forward to a firsthand experience of smelling, seeing and touching the animals, not a virtual reality,” Ward says. “For visitors of all ages, it’s a lovely place to be.”



GETTING BIGGER AND BETTER

An update on the recent opening of a new park, expansion of another, additions to the Bay Trail and more

It's been a busy few months of ribbon-cuttings and dedications for East Bay Regional Park District. Check these developments.



Las Trampas Regional Wilderness

◀ Danville

In July, a 232-acre addition to Las Trampas Regional Wilderness was opened. The acquisition, which includes a staging area off Elworthy Circle in Danville, provides an important access point to one of the District's largest and most rugged parks.

Oakland

The Park District worked with the Alameda County Transportation Commission to open one-half mile of the East Bay Greenway, a paved pathway along the BART tracks that will ultimately stretch 12 miles from Oakland to Hayward.

Hayward ▶

In October, the Bay Area Ridge Trail gained an additional mile with the new connection opened at Stonebrae Golf Course connecting to Garin Regional Park. Also in October, a section of

the Bay Trail along the Hayward Shoreline was formally renamed the Bill Lockyer Trail after the longtime legislator who authored the legislation to create the San Francisco Bay Trail.



Hayward Shoreline



Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline

◀ Richmond

The Park District is completing major construction at Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline to beautify and upgrade the park facilities, restrooms and turf.

Hercules

In September, a long-awaited, beautiful new portion of the Bay Trail was opened in the city of Hercules near the Bio-Rad campus.



Perfect Man for the Perfect Job

A passionate park interpreter garners a national award for doing what he loves best—helping kids and adults understand the natural world

When Ira Bletz was 6 years old, his family went camping at Pinnacles National Park, where a park ranger would drive up and gather the kids around. He would then unscrew the end of his flashlight, and a tarantula would creep out. “The tarantula would crawl over our hands,” Bletz says. “I thought, that’s the perfect job. I’d have a cool truck to drive around in, a cool hat and a tarantula in my flashlight! I never wavered very much from that goal.”

After studying environmental education at San Jose State University, Bletz got a job as a park ranger; worked for the U.S. Forest Service, supervising a recreation crew and tagging bears; and guided tours with the National Park Service on Alcatraz and at historic Sandy Hook, New Jersey.

Today, as regional interpretive and recreation services manager for the East Bay Regional Park District—where he has worked since 1979—Bletz helps visitors better “interpret” the natural

world. “We make history or science accessible to people of different ages and backgrounds,” he says. “You want it to be fun and interactive. It’s best when people are discovering and exploring.”

So at Ardenwood Historic Farm, he might have kids dig up potatoes as he spins their tale. “For adults, I’m talking about the fascinating history of how potatoes started in the Andes. For kids, I’ll talk about how potatoes grow in this amazing way so that when you dig up the plants, there are 10 potatoes under there.”

Bletz’s peers recently recognized his commitment and creativity with the Master Interpretive Manager award, given by the National Association for Interpretation—essentially the Academy Awards for interpreters. “I’m so excited and honored,” Bletz says. “It speaks to what I’ve done in my career, but also to what the Park District allows us to do.”

Marvelous Monarchs

Each year in November, thousands of monarch butterflies arrive at Ardenwood Historic Farm for the winter, many having traveled thousands of miles, and spend a few months clustered in the eucalyptus trees. Visitors learn about this threatened species’ life cycle, migration and conservation.

“We once saw a butterfly that had been tagged in southern British Columbia,” says Ira Bletz, EBRPD regional interpretive and recreation services manager. “What’s amazing is that the butterflies that arrive at Ardenwood in the fall have never been there. They’re the great-great-grandchildren of the ones that were there the previous winter. As an interpreter, I get to share this great story.”

For more info about EBRPD’s Return of the Monarchs program, see page 19 or visit www.ebparks.org/activities.



OFFSEASON ADVANTAGES

Camping at Del Valle at this time of year and in the spring may be the best



With its vast lake, shady campgrounds and gorgeous scenery, Del Valle Regional Park near Livermore is one of the East Bay's most popular parks all year-round. But some say the best time to visit this 4,400-acre gem is in the winter and spring.

When the crowds have thinned out, the weather has cooled and the hills have turned a brilliant green, Del Valle is a wonderland for outdoor enthusiasts. Hikers can traverse miles of backcountry trails without seeing another soul. Deer, bobcats and foxes wander right up to the water's edge. Bald eagles soar overhead, hunting for fish in the 5-mile-long lake. Creeks gush with water, and wildflowers blanket the hills. And it's not 110 degrees out.

But best of all, the park is blissfully quiet. For those seeking relief from the stress and noise of modern life, Del Valle is an idyllic place to forget about everything but the sound of the wind in the oaks and the hawks overhead.

There's no better way to immerse yourself in the park's delights than by spending the night there. The park has an extensive family campground, plus group camps, equestrian camps and RV hookups. In the summer, the campground is nearly always full, but in the offseason it's much easier to sneak away for a quick weekend getaway under the stars.

And once you're there, the park offers all the same amenities you'll find in summer: terrific fishing, boat rentals, hiking, picnicking, and a visitor center with exhibits about the natural history of the lake and surrounding wilderness. Backpackers can embark on the Ohlone Wilderness Trail, a 28-mile trek through Del Valle and the Sunol Ohlone Regional Wilderness, ending at Mission Peak Regional Preserve in Fremont.

But even if you just want to relax with a good book and watch nature unfold around you, Del Valle is a perfect offseason retreat. Watch the sunset and sunrise over the hills, enjoy the wildlife, and relish the scenery as one of the East Bay's busiest parks transforms into an oasis of calm.

FOR MORE INFO

To book a campsite at Del Valle, obtain a permit to backpack the Ohlone Wilderness Trail or learn more about camping in the East Bay Regional Park District, call 888-327-2757, option 2, or go to www.ebparcs.org/activities/camping.

Del Valle daily camping fees are \$25 for tents, \$45 for sites with RV hookups, \$5 for backpacking and \$100 for the equestrian sites. Group camping fees range from \$75 to \$200, depending on the size and type of campsite. The non-refundable reservation fee is \$8. The dog fee is \$2.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Christmas Tours of the Patterson House

Weekends in December, Ardenwood Historic Farm, Fremont. The Patterson House Museum has been transformed into a Victorian Christmas fantasy. Celebrate the holiday season 1900s-style. Enjoy a docent-led tour of the farm's elegantly decorated centerpiece. Tour fee \$3-\$4, plus farm entry fee. Check website for dates and times.

Return of the Monarchs

December-January, Ardenwood Historic Farm, Fremont. Come look for overwintering butterflies on a naturalist-led walk, or view a slideshow at the Granary. Multiple dates and times; check website for details.

Delta Discoveries

January and February, every Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m.-2 p.m., Big Break Regional Shoreline, Oakley. Drop by every weekend during this time slot to discover the wonders of the Delta through hands-on arts and crafts activities! Each week we will explore different wetland wonders. For more information, call 510-544-3050.

Saturday and Sunday Strolls

January and February, weekends, 10 a.m.-noon, in various parks. Wake up and walk into nature. Each week, we will explore a different park and the natural wonders within. Hikes range from 2 to 5 miles. Great for families. Dogs welcome on most hikes. See www.ebparks.org/parks for maps and directions. For more information, call 510-544-3187.



Big Break Regional Shoreline

SAVE THESE DATES

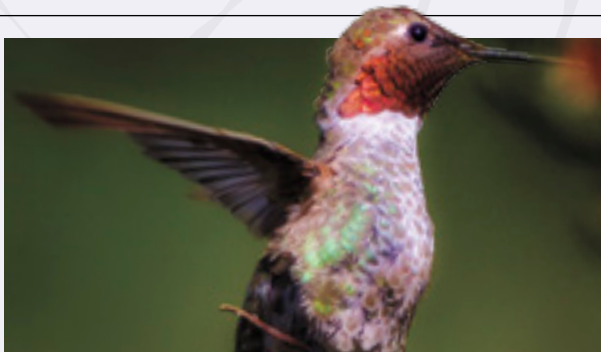
Mark your calendar and join these highlighted EBRPD programs and activities—perfect for the young and young at heart. To view complete listings of EBRPD events, visit www.ebparks.org/activities.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service

Monday, Jan. 18, 8:30 a.m.-noon, Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline, Oakland. Volunteers assist staff in removing invasive species and picking up litter along the shoreline, as well as caring for the MLK Jr. Memorial Grove. Register in advance online or by calling 888-EBPARKS.

Family Nature Fun Hour

January and February, Saturdays and Sundays, 2-3 p.m., Crab Cove Visitor Center, Alameda. Drop by for fun activities to help you learn about the bay, its wildlife and local history. The aquariums, beach and pond await you, with a new topic each week.



Visit the Regional Parks Botanic Garden

The Regional Parks Botanic Garden is open 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. (except for New Year's Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas). The Garden is located in Tilden Regional Park at the intersection of Wildcat Canyon Road and South Park Drive, Berkeley (use Shasta Road to connect to Wildcat Canyon Road when South Park Drive is closed November through March). For more information, call 510-544-3169. See www.nativeplants.org and click on "Events & Classes" for class and registration information.

Regional Parks Foundation
P.O. Box 21074, Crestmont Station
Oakland, CA 94620
www.RegionalParksFoundation.org

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