

Mount Diablo Review

MOUNT DIABLO INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION

Fall/Winter 2013 • MDIA, PO Box 346, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0346 • 925-927-7222 • www.mdia.org

Myths of Mount Diablo's "Fearsome Four" • Michael Marchiano

MOUNT DIABLO IS HOME to many extraordinary plants, animals, habitats, geological formations, and microenvironments. Animals as large as a mountain lion, as elusive as a night snake, as fleeting as a Ceanothus moth are rarely seen by the average visitor or casual hiker. Among this fabulous fauna are four creatures that have come to notoriety through folklore, mythology, and undeserved bias.

Tarantula

First and foremost on this list is the California tarantula (*Aphonopelma* spp.). Visitors to the Mountain in late summer and early fall—mating season for these benign giants—often see the males crossing a road or path looking for a female's burrow.

Contrary to popular belief, these gentle arachnids are relatively harmless to humans. Actually, no tarantula worldwide is deadly to humans. A few African and Asian species have a nasty, painful bite, but no one has ever died from their bite. These magnificent, slow-moving spiders, although commonly portrayed as threatening, dangerous, and monstrous in the media and movies, are none of these things and have been unjustly vilified.



TARANTULA • KEVIN HINTSA

and monstrous in the

Scorpion

Another unjustly vilified creature found on Mount Diablo is our local scorpion. At least three species of the scorpion family live on Mount Diablo. The California forest scorpion (*Uroctonus mordax*) is the most common species and the largest in the area, growing to two inches long. None of the three local

species can inflict a sting of any consequence to most humans. The forest scorpion sting feels like a mild burning sensation that lasts for no more than 15 minutes (usually less).

The only way to get stung is to grab or step barefoot on one.



SCORPION • DENISE WIGHT

Scorpions only come out at night and hunt for other scorpions, insects, and other small arthropods. If you wish to see these fascinating creatures, join one of our summer night hikes and see them glow in the dark when we shine an ultraviolet flashlight on them.

Black Widow

Next on our list of feared creatures is the only local spider of any medical significance, the notorious western black widow (*Latrodectus hesperus*). This shiny black spider with the red hourglass shape on its underside is ubiquitous throughout Contra Costa County and can be located on Mount Diablo in dark, undisturbed places around campgrounds, buildings, outhouses, wood piles, etc. This nighttime-only hunter stays hidden during the day and then pounces on unsuspecting insects that get too close to its web at night.

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Park Supervising Ranger's Report

• Dan Stefanisko



Your Safety Is No Accident

Each year Mount Diablo State Park receives over 800,000 visitors. Most either drive their car to the Summit Visitor Center to enjoy the famous view or use the mountain as an outdoor gym by riding their bicycle to the summit, which boasts an elevation of 3,849 feet.

No matter how you make the 10-mile journey to the top of the mountain, that trek may be safer now, thanks to the partnership between Mount Diablo State Park and the Diablo Multisport Connection (DMC). The park worked with DMC, a local multisport women's training and racing team, to develop, produce, and fund road signs with a key, general safety message. Installed along South Gate and North Gate roads, these signs are a welcome addition. Similar to the permanent signs, DMC funded mounted safety signs on barricades that can be moved throughout the park.

The signs promote the following key safety messages:

- Do not pass on blind curves.
- Wearing headphones in both ears is illegal.
- All traffic laws are enforced.
- Use caution, and be patient.

With everyone's safety in mind, we urge visitors take it easy, slow down, and enjoy the wonderful scenery that Mount Diablo State Park has to offer. After all, one accident is one too many.

Where is this location in the Park?



Answer on page 6.

MDIA President's Column

• Jim Mitchell

Welcome to Mount Diablo

The members of the all-volunteer Mount Diablo Interpretive Association (MDIA) are happy to share this very special park with you.



In early September, a tragic wildfire burned more than 3,000 acres of Mount Diablo. The fire was contained within a week by the hard work of over 1,300 personnel from Cal Fire, local fire districts and cooperating agencies, and, of course, State Parks staff.

A lot of work needs to be done now to restore the affected areas of the park to a state that can again welcome visitors. Related work is also needed to repair park facilities suffering from neglect due to lack of state funds. MDIA is working closely with park staff to accomplish much of this work, which includes repairing and replacing park structures, trail signage, and fencing. We are asking those who cherish Mount Diablo to help us fund many of these projects. In gratitude for your donation, MDIA is offering several gifts that can be seen on our website, mdia.org. Please consider contributing. A membership and donation form is on page 7.

To plan your trip to the park or simply to learn more about what Mount Diablo has to offer, go to the MDIA website, mdia.org. You will find an events calendar listing guided hikes, pictorial and audio tours, and park maps, as well as information about the history and natural wonders on the mountain.

MDIA works closely with the State Parks staff to enhance your visit to this park through development of interpretive displays, publications, docent training, and visitor center operations. Trail maps, guides, and other publications, as well as knowledgeable docents, can be found at the Summit Visitor Center and on weekends at the Mitchell Canyon Visitor Center. Almost all net proceeds from sales of publications and merchandise in the park, MDIA membership dues, and donations go directly to support Mount Diablo State Park.

Please enjoy your visit to Mount Diablo and let the mountain inspire and energize you.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Although its venom is very toxic, it has such a small quantity that its bite has little or no serious lasting effect on most people. In rare cases, the venom can cause severe pain, neurological problems (the venom is a neurotoxin), and flu-like symptoms, such as achy muscles, headache, and nausea. Anti-venom is rarely used because it can cause anaphylactic shock, which can cause death more often than the bite. In the past 30 years, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has not recorded a single confirmed death from a black widow in over 50,000 reported incidents each year in the United States. Like the aforementioned animals, these beneficial creatures just want to be left alone and rightly fear us far more than we should fear them.



BLACK WIDOW SPIDER
• MICHAEL MARCHIANO

Rattlesnake

The last of our "Fearsome Four" creatures is the northern Pacific rattlesnake (*Crotalus oreganus*), the only venomous snake in northern California. This non-aggressive animal also prefers to avoid humans.

We have very few bites on Mount Diablo considering this is one of our most common snakes. Most bites are caused by someone reaching for the snake (not a good idea) or, on rare occasion, someone inadvertently stepping on a snake. Although very few deaths are caused by venomous snakes in

the United States, the bite of this animal is very painful and should always be considered serious. Traditional treatments, such as cutting the wound, sucking out the venom, and tourniquets, are now recognized to increase damage from the bite. The best course of action is to stay calm and seek treatment at a hospital.

The actual numbers belie the deadly reputation of this fascinating serpent. Out of approximately 10,000 venomous snake bites annually, there are only 15 to 20 deaths, and half of those are members of religious cults who handle deadly snakes and will not seek medical attention if bitten.



NORTHERN PACIFIC RATTLESNAKE
• CLAYTON WORSDELL

Rattlesnakes as well as other local snakes help to keep rodent populations in check and in turn become food for larger predators. They are an integral part of our Mount Diablo ecosystem.

The bite or sting of some of these creatures may affect some individuals more than others, so take appropriate precautions. Remember, however, that each of these creatures has its place in the natural order. Learn about their fascinating lives, their relationship to the rest of the environment, and learn to respect them for what they are, not fear them.

Kids Corner

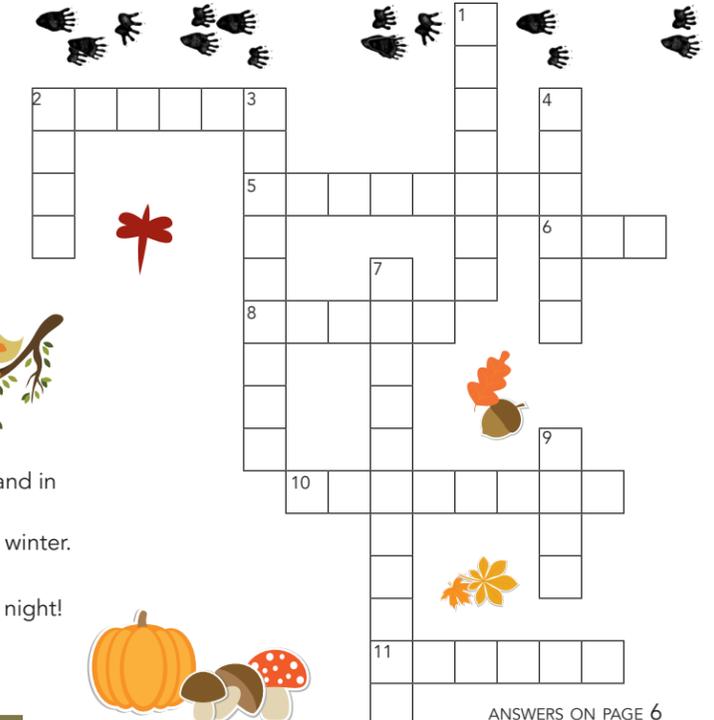
BY KRISTA SAWCHUK

ACROSS

- The top of Mount Diablo is called the _____.
- This place is known for its wind caves and big rocks.
- There are many different varieties of this tree on Mount Diablo.
- This is used by hikers, bikers, runners, and horses to go places on the mountain.
- You can see these large birds flying around looking for carrion (dead animals).
- This person helps keep the park safe.

DOWN

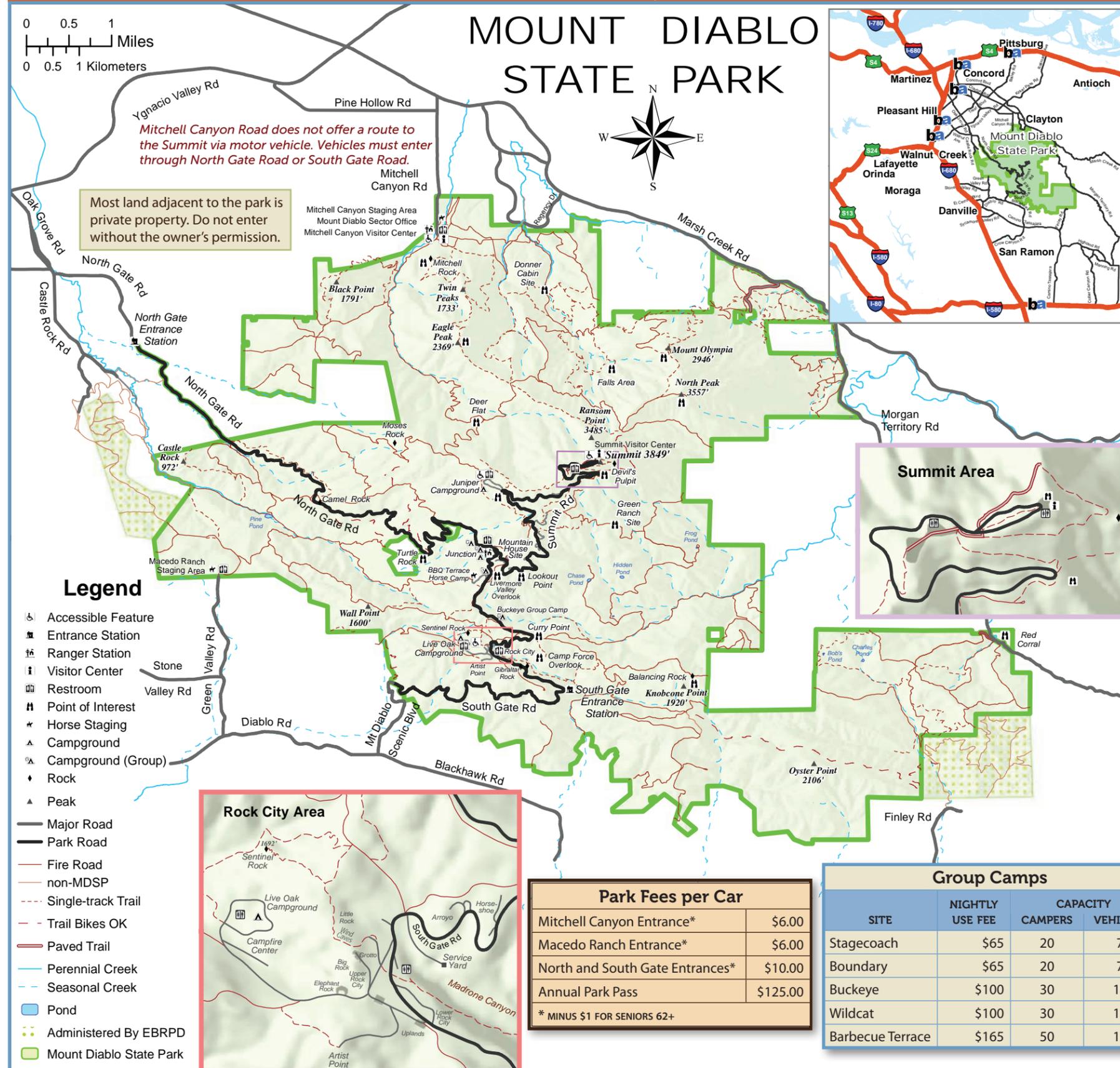
- These remains of living organisms can be found at Rock City and in the stone of the Summit Visitor Center.
- On rare occasions, this can be found on Mount Diablo during winter.
- This large spider makes Mount Diablo its home.
- This dog-like animal is smaller than a wolf but will still howl at night!
- These can be seen blossoming in the spring.
- You may see these swift animals eating grass.



ANSWERS ON PAGE 6

A more detailed topographic map is available for purchase at the entrance stations and the Summit and Mitchell Canyon visitor centers.

Camping at Mount Diablo State Park



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 and North Gate meet at the Ranger Station. This campground is situated in an open woodland area. *Available on a first-come, first-served basis only.*

- All campgrounds are provided with picnic tables, fire pits or stoves, potable water and restrooms.
- The campgrounds are mainly designed for tent camping, yet they can accommodate RVs up to 20 ft. in length. There are no hookups and no dumping stations provided in the Park.

Camping Procedures

You may make reservations from 48 hours to 7 months in advance by calling Reserve America at 800.444.7275 or by visiting their website at www.reserveamerica.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.

Group Camps are Buckeye, Barbecue Terrace, Wildcat, Stagecoach, and Boundary. Reservations are available for all group camps with Reserve America. Each campground is primitive with running water and pit toilets. Barbecue Terrace is equipped with horse ties for equestrian use. Motorhomes are not allowed in the group camping areas. 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.
- Fires must be in stoves or fire pits provided. **NO GROUND FIRES.**
- 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.
- Peace and quiet—noise must not carry beyond your immediate camp or picnic ground.

Group Picnic Reservations: Call Ranger Scott Poole at 925.837.6129 x4

Where Is This Location in the Park?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

This new interpretive display panel, titled “Life Underground,” was recently installed in the Native Plant Garden area behind the Mitchell Canyon Visitor Center. It graphically illustrates what may live in one cubic foot of soil. The display states, “Soil is actually a dynamic habitat full of crawling creatures, decomposing microorganisms, organic plant and animal material, and minerals. A single handful of fertile soil may be inhabited by millions of small invertebrates.” Be sure to stop by the entertaining and informative display on your way to the Mitchell Canyon trailhead for a hike.



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.
- **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 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** are prohibited.
- **Hunting** is prohibited.

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 CHART						
Fire Danger Reading	Wood fire permitted in stoves and BBQ pits (designated picnic and campsites)	Use of Compressed Logs	Use of Charcoal	Use of Self-contained Stove	Cigarette Smoking ¹	Park Closed ²
LOW	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
MEDIUM	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
HIGH	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO
HIGH WITH RED FLAG	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO
VERY HIGH/EXTREME	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES

¹ THE PROHIBITION OF SMOKING UNDER HIGH FIRE DANGER INCLUDES SMOKING WITHIN A VEHICLE.
² PARK CLOSURE APPLIES TO ALL HIKERS, VEHICLES, BICYCLISTS (MOUNTAIN AND ROAD), AND HORSEBACK RIDERS.

MDIA Product Order and Membership Form

Prices include sales tax, shipping and handling. Profits from sales support the educational programs of MDIA.

• Maps and Hiking Information	EACH	QTY	TOTAL
Trail Map of Mount Diablo State Park (7th Ed.)	7.50		
Hiking Brochures: Easy, Moderate, Demanding (set of 3)	2.00		
• Interpretive Publications			
Mount Diablo, The Extraordinary Life and Landscapes of a California Treasure	60.00		
Mount Diablo Guide (3 rd Ed.)	17.00		
Mountain Lore—History & Place Names of Mount Diablo	7.50		
Trees and Shrubs of Mount Diablo	7.50		
Common Birds of Mount Diablo	7.50		
Mt. Diablo Wildflowers	7.50		
Geology Brochure and Map	2.50		
• Nature Guides (Laminated/Folded)			
Local Birds of the San Francisco Bay Area	9.75		
Local Rocks of North America	9.75		
Local Butterflies of the San Francisco Bay Area	9.75		
Local Animal Tracks of North America	9.75		
• Products with Mount Diablo State Park Logo			
T-shirts: Sky Blue or Pine Green; S, M, L, XL (circle size and color)	16.00		
Mount Diablo Patch	4.00		
Mount Diablo Lapel/Hat Pin	3.50		
SUBTOTAL			\$
10% Discount for MDIA, California State Parks Foundation members, and Park Staff			
TOTAL AMOUNT (INCLUDES TAX & SHIPPING)			\$

Thank you for your mail order!

- Mount Diablo Interpretive Association offers an online Event Calendar, which includes hikes and other events in Mount Diablo State Park.
www.mdia.org/site/mdia-event-calendar
- MDIA's newsletter is also available online via a link at www.mdia.org

Article or Photograph Submission
 To submit articles or photographs for the Spring/Summer issue of the *Mount Diablo Review*, email info@mdia.org or leave a message at 925.927.7222. Submission deadline for the Spring/Summer issue is **January 15**.

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.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY (CIRCLE ONE)

Student/Senior (55+)	\$15
Individual	\$25
Family	\$40
Contributing	\$100
Lifetime	\$500

Donation \$

Name:

Address:

City:

State/Zip:

Telephone: ()

Email:

Checks only, made payable to MDIA

Clip and mail to:

MDIA
 PO Box 346
 Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0346

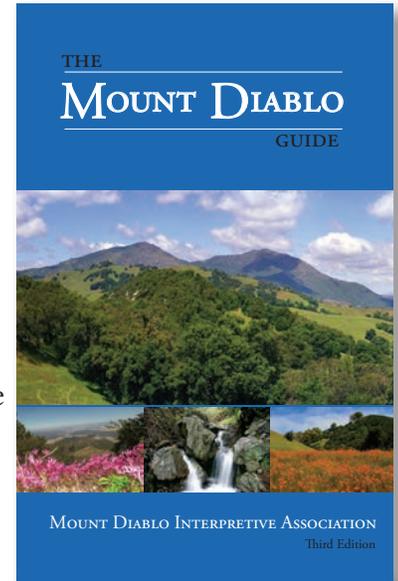
Summit Museum is open
 7 days a week, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Summit temperature and wind conditions are updated every 20 minutes at 925.838.9225.

Mount Diablo is a stunning ecological and geological treasure of unparalleled natural beauty. The nearly 20,000-acre Mount Diablo State Park, a jewel of the California State Parks system, includes the mountain's 3,849-foot summit and surrounding peaks and foothills, offering outstanding hiking, bicycling, and horseback riding trails; picnicking and camping areas; and incomparable panoramic views.

To help you fully enjoy the mountain and the park, you will want to add *The Mount Diablo Guide*, third edition (July 2013), to your backpack and bookshelf. Newly revised with color photographs and updated maps and illustrations, this authoritative guidebook, published by the Mount Diablo Interpretive Association, offers a comprehensive overview of all things Mount Diablo, helping you navigate and enjoy the park's many natural resources and outstanding visitor amenities. Within its pages, you will find stories of the mountain's complex geological and rich cultural histories. You will discover the mountain's incomparable biodiversity and find descriptions of hiking, biking, and horseback riding trails for just about every level of outdoor enthusiast.

To appreciate its stunning beauty, extraordinary biodiversity, intriguing geology, and enchanting history, you are encouraged to explore the mountain up close and personal—with *The Mount Diablo Guide* and the *Trail Map of Mount Diablo State Park* as your guides.



The Mount Diablo Guide (\$14) and other MDIA publications are available at the Summit Visitor Center, the Mitchell Canyon Visitor Center, and online at www.mdia.org.

Understanding Trail Signs



Almost 400 trail signposts identify over 155 miles of hiking trails and fire roads in Mount Diablo State Park's nearly 20,000 acres.

The trail signs in the park follow the California State Parks uniform format. The name of the trail you are on is specified in relatively small horizontal type near the top of the sign.

The name that appears vertically in large type (usually another trail but sometimes a destination or park boundary) shows the termination of that particular trail; the word "TO", in small letters, is important. The mileage to that end point is specified at the bottom.



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
Summit Weather Conditions....	925.838.9225
TTY Relay Service.....	711

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

