



SUMMER NEWSLETTER

Enhancing public awareness of the importance of maintaining and restoring the unique natural habitat within Chino Hills State Park through interpretive and educational activities

AT A GLANCE

- It's still Nesting Season
- Eagle Scouts provide Improvements to the Park
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It's Still Nesting Season

Most park visitors never notice the quiet dramas unfolding in the shrubs, trees, and creek beds of Chino Hills State Park each spring. Inside thickets, and trees, hundreds of nesting birds are engaged in one of nature's most vulnerable and critical rituals: raising their young.

From federally endangered songbirds to resilient year-round residents, each species depends on specific habitats, timing, and uninterrupted space to successfully breed. Understanding bird nesting season — not just when it happens, but also why it matters — is essential to preserving the park's ecological balance and the rich chorus of life it sustains.

When is Nesting Season?

Most native birds in Chino Hills State Park begin nesting between February and September, with peak activity from March through July. Some species, like the Great Horned Owl, start as early as January, while others, such as the Spotted Towhee, may continue nesting attempts into late summer, especially if earlier nests fail due to predation or weather. Let's talk about two species in particular, that are essential to the health and diversity of the Park.

Least Bell's Vireo: Sentinel of Riparian Health

The Least Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) is a federally endangered songbird that nests in riparian woodlands — areas dominated by willows, mulefat, and other water-loving plants. Its presence signals a healthy streamside ecosystem.

- They require dense native vegetation near water, with minimal slope.
- Human disturbance detracts from a successful nesting season.
- Only 6% of California's riparian habitat is considered suitable for this species.
- It's highly vulnerable to nest parasitism by brown-headed cowbirds and habitat loss from urban development.
- Conservation of this bird helps protect entire riparian corridors, benefiting amphibians, insects, and other birds.



California Gnatcatcher: Guardian of Coastal Sage Scrub

The California Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica*) is a federally threatened species and a year-round resident of coastal sage scrub — a habitat increasingly rare due to development and fire.

- It depends on California sagebrush and other native shrubs for nesting and foraging.
- Over 90% of its habitat has been lost or fragmented.
- It's a keystone species: protecting it safeguards other scrub-dependent wildlife like the coastal cactus wren and horned lizard.
- Despite its small size, they are known to harass predators and persistently re-nest, sometimes up to 10 times per season.



Why Respecting Nesting Season Matters

During nesting season, even small disturbances — like off-trail hiking or loud noises — can cause birds to abandon their nests. Protecting nesting birds means:

- Staying on designated trails and staying out of sensitive areas such as stream beds and coastal sage scrub areas.
- Avoiding playback of bird calls (especially for sensitive species like the gnatcatcher).
- Supporting habitat restoration efforts.

Nesting season is a time of renewal in Chino Hills State Park. By learning about and respecting these cycles, we can help ensure that future generations will hear the songs of all the wonderful birds that inhabit these hills.

All of this is true for the birds in your yard. They need places to nest from February through September, so plan your tree trimming in the winter to not disturb these nests in your own yard.

Eagle Scouts Provide Improvements to the Park

New Benches and other Scout Projects Add Value to the Park

You may have noticed a few new benches along Telegraph. These three additions are the result of an Eagle Scout project completed by El Roy Coddling IV. Thoughtfully placed at key intersections; Easy Street, Little Canyon, and Diemer, these benches offer a welcome resting spot for hikers and park visitors.

Eagle Scout projects are required to benefit the community, and El Roy's project is just one example of how local scouts are making a lasting impact. Over the past few years, several other Eagle Scout and Girl Scout Gold Award projects have added meaningful improvements to the park. These include:

- **Carter Mack's** refurbishment of the amphitheater benches
- **Kyle Whittingham's** refinished DC picnic tables
- **Presley Count's** journaling benches
- **Bethany Bergey's** comprehensive Girl Scout handbook (covering patches in camping, eco science, nature, and art)
- **Faith Bosanko's** informative guide to local trails, birds, park history, and ethnobotany

Each of these projects reflects a significant investment of time, effort, and community spirit. We're grateful to these dedicated scouts for their contributions which continue to enhance the park experience for everyone.





Interpreter's Corner

Summer brings interpretation a chance to slow down and review programs before we rev back up for Autumn school fieldtrips and virtual programs. This summer we are looking at how to bring senior citizens to the park so that all ages can enjoy learning new ideas and having novel experiences. All visitors should experience our Discovery Center and Discovery Trail.

We are also excited to continue Naturalist Night. These once-a-month programs invite subject matter experts to present on topics that cover our park history and habitats. This summer we will host Sinclair Andruska-Fischer in August with Ethnobotany of Native Plants, and a surprise guest in September. All Naturalist Nights are on the final Friday of each month at 6 pm.

Check out the upcoming event schedule [here](#).

Did you know Volunteers in Parks get extra training on and off site through conferences and fieldtrips? If you would like to turn 8 hours of “doom scrolling” into 8 hours of habitat restoration and interpretation AND fieldtrips are your thing, come see Shelly!



Odds & Ends

Check out our social media for current information about the Park at:

<https://www.facebook.com/10CHSPIA>

<https://www.instagram.com/chspinterpretiveassociation/>

Dogs are welcome in the Park only on the paved Bane Canyon Road. While dogs are not allowed on any of the dirt trails in the Park, bring your pup out on the paved Bane Canyon Road while still enjoying the Park.

Do you know of any groups that may want to support the Park? Does your employer have a matching donation program that you can target towards CHSPIA? Let us know, or if you have any questions, please email eric@chinohillsstatepark.org.



Reach out to us

For questions, feedback, article ideas, or story contributions, email info@chinohillsstatepark.org.

If you want to volunteer at the park, for more information go to:

<https://app.betterimpact.com/PublicOrganization/9c092e9f-8c6e-46e9-b19f-48d3f4f3a41c/1>

If you are looking for great gift ideas and want to support CHSPIA, stop by the gift store at the Discovery Center.

Help the Park and make a tax-deductible donation to CHSPIA at www.ChinoHillsStatePark.org or at this QR Code:



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