



SPRING 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

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Earth Day at Chino Hills State Park

Earth Day at Chino Hills State Park

On Saturday, April 4th, with funding and support from the California State Parks Foundation (calparks.org), almost 100 volunteers from Niagara Water, Southern California Edison, and members of the public descended on Chino Hills State Park to do good works.

They removed non-native vegetation from an area near the lemon trees past the Discovery Center. This clearing will allow Parks staff to be able to plan revegetation of native plants in this area, as part of larger restoration efforts around the Discovery Center.

Thank you to all the volunteers. Your hard work is much appreciated.



What to know about Rattlesnakes

Rattlesnakes in Chino Hills State Park: What Visitors (and Their Dogs) Need to Know

Chino Hills State Park is home to an incredible diversity of wildlife, including several species of snakes that play an important role in the local ecosystem. Among them are two rattlesnake species commonly seen in the Park: the **Southern Pacific Rattlesnake** and the **Red Diamond Rattlesnake**. Encounters are rare, but they do happen — and being informed is the best way to keep both people and pets safe.

Visitors may feel like rattlesnakes are more visible this year, and there are a few simple reasons:

- **Warm early spring** — Snakes became active earlier and stayed active longer each day.
- **More rodents** — Winter/spring rains boosted rodent populations, which attracts hungry snakes.
- **More people on the trails** — Higher visitation naturally leads to more reported sightings.

These factors don't mean the Park has "more snakes" — just that conditions are perfect for seeing the ones already here.

Meet the Park's Rattlesnakes

Rattlesnakes are shy, well-camouflaged animals that prefer to avoid people. Most visitors hear the distinctive rattle before they ever see the snake.

- **Southern Pacific Rattlesnake:** Typically brown, olive, or gray with lighter blotches. They're active on warm days and at dusk during hotter months.
- **Red Diamond Rattlesnake:** Known for their reddish or brick-colored bodies with diamond-shaped markings. They share similar habits and diet, feeding on rodents, rabbits, lizards, and birds.

Non-venomous snakes such as **Gopher Snakes** and **California Kingsnakes** also live in the Park. They lack rattles and are harmless, though they may mimic rattlesnake behavior when threatened.

Southern Pacific Rattlesnake



Red Diamond Rattlesnake



Why Rattlesnakes Rattle

A rattlesnake's rattle is a warning — not aggression. If you hear one:

- Stop immediately
- Locate the sound without stepping closer
- Slowly back away the way you came

If a snake is stretched across a trail, give it time to move off on its own. If it doesn't, notify Park staff or a volunteer. Never attempt to move a snake yourself.

If a Person Is Bitten

While bites to humans are rare, it's important to know the basics:

Do:

- Call 911
- Stay calm and limit movement
- Gently wash the bite with soap and water
- Remove rings, watches, or tight clothing

- Keep the bite area immobilized

Do NOT:

- Apply a tourniquet
- Pack the bite in ice
- Cut the wound
- Attempt to suck out venom
- Consume alcohol

Dogs and Rattlesnakes: A Critical Safety Message

Dogs are **far more likely than humans** to be bitten by rattlesnakes. Their natural curiosity, tendency to sniff brushy areas, and quick movements put them at higher risk — especially in spring and early summer when snakes are most active.

Why Dogs Are at Higher Risk

- They explore with their noses, often putting their face close to hidden snakes
- They move quickly and unpredictably, startling wildlife
- They may not recognize a rattling sound as a warning

How to Protect Your Dog

- Keep dogs on a short leash at all times — this is required in the Park and is the single best safety measure
- Stay on wide, clear trails and avoid tall grass, rock piles, and dense brush
- Do not allow dogs to investigate holes, logs, or crevices
- Carry water so your dog doesn't wander off-trail looking for shade or puddles
- Consider rattlesnake aversion training from a reputable trainer
- Know the nearest emergency veterinary clinic before you start your hike

If a Dog Is Bitten

Stay calm and act quickly.

- Carry or walk your dog immediately back to your vehicle
- Limit movement as much as possible
- Go straight to the nearest emergency veterinarian
- Do **not** apply ice, cut the wound, or attempt to suck out venom

Prompt veterinary care is essential — rattlesnake bites can be life-threatening for pets.

Top 5 Dog Safety Tips in Rattlesnake Country

- 1. Keep dogs on a short leash** A 6-foot leash prevents dogs from darting into brush, holes, or tall grass where snakes may be resting.
- 2. Stay on wide, open trails** Avoid edges of the trail, rock piles, logs, and dense vegetation — these are prime hiding spots for rattlesnakes.
- 3. Don't let dogs sniff or explore off-trail** Most dog bites occur on the face or nose because dogs investigate with curiosity.
- 4. Carry water and take breaks in open areas** A hydrated dog is less likely to wander into unsafe spots looking for shade or puddles.
- 5. Know the nearest emergency vet before you hike** Quick action saves lives. If bitten, carry or walk your dog calmly back to your vehicle and go straight to emergency care.

Learn More at the Discovery Center

The **Chino Hills State Park Discovery Center** (4500 Carbon Canyon Rd, Brea) features excellent exhibits on local reptiles, including rattlesnakes. Park Interpreter Shelly Imler and the volunteer team are always happy to answer questions and help visitors learn how to safely enjoy the Park's wildlife.



Interpreter's Corner

Light Eaters by Zoë Schlanger — A Review

I fell in love with the world of plants thanks to a book, *Light Eaters* by Zoë Schlanger.

Schlanger's book presents the modern science of plant intelligence as she experiences it in real time, not from a podium, but from the field. She leads us through the lens of a novice, with curiosity and awe, the same way a newcomer like me would experience it too. That accessibility is rare in science writing, and it matters.

There were so many new lessons learned along the way. Plants see, hear, talk, feel, think, outsmart, and sabotage or entice, like their animal kin. And yet, for most of human history, we have refused to believe it.

Why has it been so hard for us to accept that plants, the beings on this planet longer than any other living thing, could do the things we do, without a brain? I don't think it's hardheadedness. I don't think it's a failure of imagination either. I think it's something simpler and stranger: we lost the language for it.

Consider this: if a person doesn't have the word for a color as pink as the flesh of a fresh-cut fish pulled from the Eel River, does that color cease to exist? Of course not. It exists. It can be described — accurately, or less accurately, in many different ways, but it can be described. The same is true of plant behavior. When humans slow down and spend real time with plants, we begin to observe, and we begin to reach for words to describe what we're seeing. The vocabulary is clunky at first. Child-like, even. Not beautiful or poetic. But something primal and yearning lives inside it.

We used to speak this language fluently. Indigenous knowledge and ethnobotany held entire vocabularies for the inner lives of plants, vocabularies built over thousands of years of close, patient attention. We don't speak that language much anymore. Today we speak in observation and cause and effect. It's basic. It's a starting point.

Writers like Schlinger are rebuilding the bridge. She gives us a new language inside a new science, and as that wobbly language grows, it will become more eloquent. Someday, I believe, we will speak for the trees again, just as we always have.

If you're looking for a good read this summer, I cannot recommend *Light Eaters* enough. Give it to everyone who will listen.



Photo by Sherry Schmidt

Discovery Center Store

If you are looking for fun park-related items, stop by the Friends Store at the Discovery Center. There are book, shirts, hats, stickers, stuffed birds and other items. And you would also be supporting the Friends and the programs at Chino Hills State Park.



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.



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>

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



Friends of Chino Hills State Park | 4500 Carbon Canyon Road | Brea, CA 92823