Oak Canyon Community Park Trail

The Trail: The trail has five trailheads. Two are off of the lower parking lot just off of Hollytree Drive. One trail is a paved road along the east side of the park and then continues north to Bromely Drive. The other returns south to the park and continues along the west side of the park. Just south of Bromely Drive is a dirt track, which parallels the paved road along the east side of the wash bottom before returning to the paved section. A paved road extends to the east to a dog park. The third and fourth trailheads are north & west of Bromely Drive, and the last is the northern most (Lindero Canyon Rd.). The trail round trip is approximately 2 3/4 miles. The views from the trail is of the near hillsides and are enchantingly pleasant.

Geology: Most of the trail is over older surfical sediments. The hillside on either side of the canyon are made up of soft friable to semi-coherent, massive to vaguely bedded sandstone of the middle Miocene, i.e., 9.5-16 million years. It is uncertain whether this bedrock unit is of marine or nonmarine origin.

Plant Life: My survey was conducted on May 20, 2020. The hillsides were burned over in 2018, so the plant life is going through the early stages of "plant succession." Eventually the plant cover will be characterized as chaparral, however, the plant cover can be expected to be somewhat different every year until it becomes a mature chaparral or is again impacted by another wildfire.

The plants encountered along the trail includes many exotic species planted in the park or along the paved section next to the subdivision at the north end of the trail as well as along the creek bottom. The included laurel sumac, toyon, coast live oak, bush sunflower, coyote brush, bush mallow, Braunton's milk vetch, horehound, Mediterranean mustard, California everlasting, tree tobacco, yellow star thistle, deer -weed, slender tarred, golden yarrow, holly leaf cherry, California sagebrush, yucca, slender sunflower, Chaparral nolina, telegraph weed, California pepper, bindweed, black sage, cliff aster, sawtooth goldenbush, purple nightshade, bush mallow, sugar bush, dodder, Mexican fan palm, whispering bells, Fremont cottonwood, California buckwheat, wild oats, sow thistle, wild cucumber, mugwort, purple needle grass, chamise, oleander, prickly sow thistle, blue elderberry, and tamarisk.

Two of the plants identified are interesting to note. Braunton's milk vetch went unreported by biologists from 1947 to 1983, at which time one plant was encountered on the Silvernale Ranch (now part of the Boeing Santa Susana Field Lab site at the top of the Simi Hills). As a result, it achieves the status as being listed by the federal government and by the state of California as an "endangered species." The plant is known to be a "fire follower."

In 1983 I had, as far as I could remember at the time, never heard of it or observed it in the field. Its return caused a great deal of excitement in the biological community. With the development of Oak Park, it returned in substantial numbers. If you have visited any of the trail areas in Oak Park that were burnt off during the 1983 wildfire event, you will have encountered it in profusion. Within the subject park there are whole hillsides that are dominated by Braunton's milk vetch.

The other plant is the chaparral nolina. When I first saw it, I was puzzled. I didn't recognize what I was looking at. For years, it was mistakenly identified as Parry nolina. In 1988, nolina expert James Dice first named and described it. It was not until then, an unrecognized species. At that time there was thought to be less than 1,000 plants of that in existence. In my survey of the trails in the Oak Park area in 2020, I have seen what may be at least a few thousand of the plant. There have been many times that I have stood in one place and counted 50 or more plants in individual clusters - including from this trail. It causes one to question its designation as an endangered species. Non-theless, its presence in such numbers is heart-warming.

Animal Life: Animals that may be seen or the tracks of which may be observed along the trail include: birds, such as turkey vultures, common crows and ravens, red-tailed and red-shouldered hawks, American kestrel, barn and great horned owls, poor-will, California quail, mourning dove, Anna's hummingbird, common flicker, scrub jay, California towhee, and white crowned and English sparrows, as well as many other species; reptiles, such as southern Pacific rattlesnake, San Diego gopher snake, California king snake, Great Basin fence lizard among many others; and mammals, such as brush rabbit, desert cottontail, California ground squirrel, Botta's pocket gopher, agile kangaroo rat, deer mice, dusky woodrat, ringtail cat, coyote, gray fox, bobcat, mountain lion, raccoon, southern California weasel, striped skunk, and mule deer.

While mountain lions are present in the hills around Simi Valley, encounters are unlikely, but you should always be alert. It is best that you do not hike alone, and that you keep small children close at hand. Rattlesnakes may be encountered — Stay on the trail and avoid them when they are encountered — Be observant and never try to handle them. Do not handle any wildlife, including bats, even if they appear to be injured or sick. Remember, you are visitors to their homes.

Mike Kuhn,
Executive Chair,
Rancho Simi Trail Blazers

*Please see **Trail Safety Tips** at this trail's main page for more info.*