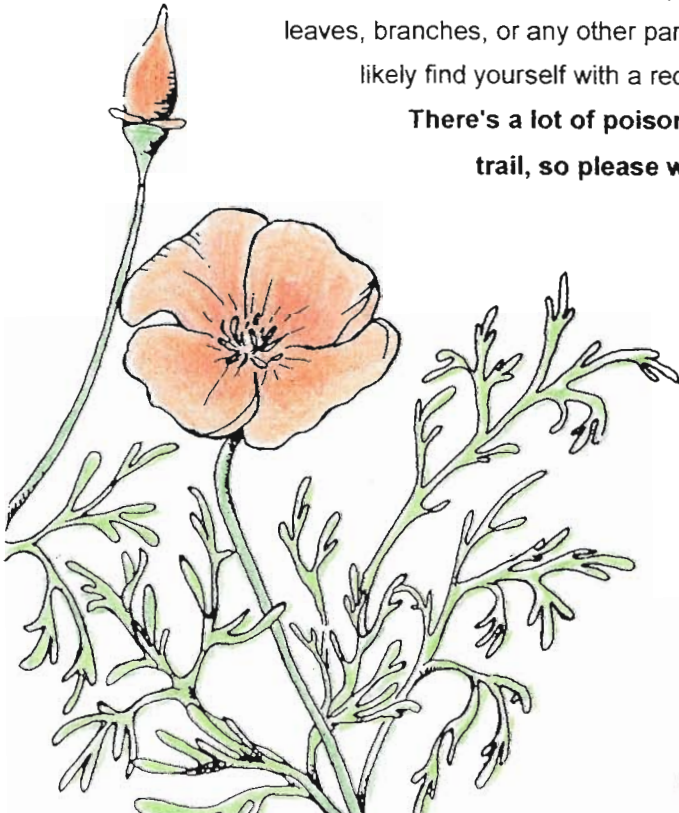


Welcome to the
American River Canyon and the
Codfish Creek Falls Discovery Trail.

Follow the path and you will enjoy a meandering hike along the American River Canyon to the Codfish Creek Water Falls and have the opportunity to experience some beautiful natural scenery along the way. Before starting your hike, please note the reddish leafy shrubs on the hillside behind the sign. If you're not already familiar with this plant, then it's only fair to let you know that this is **Poison Oak** (*Rhus diversiloba*). If you touch the leaves, branches, or any other part of the plant, you will most likely find yourself with a red, bumpy, itchy rash.

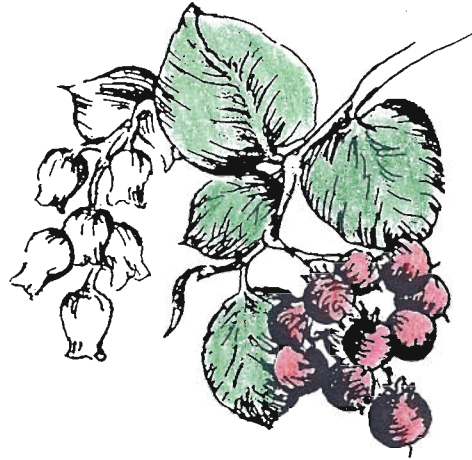
There's a lot of poison oak along the trail, so please watch out!



Poison Oak

Manzanita

1. This beautiful shrub is **Manzanita** (*Arctostaphylos viscida*). Manzanita is common to the Sierra foothills area. It has 1-2 inch oval leaves, which are leathery and silver-green in color. In the spring, Manzanita bushes produce profuse clusters of small pink and white, urn-shaped, sweet smelling flowers. Come summer, the Manzanita bushes will be laden with many small brown and red berries. Native Americans and early Spanish settlers harvested these berries as food. The trunk and branches of manzanita twist and bend into curious shapes and are a beautiful deep red color. Reach out and feel the trunks of the manzanita bushes as you pass by. You will notice that they are surprisingly cool. One nickname for Manzanita is "refrigerator tree."



Canyon Live Oak

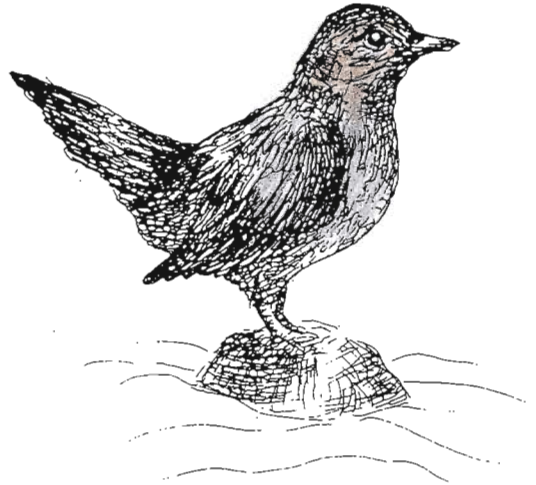


2. The **Canyon Live Oak** (*Quercus chrysolepis*) grows all along the American River Canyon. This tree is evergreen and will keep its leaves all throughout the winter. The leaves are leathery and have both smooth and toothed edges. The underside of the leaves are light green and fuzzy. Another name for the Canyon Live Oak is the Golden Cup Oak. This name comes from the large, powdery, yellow caps of the egg-shaped acorns. The wood of the Canyon Live Oak was often used by early settlers because it is very dense and made strong tools.

3. This is a good spot for looking out at the river. If you're lucky you may see some of the varied bird life. If you look very closely down at the river, you may spot a little brownish grey bird about the size of a robin bobbing up and down, and every once in a while suddenly diving below the water.

This is a **Dipper** (*Cinclus mexicanus*), also known as the Water Ouzel. The Dipper hunts for food along the river by plunging into the water where it can walk along the bottom to search for aquatic insects. The Dipper builds its nest near streams and running water, preferably in places where the nest will be splashed so as to remain damp and green. Quite often a Dipper will build its nest behind waterfalls.

Dipper



Merganser



Another feathered resident of the American River is the **Merganser** (*Mergus merganser*) duck. The head and neck of the male are a glossy green color, while the female and juveniles heads are reddish brown. The Merganser's neck, underbelly, and underneath its wings are white. The Merganser is a fish hunting duck and is often seen along this section of the canyon.

4. How many different plants can you see here?

The shrub growing across from the post (as you face the river) is **California Bay** (*Umbellularia californica*), also known as California Laurel. It usually grows as a small tree, but can also grow as a shrub. Bay has shiny dark green leaves that are 2-5 inches long. Take one of the leaves in your hand and crush it. Do you recognize the strong, spicy smell? Native Americans used the leaves to clear their sinuses and relieve headaches. Bay has small clusters of sweet smelling yellow flowers in the spring and small round green fruits in the summer. The wood of the Bay is very beautiful and is marketed in Oregon as Myrtlewood.

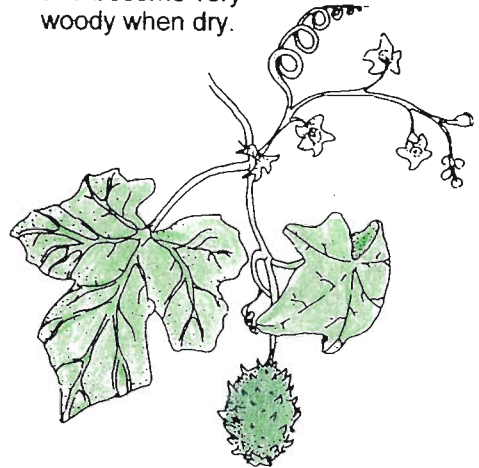
California Bay



Dutchman's Pipevine

Growing amongst the Bay is **Dutchman's Pipevine** (*Aristolochia californica*). This is a deciduous vine with heart shaped 2-6 inch long leaves and very unique flowers. The green and purple flowers bloom early in the spring. Their unique shape allows them to capture fungus gnats for a short time. While trapped, the gnats fly all around inside the flower, covering themselves with pollen and ensuring pollination of the vine. The seedpods of the Dutchman's Pipevine are generally much larger than the flowers, 1-3 inches long. They are multi-sectioned and become very woody when dry.

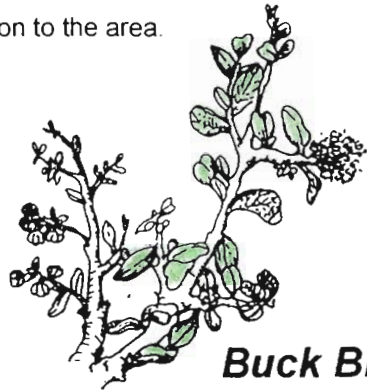
A second vine growing amongst the Bay is **Manroot** (*Marah fabaceus*) or Wild Cucumber. This vine produces fruits that resemble small round cucumbers, but they are not edible. Manroot gets its name from the huge, nearly man-sized root from which the vine grows.



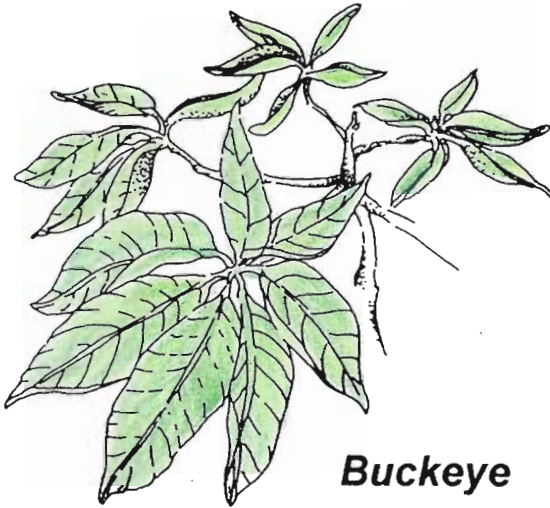
Manroot

5. This spot has a grouping of three shrubs common to the area.

Buck Brush (*Ceanothus cuneatus*) is an evergreen shrub with small leathery leaves. In the spring this shrub's small white flowers emit a strong, sweet smell.



Buck Brush



Buckeye

Buckeye (*Aesculus californica*) has smooth, silvery bark and grows in beautiful bending formations. The leaves are broad and dark green, but dry and become brown in the summer months. The seeds are large, round, and shiny brown. Native Americans would eat Buckeye seeds after leaching out the toxins.

Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), also known as Christmas berry, is a very attractive shrub, which is sometimes used commercially in Christmas decorations. Toyon is evergreen and has 2-4 inch long leathery dark green leaves with toothed edges. In the spring Toyon has small white flowers and in the summer it bears small red berries, which are an important food for songbirds. The berries were also eaten by Native Americans and were prepared by boiling, baking, or grinding them into a meal.

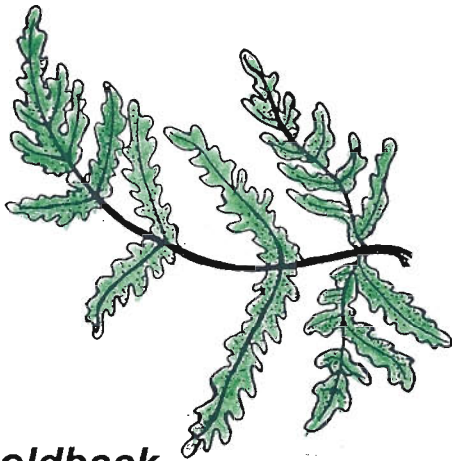


Toyon

6. This tree may seem familiar. The **Interior Live Oak** (*Quercus wislizenii*) is very similar in appearance to the Canyon Live Oak you encountered earlier. The easiest way to distinguish between the two is by inspecting the underside of the tree's leaves. The leaves of the Interior Live Oak have a smooth underside, while the Canyon Live Oak's leaves have a fuzzy underside. Also, the acorns of the Interior Live Oak are thinner and have a scaly cap, while the Canyon Live Oak's acorns are rounder and have a chalky yellow cap. Acorns of both species were a staple part of local Native American diets.



**Interior
Live Oak**



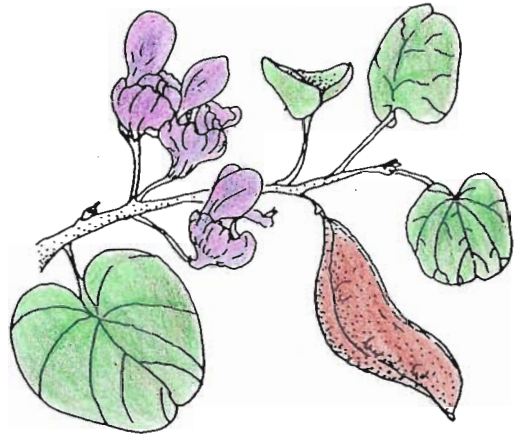
**Goldback
Fern**

Beneath the Oak you may notice a dense growth of ferns. This is the **Goldback Fern** (*Pityrogramma triangularis*). Look at the underside of the fronds and you will see how this fern got its name. The spores are a bright yellow color and very powdery. The thin dark stems of the goldback fern were used as decoration in baskets woven by Native Americans.

Take a look down at the river bar immediately below this post-marker and you will see a rusted dredge bucket half-buried in the river cobbles. This relic from the mining days is a reminder of the intensive search for gold during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The huge mounds of cobbles on the opposite riverbank are also dredging leftovers.

Immediately down river on the opposite river bank there are also fascinating slate bedrock formations thought to have originated in the ocean 300 – 160 million years ago. The river has eroded and exposed this ancestral river bedrock, creating an assortment of captivating pools filled with aquatic secrets just waiting to be explored.

7. Redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*) is one of the showiest shrubs along the Canyon. If you are lucky enough to see it in the spring, you will be awed by its dense covering of small pink flowers. Redbud is often used as an ornamental. The heart-shaped leaves of Redbud are a very pretty dark green color. In the summer, fall, and winter, you will see many large seedpods hanging from the Redbud. Native Americans used extracts from Redbud medicinally and put the shredded bark in baskets as decoration.



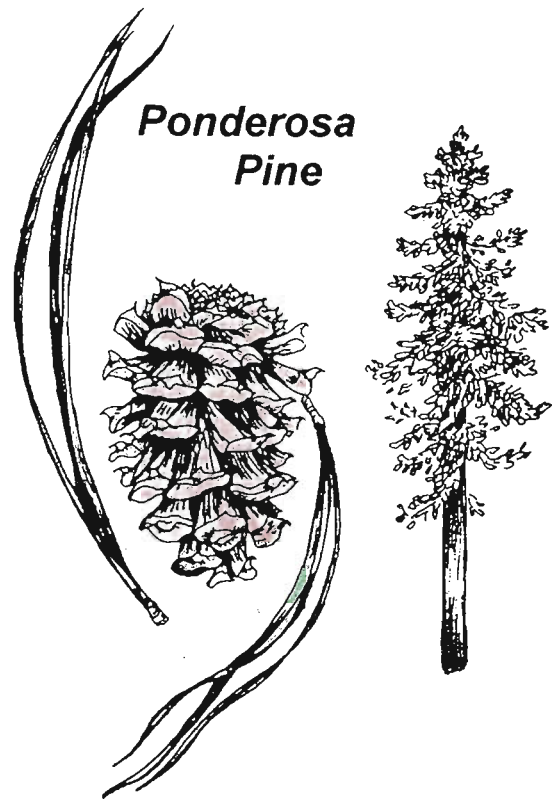
Redbud



Black Oak

8. Across the trail from the post is a stately **Black Oak** (*Quercus kelloggii*) tree. Its broad, dense leaves provide shade and shelter to many birds and small mammals during the summer months. While it is more profuse further up the canyon and through-out other regions of the foothills, a few can be found here as the trail winds up towards the Falls. The acorns of the Black Oak were very important to Native Americans, making up a major portion of their diet.

9. This is a lovely specimen of a **Ponderosa Pine** (*Pinus ponderosa*). This large tree is common to the foothill area and the most widely distributed pine in North America. It is easily distinguished by its "jigsaw puzzle" bark, which breaks off in thin, irregular chips. The seeds of the ponderosa are eaten by various birds and rodents, including California Quail and squirrels, but are a bit too small to attract any interest from people.



**Ponderosa
Pine**

Grey Pine

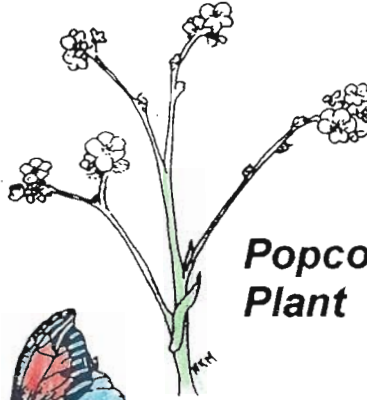


10. On the bank towards the river you will see a stand of **Grey Pine** (*Pinus sabiniana*), also known as the Foothill Pine. The Grey Pine is easily distinguished from a distance by its silvery gray foliage and wispy branches. The cones of the Grey Pine are very large (6-10 inches long), heavy (up to 4 lbs), and spiky. If one fell out of a tree and hit you, it could cause some serious damage. The nuts found in the cones are large and delicious. Native Americans harvested the cones extensively and roasted them to extract the nuts. The seed's shells were also used as beads for decorating costumes.

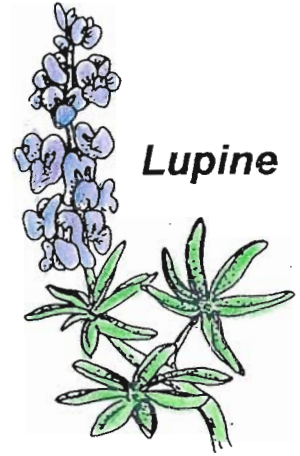
11. If you happen to be hiking this trail in the spring months, you will have the opportunity to admire the profuse bloom of wild flowers. Hundreds of species can be found along the American River, but here is a sampling of some of the most common ones you will see March -- May.



Fiddleneck



**Popcorn
Plant**



Lupine



Brodiaea

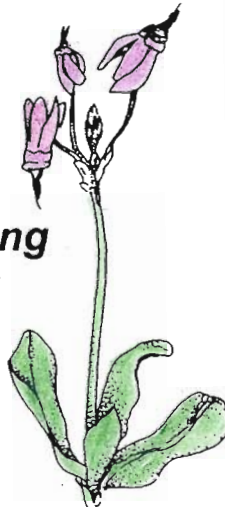


**California
Poppy**

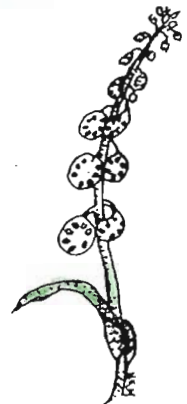


Larkspur

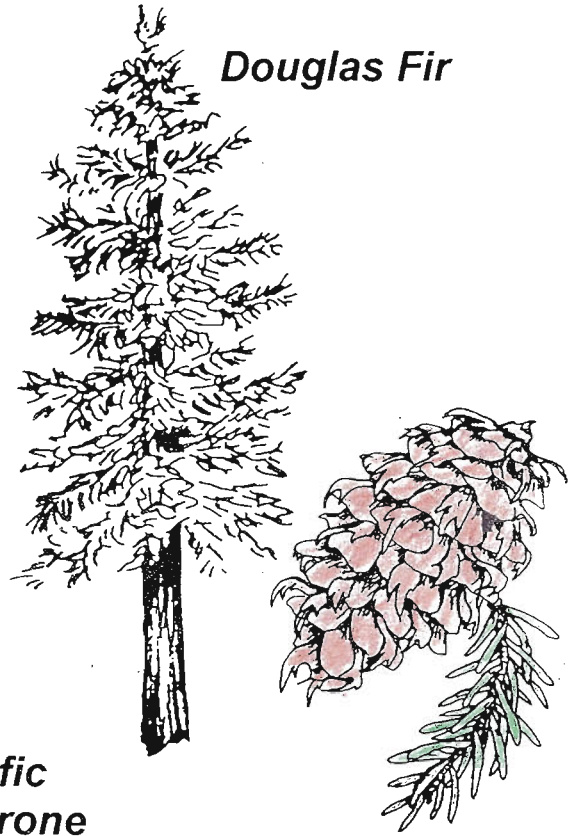
**Shooting
Star**



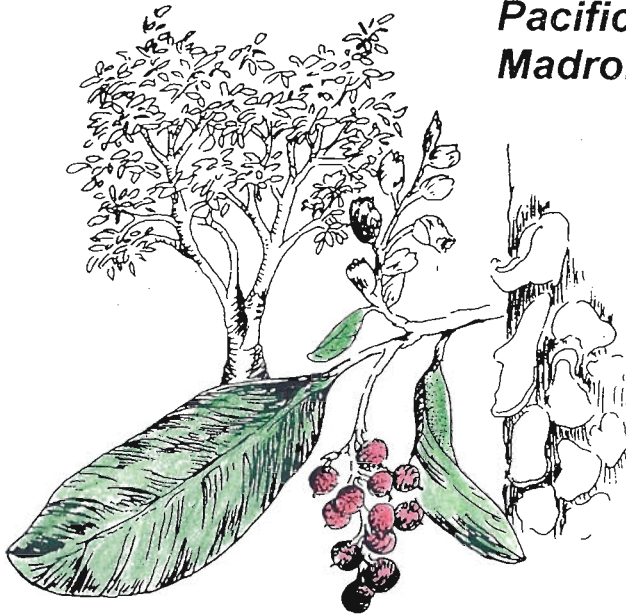
Lace Pod



12. This huge tree trunk belongs to an ancient **Douglas Fir** (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). The Douglas Fir has very distinctive cones with three-pronged papery bracts. These bracts allow the seeds to be carried by the wind up to one-fourth mile away from the parent tree. There are several very old Douglas Firs along this stretch of trail. This species is one of the tallest found in California. Some Native American uses of the Douglas Fir included housing timbers, harpoon shafts, canoes, and several other tools constructed from the lumber. The roots of young trees were used to make baskets. A tea rich in vitamin C can be made from the newly sprouted needles of the Fir.



Douglas Fir

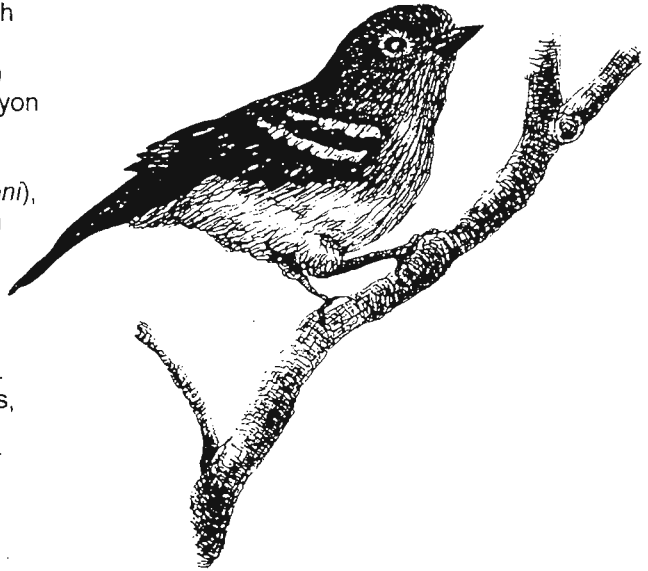


Pacific Madrone

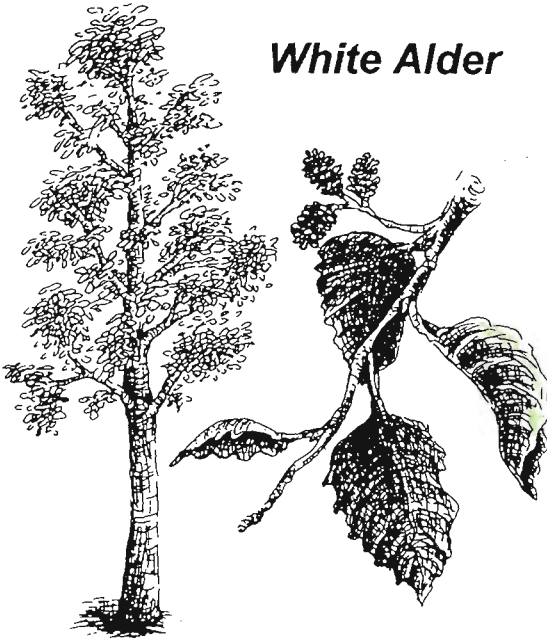
Another distinctive tree growing in this grove is the **Pacific Madrone** (*Arbutus menziesii*). This ever-green tree has broad oval leaves and small red berries. The bark of the Madrone is a lovely reddish brown color. You may notice that it peels off in large papery sheets. The berries of the Madrone are eaten by deer and many species of birds. They were also harvested by Native Americans and eaten raw or cooked, but eating too many will cause cramps.

Hutton's Vireo

13. Take a moment to admire Codfish Creek as it flows past the trail. Often heard singing and calling, but seldom seen are the birds that live in the canyon woodlands. With a little practice and patience, the inquisitive year-round resident, **Hutton's Vireo** (*Vireo huttoni*), a small 4^{1/2}-inch olive-brown bird with two broad white wing bars, can be called using the "birders" *spish-spish-spish* alarm call. The Hutton Vireo's call is a double-noted *zu-weep* and a hoarse *day-dee-dee*. Nesting in Live and Golden Oak trees, the Hutton Vireo's hanging nest is often made from lichen held together with spider silk and cocoons.



White Alder



14. The riparian zone (the plant area next to the creek) is filled with plants and trees adapted to streams and rivers having year-round water. The attractive **White Alder** (*Alnus rhombifolia*) tree shades the creek, helping to cool the water for aquatic insects and animals. Its tall trunk and open crown branches are whitish or grayish in color, and its oblong 2-4 inch leaves are tapered at each end. The White Alder's long, slender hanging catkins ripen into miniature brown, woody cones. Alder wood is said by many to be good for making strong, lightweight canoe and kayak paddles.

Congratulations!

You have reached Codfish Creek Falls.

We hope you have enjoyed your hike and gained a little more insight into the unique habitat around you. Please take care to preserve the trail for other visitors and the wild residents of the area. Please take any trash you may have to the garbage can at the trailhead and stay on the path so you do not damage any wildlife or cause erosion. All archeological sites and natural features in California State Parks are protected by law. Do not disturb or take anything. No overnight camping is allowed along this stretch of the American River. Thank you for visiting and please continue to explore the many trails and parks along the American River Canyon.



*Pamphlet Illustrations & Text by Heather K. Mehl
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