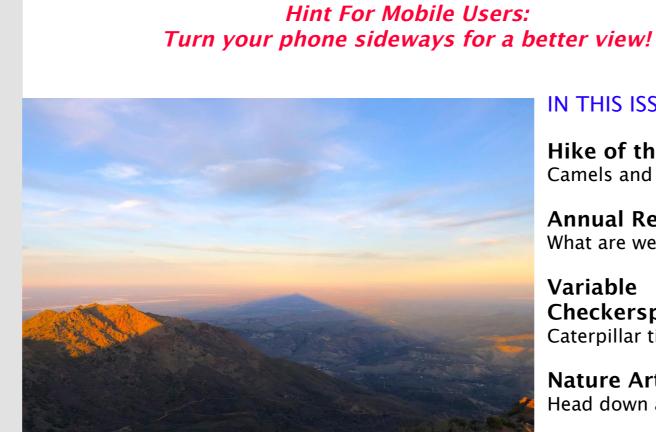


MDIA E-Newsletter ● March 2025



IN THIS ISSUE: Hike of the Month Camels and Buckeyes **Annual Report** What are we doing? Variable Checkerspot Caterpillar time **Nature Articles** Head down a rabbithole

Upcoming Events Great things to see and do

Shadow of Diablo by Steve Smith

Hike of the Month: Camels, Sunsets, and Buckeyes

It is wildflower season on Mount Diablo and the hike of the month will explore some of our best single-track trails with some explosions of color. This hike can be modified to begin from just about any trail entrance, this version begins from North Gate Road where Burma Road crosses over, there are a dozen or so parking spaces in this area. You can just as easily begin from Castle Rock Park in Walnut Creek or Macedo Ranch in Alamo. The hike here is 5.7 miles and 1,000 feet of climbing...but you should allow lots of time to enjoy the beauty along these trails. Of course a nice sunny day is best for maximum color impact. Don't wait too long though, as the non-

native grasses grow taller and taller, the poppies and other low-growing flowers tend to get swallowed up.

North Gate Road is well-known for Mount Diablo's version of a superbloom, and right now the Poppies and Lupine are abundant and spectacular. Park where Burma Road crosses North Gate and head uphill on Burma, making your first left on Camel Rock Trail. You are going to explore this trail for 1.6 miles and will find many lovely flowers as well as several miniwaterfalls and fabulous rock outcrops along the way. Arroyo Lupines line the hillsides but you'll also find Fremont Star Lily, Blue Dicks, Blue Witch, and of course fields of Poppies. At trail's end you will cross back over North Gate and

down Little Pine Creek trail. Make your first right and begin your climb up Falcon Road. This area is beginning to pop with color, take note of the varying colors of green as the Oak trees and Buckeyes continue to leaf out. You may be greeted with some pops of yellow Mule Ears along the way. Keep your eye out as you get closer to the top for the Wood Spirit guarding the trail. Turn right on Sunset Trail ensuring you learn a little about our Peregrine Falcons at the interpretive panel...Castle Rock is off limits this time of year for nesting. Sunset Trail is a lovely winding path down the hillside with lots of "smalls", flowers less than the size of a dime. However, keep an eye out for our iconic and endemic Mount Diablo Globe Lily...they are just

starting to pop up throughout the park and along

here in early April.

Once you reach trail's end, hang a left on Stage Road. This is the original stagecoach route which once brought visitors from the train station in Martinez up to the Mountain House Hotel in the late 19th century. Beware this time of year as you will be crossing Pine Creek half a dozen times or more as you soak up the sounds (and perhaps the water) of a babbling brook and the lush riparian corridor. You will be traveling this relatively flat trail for about a mile before you veer to the left as Stage Road begins to climb back up the hill. Look out for carpets of Fiddlenecks and Blue Dicks before making a left on Buckeye Trail. Here you are treated to lush grasses and some small waterfalls...keep your eye out on the right for our showiest of flowers, Mule Ears. As you begin to glimpse the hills beyond you should start seeing hillsides of Poppies, particularly the area above and below the North Gate Road washout. Arroyo Lupine are

1.2 miles until you reach Burma Road again, a quick right will bring you back to your car. Click here for a map of the route, click here for a

abundant as well in addition to Mustard and Wild Radish. Continue on this lovely trail for a total of



Super blooms

Wood Spirit

Fiddleneck

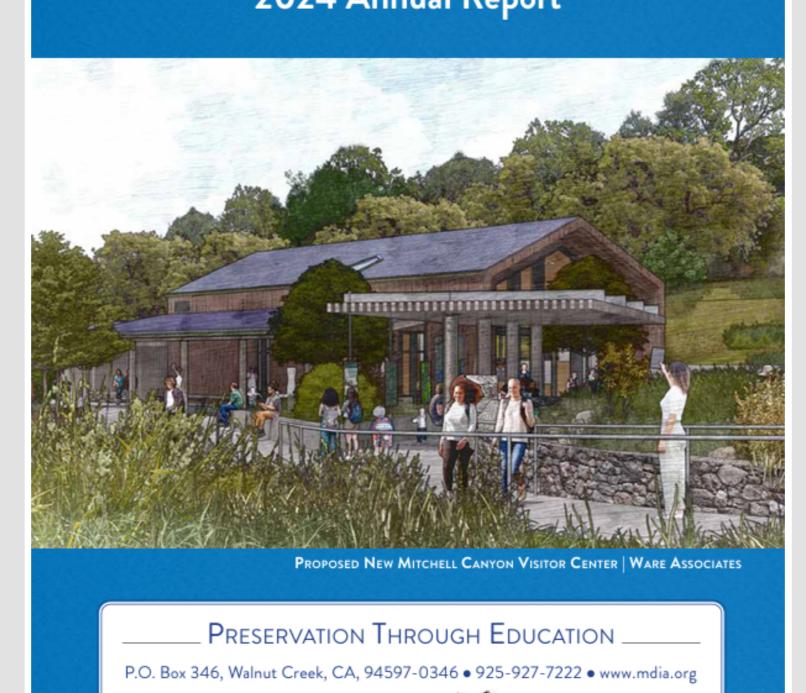
Mule Ears

Arroyo Lupine

<u>.gpx route</u>. Click <u>here</u> to download our Wildflower Bloom Report and take it along with you to see how many you can find along the way!

Annual Report

Mount Diablo Interpretive Association 2024 Annual Report



MOUNT DIABLO INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION I know, you're thinking an Annual Report isn't that exciting to read. Think again! Maybe it isn't a Pulitzer Prize winner, but it really does tell a good story of all the ways in which MDIA gives back to Mount Diablo State Park each and every year. Inside you will learn about progress on the Education Center, information on our Peregrine Falcons, updates on our new publications, news about our 50th anniversary and community outreach, and so much more!

If you donated to our organization last year, you can look for your name in lights and see who else shares your interest in furthering our mission of Preservation Through Education! So please click here to visit our Annual Report page and select the 2024 report for a quick and interesting read.



We're on Facebook! Come like and follow us on our brand new Facebook page. You can see several posts every week, cool photos, interesting creatures, event updates, great articles and much more. Come give us a like!

Fun Fact The California Poppy (Eschscholzia Californica) is our state flower, but you knew that. But did you know that it was named by a German, for an Estonian doctor, sailing on a Russian ship, exploring San Francisco Bay? German botantist and poet Adelbert von Chamisso hopped off the Russian exploration ship Ryurik in 1816 to find the hills of San Francisco gleaming with golden poppies. He collected specimens, named the flower after his friend, Estonian ship's doctor Johann Escholtz and then took those specimens back to Russia. Click <u>here</u> to watch a video of the story told by our own Ken Lavin. California Poppy by Dan Fitzgerald

Variable Checkerspot

Here's a super-common butterfly—the Variable Checkerspot. Also known as the Chalcedon Checkerspot, the Variable Checkerspot is more commonly seen on Mount Diablo right now as a caterpillar. The caterpillars are black, with orange markings, which warn potential predators that they taste bitter due to the iridoid glycosides they accumulate from the plants they eat.

leaves, flowers and bracts of Indian Paintbrush, Monkeyflower, Penstemon, Plectritis, California Figwort (aka California Beeplant, aka Scrophularia californica) and many other plants. When they reach full size, they drop off into the leaf litter, or under fallen limbs or rocks, and pupate. They will emerge as adults the following Spring. There is one generation of butterflies per year.

Why are they called Variable Checkerspots? The adult comes in many shades, with the top of the forewing colored with a mix of black, orange, or brown, with a mix of yellow, red, or white spots, or some combination of some or all those colors (see the difference in the 2 adults shown here). The smaller male butterflies show mostly in April - June and

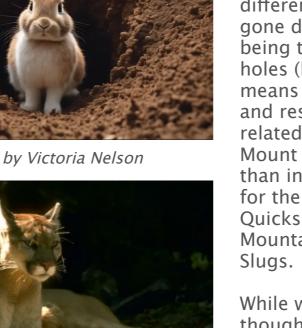
patrol constantly for the larger females. Soon they will be one of the most common butterflies seen on our hikes/rides. But see the caterpillars now!



Variable Checkerspot butterfly by Dan Sandri

MDIA Articles: Surf Down Our Rabbit Hole





Mountain Lion

head and before you know it an hour is gone and you're looking up something completely different than you had intended. You've gone down the rabbit hole! We here at MDIA, being the nature nerds we are, love rabbit holes (literally and figuratively speaking). It means you can get lost in scientific thought and research about a variety of topics related to the natural and cultural world of Mount Diablo. What better place to do so than in exploring our Articles page? Come for the Tarantula article, detour to Quicksilver mining, find a tangent on Mountain Lions and circle back to Banana While we would love for you to get lost in thought and exploration on our website, we have made it easier to find exactly what you

We all do it. You've jumped on the internet to look up something that popped into your

were looking for (before you get sidetracked) on our redesigned Articles page. Now you can choose topics like Mammals or Geology and go directly to those articles. Newer articles appear at the top so you can see the latest information. Some articles may even help you find a rabbit hole by linking out to related videos or webinar recordings! So enjoy your guided exploration and dig deep into our wonderful website...you know you want to. You can always find the Articles page under the About Us|Articles tab at mdia.org.

Banana Slug by Dan Sandri





Hike: Twin Peaks

April 12 (and May 10)

Leisurely hike to Twin

Wildflower Hike

9:30-1:30 pm

Peaks to view



April 5 (and May 3) 1:00-3:30 pm Nature walk in the Mitchell Canyon area

Hike: Natural History

of Plants

wildflowers in view wildflowers and their pollinators Mitchell Canyon area



April 19 (and May 17)

9:00 am-12:30 pm

Mitchell Canyon to

Nature hike up

Hike: Wonder Hikes 2025

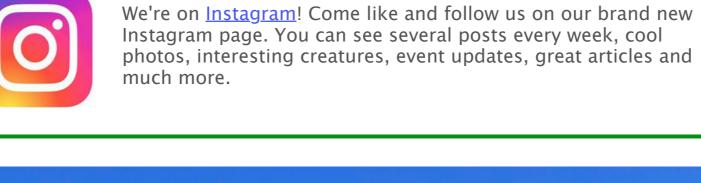
April 23 (and May 21)

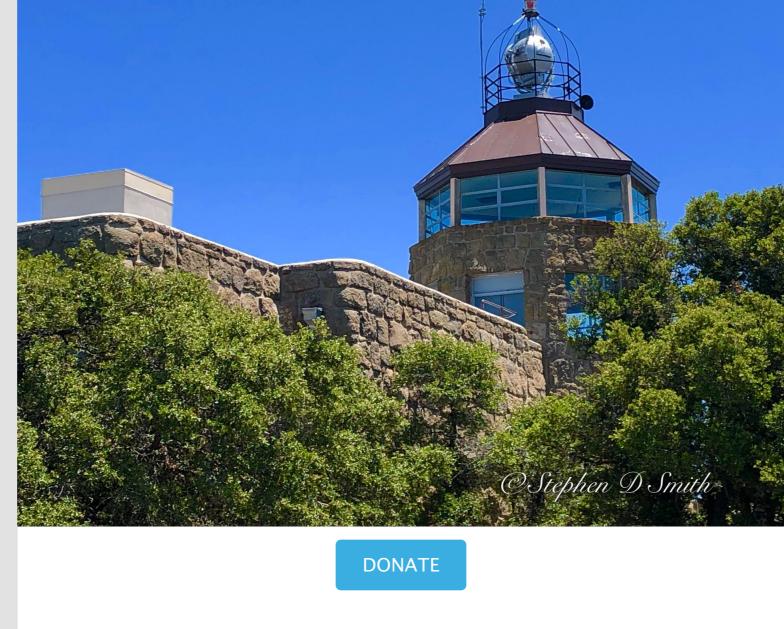
Hike: Rocks on the <u>Move</u> April 27 9:30-2:00 pm

Click here for a listing of more upcoming events!

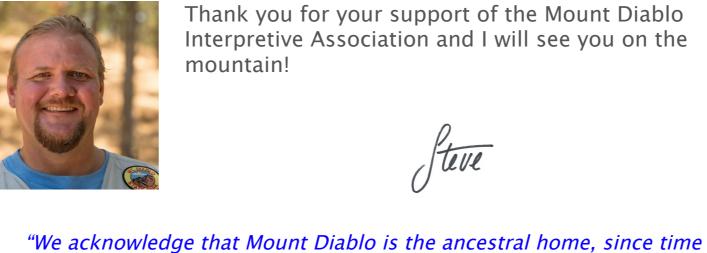
Hike: Wildflower Walk May 4 9:00 am-12:0 pm Nature hike up Mitchell Canyon to view wildflowers

8:30-12:30 pm **Explore Rock City** Nature walk in the Mitchell Canyon area wind caves, fossils, Sentinel Rock, more





Thank you for your support of the Mount Diablo Interpretive Association and I will see you on the mountain!



Our Contact Information *{{Organization Name}}* *{{Organization Address}}* *{{Organization Phone}}* *{{Organization Website}}*

{{Unsubscribe}}



Lisjan, Northern Valley Yokuts, Muwekma, and Ohlone peoples."

immemorial, of the Wilton Rancheria, Bay Miwok, Confederated Villages of



MOUNT DIABLO INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION