

APTF 2025 Field Trip Options and Information

Saturday, 11 January 2025

1. Peter Strauss Ranch – Santa Monica National Recreation Area

This will be an easy approximate 1-mile hike through some riparian habitat along Malibu Creek, a Eucalyptus grove, and up into chaparral habitat with interspersed California live oak on a developed trail. Be prepared to encounter some poison oak. There are some interesting historical structures on the site (see this link for more information:

<https://www.nps.gov/samo/planyourvisit/straussranch.htm>). A local historian will give a brief tailgate history of the site and its historical significance to the area.

This visit will be led by Chris Dellith (Senior Biologist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) and should take approximately 2 hours to complete; however, it is National Park land, and you are welcome to explore the area some more on your own. Please wear durable footwear and layered clothing. At this time of year in this part of southern California you can expect any type of weather conditions. Drinking water is always advised and snacks are up to you. Lunch is not necessary, but if you do want lunch after the hike, the iconic Old Place and Winery are across the street (see this link for more details: <https://oldplacecornell.com/>). The Old Place will have bathrooms.

On this hike we can expect to find black-bellied salamanders (*Batrachoseps nigriventris*), Pacific chorus frogs (*Pseudacris regilla*), and American bullfrogs (*Lithobates catesbeianus*). We hope to find Ensatina (*Ensatina eschscholtzii*) and arboreal salamanders (*Aneides lugubris*) as they have the potential to occur there. It will be your job to discover them!

We will meet at 9:00 AM in the parking lot of the Ranch (National Park Service), which is across the street from Old Place and Winery. The address of the Ranch is 30000 Mulholland Highway, Agoura Hills, CA, 91301; GPS will take you near to but not exactly to the parking lot. There is ample parking; however, carpooling is advised. There is no parking fee. Driving distance and time from the Sonesta Select Camarillo hotel are about 20 miles and 25 minutes. There are no attire or equipment restrictions other than the usual disinfectant treatment, which will be provided.

2. Upper Sycamore Canyon (Rancho Sierra Vista) - Santa Monica National Recreation Area

This will be a moderate approximate 3.5-mile hike over a meadow and down into a canyon. The descent is approximately 200 feet, which we'll hike back up on our return. The trail is well developed and habitat to expect consists of ruderal grassland, coastal sage scrub, chaparral, and riparian vegetation with interspersed California live oak. Be prepared to encounter some poison oak. There will be a visitor center with bathrooms and a gift shop along the way.

This visit will be led by National Park Staff (TBD, but likely Katy Delaney) and should take approximately 4 hours to complete; however, it is National Park and State Park land, and you are welcome to explore the area some more on your own. Please wear durable footwear and layered clothing. At this time of year in this part of southern California you can expect any type of weather conditions. Drinking water is always advised and so are snacks. It is a wonderful location to have a picnic lunch if you are so inclined.

On this hike we can expect to find Pacific chorus frogs (*Pseudacris regilla*), California newts (*Tarhica torosa*), African clawed frog (*Xenopus laevis*), western toad (*Anaxyrus boreas*), and southwestern pond turtle (*Actinemys pallida*). We hope to find Ensatina (*Ensatina eschscholtzii*) and arboreal salamanders (*Aneides lugubris*) as they have the potential to occur there. It will be your job to discover them!

Please see the following link for driving directions:

<https://www.nps.gov/samo/planyourvisit/rsysatwiwa.htm>, or use GPS to the intersection of Via Goleta and Lynn Rd, Thousand Oaks, CA, which is at the entrance to the park. There is ample parking; however, carpooling is advised. There is no parking fee. We will be meeting in the lower parking lot by the bathrooms at 9:00 AM (it will be apparent to you when you get there). Driving distance and time from the Sonesta Select Camarillo hotel are about 9 miles and 17 minutes. There are no attire or equipment restrictions other than the usual disinfectant treatment.

3. Las Virgenes Creek at Highway 101 - Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority

This will be an easy approximate 1/2-mile hike through some level riparian habitat along Las Virgenes Creek in an urban setting. There is an interesting back story regarding this site that involves intensive crayfish management and the natural recruitment of California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) from a known upstream source. At least for now, this is being considered a success story with respect to crayfish management.

This visit will be led by Debbie Sharpton (Environmental Restoration Group) and should take approximately 1 hour to complete. Please wear durable footwear and layered clothing. You may want to wear waterproof footwear as there is a potential to enter ankle-deep water. Entering the water can be avoided and is optional. At this time of year in this part of southern California you can expect any type of weather conditions. Drinking water is always advised; however, you will literally be meeting in a parking lot for a Starbucks and supermarket.

On this hike we can expect to find Pacific chorus frogs (*Pseudacris regilla*), California red-legged frogs, and western toad (*Anaxyrus boreas*). A bonus here is that for those of you who are interested, your leader will take you to the nearby World-Famous Wallis Annenberg Crossing (aka the Liberty Canyon Wildlife overpass) which is currently under construction. You can monitor the construction at this link:

(<https://app.oxblue.com/?openlink=NWF/WallisAnnenbergWildlifeCrossing>).

We will meet at 9:00 AM at this address in the Starbucks parking lot: 26531 Agoura Road, Calabasas. There is ample parking; however, carpooling is advised and there is no parking fee. Driving distance and time from the Sonesta Select Camarillo hotel are about 20 miles and 25 minutes.

4. Turtle Conservancy Conservation Center, Ojai, CA.

Tour of the Conservation Center and skeletal collection, with each tour lasting about 1 to 1 ½ hours. The conservation center has around 40 species of turtles and tortoises with roughly 600 individuals on site. Depending upon the weather, the group will get to see and interact with the Radiated and Galapagos tortoises.

However, if it is below 70 F, staff will supplement the tortoise yards with individuals from the greenhouses and nursery. The Turtle Conservancy's skeletal collection contains ~14,000 specimens that encompass 270 of the 350+ recognized species, originally curated by the late Dr. Peter Pritchard. Tour leaders will be Conservation Center staff. For information about the Turtle Conservancy, see <https://www.turtleconservancy.org/>. Tour start time at the Center is 10:30 am (start time is set so tour will be in warmest time of day). Address is 1766 McNell Rd Ojai, CA. You will see an entrance sign and you are welcome to park anywhere inside the parking lot. The Center is about 50-minute drive from the Sonesta Select Camarillo Hotel in Camarillo.

5. Santa Cruz Island, 11 January 2025.

Limited to 20 people. First Come, First Served!

Payment must be received no later than 3 January 2025

Cost: **\$67.51** for boat transport ([click on this link as we will reserve the tickets](#))

Departure: 0815 hrs meeting time at [Island Packers in the Ventura Harbor](#)

Return: 1630 hrs at Island Packers in the Ventura Harbor

Total time on Island: 4 hours, 1045 - 1445 hrs

Santa Cruz Island is home to the northern Channel Islands endemic Channel Islands Slender Salamander (*Batrachoseps pacificus*) along with the Santa Cruz Island Natural Reserve and Research Station. Visitors are normally only permitted to hike on National Park property but we will be hiking toward the research station through a transition from coastal terrace to oak woodland on property managed by the UC Natural Reserve System and The Nature Conservancy. Expect to see both species of slender salamander that occur on the island, *B. pacificus* and *B. nigriventris*, and the endemic Island Scrub Jay (*Aphelocoma insularis*). Plan on bringing enough water for the hike, clothes and hats for varied weather, closed-toed shoes that can be disinfected, and lunch. Chris Evelyn from UC Santa Barbara will lead this hike.

To attend, pay for your boat trip using [this link](#).

Waivers for island access will be sent once payment is received.

Any payment received after 3 January 2025 will be refunded, tickets purchased directly through Island Packers will not be considered part of this group and will not be permitted to leave National Park property.