Protecting Wildlands from Plant Invaders
Bill Miller, Environmental Scientist, Bay Area District, California State Parks

The sharp spines of yellow starthistle pressed against my shins as I visited an invasive plant treatment area in one of the many grasslands on the slopes of Mount Diablo, accompanied by my supervisor Cyndy Shafer, senior environmental scientist for the Bay Area District of California State Parks. As we stopped at the edge of a dense patch of the prickly plants, Cyndy said, “Invasive plants, like yellow starthistle, are the largest threat to endangered and threatened species after habitat destruction.”

First introduced to California in the mid-1800s, probably through contaminated alfalfa seed from Chile, yellow starthistle was found in localized populations around the alfalfa fields near San Francisco, Marysville, and Sacramento and expanded to surrounding areas as more fields were converted to agriculture. In the 1930s and 1940s, the spiny invader began to move into the Central Valley foothills by hitching a ride on livestock and wildlife. By the 1960s, yellow starthistle expanded to 1 million acres in California. Since then, extensive road building, urban development, and more grazed lands have helped the plant expand to over 18 million acres.

Yellow starthistle is not native to California, but why call it invasive? Not all non-native plants are invaders, but a small percent of introduced species become invasive to wildlands. Many invasive plants in California come from other areas of the world that share a similar Mediterranean climate. They tend to be prolific seed producers, lack pests or herbivores that kept them in check in their native ranges, and have longer growing seasons than native plants, which gives them a competitive edge and makes them highly damaging to native species.

The impacts of invasive plants on wildlands can be significant. Invasive plants can crowd out native plants and compete with them for water and nutrients. Animals that depend on those natives can then be impacted. Invasives can also alter whole ecosystems and degrade the services they provide. For example, yellow starthistle has deep tap roots that reduce soil moisture where it grows.

The strategies used to manage invasive species depend on the extent of infestation. Prevention strategies attempt to stop invaders before they hit our shores by identifying potential invaders and banning their import. Eradication strategies try to eliminate pests
We at California State Parks are excited to introduce a new system for making camping and lodging reservations, called ReserveCalifornia™. This online platform will streamline the booking process throughout the state and allow visitors to make reservations 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at www.ReserveCalifornia.com.

Reservations are available up to six months in advance of the arrival date and can extend up to the park’s maximum stay length. For example, if a park allows a 7-day stay, a visitor could visit ReserveCalifornia™ on August 1 and make a reservation for February 1-7.

At Mount Diablo State Park, reservations are available for the Live Oak and Juniper campgrounds, as well as five group campgrounds. To make a reservation, simply visit the ReserveCalifornia™ website, type Mount Diablo into the search bar, select your arrival date and the length of your stay, and press Go. Then click on the Reserve button to view the available campsites and the amenities for each site. You will need to create an account before making your first reservation.

We hope that this new system will facilitate the reservation process and make it even easier for you to enjoy your State Parks!

Welcome to Mount Diablo State Park and all of the beauty and wonder it contains! For thousands of years this mountain has been an integral part of the human history surrounding it. From the native people who revered it in their creation stories, the pioneers who settled around it, the ranchers who sought their fortunes upon it, the organizations who sought to preserve it, and finally to our visitors—Mount Diablo has always had a vital and magical quality to it. We hope that during your visit here you will stop along the way to your destination and soak in the majesty of its 20,000 acres.

Relax at one of our many picnic sites and enjoy a meal nestled amongst the trees or pull into one of our lookout points to enjoy the scenery. Stop at Rock City to explore the geology of the mountain or venture up to the Summit and take in the expansive views. Be sure to come inside the visitor center and enjoy our exhibits upstairs or purchase a park map and set out on any of our 162 miles of trails.

However you choose to enjoy the mountain, know that a wonderful and experienced group of staff and volunteers can be found throughout the park to help you along your journey in finding your own bliss. The Mount Diablo Interpretive Association (MDIA) is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing your visit by developing interpretive displays and publications, offering nature hikes and programs, and so much more. All net proceeds from merchandise sales, membership dues, and donations go directly back to the park! Please visit mdia.org to plan your visit, check out the calendar for upcoming events, shop for publications and souvenirs at the online store, or sign up to become a member of MDIA.

Please enjoy your stay and come again soon—one visit is never enough.

Supporting organizations and agencies working to prevent invasive plants,

Using preventive measures when visiting the park, like remaining on trails and cleaning the mud or vegetation off your clothing, shoes, and gear before and after your hike, ride, or run.

With the help of volunteers and park visitors, we can control invasive plants in Mount Diablo State Park and give native species a better chance at survival.

In naturalist.org/), www.cal-ipc.org/ip/management/wwh/, which can help you identify invasive plants,

• Checking out the Weed Workers Handbook (http://www.cal-ipc.org/ip/management/wwh/),

• Reporting invasive plants to Mount Diablo State Parks via email (William.miller@parks.ca.gov) or using reporting platforms such as CalFlora (http://www.calflora.org/) or iNaturalist (https://www.inaturalist.org/),

• Planting native species in your landscaping and removing any invaded that may already be on your property.
Mount Diablo has three designated family camping areas and five group camps:

- **Juniper Campground** (36 sites, elevation 3,000 ft.) Located approximately 2 miles below the summit, on Summit Road, Juniper is known for its fantastic views. Three campsites meet accessibility (Americans with Disabilities Act) standards. Reservations available.

- **Live Oak Campground** (23 sites, elevation 1,450 ft.) Located one mile above the South Gate Entrance Station, off South Gate Road. Live Oak is near Rock City, where one can explore rock formations. Reservations available.

- **Junction Campground** (6 sites, elevation 2,200 ft.) Located where South Gate Road and North Gate Road meet at the Ranger Station. This campground is situated in an open woodland area. Available on a first-come, first-served basis only.

**Group Camps** are Buckeye, Barbecue Terrace, Wildcat, Stagecoach, and Boundary. Each campground is primitive with running water (subject to availability) and pit toilets. Barbecue Terrace is equipped with horse ties for equestrian use. RVs are not allowed in the group camping areas. Reservations available.

- All campgrounds are provided with picnic tables, fire pits or stoves, potable water (subject to availability) and restrooms. Showers are available at Juniper and Live Oak campgrounds at no additional charge.

- The campgrounds are mainly designed for tent camping, but can accommodate RVs up to 20 feet in length. No hookups and dumping stations are provided.

**Camping Procedures**

Make reservations up to 6 months in advance using the ReserveCalifornia website at [reservecalifornia.com](http://reservecalifornia.com). Reservations can be made for a specific campground but not a specific site. Campers cannot be registered at Mitchell Canyon.

Check-in time is 2:00 p.m. Check-out time is 12:00 noon. During the fire season (generally May to October), the park is subject to closure due to extreme fire danger. Campers must call the park at 925.837.2525 or 925.837.0904 one day prior to their arrival to confirm park status.

**General Rules**

- Alcoholic beverages are prohibited in the park.
- 8 people and 2 vehicles maximum per campsite.
- Each juvenile (under age of 18) must have written permission from his/her parents (with parent's phone number) prior to camping without adult supervision. Phone verifications will be attempted.
- Quiet hours are from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.
- No electric generators from 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 a.m.
- Firewood gathering is prohibited.
- Campfire restrictions are in effect during the fire season. Check fire conditions for appropriate use (see page 6).
- Campers are locked in the park overnight from sunset to 8:00 a.m. For emergencies dial 911.
- Quiet—noise must not carry beyond your immediate camp or picnic ground.

**Group Picnic Reservations:** Call Ranger Dan Stefanisko at 925-855-1730

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**Park Fees per Car**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Nightly Use Fee</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
<th>Vehicles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell Canyon Entrance*</td>
<td>$60</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macado Ranch Entrance*</td>
<td>$60</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North and South Gate Entrances*</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golden Poppy Annual Pass</td>
<td>$125.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>California Explorer Annual Pass</td>
<td>$195.00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* MUSEUM USE FEE CAMPERS ADDITIONAL CHARGE

**Group Camps**

- **Stagecoach**: $65
- **Boundary**: $65
- **Buckeye**: $100
- **Wildcat**: $100
- **Barbecue Terrace**: $165
Kid’s Corner • Mount Diablo Word Search

PHOTO: MICHELLE KUNNELL

1. tarantula
2. oak
3. hike
4. summit
5. scorpion
6. Diablo
7. wildflowers
8. turkey
9. aster
10. chaparral

MDIA Product Order and Membership Form

Clip and mail to MDIA, PO Box 346, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0346. Checks only, made payable to MDIA.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SUPPORT MDIA, PLEASE CONSIDER JOINING
Mount Diablo Interpretive Association
Membership Application

Membership dues are deductible to the full extent allowed by law. New memberships include a free Mount Diablo trail map.

MEINBERSHIP CATEGORY (circle one)
Student/Senior (55+) $15
Individual $25
Family $40
Contributing $100
Lifetime $500

Donation $ 

Name: ___________________________
Address: _________________________
City: ____________________________
State/Zip: ________________________
Telephone: ______________________
Email: __________________________

Join MDIA or renew your membership online now. Use your smartphone.
https://squareup.com/store/mount-diablo-interpretive-association/item/mdia-membership

Event Calendar
Check out all the hikes and other events happening in Mount Diablo State Park.
www.mdia.org/site/mdia-event-calendar

Fire Danger: How Will It Affect You?

- Maintain fires at all times in a safe condition that does not threaten any person or natural or structural feature.
- Never leave a fire unattended.
- Extinguish all fires prior to departure.
- Ground fires are not permitted.
- Firewood gathering is prohibited.
- Report all wildfires immediately. Call 911.

Fire Danger Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fire Danger Reading</th>
<th>Wood fire permitted in stoves &amp; BBQ pits (designated areas and campgrounds)</th>
<th>Use of Compressed Logs</th>
<th>Use of Charcoal</th>
<th>Use of Self-contained Stove</th>
<th>Cigarette Smoking</th>
<th>Park Closed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIGH WITH RED FLAG</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>VERY HIGH/EXTREME</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE PROHIBITION OF SMOKING UNDER HIGH FIRE DANGER INCLUDES SMOKING WITHIN A VEHICLE.

PARK CLOSURE APPLIES TO ALL HIKERS, VEHICLES, BICYCLISTS (MOUNTAIN AND ROAD), AND HORSEBACK RIDERS.

7 days a week
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
925.837.6119

Summit Museum is open
Park Rules

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OBEYING THESE AND OTHER PARK RULES

• All Features of the Park Are Protected! Do not remove or disturb plants, animals, or geological features.

• Park Hours: Opens at 8 a.m. and closes at sunset. Visitors should be in their vehicles heading out at sunset to avoid being locked in.

• No Alcohol: All alcoholic beverages are prohibited in the park.

• Vehicles/Bicycles Speed Limit: 15 to 25 mph on park roads, 15 mph in campgrounds and picnic areas. All vehicles must stay on the pavement and are prohibited on trails and fire roads.

• Bicycles are allowed only on paved roads, fire roads and designated trails. Check at the Ranger Station for current regulations.

• Drones or Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) are prohibited.

• Skateboards, rollerblades, rollerskates, and gravity-propelled devices are prohibited.

• Dogs: Must be on leash at all times when out of your car; must be in a tent or a vehicle at night; and must stay in developed areas—they are not allowed on trails or fire roads.

• Fires: Restrictions in effect during season. Check with a Ranger. Fires must be in fire stoves or barbecues provided—no ground fires.

• Emergencies: Dial 911.

• Fireworks are prohibited.

• Firearms/airguns and hunting are prohibited.

Rules of the Road
For Motorists and Cyclists

Share the roadway with all Park users.

• Drive at or below the posted Park speed limits.
  CALIFORNIA VEHICLE CODE 22350*

• Pass with sufficient visual clearance.
  CALIFORNIA VEHICLE CODE 21751*

• Do not pass on blind curves.
  CALIFORNIA VEHICLE CODE 21752(a)*

• Give bicyclists 3 feet clearance.
  CALIFORNIA VEHICLE CODE 21760(b)*

• Yield to equestrians.
  CALIFORNIA VEHICLE CODE 21759*

*MINIMUM FINE: $238.00

Take your time and enjoy
Mount Diablo’s scenic views

Mount Diablo State Park Phone Numbers

Supervising Ranger .................925.855.1730
Junction Ranger .....................925.837.6129
Mitchell Canyon Ranger.........925.672.4266
Summit Museum ....................925.837.6119
South Gate Entrance Station ...925.837.0904
Maintenance .........................925.837.6122
Sector Office .......................925.673.2891
General Information ..............925.837.2525
TTY Relay Service .................711

Mount Diablo State Park
96 Mitchell Canyon Road
Clayton, CA 94517-1500

California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the Contra Solano Sector Office, 925.673.2891. This newsletter is available in alternate formats by contacting 925.673.2891.

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