



MDIA E-Newsletter • April 2026

## *Happy Earth Day from MDIA!*



Dramatic Skies by Steve Smith

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***Hint For Mobile Users:  
Turn your phone sideways for a better view!***

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## Hike of the Season: Little Yosemite



Globe Lilies

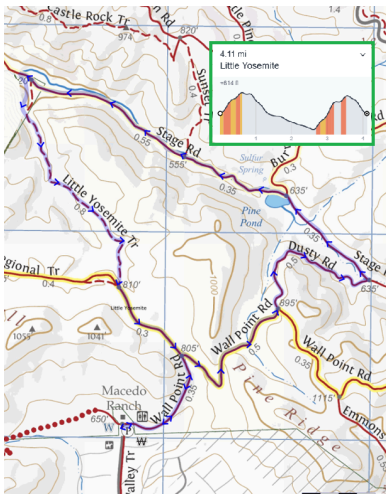
Despite the wet weather and an unusual spring, we're now entering the late season for wildflowers. Even so, beautiful blooms still wait in cool, sun-dappled canyons and along riparian corridors. This featured hike takes you straight to them as you descend Dusty Road, follow the old Stage Road, and climb through Little Yosemite Valley.

Start at [Macedo Ranch in Alamo](#) and head up Wall Point Road. After the road bends right you may hear the warning squeaks of a large ground-squirrel colony. Continue on and pass through the gate and straight onto Dusty Road—you'll quickly learn how it earned its name. As you wind down toward the canyon, look to the steep, lush banks on your right for standout flower displays.



Castle Rock

At the bottom, turn left onto Stage Road. The name dates to the 19th century, when stagecoaches traveled this route to carry visitors to and from the Mountain House Hotel high on the mountain. Settle into an easy walk along Pine Creek, passing Pine Pond on your left and meandering along (and across) the stream for a mile or so. After you pass through the boundary gate, you'll briefly enter Diablo Foothills Regional Park. By now, you've likely caught glimpses of the impressive sandstone cliffs of Castle Rock on your right.



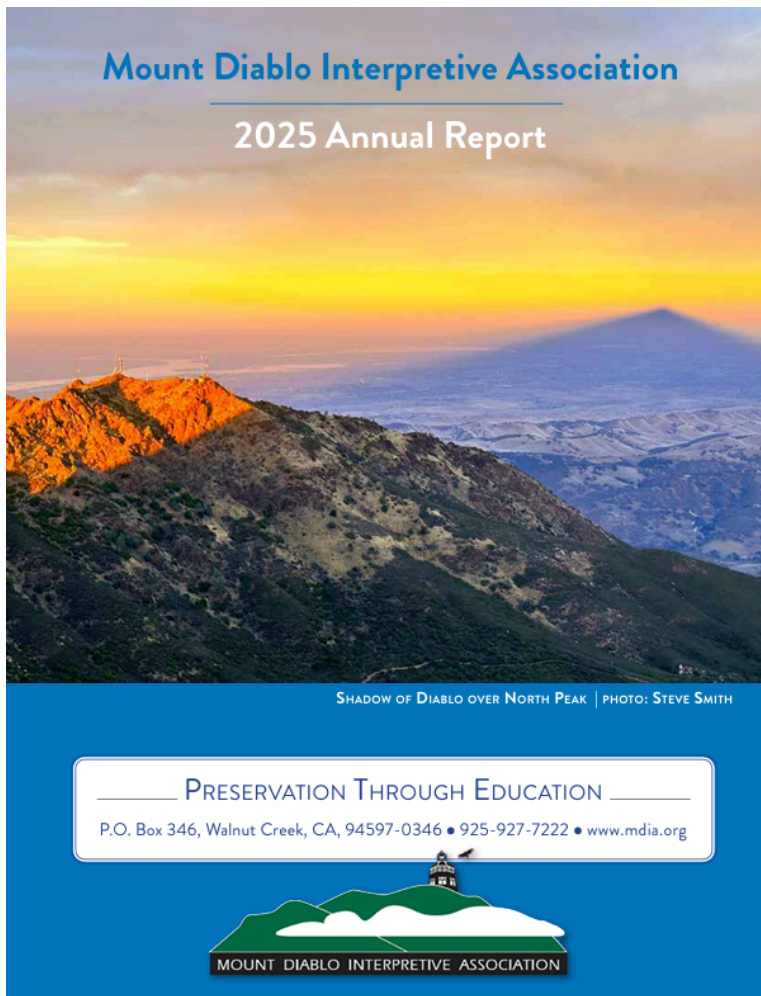
Click map to download

Continue past a lovely picnic spot, then turn left up Little Yosemite Trail, passing through another gate and back into Mount Diablo State Park. As the trail begins its short climb, you'll see where the waterfalls would be. In all my years on the mountain, I've seen water cascade down the boulders only twice—both times during active downpours. Waterfall or not, the route follows a small creek on a gentle, winding climb through grasslands and into chaparral. Be sure to look back as you break into the open: excellent photo opportunities of the Castle Rock formations await. Keep climbing to the top of the hill, then turn left and follow the open pastureland straight back to your starting point.

4 miles/600 feet [Download .gpx file](#)

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## Annual Report



An annual report may *sound* like homework, but trust me—you'll want to read this one. Inside, you'll find all the meaningful ways **you**, our supporters, helped strengthen Mount Diablo State Park and advance MDIA's mission this past year.

If you contributed to our 2025 campaign, be sure to flip to the final page to find your name—and maybe spot a few friends and neighbors as well. And if you're here for the photos, we've included plenty of beautiful images for you to enjoy.

Click the [image](#) and take a look. We think you'll be proud of what you helped make possible.

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**Happy Earth Day!**



Every April 22, Earth Day brings people around the world together to protect the environment and promote more sustainable ways of living. What began in 1970 has grown into one of the largest global civic events, with more than 1 billion participants across 193 countries. From community cleanups to educational campaigns and local advocacy, individuals, schools, and organizations use the day to spotlight issues like climate change, pollution, and conservation—and to take practical action.

Here's a list of 10 simple things you can do to help the planet:

**1. Support Pollinators:** Plant pollinator-friendly flowers, learn about native bees, and consider adding a bee house.

- 2. Clean Up Plastic:** Pick up litter in your neighborhood, recycle what you can, and reduce plastic use where possible.
  - 3. Visit a Park:** Spend time in green spaces for your physical and mental health, and explore local or national parks.
  - 4. Plant a Tree:** Trees capture carbon, support wildlife, and cool communities. Plant native trees or advocate for more public greenery.
  - 5. Use Native Plants and Wildflowers:** Native plants attract beneficial insects and birds, improve pollination, and make gardens more resilient.
  - 6. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle in the Garden:** Buy materials in bulk, reuse pots and trays, and choose biodegradable containers.
  - 7. Garden Without Chemicals:** Focus on healthy soil, organic amendments, beneficial insects, and natural pest control.
  - 8. Conserve Water:** Water plants at the soil level, use drip irrigation or timers, collect rainwater, and consider a rain garden.
  - 9. Think About Your Diet:** Reduce food waste, eat more seasonal and plant-based foods, compost scraps, and avoid single-use packaging.
  - 10. Get Kids Involved:** Share a love of nature through hands-on outdoor and gardening activities.
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## Education Center: Where Are We Now?

### **Mitchell Canyon Education Center: Progress Update and Path Ahead**

Work continues steadily on our long-awaited Mitchell Canyon Education Center, even as we navigate some unexpected slowdowns at the State level. Despite these challenges, the past several months have brought meaningful milestones that keep us moving toward the finish line.

### **Funding Secured and Blueprints Completed**

January delivered a major victory: **we secured all anticipated construction funding**, thanks to the tremendous generosity of our supporters during the year-end fundraising campaign. This achievement ensures that the building phase of the project is fully financed and ready to advance as soon as State approvals are complete.

Later that month, we celebrated another landmark moment—the **completion of our architectural blueprints** with Ware & Associates. After four years of close collaboration, we could not have asked for a more dedicated or talented partner. Their expertise and creativity have shaped a design that reflects both the natural beauty of Mitchell Canyon and the educational mission of the center.

Following this milestone, the plans moved swiftly through two critical review processes: Office of the State Fire Marshal approval and ADA compliance approval. Both were completed more quickly than expected, clearing the way for the next major step.

### **Awaiting State Budgetary Approval**

The project now sits with the **California State Department of Finance**, whose budgetary approval is required before the center can go out to bid. Unfortunately, this stage has progressed more slowly than hoped, and the project is currently awaiting its turn in their review queue. While this delay is frustrating, we remain optimistic that the gears will begin turning again soon.

### **Exhibit Design Reaches 50% Conceptual Phase**

While the construction side pauses, the creative side is in full swing. We are now knee-deep in exhibit design, having reached the **50% Conceptual Design phase**. This work is being carried out in partnership with our designers JM Productions, State Parks officials, Tribal representatives, and our dedicated committee members.

Together, we are shaping an interior experience that will be: **Educational**, highlighting the natural and cultural history of Mount Diablo. **Visually compelling**, with modern interpretive elements. **Welcoming and accessible**, designed to meet the needs of all visitors.

We look forward to sharing early renderings soon—an exciting step as we prepare to launch a new phase of fundraising focused on exhibit fabrication. This is where the center truly comes to life, and it's one of the **most inspiring parts** of the journey.

### **Looking Ahead**

We ask for your continued patience and enthusiasm as we work through this temporary slowdown. Your support has carried us through every milestone so far, and we remain committed to pushing forward, building momentum, and keeping the vision of our **grand opening** front and center.

Together, we are creating something extraordinary for the Mount Diablo community—an education center that will inspire curiosity, deepen understanding, and welcome generations of visitors to come.



[Click image for more information.](#)

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We're on [Facebook!](#) Come like and follow us on our brand new Facebook page. You can see several posts every week, cool photos, interesting creatures, event updates, great articles and much more. [Come give us a like!](#)

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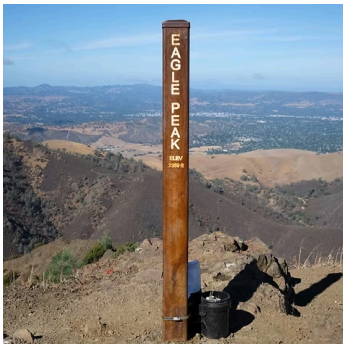
## Fun Fact

The density of the rods and cones in a Golden Eagle's eye allows it to spot movement of a rabbit from over a mile away. This is why "Eagle Eye" is used to describe great vision. They can detect ultraviolet light, allowing them to see urine trails of prey. Golden eagles can see up to 8 times farther than humans.



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## Upcoming Events



**Hike:** [Eagle Peak Hike](#)  
*April 26*  
*9:00-2:00 pm*  
Challenging hike to Eagle Peak from Mitchell Canyon



**Webinar:** [California Wolves](#)  
*April 29*  
*7-8:00 pm*  
Wolves are returning to California



**Walk:** [Natural History of Plants](#)  
*May 2*  
*1:00-3:30 pm*  
Learn about how plants changed through time



**Hike: Poorwill Hike**  
May 8  
7-10:30 pm  
Night hike in the  
canyon.



**Walk: Mother's Day**  
**Wildflowers**  
May 10  
9:00 am-1:00 pm  
Mother nature's beauty  
is on display



**Walk: Wonder Hike**  
May 13  
8:30 am-12:30 pm  
Wonder and wander in  
Mitchell Canyon

Click [here](#) for a listing of more upcoming events!



We're on [Instagram](#)! Come like and follow us on our brand new Instagram page. You can see several posts every week, cool photos, interesting creatures, event updates, great articles and much more.



BECOME A MEMBER



Thank you for your support of the Mount Diablo Interpretive Association and I will see you on the mountain!

Steve

*"We acknowledge that Mount Diablo is the ancestral home, since time immemorial, of the Wilton Rancheria, Bay Miwok, Confederated Villages of Lisjan, Northern Valley Yokuts, Muwekma, and Ohlone peoples."*



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