

# MOUNT DIABLO REVIEW



MOUNT DIABLO INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION

Established in 1974

Fall / Winter 2009

MDIA, PO Box 346, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0346 • 925.927.7222 • fax 877.349.5016 • www.mdia.org



## PARK SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

by Roland Gaebert

Park Superintendents wouldn't get anything done if it weren't for the dedicated staff. In this issue I am privileged to have a long time dedicated Ranger and competitive cyclist write about "Sharing the Road" on Mount Diablo. Cyclists and drivers are at times in conflict over the narrow roads in Mount Diablo State Park. Ranger Nielson's message is of great safety value for both.

Photo by  
Harvey Brosler

## SHARING THE ROAD

by Carl Nielson  
State Park Peace Officer and  
Bicycling Enthusiast

On February 8, 2009, a week before the Tour of California stage race, on a cool and foggy day, **Christian Vande Velde** of Illinois reached the summit of Mount Diablo on his team-sponsored bike. Vande Velde placed fifth in the 2008 Tour de France. Not all Mount Diablo riders are as famous as a podium contender of the Tour de France, but bicyclists of all ages and levels are attracted to the challenging climb that Mount Diablo offers.



Photo by  
Harvey Brosler

The park hosts the Mountain Challenge on the first Sunday in October – it's a twenty-eight-year-old tradition. The cycling event is a benefit for Save Mount Diablo. The ride attracts a thousand bicyclists. It starts at Athenian School and proceeds up South Gate and Summit Roads, an elevation gain of approximately 3,000 feet. Those making it in under an hour earn a special T-shirt.

Last year's Mountain Challenge featured record ascents in the men's and women's divisions. Nate English finished with a time of 43:33, smashing the record set by Greg Drake (44:58) in 2004. In the women's division, Flavia Oliveira's 51:40 was a record-setter.

Bicyclists ride the mountain daily. It's easy to spot them while traveling the park roads, but many bicyclists are in the park's backcountry on mountain bikes. They are riding the park's many

*continued on page 2*

## MDIA PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

by Rich McDrew

Welcome to the magnificent Mount Diablo State Park. The famous naturalist and founder of the Sierra Club, John Muir (1838-1914, visited Mount Diablo when he was 39 years old. At the time of his visit, he was still relatively unknown to the world, and Mount Diablo was not yet a Park (the park was created in 1921). John Muir was described by Donald



Photo by Mike Nelson

Worster in *A Passion for Nature: The life of John Muir*, as "a man who would become the world's leading advocate of wilderness and would take as his life mission the preservation of natural beauty." I am confident that Mount Diablo's nature provided a springboard for his inspirational writings. My hope is that the Park's natural surroundings will inspire and energize you also in some beneficial manner. I know that John Muir would enjoy Mount Diablo even more today because the expansive 20,000-acre parkland is so well maintained. "Earth Day" every year is on John Muir's birthday, April 21. Even though it is not Earth Day, please continue to take care of the Park in the John Muir tradition. Enjoy yourself, and become energized!

If you wish to submit articles or photographs for the  
**Mount Diablo Review,**

contact Rich McDrew at 925-932-7511 or  
via e-mail at <mc drewrich@astound.net>.

Submission deadline for the Spring/Summer edition is February 1,  
and for the Fall/Winter edition is August 1.

Save Mount Diablo generously publishes the  
"Events Schedule" which includes hikes in  
Mount Diablo State Park.

This schedule may be found on-line at  
[www.savemountdiablo.com](http://www.savemountdiablo.com)  
or via a link at [www.mdia.org](http://www.mdia.org).

miles of fire roads and the handful of authorized “single tracks”. (Consult the “6<sup>th</sup> edition of the Trail Map of Mount Diablo State Park” or the free handout entitled “Mount Diablo State Park Mountain Bike Information”.)

### **SAFETY**

Bicycling comes with a degree of risk, but there are ways to reduce the risk factor. On the road, the responsibility for safety generally falls on two user groups: **the bicyclists and the operators of motor vehicles**. Both user groups need to **Share the Road**. Even pedestrians need to be safety-conscious.

#### **ATTENTION: Car Operators!**

For the car operator, awareness is a critical element. Be prepared for bicyclists on the road, both ascending and descending. Obey speed laws. And be careful while passing bicyclists (usually an issue while ascending). **Don’t pass on a blind curve – have a clear visual of oncoming bike and vehicular traffic.**

#### **ATTENTION: Bicyclists!**

For the bicyclist, **excessive speed** on the descent is a common accident factor. **Ride to the far right, and do not cross the center line.** On the ascent, the rider shall ride as close as practical to the right-hand edge. The exceptions are when overtaking and passing another bicycle in the same direction, when preparing for a left turn, or when reasonably necessary to avoid conditions (example: surface hazards). **Riders in groups should travel single-file.** In addition to descents, bicyclists should watch their speed in congested areas. These areas include entrance stations and Rock City. **Watch for pedestrians!**

**Avoid using earphones/headsets!** Why rock out while bicycling on the Mountain? The scenery up here should be inspiring enough! The California Vehicle Code states that a person operating a bicycle may not wear earphones/headsets covering both ears. The sense of hearing is an important element in recognizing traffic behind you and in recognizing an emergency vehicle with its siren activated. You must pull to the right and stop when you hear a siren.

Bicyclists should avoid waving on car operators to pass, and **car operators should not trust a “wave-on” to pass by a bicyclist.** The car operator should rely on his/her own view of the opposing traffic lane to make a determination to pass. A hand gesture by a bicyclist to not pass should be adhered to as the bicyclist may

see something that the car operator cannot see. These guidelines err on the side of safety. Sharing the road requires patience and respect by all user groups.

**Helmet use is strongly suggested for all bicyclists** and is required by those under 18 years of age. Maintain your equipment! Check your tires and brakes! Many accidents are a result of front tire blowouts. Again, watch your speed on descents!

Beyond safety, another issue worth discussing is litter. And it applies to all park users--runners, hikers, equestrians, and bicyclists. Pack out your trash! Common litter items on our park roads include gel wraps and wrappers from energy bars. **Food wrappers are eaten by animals with deadly results.** Leave your competition behind, not your trash!

Certain times of the day and days of the week are better for riding if the bicyclist is looking for less traffic. Weekends and holidays result in high bike traffic and high vehicular traffic.

Weekend mornings tend to see high bike traffic and lower vehicle counts than midday. Weekend late afternoons tend to see lower traffic conditions for both bikes and cars. Weekdays are great times to ride as visitation is generally lower than weekends. If you have the flexibility to choose your ride time, be selective on when you bike on the Mountain. A bit of planning and an awareness of safety go a long way in making



*Christian Vand Velde (far right) and support crew - Photo by Carl Nielson*

your bike experience on Mount Diablo State Park a positive one. I think Christian Vande Velde would agree.

#### **ATTENTION: Pedestrians!**

Foot traffic occurs on paved roads within the park. If possible, utilize our extensive fire road and trail network – it’s a great way to explore Mount Diablo’s backcountry. If you find yourself walking or running on the pavement, be alert for traffic. The narrow and winding roads within the park deserve extra caution.

#### **Destination: Summit**

Your ascent up Mount Diablo may be by foot, horse, auto, or bike. By following the safety tips presented in this article, your experience will hopefully be one that is rewarding and without incident.

*Carl Nielson has been a ranger at Mount Diablo State Park since 1991. He rides competitively for the Wells Fargo Racing Team. He hopes to improve on his PR of 51:10 for the Mountain Challenge on October 4, 2009.*

## THE DONNER CABIN

by Rich McDrew

A popular trailhead on the north side of Mount Diablo State Park is called "Regency Gate". Regency Gate is at the end of Regency Drive in Clayton (see map). This trailhead is one of the best routes to access Donner Canyon, and to find the Donner Cabin site. Regency Gate is a no-fee Park hiking, biking & horseback entrance, but there are no restrooms or potable water.

The beautiful Donner Canyon was named for John Donner and his descendants. He was not a member of the ill-fated Donner Party that attempted to cross the Sierra Nevada in a horrific snowstorm in the 1840s. According to the 1880 census in Clayton, John Donner was born in 1814 in Canada, and was employed as a farmer. His parents were both born in Germany. John and his family developed a farm in the area of Donner Canyon in the 1870s.

Two miles south of Regency Gate on the level Donner Canyon fireroad, there existed in the 1930s a 160-acre parcel leased by a hunting club. Members of the club built a two-bedroom house on a massive concrete foundation overlooking Donner Creek. The house had such a large fireplace that a grown person could actually stand up in it! The house was appropriately called the "Donner Cabin".

On May 11, 1951, William Alford Hetherington (1906-1983) and his wife, Blenda Hetherington (1901-1995), purchased the 160 acres from Janet Knight. William was a native Californian, and a professor at the University of California, Berkeley. The Donner Cabin and acreage was primarily used by the Hetheringtons as a summer retreat. The Hetheringtons sold this parcel in 1973 to the California State Park system. They were anxious to sell their property to the State because it was their desire to have their property put into a permanent protection status.



Photo by Bob Doyle

From 1976 to 1980, Bob Doyle lived in the Donner Cabin as a bachelor while attending college and working as a ranger for the East Bay Regional Park District's (EBRPD) Black Diamond Preserve. Bob paid the State of California a rental fee but, more importantly, was a caretaker/protector for the Donner Cabin. Bob is currently the EBRPD's Assistant General Manager of the Interagency Planning & Land Acquisition Division headquartered in Oakland, CA. Bob reminisced recently about how the Donner Cabin and nearby

barn miraculously survived the devastating 1977 wildfire on Mount Diablo. This fire burned the entire northern portion of Mount Diablo State Park from the summit to the bottom of Donner Canyon. Ironically, the Donner Cabin was destroyed by an arson fire on New Year's Eve of 1982.

Today, Park visitors can still see remnants of the Donner Cabin's concrete foundation. The cabin's location is across the Donner Canyon fire road from the foot of Donner Cabin Trail.



Photo by Bob Doyle

## UNDERSTANDING TRAIL SIGNS

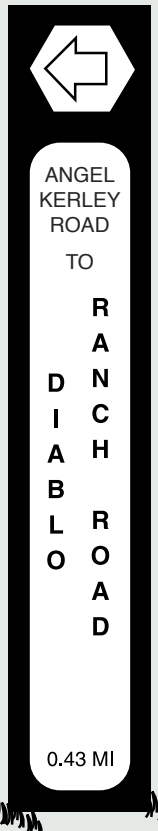
The identification of almost 200 miles of hiking trails in Mount Diablo State Park's 20,000 acres has been much improved due to the signage project spearheaded by the Mount Diablo Interpretive Association. Hundreds of signs have been installed on 404 trail signposts as part of the effort begun in 1993 by MDIA.

The trail signs in the park follow a uniform format prescribed for use in all California State Parks. The format has confused more than one visitor who has hastily read only the larger words on the sign. 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 larger type (usually another trail but sometimes a 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.

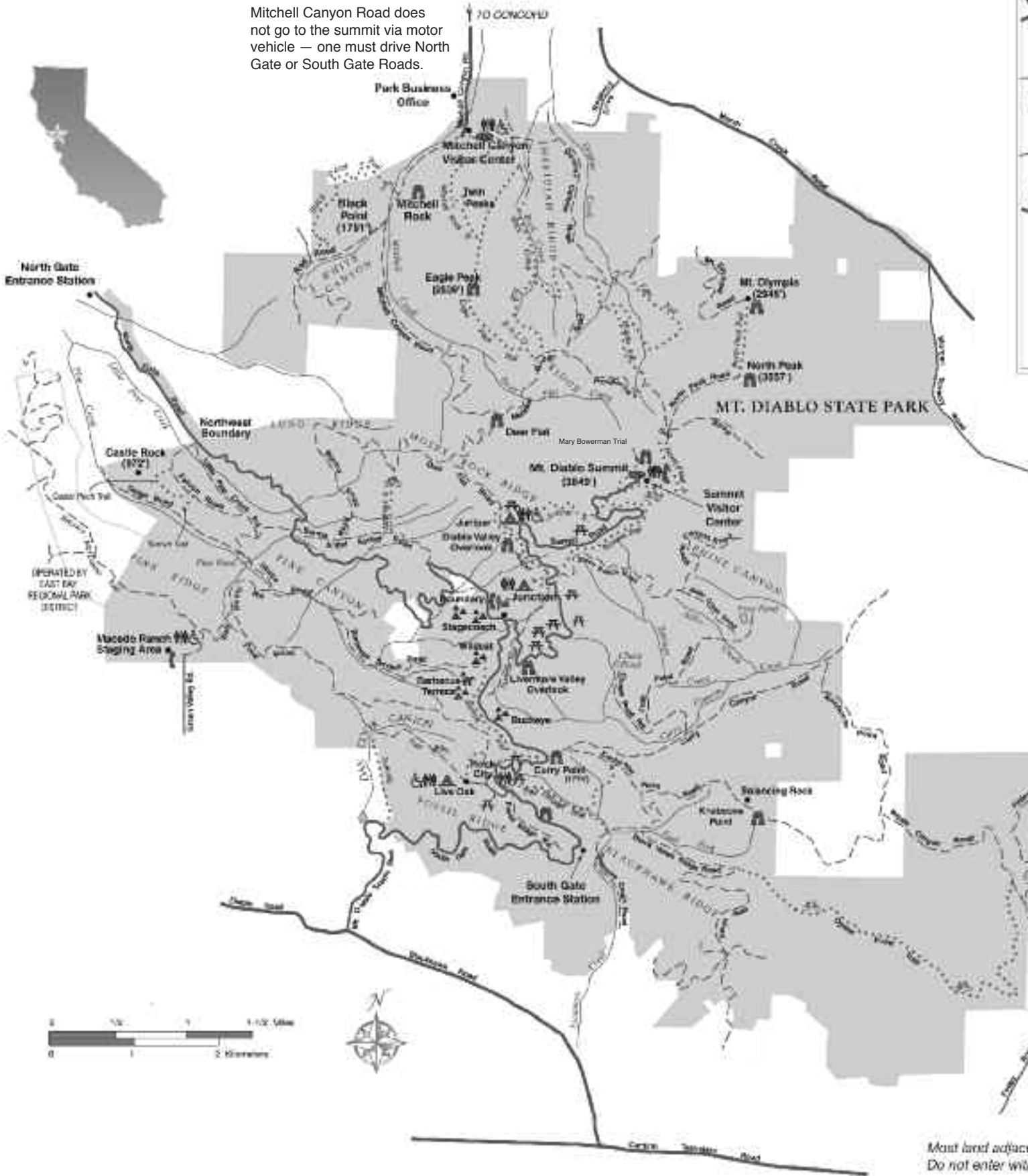
Here is a simplified sample to the right.

The sign shows that you are on Angel Kerley Road, and that if you go .43 miles to the left you will arrive at the junction with Diablo Ranch Road, and the termination of Angel Kerley Road.



# MOUNT DIABLO STATE PARK

Mitchell Canyon Road does not go to the summit via motor vehicle — one must drive North Gate or South Gate Roads.



## CAMPING AT MOUNT DIABLO STATE PARK

### Mount Diablo has three designated family camping areas and five group camps:

**Juniper Campground** (36 sites, elevation 3000 ft.) Located approximately 2 miles below the summit, on Summit Road, Juniper is known for its fantastic views. Reservations Available.

**Live Oak Campground** (23 sites, elevation 1450 ft.) Located one mile above the South Gate Entrance Station, off South Gate Road. Live Oak is near Rock City. At Rock City one can explore rock formations. Reservations Available.

**Junction Campground** (6 sites, elevation 2200 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 rest rooms.

\*The campgrounds are mainly designed for tent camping, yet they can accommodate RVs up to 20 feet in length. There are no hook ups and no dumping stations provided in the Park.

\*Pay phones are located at the Junction Ranger Station and the Summit Visitor Center.

### Camping Procedures

You may make reservations from 48 hours to 7 months in advance by calling **Reserve America at 1-800-444-7275** or by visiting their website at [www.reserveamerica.com](http://www.reserveamerica.com). Reservations can be made for a specific campground but not a specific site.

Campers will not be registered at Mitchell Canyon.

**\*Check-in time is 2:00 PM. — Check-out time is 12:00 NOON.**

### Group Camps—Buckeye, Barbecue Terrace, Wildcat, Stagecoach & Boundary.

Reservations are available for all group camps with Reserve America. Each campground is primitive with running water and pit toilets. BBQ Terrace is equipped with horse ties for equestrian use. Motorhomes are not allowed in the group camping areas. During the fire season (generally, May—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 2 vehicles maximum per family campsite.

\*Each juvenile (under the age of 18) must have written permission from his/her parents (with the parents' phone number) prior to camping. Phone verifications will be attempted.

\*Quiet hours are from 10:00 PM to 6:00 AM

\*No electric generators from 8:00 PM to 10:00 AM.

\*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 8).

\*Campers are locked in the park overnight from sunset to 8:00 AM. For emergencies, dial 911.

\*Peace and Quiet: Noise must not carry beyond your immediate camp or picnic ground.



#### Legend

- Paved Road
- Fire Roads (Hiking, No Vehicles)
- Hiking Trail
- Accessible Feature
- Bicycle Trail
- Campground
- Estate
- Group Campground
- Horse Campground
- Picnic Area
- Ranger Station
- Restrooms
- Telephone
- Viewpoint

OPERATED BY  
EAST BAY  
REGIONAL PARK  
DISTRICT

#### Park Fees: (per car)

Mitchell Canyon Entrance	\$6.00
Macedo Park Entrance	\$6.00
North and South Gates	\$10.00
minus \$1 for Seniors 62+	
Annual Park Pass	\$125.00

Land to the park is private property.  
Use without the owner's permission.

#### Nightly Rates

Junction Campground	\$30.00
Juniper Campground	\$30.00
Live Oak Campground	\$30.00
Additional Vehicle (one only)	\$10.00
Senior Discount (62+)	\$2.00 off Camping Fees

#### Group Camps

Name	Nightly Use Fee	Capacity	Vehicles
Stagecoach	\$65.00	20	7
Boundary	\$65.00	20	7
Buckeye	\$100.00	30	10
Wildcat	\$100.00	30	10
BBQ Terrace	\$165.00	50	17

## NEW MOUNT DIABLO STATE PARK TRAIL MAP AVAILABLE SOON

Reviewed by Jim Mitchell

The 6th edition of the Mount Diablo State Park Trail Map will be available in late September or early October. This detailed topographic trail map is a “must have” for all visitors to the park, from the casual visitor who is interested in picnic locations to the serious hiker who wants to explore some of the less visited sites in the park. The map is in full color and is printed on weather-resistant waterproof plastic to last through many trips and in all seasons. This is the most detailed and up-to-date map of the park available.

All 187 miles of trail within the park are clearly shown and, for those hiking into the park, adjoining trails have also been included. Trails suitable for bicyclists and equestrians as well as for those hiking on foot are detailed along with elevations. Users with GPS will be pleased with the new UTM (Universal Transverse Mercator) grid provided.

The back of the map welcomes you to the mountain with general information and park rules for visitors as well specific information about the history, natural environment, and points of interest in the park. Several favorite hikes are also described with elevation gain and hike times. Notes for campers and picnickers have also been included.

Cartoon by Tom Dickson, “Montana Outdoors”



*“I still pray for guidance, but it’s good to have GPS for backup and the MDIA trail map of Mount Diablo State Park.”*

Mount Diablo State Park for its 700,000 annual visitors.

The map will be available at the Mitchell Canyon and Summit Visitor Centers and kiosks within the park. Outside the park, it can be found at local bookstores and sporting goods stores. The map can also be ordered by mail (see page 7 for form).



## TAKE A VIRTUAL TOUR OF MOUNT DIABLO

Reviewed by Jim Mitchell

With a simple click of your mouse, you can now take a virtual tour of Mount Diablo State Park from your computer and view popular points of interest, picnic sites, trail heads, and campgrounds. Featuring 360-degree views from the summit and other points of interest, you can make plans for your next trip to the park, picking those spots you want to visit before you arrive. The tour also includes detailed instructions on how to get to the park and links to Google Maps. In addition, a guide to wheelchair-accessible trails and visitor centers is available.

The tour is accessible from a link on the Mount Diablo Interpretive Association website, [www.mdia.org](http://www.mdia.org). This website also has lots of information about the State Park and the many features of Mount Diablo. MDIA is a non-profit volunteer organization that assists the California State Parks in maintaining and interpreting Mount Diablo State Park for its 700,000 annual visitors.



**Summit Museum  
is open  
7 days a week  
10:00 am to 4:00 pm**

**Summit temperature  
and wind conditions  
are updated every  
20 minutes at  
925-838-9225**

## MDIA PRODUCT ORDER and MEMBERSHIP FORM

(Profits from sales support the educational programs of MDIA)

Thank you for your mail order.

If you would like to further support MDIA please consider joining the Association.

### MAPS AND HIKING INFORMATION

Qty. Amount

Mount Diablo State Park Map	2.25	___	___
Mount Diablo State Park Trail Map	TBA	___	___
Hike Brochures: Easy, Moderate, and Demanding-(set of 3)	2.00	___	___

### INTERPRETIVE PUBLICATIONS

Mount Diablo Guide	12.50	___	___
Geology Brochure and Map	2.00	___	___
Trees and Shrubs of Mount Diablo	7.50	___	___
Common Birds of Mount Diablo	7.50	___	___
Mt. Diablo Wildflowers	7.50	___	___
51 Uncommon Names of MDSP	2.25	___	___
Mount Diablo State Park Coloring Book	3.75	___	___

### 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 MT. DIABLO STATE PARK LOGO

T-shirts: lt. blue or lt. olive; S,M, L, XL (circle size & color)	16.00	___	___
Mount Diablo Patch	4.00	___	___
Mount Diablo Lapel / Hat Pin	3.50	___	___

**SUBTOTAL:**    \_\_\_    \_\_\_

**10% discount for MDIA members and Park Staff**    \_\_\_    \_\_\_

**Total Amount: (includes tax & shipping)**    \_\_\_    \_\_\_

### Mount Diablo Interpretive Association Membership Application

Membership Dues are Deductible to the Full Extent by Law

Membership Category (check one)    **Make Checks Payable to "MDIA"**

_____ Student/Senior	\$15
_____ Individual	\$25
_____ Family	\$40
_____ Sustaining	\$50
_____ Contributing	\$100
_____ Lifetime	\$500

Donation in addition to membership fee \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Clip and Mail to:

**MDIA**  
**P.O. Box 346**  
**Walnut Creek, Ca 94597-0346**

## FIVE DOES

by Helene Crowley

I ascend Clayton Oaks trail in early September.

Five does, startled by my presence, prick their ears.

With tails erect, they signal each other "Run, dears."

And so they rush, leap, and swiftly allay their fears.

Through the tall grass, they sprint a short span, then remember.  
I am not near enough to cause them harm – they can resume grazing.  
They cease their alarm, inspect me, and accept me, warily gazing.  
Their faces sweet, their brown eyes greet, in this group each member.

The golden grass is lush beneath their feet.  
Inclining splendid, graceful necks, they eat.



The warm and gentle Autumn dusk so sweet,  
For this human, these deer decline to miss a beat.

Sister, mother, and daughter – a matriarchal clan.  
Thus have they lived throughout the age of man.  
In forest deep, on mountain steep, the plains great sweep,  
These lovelies share their every hour, awake or in sleep.

Learn then, from their peaceful ways, my fellow creatures of this orb.  
Ascending mountains, crossing plains, no matter, do not raise a hand.  
Cause no harm, and leave no trace  
where one time you did stand.  
Be instead content to gaze with wonder at the beauty of this land.



**YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE for obeying these and other park rules.  
Ask a Park Ranger for further information.**

- **ALL FEATURES OF THE PARK ARE PROTECTED!**  
Do not remove or disturb plants, animals or geological features.
- **PARK HOURS:**  
Opens at 8 am, and closes at SUNSET.  
Visitors should be in their vehicles heading out at sunset to avoid being locked in.
- **ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES:**  
All alcoholic beverages are PROHIBITED IN THE PARK.
- **VEHICLES / BICYCLES:**  
SPEED LIMIT is 15-25 MPH on park roads, 15 MPH in campgrounds and picnic areas. All vehicles must stay on pavement and are prohibited on trails and fire roads.
- **BICYCLES ARE ALLOWED:**  
Only on paved roads, fire roads and designated trails. Check at Ranger Station for current regulations.
- **SKATEBOARDS, ROLLERBLADES, ROLLERSKATES and GRAVITY-PROPELLED:**  
devices are prohibited.
- **DOGS:**  
MUST BE IN TENT or vehicles at night. MUST BE ON LEASH at all times when out of your car. MUST STAY IN DEVELOPED AREAS ONLY — not allowed on trails or fire roads.
- **FIRES:**  
RESTRICTIONS IN EFFECT DURING FIRE SEASON — check with Ranger.

MUST BE IN STOVES OR BARBEQUES PROVIDED — No ground fires.

- **PUBLIC TELEPHONE:** Located at Junction Ranger Station.  
Dial 911 for emergencies.
- **FIREWORKS: PROHIBITED**
- **FIREARMS/AIRGUNS: PROHIBITED**
- **HUNTING: PROHIBITED**

<b>Fire Danger - How Will It Affect You?</b>						
Fire Danger Reading	Wood fire permitted in stoves and BBQ pits in designated picnic and camp sites	Use of Compressed Logs	Use of Charcoal	Use of Self-contained Stove	Cigarette Smoking (including within a vehicle)	Park Closed
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

**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
Entrance Station	925-837-0904
Maintenance	925-837-6122
Sector Office	925-673-2891
General Information	925-837-2525

**Group Picnic Reservations: Call Ranger Carl Nielson, 925 - 837-6129, EXT 2**

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