Sharing the Trails

Be Considerate: Keep speeds at a safe pace. Yield to slower trail users. Use particular caution when passing children and senior citizens. Respect everyone’s right to use the trail.

Use Open Trails Only: Trails may be closed due to sensitive environmental concerns.

Be Aware of Conditions: Riding (even on open trails) when conditions are poor, such as shortly after a rain, may cause trail damage.

Plan Ahead: Know your equipment, your ability and where you are going. Carry necessary supplies for changes in weather or other conditions.

Bicyclists: Persons under age 18 must wear an ANSI, Snell, or other state-approved helmet for head protection on bicycle trails, pathways and promenades. All persons age 18 years and over operating a bicycle must wear a state-approved helmet for head protection on unpaved bicycle trails in County Parks.

Picnicking

Please help make picnicking at Ed Levin enjoyable for everyone by adhering to the following rules and any posted regulations:

• Family picnic tables are available on a first-come, first-served basis. A responsible adult (with picnic items) must be present in order to hold a picnic table.
• Reservations are recommended for groups larger than twenty. Please call (408) 355-2201, 8:30 am to 3:30 pm, Monday through Friday or make a reservation online at EdLevin.org. Park is available on a first-come, first-served basis only. Parking stalls may not be saved. Reservations at group areas do not include a picnic table.
• Do not drive into picnic areas or onto lawns, paths, or landscaping.
• Twenty minutes is the maximum time allowed for parking in a yellow zone for unloading and loading of picnic supplies.
• Post directional signs in designated areas only.
• No tents, nails, or staples on park signs, tables, or trees.
• Allows fires in BBQ pits to burn out. Water will damage the grill and pit.
• Amplified music is allowed at Elm Group Area only.

Cultural History

Ed Levin County Park was once part of the tribal lands of the Tamayan Ohlone tribe. Today’s park boundaries also encompass parts of three Mexican Ranchos. Most of today’s park are now part of the original Tularcitos Ranch, meaning “Little Tule Thickets”. Tularcitos may have referred to the lagoons and tules in what would later be called Laguna Valley, which encompasses most of Ed Levin. The 4,394 acre Rancho was granted by the last Spanish Governor of Alta California, Pablo Vicente de Sola to Jose Higuera in 1821. Once California became a state, the rancho owners were required to confirm their land holdings with the state. During this time, portions of the rancho were sold off to the newly arrived Americans. Settlers began settling in the foothills valley. Josiah Evans, from Ohio, bought 800 acres of Rancho Tularcitos in 1853. Jacob Miller first settled in Calaveras Valley and then became the first to settle in Laguna Valley near the Spring Valley area of Levin Park.

Pioneers of the 1860’s included Henry Curtner of Indiana who arrived in California in 1852. In the late 1860’s he bought the first of the thousands of acres of Rancho Tularcitos including much of present day Ed Levin Park. In the 1870’s Mary Miller and her two sons grew barley and wheat around the present day Spring Valley area day use area.

Alex Anderson owned the golf course area and let out his land to Portuguese and Italian farmers. In 1881, William F. Downing and his family bought the Curtner lands just to the north of Laguna Valley. Benjamin Gordon settled with his family in Laguna Valley, building a home on the south side of Calaveras Road near Downing Road. Farming, cattle and dairying operations continued in the valley in the 1890’s. Stone walls along the ridges are said to have been built by an Amish family named Matthewson around the turn of the century. Weller Curtner recalled, “In the fall, when the crops were off, they would go out with stone boats made out of a couple of willow trees ... they cleared the land (of rock) and built the fence at the same time.” Other stone walls in the area remain a mystery.

The Laguna Cemetery, a two acre historic site, is located in the southeast corner of the park (on Calaveras Road). The first burials occurred in the early 1860’s, with the last burial in 1914. Many of the burial markers were created by stone boats made out of a couple of willow trees. Most of the grave markers are poor, such as shortly after a rain, may cause trail damage.

The State of California has bought several hundred acres in Laguna Valley in hopes of building a reservoir; however, studies showed that the land was not suitable for a reservoir and the idea was abandoned. In the early 1960’s, County Supervisor Ed R. Levin led a campaign to acquire the property from the state. After a special referendum, the 488 acres were purchased from the state in 1965. Levin died in 1966 and Airpoint Park, renamed Ed Levin Park, was opened in September 1969. In the same year a memorial to Ed Levin was installed in the Spring Valley area. In 1979, the County Parks Department acquired part of the Minnis Ranch which is still partially in operation.

Natural Diversity

Ed Levin Park is primarily oak woodland habitat. The park sits in a foothill valley, formed by millions of years of plate movement along the Calaveras and Hayward faults. Above the developed areas of the park are fox, bobcat, coyote, opossum and skunk habitats. The diversity of animal and plant life here presents endless opportunities for observation and appreciation. Each winter, the local Audubon Society inventories the different species of birds that inhabit the area. Visitors who watch carefully may occasionally see the more than sixty-four bird species that make this park their home.

The park is also fortunate to have a healthy spider and snake population. The normally shy and reclusive rattan is rarely seen in the daylight. It rarely wanders far from its burrow, with the exception of the fall mating season. During this time males are often seen wandering across park roads and paths in search of a mate. Visitors fortunate enough to see one of the beautiful creatures should take a moment to observe, but not interfere with, these amazing but delicate creatures.