

FOCUS ON—HIKING ON MOUNT DIABLO

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NORTH GATE POPPIES • JIM MITCHELL

One of the pleasures of living near Mount Diablo is the variety of hiking and walking opportunities that it offers. You can drive to the summit and spend an easy 20 minutes walking along the Fire Interpretive Trail or you can hike a round-trip from Mitchell Canyon in Clayton to the top and back again—about an eight-hour, 3400 ft. elevation gain (and drop) strenuous work-out.

The mountain offers much to see and do year-round although summer hikes can be very hot and winter hikes very wet. The “April on the Mountain” schedule shown as an insert to this issue of the *Mount Diablo Review* contains 85 hikes, walks and other activities in and around Mount Diablo State Park. You can see waterfalls (rain-permitting), wildflowers, butterflies, take photographs, spot birds, walk your dog (in the Diablo foothills, not in the State Park), enjoy wonderful panoramic views, see Yosemite with binoculars (half of Half Dome can be seen when conditions are right), see the windmills at Altamont, hear stories of the early history of Ygnacio Valley, see recently-acquired State Park lands, learn about the geology of the mountain . . . the list goes on.

Many groups, non-profit and otherwise offer led hikes on and around Mount Diablo. All of these hikes are free and for the most-part the hike leaders are volunteers. Among the groups offering hikes are Mount Diablo Interpretive Association (MDIA) with its “First Sunday Hike Series” and other hikes, Mount Diablo State Park Rangers (MDSP), Save Mount Diablo (SMD), the Sierra Club (a number of chapters are participating), Berkeley Hiking Club, the North American Butterfly Association, Orinda Hiking Club, the City of Walnut Creek, Walnut Creek Open Space Association, the California Native Plants Society and the East Bay Regional Park District. For more information about any of these groups call the hike leaders and ask for details. The non-profit groups exist only with our support.

Many schools and other youth groups use the mountain as a classroom and bring students to learn about its natural wonders. There are special activities each year such as the “Trek through Time” in October. This is a 4.1 mile hike from Live Oak Campground to the Summit, with experts in a whole host of topics at 20 stops along the route. This event, co-sponsored by MDIA, MDSP, Monte Vista High School and UC Berkeley Museum of Paleontology is held in October and well attended.

The mountain is a great place to visit but care must be taken when preparing for the weather. There can be variations in temperature between the bottom and the summit and, at the beginning and end of seasons, the weather can change quite rapidly. Dress in layers, carry sufficient water, use sun block and a hat—be prepared!

Use a map or trail guide and choose a route that you can manage. Only you know your own level of fitness—take this into account when hiking. There are many alternatives that will suit you.

Many of the trails are well-signed with directional and name signs which you can find on the trail map.

Some Hiking Hints!!

1. Wear sturdy walking/hiking shoes or boots
2. Carry sufficient water
3. Wear layers
4. Have some sun cover
5. Take a map and don't hike alone
6. Let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return
7. For a led hike call the leader for details and difficulty level
8. Only you know your own level of fitness—be prudent with what you take on . . . and remember—take only photographs and leave only footprints!

Trail guides are available on 30 popular hikes of three difficulty levels. MDIA has published a set of hiking trail guides to Mount Diablo State Park. "Demanding hikes", "Short, pleasant walks" and "Moderate hikes" to form a useful information resource on our island mountain. Each guide is in a tri-fold format to easily slip into pocket or backpack. The guides were underwritten by local businesses (Short walks by REI, Moderate hikes by Chevron and Demanding hikes by Dow), and each contains information about ten trails. This includes how to get to the trailhead, the trail route and what features of the park can be seen on this trail. Icons indicate whether this is a good place to see birds, wildflowers, geological points of interest, butterflies, or other points of note.

Enjoy the mountain!