



CALIFORNIA RED-LEGGED FROG

amphibian | *Rana draytonii*



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CALIFORNIA RED-LEGGED FROG

amphibian | *Rana draytonii*

The California Red-Legged Frog is found almost exclusively in the state of California, but it does not always have red legs. A more consistent characteristic of the species is its dorsolateral fold, which is a ridge on either side of the body, extending from around the eye to the hip. These frogs breed in ponds and slow-moving streams, but live most of their lives in terrestrial upland habitat. They are the largest native frog in the western United States, reaching more than 5 inches in length! Also, this was the species famously written about by Mark Twain in the short story, "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County."

HABITAT

breeds in ponds and streams and utilizes adjacent upland habitat

DIET

mostly invertebrates, but also amphibians and mammals (almost anything that fits in its mouth)

PREDATORS

birds, raccoons, snakes, american bullfrog



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ZAYANTE BAND-WINGED GRASSHOPPER

insect | *Trimerotropis infantilis*



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ZAYANTE BAND-WINGED GRASSHOPPER

insect | *Trimerotropis infantilis*

Only found in the Sandhills of Santa Cruz County, this insect has 3 life stages: egg, nymph, and adult. Even with a mask around its eyes and spots on its cheeks, they can camouflage very well in light, sandy areas. The small adult grasshoppers (0.5 - 1 inch long) fly short distances during their flight season, which is June through November. Their wings create soft chirping noises (crepitations) as they fly. These unique grasshoppers require open habitat with sparse vegetation and loose soil.

HABITAT

sand parkland (endemic to Zayante sandhills)

DIET

herbs and small shrubs, including silver bush lupine and golden aster

PREDATORS

birds, lizards, spiders



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SILVERLEAF MANZANITA

plant | *Arctostaphylos silvicola*



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SILVERLEAF MANZANITA

plant | *Arctostaphylos silvicola*

This shrub can appear to be more of a tree, as it typically grows up to 6 feet tall. There are silver-colored hairs on the leaves, which is a great adaptation for living through the heat of summer because the hairs reflect excess sunlight and reduce water loss. This plant flowers from November to January, and provides great erosion control on steep, sandy slopes. Its flowers and fruits resemble little apples, and they support many animals including insects, birds, and small mammals. Endemic to the sandhills around Bonny Doon (also known as Bonny Doon Manzanita), this is a naturally rare species that closely resembles the more common manzanitas.

PLANT TYPE

woody shrub

HABITAT

sand chaparral; sand parkland
(south-facing slopes)

LIFESPAN

long-lived perennial



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BEN LOMOND WALLFLOWER

plant | *Erysimum teretifolium*



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BEN LOMOND WALLFLOWER

plant | *Erysimum teretifolium*

This rare plant is endemic to the sandhills of Santa Cruz County, where it occurs only in areas of open sand soil. Without a high-level of disturbance to the soil, other plants will outcompete this native, so it is found frequently on steep slopes with unstable soil where other plants tend to struggle. It is an herbaceous, monocarpic plant, which means it flowers once and then dies. Still, it needs one or more years to complete its life cycle, so each individual plant usually lives a whole year, storing energy before eventually flowering the following year.

PLANT TYPE

short-lived perennial

HABITAT

Zayante sand hills; loose, fluffy soil with high disturbance

LIFESPAN

biennial (2 years) or short-lived perennial



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BEN LOMOND BUCKWHEAT

plant | *Eriogonum nudum* var. *decurrens*



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BEN LOMOND BUCKWHEAT

plant | *Eriogonum nudum* var. *decurrens*

Only found in the sandhills of Santa Cruz County, this naturally rare herb occurs in areas away from other shrubs and trees. A perennial herb, it germinates in the fall and requires 2-3 years to begin to flower, producing tall flower stalks with dense heads of small white flowers. The leaves are greenish red on top but feature dense white hairs underneath, that reflect excess sunlight to reduce loss of moisture during transpiration.

PLANT TYPE

perennial herb

HABITAT

sand parkland and sand chaparral
of the Zayante sand hills

LIFESPAN

long-lived perennial (3 or more years)



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BEN LOMOND SPINE FLOWER

plant | *Chorizanthe pungens* var. *hartwegiana*



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BEN LOMOND SPINE FLOWER

plant | *Chorizanthe pungens* var. *hartwegiana*

This annual native plant is endemic to the sandhills of Santa Cruz County, where it can cover large areas with its beautiful pink flowers during the spring. Germinating after the first rainfall of the season, flowering in spring and setting seed in summer, this species produces pink flowers that turn to brick-red fruits upon maturity. The flowers and fruits feature spiny bracts that help facilitate dispersal of the seed by sticking onto environmental features once they fall off the original plant. This disturbance-dependent species occurs primarily in open soil away from shrubs and trees.

PLANT TYPE

prostrate annual

HABITAT

Zayante sand hills; gaps between chaparral canopies (open sandy soil)

LIFESPAN

1 year (annual plant)



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MOUNT HERMON JUNE BEETLE

insect | *Polyphylla barbata*



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MOUNT HERMON JUNE BEETLE

insect | *Polyphylla barbata*

The Mount Hermon June Beetle is only found in the Sandhills of Santa Cruz County. These beetles take about 2 or 3 years to mature from an egg, and the adults emerge during the summer to reproduce. Males fly in the early evening hours in search of the flightless females, which emerge from burrows solely to mate. The small mouthpart suggests that this species does not feed as an adult, but rather utilizes its energy stores during the adult stage. These energy stores are obtained as a larva, feeding on plants and mycorrhizae, fungi on plant roots.

HABITAT

all vegetation within the Santa Cruz (Zayante) Sandhills

DIET

plant roots, fungi

PREDATORS

birds, humans