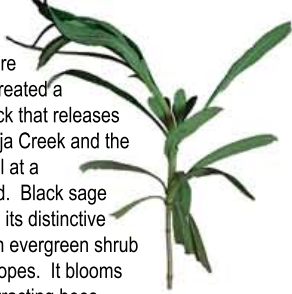


#10 Black Sage

This spot gives you a view of the summit of Dry Lakes Ridge, where geologic faults have created a natural reservoir of rock that releases water and feeds Matilija Creek and the stream beside this trail at a steady rate year-round. Black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), with its distinctive flower structures, is an evergreen shrub native to sunny, dry slopes. It blooms from March to July, attracting bees, butterflies and hummingbirds, and quail love its seeds.



#11 Chamise

Chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*) has tiny needle-like leaves that conserve water due to their small surface area. It is also called "greasewood" due to a waxy substance that causes it to burn with a high intensity and heavy black smoke. Nearby are wooly blue curls (*Trichostema lanatum*), evergreen shrubs with spikes of blue flowers from May to August, native to the dry slopes of California's coastal ranges.



#12 Toyon

Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), also called "Hollywood," is common to oak woodland and chaparral habitats. The leaves of this tree-like shrub are rounded, sharp-toothed and evergreen. Toyon survives on little water, but produces white flowers in early summer, and masses of bright red berries in fall and winter that are a favorite of birds and small mammals, including coyote. Hills covered with toyon shrubs gave the City of Hollywood its name.



#13 Western Mountain Mahogany

Western mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus betuloides*) often grows alongside toyon in chaparrals. Its wood is extremely hard and the same color as that of the mahogany tree, but it is part of the rose (*Rosaceae*) family. The fruits have long silken tails in late spring and summer, and the seed has a long, curly, fuzzy attachment that helps it to be blown in the wind or to attach to the fur of passing animals. Mountain mahogany is an important food for local deer.



#14 Scrub Oak

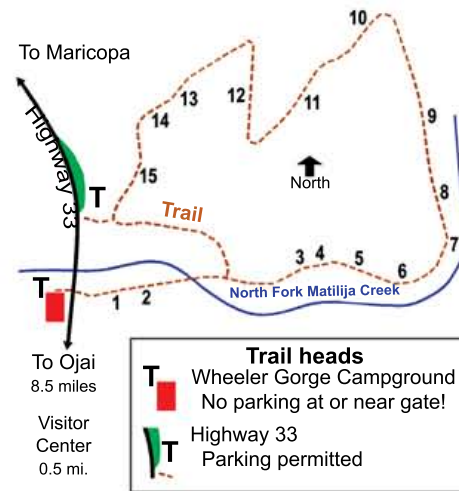
Scrub oak (*Quercus berberidifolia*) is an important member of the chaparral ecosystem, providing acorns for local wildlife. Its leaves have sharp, spiny teeth, and are shiny smooth on top with fine hairs underneath. The leaves will roll under in hot, dry weather to slow evaporation.



Nearby "mountain lilac" (*Ceanothus arboreus*) has glossy dark green leaves that are leathery or felt-like underneath, and bears bunches of tiny blue flowers in the spring.

#15 Flowering Ash

The flowering ash tree (*Fraxinus dipetala*) has adapted to long, dry summers by dropping its leaves, which grow opposite each other, early to retain water in its trunk. The ash tree flowers in mid to late spring, followed by clusters of papery, winged "samara" fruit that are blown far from the parent tree by the wind.



Text adapted by William Hohensee from original flyer by Terry Austin and Dan Reeves. Text updated with assistance from Lloyd Simpson Ph.D., Botanist, Los Padres National Forest (LPNF).

Project supervised by Ojai Ranger District Staff, LPNF Recreation Officer Charlie Robinson and Recreation Managers Heidi Anderson and Diane Cross.

Trail constructed by Youth Conservation Corps in 1979.

New signs sponsored by Cal Ehler and Coast Reprographics, designed by Mike Havstad and installed by BSA Troop 808, Camarillo, CA in 2011 as William Hohensee's Eagle project.

Photographs and brochure layout by Mike Havstad
Copyright 2011

Printing of brochure sponsored by the Los Padres Forest Association. www.lpforest.org

For more information visit the Wheeler Gorge Visitor Center
Open Saturdays and Sundays from 9 AM to 3 PM
(805)-640-9060

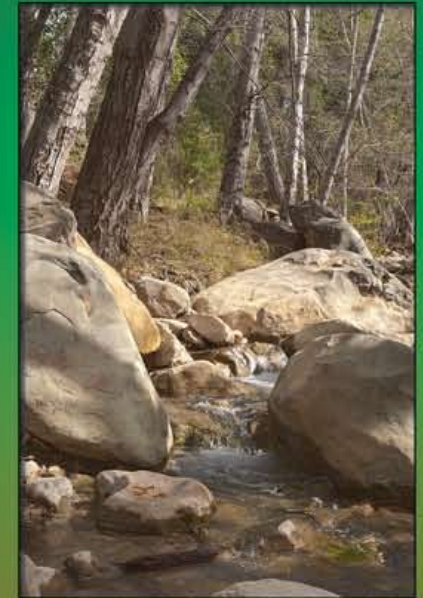


The Wheeler Gorge Visitor Center operates under a special-use permit with the Los Padres National Forest LPNF and the Los Padres Forest Association LPFA.



The LPFA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit. The USDA Forest Service, the LPNF and the LPFA are equal opportunity providers.

Wheeler Gorge Nature Trail



"I only went out for a walk and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in"

John Muir 1838-1914

Ojai Ranger District Los Padres National Forest

For more information, visit
or call the Ojai Ranger Station.

1190 E. Ojai Ave., Ojai, CA 93023, or call
(805) 646-4348 or (805) 646-3866 (TTD)
www.fs.usda.gov/lpnf

This loop trail is a relatively easy 0.7 mile walk, with one stream crossing and a few steep sections. Look for numbered signs along the trail and learn about our local plants and their environment. Please stay on the trail and do not touch the plants...please leave flowers and leaves for others to enjoy, too!

If you have parked along Highway 33 and need to make a U-turn, for your safety and the safety of others, continue driving up the highway a short distance (0.3 miles) to the large turnout along the left side.

#1 Beware of Poison Oak!

Watch out for poison oak! It is a poisonous three-lobed vine or shrub usually found in the shade and near streams. The leaves are green in the spring, and turn red in late summer and fall. The oil on poison oak leaves can cause a severe rash where it comes in contact with your skin, and may not appear for hours or days. Oil can also be transferred to your skin if your clothes or dog have touched poison oak. The stems are bare in winter, and may have berries, but the oil remains, so stay on the trail and do not touch poison oak.



#2 White Alder

You are entering a "riparian zone" or streamside area. Local white alder trees (*Alnus rhombifolia*) and sycamore trees (*Platanus racemosa*) provide cover and shade, keeping water temperatures cool for fish and water-loving wildlife. Alder trees thrive in damp, moist soil. When you cross the stream ahead, look for long roots from the alder trees extending directly into the water!



#3 Laurel Sumac

Laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*), a tree-like shrub, thrives at the edge of the riparian zone, as well as in dry, chaparral environments. Its leaves have a waxy outer layer that minimizes water loss, and are folded upward to cast their own shade and avoid direct sunlight. Laurel sumac is evergreen, but frost sensitive, resulting in many dead leaves and branches. Its tiny white flowers bloom in early summer, and its seeds and berries are an important food source for quail and other local birds.



#4 Yerba Santa

Moving away from the creek, the trail passes through oak woodland, between the riparian zone and the chaparral zone, where shrubs begin to replace tall trees. Yerba Santa (*Eriodictyon californicum*), which means "holy herb" in Spanish, is an evergreen tree that grows well here. It has long, sticky leaves, toothed at the edge and covered with shaggy hairs, which reduce heat absorption and water loss.



#5 Coast Live Oak

The trail is about to enter an oak canopy. Coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) trees provide wildlife with shelter in their branches and trunks, and with acorns for food. Where wildfires kill plants that compete with oak trees for water, mature oak trees are rarely killed by low intensity fires, and their new growth can thrive on the mineral nutrients leached into the soil from charred wood and ash by rain-water, and from the absence of damaging insects and fungi.



#6 Holly-Leaf Cherry

The holly-leaf cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia*) is an evergreen shrub or small tree native to the California coastal chaparral region, with hot, dry summers and wet winters. The holly-leaf cherry, also called the Islay plant, has clusters of small white flowers in the spring, followed by red fruits known as choke cherries. The fruit looks much like domestic cherries but tastes quite bitter and has a very large pit. Although they are not very desirable to humans, wildlife such as bears, coyotes and birds thrive on them.



Wild Cucumber

In the spring, you may notice wild cucumber (*Marah macrocarpus*) vines, with their spiky balls of fruit, growing through the nearby shrubs.



#7 Arroyo Willow

Here, the trail returns to the riparian, or streamside, environment, with abundant trees, including the arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepis*). These trees provide a multi-storied habitat to a variety of birds, from the hummingbird to the red-tailed hawk. Older trees have holes or cavities that provide homes for birds such as owls and woodpeckers.



#8 Sycamore

As you move down the trail, look for sycamore trees growing close together. Sycamore trees (*Platanus racemosa*) can reproduce by sprouting a new tree from the root of an existing tree. Sycamore leaves are shaped like a hand, and are covered by a flannel-like fuzz that is plucked by hummingbirds to line their nests.



Blackberry

Near the moist stream banks, you will also find sedges (*Carex*), or grasses, and elderberry (*Sambucus*). Blackberry (*Rubus* sp.) looks much like poison oak, except that it has prickles.



#9 Transitional Oak Woodland

Up ahead, you will pass through a shady tunnel of oak woodland, with standing dead trees or "snags" caused by past wild fires. Fungi, moss and lichens grow on the decayed wood, and ants, beetles, moths, and other insects use the spaces under the bark as cover.

