

## 5. Miwok Meadow

This clearing was originally a village site for a tribe of Coast Miwok, who occupied this area for thousands of years before European settlers came in the late 1700's. The villagers gathered oysters, mussels, and clams as one of their main food sources and the shells were discarded in large heaps, called middens. If you look down at the soil, you will find fragments of shells that were brought here by the Coast Miwok. You may also notice that the soil looks darker than it did on the other side of the canyon. This is because the ashes of many campfires from the Miwok village have mixed into the soil, turning it black.

## 6. Coastal Scrub

Here, the habitat becomes primarily coastal scrub, with coyote brush dominating the landscape. These plants grow in dense clumps, which provide cover and nesting habitat for many species, including Wrentits, Song Sparrows, White-crowned Sparrows, and Spotted Towhees.

You may see these birds with colorful plastic bands around their legs, which allows scientists at Point Blue to identify individuals and track their nests during the spring and summer. We have been studying



Wrentit with color bands

population changes, including nest success, as habitats and climate have changed since the 1980's.



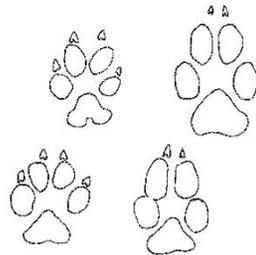
Spotted Towhee

California Quail running through the grass, and Black-tailed Deer grazing on the tender leaves of nearby plants. You may also see the tracks or the scat of coyotes and gray foxes that are common in this area.



Red-tailed Hawk

The Nature Trail ends on Mesa Road. To return you can turn left and walk down Mesa Rd or you can retrace your steps along the Nature Trail.



Gray Fox

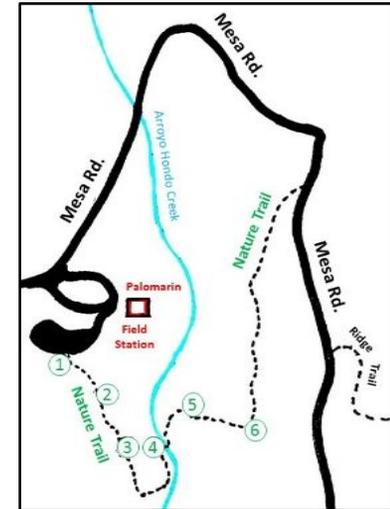
Coyote

To learn more about Point Blue, find us at <http://www.pointblue.org/>

This guide was written and illustrated by Elise Zarri, a fall 2017 intern at Point Blue. Many thanks to Renée Cormier, Lishka Arata, and Ryan DiGaudio for their help in producing this guide!



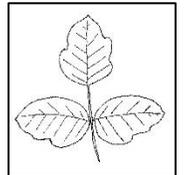
# Nature Trail Guide



The Nature Trail begins in the parking lot of Point Blue's Palomar Field Station and ends on Mesa Rd.

Welcome to the Nature Trail! This guide will introduce you to the major types of habitats, key plants, wildlife, and associated Point Blue research as you enjoy a ½ mile hike.

By the time you reach the end of the trail, we hope you know a bit more about the habitats in this region and the work that Point Blue does to study and conserve them. Along the way, listen and watch for different birds and see how many you can find!



Watch out for poison oak that grows along the trail edges!

Please come ask our biologists questions about what you saw after your walk.



Don't forget to ask about joining us on our mist-net trail too!

## 1. Landscape in Transition

In front of you is a changing landscape. This land was farmed until 1965 when Point Blue set up a bird monitoring station here. Low, shrubby coastal scrub plants were the first to take over and dominated the landscape for many years. Slowly, Douglas fir trees began to move in and shaded out the coastal scrub plants as they grew taller. Along the trail, you'll see various stages of this process, from coastal scrub with small Douglas fir saplings, to mature forests with no scrub plants left.



Palomarin in 1970 (top) and 2008 (bottom)

As the forest matures, our data has shown that birds that live in tall trees have become more common. These include Wilson's Warblers, Townsend's Warblers, Golden-crowned Kinglets, and Hutton's Vireos. Meanwhile, birds that live in more open habitats, like White-crowned Sparrows and Song Sparrows have been decreasing.

## 2. Packrat Palace

The large mound of sticks you see here is the den of a Dusky-footed Woodrat. The dens contain many different chambers and are passed down

through the generations from mother to daughter. These nocturnal creatures eat leaves, berries, seeds, and acorns, which they collect and keep in storage chambers within the den. In addition to collecting food and building material, they are also drawn to shiny objects, earning them the nickname 'packrats.' Woodrats are an important food source for the endangered Spotted Owls that live in the area.

## 3. Oak Woodland

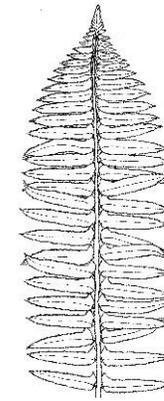
Here the landscape is dominated by Coast Live Oaks, which provide a large crop of acorns during autumn. These acorns are a vital winter food source for many animals, including chipmunks, Gray Squirrels, California Scrub-Jays, California Scrub-Jays, Steller's Jays, and Chestnut-backed Chickadees. Many of these species stash acorns in their dens or in hollow trees as a food source throughout the winter.



California Scrub-Jay with acorn

## 4. Riparian

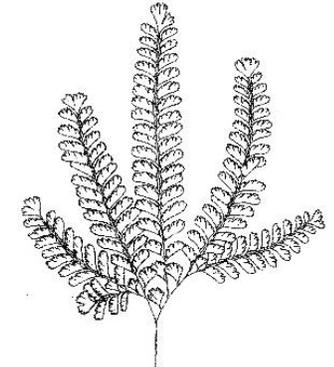
This stream-side habitat, or riparian area, is cooler and moister than the surrounding areas. It supports a high abundance and diversity of plants and animals and provides important habitat for many species of birds. We have lost over 90% of the riparian habitat in California, making it a vital area of conservation concern. At Point Blue, a program called Students and Teachers Restoring A Watershed (STRAW) is working to increase riparian habitat.



Sword fern frond

Can you see a small brown bird with a thin, curved bill and a short tail scooting around in the ferns?

These Pacific Wrens are year-round residents and use the creek-side habitat for nesting, foraging, and cover. Anna's Hummingbirds, Downy Woodpeckers, and Chestnut-backed Chickadees are other common year-round residents. In the spring and summer you may also see Wilson's Warblers, Swainson's Thrush and Warbling Vireos here. In the winter, you can see Townsend's Warblers, Fox Sparrows, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and Varied Thrush.



Five-finger fern



Pacific Wren

In addition to many different species of water-loving ferns in the canyon, you will also see large California bay laurel trees. Bay leaves have been used as food seasoning since the Coast Miwok tribes lived in this area.