

Knoxville Wildlife Area, a serpentine haven

As more and more of California's natural landscapes become developed - the wild areas that remain serve as strongholds for a diversity of wildlife species. Knoxville Wildlife Area is one of those places.

By Chamois Andersen

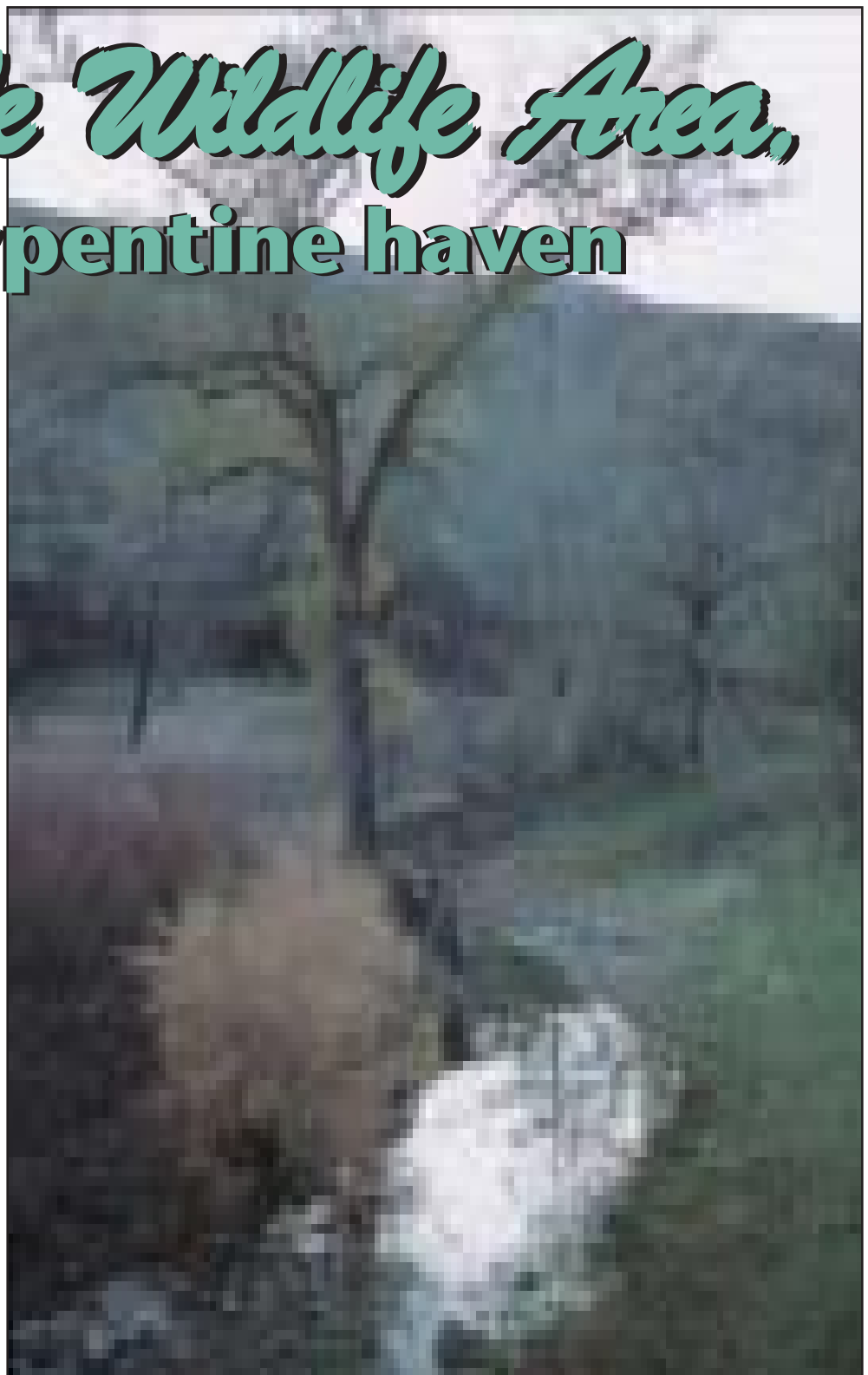
Because of the area's distinct wildlife habitats - the oak grasslands, dense chaparral brush and oak woodlands-Knoxville Wildlife Area provides important cover, breeding grounds and feeding areas for black-tailed deer, quail, wild turkeys and raptors.

Nestled in the hills of California's central coast, 10 miles north of Lake Berryessa, Knoxville was acquired by the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) to protect the area's rich wildlife habitat as well as to provide the public with expanded hunting, hiking, and watchable wildlife opportunities.

Originally, in 1988, three separate parcels totaling 93 acres were donated to the DFG to preserve habitat for game and nongame species in the area. Last year, The Homestake Mining Company, which is in the process of closing its gold mine nearby, sold the Knoxville Ranch to the DFG, which provided an additional 8,000 acres of habitat for wildlife as well as opening more land to hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts.

As part of the 300,000-acre Blue Ridge/Berryessa Natural Area in Napa, Lake, Colusa and Yolo counties, Knoxville Wildlife Area is managed in conjunction with the Bureau of Land Management, the University of California Natural Reserve System and the Blue Ridge/Berryessa Natural Area Conservation Partnership. The partnership strives to manage both public and private land to protect the diversity of species found in the entire region.

Rio Grande wild turkeys roost in gray pines found in the area's dense oak forests, and deer forage along the riparian



DFG photo by Robert Waldron

Eticuera Creek meanders along the Knoxville's western border.

corridors of Eticuera creek. The diversity of wildlife found at Knoxville is due in part to the varying vegetation found in the area.

Knoxville Wildlife Area is one of the few sites in California that protects unusual serpentine habitats. Serpentine is California's state rock, and the soil

derived from serpentine is chemically hostile to most plant species. However, its deposits support islands of rare and endemic plants, which have adapted to these harsh soils and provide for numerous endemic insects. These plants and insects help sustain a wide array of songbirds, mammals, amphibians, and



DFG photo by Robert Waldron

Knoxville provides the public with expanded hunting, hiking, and watchable wildlife opportunities.

reptiles. In addition to Knoxville's serpentine chaparral habitat, the wildlife area encompasses grasslands and cliff habitats, providing feeding areas and a safe haven for hawks, harriers, falcons, owls and other raptors.

From Blue Ridge, topping out at an elevation of more than 3,000-feet, to the tranquil Eticuera Creek, which meanders along the area's western border, Knoxville Wildlife Area's open and remote landscape continues to provide a home to many of California's native species.

This newly acquired wildlife area is open to the public; however, parking lots, trails, water and other facilities have not yet been developed. A management plan is being developed that will identify the appropriate amount and locations of these amenities. In the meantime the public can utilize the area for hiking, bird watching, wildflower observation and hunting. The best time to visit Knoxville Wildlife Area is from October through May when the temperatures are pleasant and the scenery is most alluring.

For more information on the Knoxville



DFG photo by Chamois Andersen

Posted signs indicate wildlife area borders.

Wildlife Area or the Blue Ridge Berryessa Natural Area, please contact DFG at (707) 944-5500 or stop by the regional office at

7329 Silverado Trail in Napa.

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