

MOUNTAIN NEWS

Fall / Winter 2010

MOUNT DIABLO INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION

The Bi-Annual Membership Newsletter Insert

FRANK'S FAVORITE HIKES: "Oak Knoll Trail"

by J. Frank Valle-Riestra

Over the years, I have tried to describe in this publication some of the trails crisscrossing Mount Diablo, proclaimed as my favorites. It is perhaps presumptuous of me to ascribe to them some unusually superior qualities, for truth to tell, any one of the some 200 miles of trails on the mountain is unique and attractive in its own way, and the favorite of one hiker may well be anathema to another due to some unfortunate experience or instinctive dislike. Indeed, all of us tend to remember a particular trail by associating it with some memorable experience – perhaps even a physical challenge, an exhausting effort that we look back at with some pride as duly overcome.

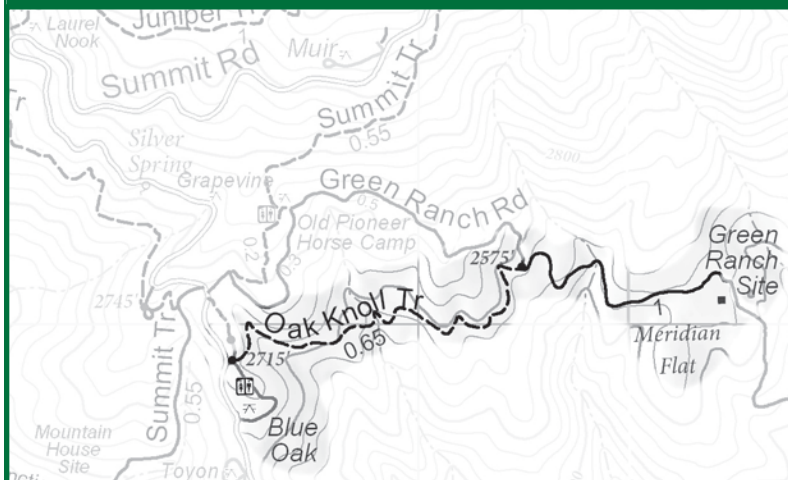
In the case of the Oak Knoll Trail, its status as another favorite stems from my own past attempts as part of a trail crew to improve its accessibility, hard but rewarding work that I recommend to all of you who are dedicated hikers.

What better way to learn to appreciate the characteristics and environment of a particular trail – it becomes a part of you, and each visit brings back a flood of remembrance. The Oak Knoll Trail penetrates a less-known part of our park, above its steep eastern slopes, a relatively easy walk along a well-engineered intimate track.



Photo by J. Frank Valle-Riestra

OAK KNOLL TRAIL



To find the trailhead, drive your vehicle past the junction of North Gate and South Gate Roads and up Summit Road. Before reaching the Juniper Camp loop, be on the lookout on your right for the posted Blue Oak picnic area. A paved loop road circles the area; enter at the upper entrance. The posted trailhead is just a few yards from the Summit Road, and there is ample parking.

The trail itself is a delight, dipping in and out of little canyons sheltering rivulets after winter rains, passing through stands of chaparral and small groves of foothill pines, overlooking broad stretches of flowery meadows on the steep slopes below. But the highlight of your hike will be the views – unobstructed, ever-changing

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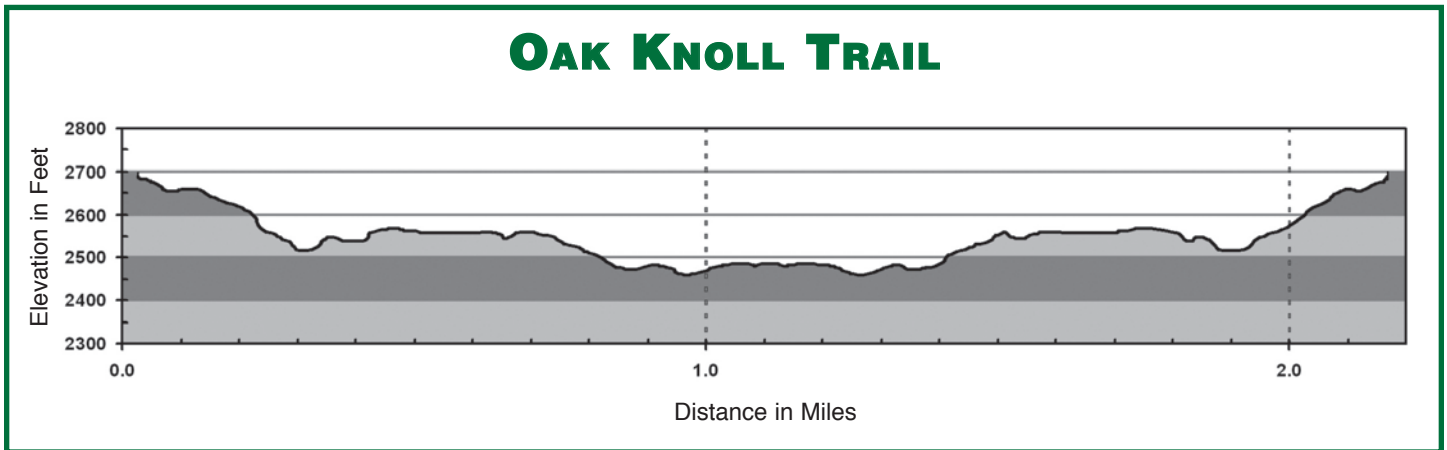
views of Curry Canyon and the mountainous wilderness beyond, stretching far out toward the eastern horizon. Roads and small communities remain hidden in the narrow valleys, and your eye meets nothing but a natural landscape to delight your senses – truly a miracle to be seen so close to our homes, so close to the urban growth all around us.



Photo by Mike Woodring

The Oak Knoll Trail spills onto the Green Ranch Road; here you may wish to turn right and follow the road to the site of the Green Ranch, once the summer home of the Green family, with just a few vestiges remaining. These are scheduled to be removed, to conform to the wishes of the family descendants who want the site to be returned to its natural state.

Retrace your steps to the trailhead to complete a pleasant excursion of about 2.2 miles, with a total elevation gain of a little more than 200 feet. You can end your walk with a picnic at one of the Blue Oak sites. And – oh, yes. If you would like to try a bit of trail work, contact Mark Sinclair, Park Maintenance, by emailing trails@astound.net or by phoning 925-837-6122.





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