



FRIENDS OF
LOS PEÑASQUITOS
CANYON PRESERVE

CARMEL MOUNTAIN PRESERVE



(View of Torrey Pines State Beach from atop a mesa along the trail)

Endangered Beauty

Distance: 2.5 miles, 213 feet of elevation gain

Trailhead GPS: 32.926209, -117.218418

Getting There: Park at Ocean Air Recreation Center. The trail starts to the left of the field, just up the hill. There will be a kiosk at the trail head. There are many variations to the trail. The map below provides a variation that brings you by all the habitats described. There are many turns so be sure to read the map closely, as not every turn is marked by a sign.

Difficulty: Moderate

Disclaimer: No restrooms on site.

Highlights:

- Carmel Mountain Preserve boasts some of the most endangered and unique habitats in San Diego. These areas are teeming with life and beauty! You will pass each of the described habitats on your hike.

Vernal Pools

- Frogs and Fairy shrimp lay their eggs in the pools. The eggs go dormant and don't hatch until at least the next rainy season, surviving extreme summer temperatures in between. The Fairy shrimp eggs can remain dormant for up to a century!
- The pools become a gathering area for the nearby wildlife. Birds and reptiles feed on the organisms that live within the pools.





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- Visit this webpage to discover a few species you'll see in an active vernal pool <https://www.californiachaparral.org/chaparral/vernal-pools/>

Cryptogamic crust

- This crust is not your normal "plant." It is a mutualistic relationship between lichen (a fungus), moss, bacteria, and sometimes a liverwort (a plant). Trampling is the greatest danger to this habitat, it takes up to 100 years to grow it back in our climate.
- Cryptogamic crusts are the pioneers of the ecosystem. Their ability to retain water, protect the soil from wind, and put nutrients into the soil make a hostile environment habitable for other larger plants that will eventually move in.



Southern Maritime Chaparral

- The shrub habitat is Southern Maritime Chaparral, which is limited to the coastal fog belt. This chaparral occurs on sandstone on north facing slopes, where they are protected from the harsh sun and have plentiful moisture from the ocean breeze. The habitat is extremely endangered, and there are less than 1,000 acres left.
- Keep an eye out for the white blooms of wart stemmed Ceanothus, the presence of the red-stemmed Del Mar Manzanita, Bush Monkey flower (pictured to the right)

Remember to Leave No Trace – Be considerate of other visitors. Be sure the fun you have outdoors does not bother anyone else. Remember, other visitors are there to enjoy the outdoors too. You'll see more wildlife too!! Learn more at <https://lnt.org/>.

More info. Visit the Friends of Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve website at <https://www.penasquitos.org/>.

