



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

FOR SELF-GUIDED NATURE TRAIL AT ARROYO HONDO PRESERVE

Adaptation:

- a) Adjustment to new or different conditions during an organism's lifetime.
- b) An inherited trait that increases an organism's chance of reproducing and surviving in a particular environment.

Algae (singular Alga): One celled, colonial, or multicellular photosynthetic organisms that live in damp or aquatic environments. Important primary producers in aquatic food chains.

Aposematic Coloration: Conspicuous coloration or markings of an animal that warns off potential predators. Examples: orange and black patterns of the Monarch butterfly, orange color of newts, orange underside of ringnecked snake.

Aquatic: Living or growing in water. Both plants and animals can be aquatic.

Carnivore: A consumer that eats animals.

Chumash people: The Native American people of coastal parts of southern California.

Deciduous: A plant that loses all of its leaves at one time of year in response to stress. The Western Sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) is an example of a winter deciduous tree. The California Buckeye (*Aesculus californica*) is an example of a summer deciduous (or drought deciduous) tree.

Diatoms: Single-celled photosynthetic organisms of fresh and salt-water habitats. Each diatom has a two-part silica shell. Diatomaceous earth or diatomite is a fine siliceous earth composed mainly of fossilized diatoms.

Dissolved Oxygen: The amount of oxygen dissolved (and so available to sustain aquatic life) in a body of water such as a lake, river, or stream. Measurement of dissolved oxygen is important when assessing the health of an aquatic ecosystem.

Ecosystem: A community of organisms and its physical and chemical (abiotic) environment.

Endangered Species: A plant or animal species that exists in such small numbers that it is in danger of becoming extinct.

Erosion: The process by which soil and rock is removed from one area of the earth's surface due to natural causes such as wind, water, and ice, and is transported elsewhere

Evergreen: A plant that has green leaves at all times of year. Evergreen trees do lose leaves but not all at the same time of year.

Exoskeleton: Exterior protective or supporting structure or shell of many animals (especially invertebrates).

Ferns: Spore-producing (non-flowering) vascular plants with fronds.

Food Chain: A diagram that represents how energy in food molecules flows from one organism to the next. For example, grass > deer > mountain lion.

Food Web: A complex diagram of interconnected food chains that represents the many energy pathways in a real ecosystem.

Fossil: The evidence in rock for the existence of plants or animals from an earlier geological period. Examples of fossils include remains or impressions of shells or skeletons and impressions of plants.

Fungus (plural Fungi): Member of the kingdom Fungi that including molds and mushroom-forming species. Fungi live by decomposing and absorbing the living or non-living organic material in which they grow. The mycelium is the main body of most fungi and is made of a web of microscopic branching threads or hyphae.

Habitat: The environment in which an organism lives.

Habitats of Arroyo Hondo:

- **Riparian Woodland** – found along streams and rivers and dominated by tall trees including California bay laurel, western sycamore, willow, white alder, and big-leaf maple. Usually with an understory of ferns, mosses, snowberry etc.
- **Coast Live Oak Woodland** – dominated by coast live oak trees with an understory that includes poison oak, blackberry, and ferns.
- **Chaparral** – on dry rocky slopes; chaparral has dense, impenetrable thickets composed mainly of stiff, mostly small-leaved, drought-tolerant, evergreen shrubs such as ceanothus and manzanita species, mountain mahogany, and chamise.

- **Coastal Sage Scrub** – with many different shrubs including coastal sagebrush, black sage, and coyote brush. In contrast to chaparral, many of the shrubs of the coastal sage scrub have soft, drought-deciduous leaves.
- **Grassland** – as in much of California, Arroyo Hondo's grassland has been disturbed by agriculture. There are some native bunchgrasses, but also many non-native European and African grasses as well as a diversity of other native and non-native flowering plants.

Habitat Restoration: work to renew and restore damaged or destroyed ecosystems and habitats as closely as possible to their original natural state.

Herbivore: An animal that feeds on plants.

Horsetails: Non-flowering plants of the genus *Equisetum*. Have hollow stems, scaly leaves, and a spike-like cone that produces spores.

Invertebrate: An animal without a backbone (or vertebral column). Examples are insects, snails, and worms.

Larva (plural Larvae): The early, free-living, immature form of any animal that changes structurally when it becomes an adult, usually by complex metamorphosis (the caterpillar is the larva of the butterfly, the tadpole is the larva of the frog).

Nature Preserve: an area of land where animals and plants are protected and that has few buildings or homes.

Nectar: The sugary liquid produced by flowers; food for many birds and insects.

Nocturnal: Term used for animals that are active at night (for example: owls). Also for plants with flowers that open at night (for example: evening primroses).

Nymph: The young of an insect with incomplete metamorphosis, differing from the adult primarily in size and structural proportions.

Omnivore: A consumer that eats a variety of organisms, both plant and animal.

Organism: An animal, plant, or other form of life.

Owl Pellets: The undigested parts of an owl's food, such as hair or bones, which are regurgitated (coughed up) through the beak.

Predator: An organism that eats other organisms.

Raptors: Birds of prey including eagles, hawks, falcons, and owls. Some definitions include vultures as well, although they do not hunt live prey and they eat dead animal matter (carrion).

Riparian: Relating to the stream corridor. Riparian woodlands have moisture-loving trees lining the stream or river. Along the California coast, watercourses may not have running water on the surface all year, but the water table is higher in riparian areas, even during periods of drought, than in the surrounding area.

Rock Types: There are three basic rock types: Sedimentary, Metamorphic, and Igneous.

- **Sedimentary** - Formed from particles of sand, shells, pebbles, and other materials. Sediment accumulates in layers over a long time and hardens into rock. Sedimentary rocks are often quite soft and may crumble or break easily. Some sedimentary rocks contain fossils. *Examples are sandstone and limestone.*
- **Metamorphic** - Formed from other rock types under the surface of the earth due to change (metamorphosis) that occurs as a result of extreme heat or pressure. Metamorphic rocks often have ribbon-like layers or shiny crystals. *Examples are slate and marble.*
- **Igneous** - Formed when molten rock (magma) deep within the earth) cools and hardens. Sometimes it cools inside the earth, and other times it erupts (as lava) onto the surface from volcanoes. If lava cools very quickly, no crystals form, and the rock that forms is shiny and glasslike. *An example is obsidian.* If gas bubbles are trapped as the lava cools, tiny holes form in the rock. *An example is pumice.*

Roost: a place where birds often settle or congregate to rest at night, or where bats congregate to rest in the day.

Sapsucker Wells: are neatly organized, with holes drilled in horizontal rows. The bird drills narrow, circular wells into the tree's xylem—the inner part of the trunk—to feed on sap that moves up to the branches in early spring.

Scat: Animal droppings (poop).

Scavenger: An animal that feeds on the bodies of dead animals (carrion). An example is the turkey vulture.

Spore: The asexual reproductive body of a non-flowering plant (for example in mosses, ferns, and horsetails). Fungi also produce spores.

Spring: A spring occurs when an aquifer (a permeable rock type that can hold water) is filled to the point that the water overflows onto the land surface.

Sulfur Spring: A spring whose waters contain compounds of sulfur such as hydrogen sulfide with its characteristic odor of rotten eggs.

Terrestrial: A plant or animal that lives on dry land.

Toxin: a poison or venom of plant or animal origin.

Tree Sap: The liquid, made up of water with dissolved sugars and mineral salts, that circulates in the vascular system of a plant.

Vertebrate: An animal that has an internal skeleton of bone or cartilage that includes a braincase and a backbone or vertebral column. The following groups of animals are vertebrates:

- **Fish** - A cold-blooded, aquatic vertebrate. Fish typically breathe with gills, have fins and a tail, and an elongated body covered with scales.
- **Amphibian** - A vertebrate of the class Amphibia. Frogs, toads, and salamanders (including newts) are amphibians. Larvae are typically aquatic and breathe with gills. Adults of most amphibians are semi-terrestrial and breathe with lungs and through their moist glandular skin.
- **Reptile** - A vertebrate of the class Reptilia. Reptiles usually have dry scaly skin and lay soft-shelled eggs on land. Reptiles include snakes, lizards, tortoises, turtles, and crocodiles.
- **Bird** - A warm-blooded, egg-laying vertebrate of the class Aves. Birds have feathers, wings, scaly legs, and a beak.
- **Mammal** - A vertebrate of the class Mammalia. Mammals are usually covered with hair. Female mammals produce milk to feed their young.

Watershed: An area of land from which water drains by streams and rivers into lakes or an ocean.

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