



# ALBANY HILL

**Field Guide to Native  
Plants & Animals**

Albany, Ca

First Edition







View of Albany Hill from the Northwest



Pipevine Swallowtail

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# WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE?

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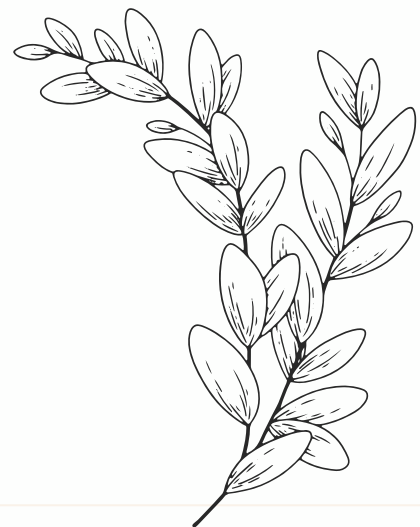
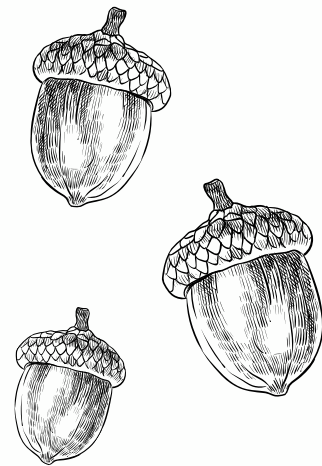
This field guide aims to serve as a helpful and educational resource which can accompany you as you explore the ecosystems of Albany Hill.

In it, you will find photographs, descriptions, identification tips, fun facts, and locations of some (although definitely not all) of the native plant and animal species found here. [*All photographs were taken by Margot Cunningham unless otherwise stated*].

Beyond this, there are several resources to help you broaden your curiosity of native ecosystems, cultural connections to the hill, identify organisms, and perhaps even take steps to cultivate local biodiversity in your own home!

The Chochenyo names and Indigenous knowledge included in this guide are thanks to collaboration with members of the Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Confederated Villages of the Lisjan Nation as well as written sources. We thank them for their help and for sharing this information with us.

We hope that you find this guide helpful as you visit, hike, or walk your pet on Albany Hill. ***We also ask that visitors stay on designated trails and engage with the hill respectfully. Please do not pick or damage plants or get close to wildlife.***





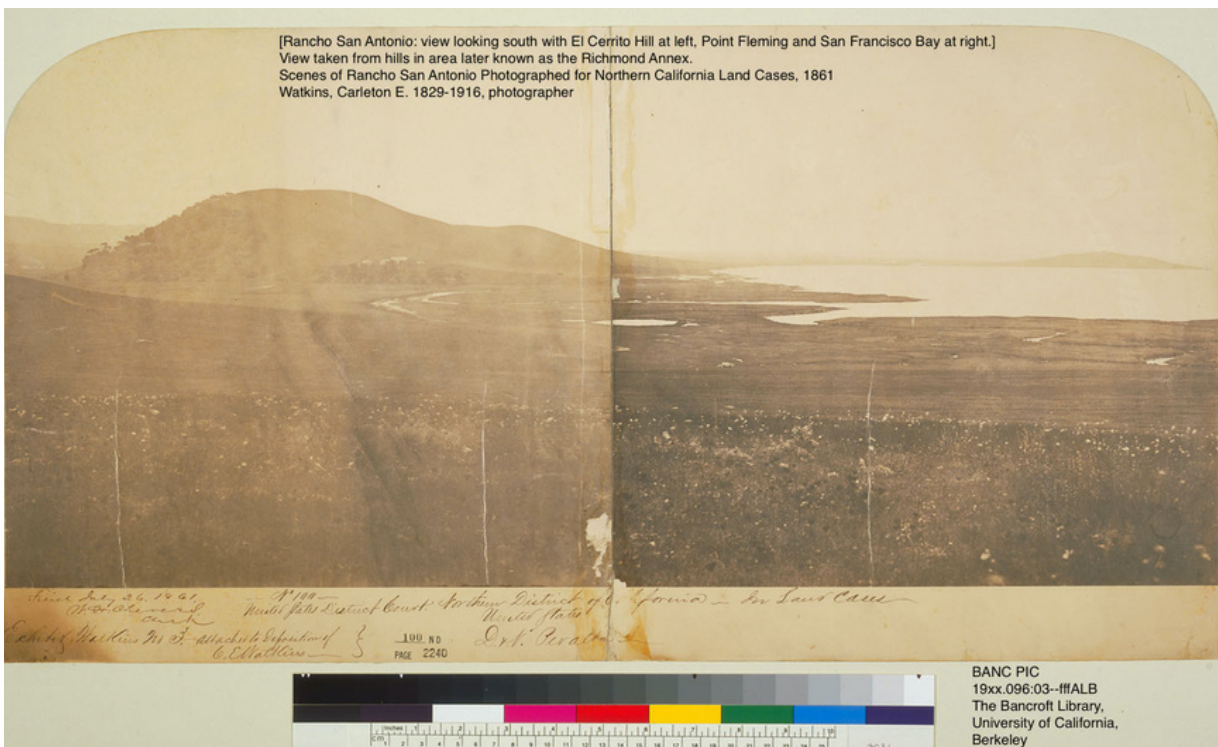
# CONTEXT

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Albany Hill is a unique oasis within the East Bay. It is part of an ancient mountain range, including the previously dynamited peak, Fleming Point (now Golden Gate Fields), Brooks Island, and peaks farther northwest. The hill is composed of shale and sandstone, creating a different soil type from much of the surrounding area and making it suitable for many specialized native plants.

The diversity of plants and animals at the hill is also a result of climactic influence. It is situated to receive cool marine air from the West as well as a warmer, inland influence from the East. These conditions allow for a variety of plants to grow, in turn creating a wide range of habitats, which attract diverse wildlife. For example, Albany Hill attracts migratory birds and monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) who take refuge and make use of resources here before traveling on.

Before settler colonialism, Albany Hill was composed of native, coastal grasslands, with oak woodlands on the northern side, above Middle and Cerrito Creeks. You can see the topography of the hill in the photograph below, from the 1860s, before Eucalyptus trees were planted. On the left side of Albany Hill, you can just make out the native oak trees growing up the slope.



Photograph from the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley



# CONTEXT

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Photo, courtesy of Jerri Nolan

*This fantastic photograph of the Judson and Sheppard Chemical Works was taken in the 1880's from out in the Bay. Site was Fleming Point, where Golden Gate Fields now stands. The Hill with the smokestack in the background is Albany Hill (then called McKeever's Hill).*

*Mrs. Bert (Kay) Haesloop*

*Photograph from "A Selective History of the Codornices-University Village, The City of Albany, & Environs" (2000) by Warren and Catherine Lee*

These ecosystems were maintained by the stewardship of the Ohlone people over many generations. Landscapes of the East Bay, including Albany Hill, changed drastically with the forced removal, enslavement, and genocide of Indigenous peoples. They could no longer engage in important management practices, like routine prescribed burning, tilling, pruning, and seeding. During the Rancho period and continuing through American settlement colonizers introduced grazing livestock and non-native species, which changed the perennial, native grasslands on Albany Hill to predominantly annual, non-native grasslands.

The later onset of dynamite manufacturing in the 1860s further changed the hill. In an attempt to reduce the impact of explosions from dynamite plants in the surrounding area, these manufacturing companies planted non-native Blue Gum Eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globulus*) on the western sides of the Hill.

Now the Hill is mostly covered in tall eucalyptus, many of them in decline due to drought stress and susceptible to pathogens like *Pseudosydowia eucalypti*. The deteriorating trees contribute to wildfire risks, and the City of Albany has an ongoing Albany Hill Eucalyptus Project (CIP No. 41015) to mitigate this issue.

# CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

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Albany Hill sits within Huchiun territory, which we today call the East Bay. The Chochenyo-speaking Ohlone people have lived in this region for generations and maintained reciprocity through cultural practices, like prescribed burning, to care for native ecosystems and cultivate cultural resources. Today many Ohlone and other Indigenous folks continue and strengthen their generational knowledge and practices. For example, in the East Bay the Indigenous women-led Sogorea Te' Land Trust works on repatriation, cultural revitalization, and land restoration.

Historical records note that some Ohlone people had a village on Albany Hill. Here they made mortars, which are deep indentations in the rock caused by the grinding and processing of plant materials, namely acorns, created and maintained by Ohlone people over generations. They would have encountered acorns from the Coast Live Oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*), or Tuhhe in Chochenyo, that grow on the slope of the hill. Traditionally, acorns would have been harvested during the fall season when they ripen. They would then need to be processed, often by drying and shelling, and stored in baskets or granaries for continued use throughout the year. Prior to processing, acorns contain tannic acid, which is harmful to humans.



# CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

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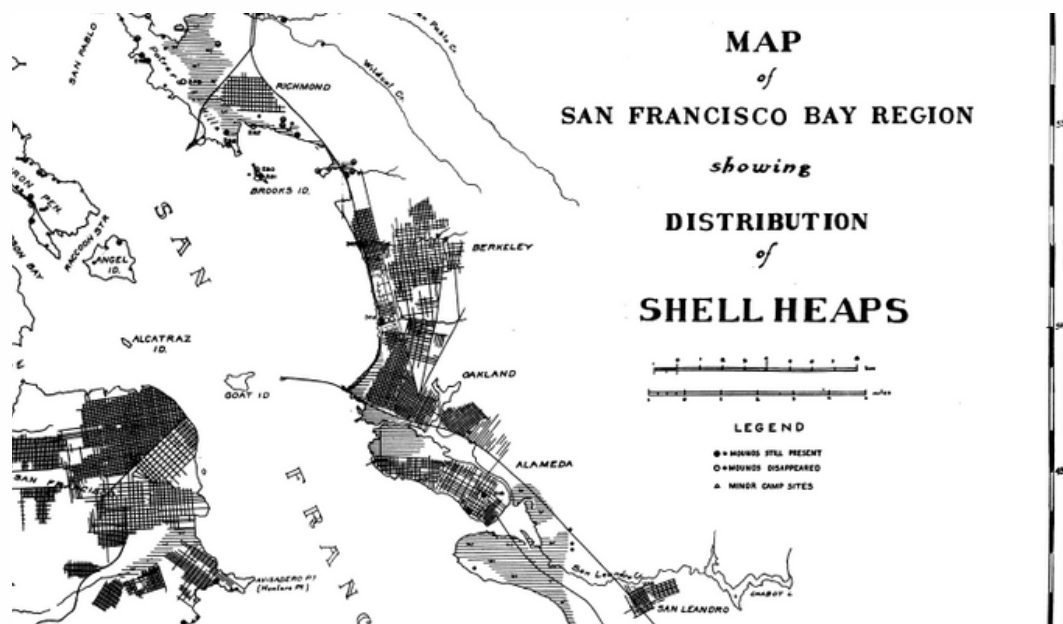
To make these nuts into edible, delicious, soup or bread, Native Californians would have ground these stored acorns into a flour using a pestle against the grinding rock mortars. Water was then used to leach the tannic acid and bitterness out of the ground acorns so that they could finally be cooked and served.

Acorns were and still are a very significant cultural food for the Ohlone and other Native Californians today and continue to be processed and eaten in accordance with traditional methods as well as new ways.

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# CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE



Section of map from "Shellmounds of the San Francisco Bay Region," N.Nelson, 1909.  
Courtesy of University of California Berkeley Digital Assets.

Throughout the Bay Area there were and still are hundreds of shellmound sites, many of which have been leveled off and covered by development projects.

Tribal Chair of the Confederated Villages of Lisjan, Corrina Gould, explains that shellmounds are, "sacred funerary monuments, burial grounds, for Ohlone people" (Sogorea Te' Land Trust). They were and still are important loci of prayer and connection as these sacred places hold generations of Ohlone ancestors. As you can see on the historical map above, there were several shellmounds sites around Albany Hill documented at the time the map was made in the early 20th century.

Please respect culturally significant sites, including mortar rocks and areas of former shellmounds. They are important to past and current Ohlone people as well as to the broader community. ***If you happen to see grinding mortar rocks anywhere, do not step on or touch them. Admire them from a distance so that we can preserve and respect their cultural and historical importance.***



# Calflora

## A tool for mapping plant species

CalFlora is a Berkeley-based non-profit that has created a free database of over 3.1 million plant species observations across California.

This is an excellent tool that allows us to see the distribution of native and invasive plants at Albany Hill and how they change over time.

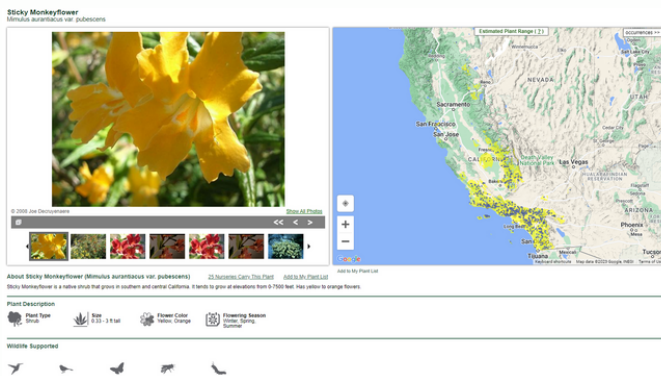
Over the past several years, volunteers and City of Albany employees have been mapping plants on the hill. We encourage the public to join in as well and contribute to our data set by making observations using the CalFlora app on [IOS](#) or [Android](#).



Tap on the picture above to explore data from Albany Hill on CalFlora

## Learn about and grow native plants

# Calscape



Calscape is a resource that aims to provide education and tools to help you incorporate native plants in to your garden. This website has descriptions for a multitude of native plants found in California as well as their seasonality, landscaping capabilities, and the wildlife they support.

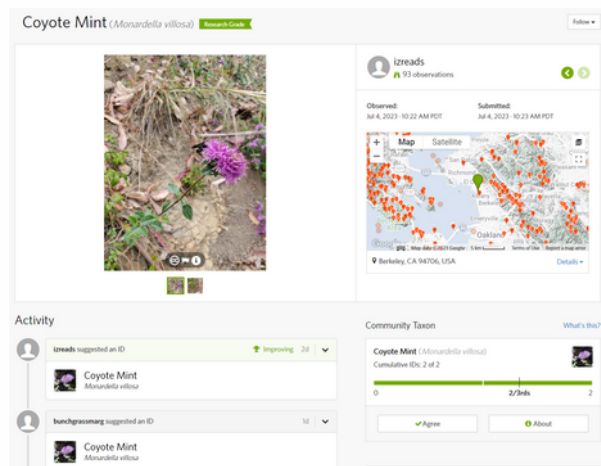
Tap on the photo to the left to visit the Calscape site.

# iNaturalist

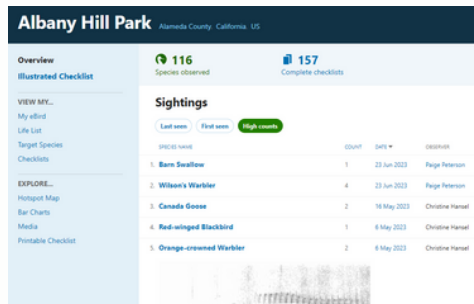
## Identify and make observations

iNaturalist is a species identification app that supports citizen science in observing and mapping species, native and invasive. The app will suggest potential species identifications from a picture you take and community members can confirm your identification or suggest another species based on their expertise. This app is available on [Android](#) and [IOS](#) and is an excellent way to learn to identify native plants and differentiate them from non-native ones.

Tap on the photo to the right to visit the iNaturalist website.



# eBird



Tap the picture above to see bird observations at Albany Hill Park

You can explore the bird species observed at Albany Hill by searching for “Albany Hill Park,” “Creekside Park (ALA Co),” and “Creekside Park (El Cerrito)” in their hotspots search bar. Community members can participate in citizen science by contributing photos, sightings, and bird call recordings to this database, run by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Even if you are not a birdwatcher, this is an excellent resource to learn and identify which birds inhabit and fly through Albany Hill.

## Sogorea Te' Land Trust

Sogorea Te' Land Trust is an Indigenous, women-led organization focused on the repatriation of land back to Indigenous people in the Bay Area. Founded in 2015, the organization runs several cultural revitalization, climate adaptation, and habitat restoration programs. Their website provides many important educational materials and protocols for the public.

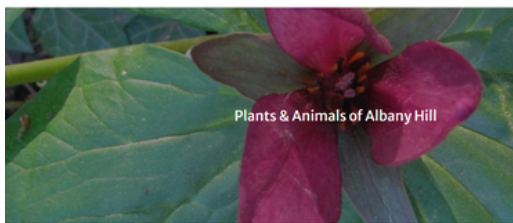
Tap the pictures on the right to learn more about their work in the Bay Area and the history of the territory of Huchiun.



## TASH

### Tending the Ancient Shoreline Hill

TENDING THE ANCIENT SHORELINE HILL (TASH)



Home · Plants & Animals of Albany Hill

Checklist of Plants

Eryophytes (Mosses, Hornworts, Liverworts)

Tending the Ancient Shoreline Hill is a community group dedicated to education on and stewardship of Albany Hill. They host volunteer clean-up days, nature walks, and other activities on the hill.

The TASH website provides lists of plants, birds, and other animals found in the past and present at Albany Hill. It also has a mini herbarium, a small collection of pressed cuttings of plants, which is an excellent resource for identification of native and non-native plants found in the area.

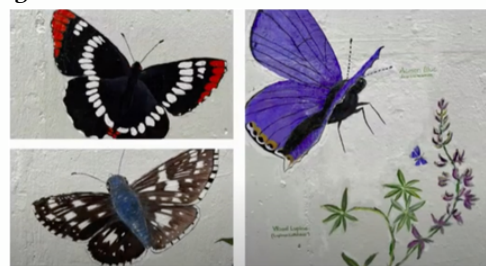
Tap the photo on the left to visit the TASH website.

## Friends of Albany Hill

Friends of Albany Hill is a decades-old community group dedicated to the preservation of nature at Albany Hill.

Having historically fought to prevent further development on the hill, the group now focuses on community projects, such as their recent mural, events on the hill, and providing educational materials like plant and bird lists and historical materials.

Tap the photos below to go to the FOAH website.





# GRASSES

## BLUE WILD RYE

*Elymus glaucus*

This perennial grass grows in bunches and is native across North America. It can grow up to 5 feet tall and has long stems with seed tufts at the ends. Like many native plants, their roots can grow much deeper into the soil compared to many invasive annuals, and are excellent at fixing carbon into the soil. Their long roots also help stabilize hillsides and reduce erosion.

At Albany Hill, you can find some beautiful blue wild rye at the crest, near the native pollinator restoration area.

Tap the picture to see its distribution at Albany Hill on Calflora.



## FOOTHILL NEEDLE GRASS

*Stipa lepidula*

Another native perennial grass, foothill needle grass is native to California and likes sun or partly shaded areas with dry soils. It has fine leaf blades and small seeds, compared to a similar looking native grass, purple needle grass.

You can find it on the southwestern side and the crest of Albany Hill.

Tap the picture to see its distribution at Albany Hill on Calflora.



## PURPLE NEEDLE GRASS

*Stipa pulchra*

Native perennial grass that is found in several ecosystems throughout California and is the official California State Grass. It is known as purple needle grass because its seeds are slightly purple when they are young. It can look similar to foothill needle grass, but has more robust leaf blades and larger seeds.

This grass is very drought tolerant and likes sunny, dry conditions. You can find it on the crest and southern end of Albany Hill, in both the southeastern and southwestern grasslands.

Tap the picture to see its distribution at Albany Hill on Calflora.





## TREES & SHRUBS

### CALIFORNIA HAZELNUT

*Corylus cornuta* spp. *californica*

Native deciduous shrub from the Betulaceae family most commonly found in northern and central California. This shrub can grow up to 18 feet and has soft, hairy leaves and multiple trunks.

Native Californians in the area traditionally used hazelnuts as a food source. California hazelnut was and still is an important part of basketry among Indigenous groups (Lightfoot and Parrish 2009).

In the late summer and fall, you can find ripening hazelnuts, which provide a food source for many animals along the oak woodland trail.

Tap the photo to see locations of these trees at Albany Hill.



### COAST LIVE OAK

#### TUHHE (CHOCHENYO)

*Quercus agrifolia*

Coast live oak and other species of oaks are very important to many Native communities in the central coast and throughout California. This particular species of oak is especially valued for its high yield of acorns. Acorns are processed and eaten in various ways as a significant cultural food source for Indigenous people (Lightfoot and Parrish 2009).

Identification tip: sturdy, glossy leaves with small prickles on the edges

Check out the oak woodland forest on the north and east sides of the hill.



### POISON OAK

*Toxicodendron diversilobum*

Poison oak is known generally as a plant to avoid at all costs. Its oils can cause many people to develop an itchy rash after contact. However, this native shrub isn't all bad. It provides habitat for many native animals --- deer eat its leaves, many birds nest within it, and its berries provide a food source in the summer. Native Californians have also made use of poison oak stems in basketry (Lightfoot and Parrish 2009).

This plant can be easily confused with young coast live oak, and other oaks. A good rule of thumb is to remember that poison oak has curved leaves and oaks are sharper with spiny edges. In the fall, poison oak will turn red and orange, which is another good indicator.

Poison oak grows throughout Albany Hill and still produces oils even after it loses its leaves in winter, so be wary of yourself and pets as you walk along the trails. When it is dormant, look for upright light brown branches with branchlets that curve out from main stems.





## HERBACEOUS PLANTS

### CALIFORNIA GOLDENROD

*Solidago velutina ssp. californica*

A perennial herb from the Asteraceae family, with clustered, rod-shaped, bright yellow flowers in the late summer and fall. You can find this plant throughout California, particularly in open grassy spaces. At Albany Hill you can find them at the crest and in forest openings.

Identification tips: slightly hairy, lance-shaped leaves that point almost vertically from upright stalks. Yellow flowers in late summer/fall.

To see locations of this plant observed at Albany Hill, tap on the picture to the right.



### CALIFORNIA MUGWORT, HIIŠEN (CHOCHENYO)

*Artemisia douglasiana*

A perennial herb from the Asteraceae family known for its aroma and healing properties--it is often used as a remedy for poison oak and stinging nettle. It thrives in moist, riparian environments throughout the state. You often see this shrub on the east side of the hill and along Cerrito Creek.

Identification tips: California mugwort has a distinct herbal smell, similar to sagebrush, and narrow, sometimes toothed leaves that are smooth and green with light and wooly undersides, Flowers range from white to yellow and can occur from late spring to fall. Mugwort tends to grow in stands, groups, or dense patches.

To see locations of this plant observed at Albany Hill, click on the picture to the right to be directed to the Calflora site.



### COYOTE MINT

*Monardella villosa*

A perennial herb from the Lamiaceae family, coyote mint has a pleasant minty smell and produces beautiful, round, purple flowers that support many native California pollinators. It can grow 2 -3 feet tall and is found in various environments-- woodlands, chaparral, shrublands and grasslands. At Albany Hill you can find coyote mint in the native plant restoration area just south of the Taft Ave. entrance on the crest.

Identification tips: This herb has fuzzy, greyish-green leaves, a minty scent, and in late summer, purple "puff-ball" flowers.

To see locations of this plant observed at Albany Hill click on the picture to the right to be directed to the Calflora site.





# HERBACEOUS PLANTS

## HAIRY GUMPLANT

*Grindelia hirsutula* var. *hirsutula*

This native North American herbaceous plant in the asteraceae family produces a milky, sticky substance on its flower heads, giving them a gummy feeling to them--hence the name.

This milky-white gum is likely produced to reduce predation and protect the plants from UV rays.

Identification tips: dark green, hairy stems, gummy/sticky leaves and flower buds. Yellow flowers in summer.

Tap the picture to see where these plants grow on Albany Hill.



## INDIAN LETTUCE or ROOREH

*Claytonia perfoliata*

Native to western North America, this annual herb is widespread throughout California. Called Rooreh by Ohlone people, this herb is abundant in spring time, high in vitamin C and can be used in cooking to make salads or pesto.

Because this is an annual plant, Rooreh will die for the rest of the year and then re-sprout in spring from dropped seeds from the previous season.

Identification tips: round leaves with small elevated white flowers in the middle on a stalk. Tap the photo to see where Rooreh typically grows on Albany Hill.



## STICKY MONKEY FLOWER

*Diplacus aurantiacus*

This interestingly named native perennial plant is in fact sticky. The undersides of its dark green leaves produce a tacky resin that works to ward off herbivores like *Euphydryas chalcedona*, a specialist butterfly whose larvae feed on sticky monkey flower.

Its sticky leaves and bright orange flowers are great indicators for identifying this plant.

In the summer you can see these beautiful flowers along Jackson St on the eastern side of Albany Hill, the native pollinator restoration area just south of the Taft Ave. entrance on the crest, and along the oak woodland trail.



Tap the [photo to the right](#) to see these plants mapped at Albany Hill.

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## HERBACEOUS PLANTS

### WAVY-LEAVED SOAP PLANT RAWWEN (CHOCHENYO)

*Chlorogalum pomeridianum*

Soap plant is a significant plant to Native Californians and can serve many purposes. Like the name suggests, this plant's root can be processed and used as a soap to clean and bathe.

It is a native perennial plant from the Agavaceae family with low-growing, wavy green leaves and robust, purplish stalks. Their white flowers with green and purple details open at dusk and through the night, supporting moths and other night pollinating insects.

Tap the picture to see where these plants grow on Albany Hill.



## INSECTS

### PIPEVINE SWALLOWTAIL

*Battus philenor*

As adults these native swallowtails are black with blue coloring on their lower wings. They get their name from being specially adapted to pipevine plants and rely on these plants to harbor and feed their offspring. In California pipevine swallowtails rely on an endemic host plant, the California pipevine, *Aristolochia californica*.

Life cycle: in late spring/early summer, light orange eggs are laid on the California pipevine, as noted on the first picture on the left. Then larvae hatch and grow into caterpillars, later forming chrysalis and emerging as butterflies. This whole process takes around a month, and during the summer you may observe one or several stages of the pipevine swallowtail's life cycle.

At Albany Hill, you can find this plant along the south bank of Cerrito Creek.



Pipevine Swallowtail eggs



Pipevine Swallowtail caterpillar



Female butterfly depositing eggs

Photographs by Isobel Readdie

### MONARCH BUTTERFLY ŠIWLUIUK (CHOCHENYO)

*Danaus plexippus*



Every fall, as part of their migration, monarch butterflies from west of the Rocky Mountains make their way to California, a warmer place to spend the winter. Some of them stop and overwinter at Albany Hill, clustering together to stay warm. They settle within eucalyptus trees near and along the crest.

Generally, monarchs will arrive in October and leave within the first week of March. For the 2022-2023 season the count on Albany Hill was over 600 butterflies, the largest count in 5 years!



# BIRDS

## ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD

*Calypte anna*

One of the most common hummingbirds in California, you will often see these hummingbirds flitting around at Albany Hill. The males have shiny, bright red throats and are easier to spot than the greenish-brown female and young birds.

They share an important reciprocal relationship with native plants--relying on their nectar, while serving as pollinators to help plants reproduce.

Identification tips: Males have red throats and heads. They have a random and squeaky song.



Photograph by Doug Donaldson

## GREAT HORNED OWL

*Bubo virginianus*

Native to the Americas, great horned owls can be found at Albany Hill-- although you aren't likely to see them during a day trip to the Hill. These birds are nocturnal and come out at night to hunt. During the day, you may find evidence of them-- like their feathers lying on the ground.

They have gray-brown coloring with reddish faces and white throats. Their calls are deep and soft, often with 4 to 5 "hoots"

To hear audio recordings of their calls tap the photo on the right.



Photograph by Doug Donaldson

## WILD TURKEY

*Meleagris gallopavo*

Wild turkeys are a common sighting in the East Bay, whether they are crossing Solano Avenue or walking the trails at Albany Hill. These birds are prominent on the landscape but, interestingly, they haven't always been.

Although not native to California, we include the turkey in this guide because flocks of these large birds are frequently seen on the hill. While native to the Americas, wild turkeys were introduced to California in the 20th century as a hunting bird. Now commonplace, these birds are part of the local ecosystem and as omnivores, feed on a variety of insects, plants, and sometimes small amphibians or reptiles.

Tap the photo to the right for more information on these birds and observations of them at Albany Hill.



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# ALBANY HILL FIELD GUIDE

First Edition

*This Field Guide was created by Isobel Readdie and edited by  
Margot Cunningham as part of the  
Habitat Restoration Intern Program at the City of Albany.  
This program was funded by a Wildfire Resilience Grant  
from the State Coastal Conservancy.*

*Entries of more plants and animals will be added by future interns*

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