

Protecting Coastal Dune Scrub

Found within the Oceano Dunes SVRA are pockets of naturally occurring "vegetated islands" which consist of coastal dune scrub and willow thickets. Coastal dune scrub plants are drought-loving and have shallow roots. The most common native dune scrub plants are mock heather and silver dune lupine. Both plants stabilize the sides and tops of the sand dunes.

Arroyo Willow

The arroyo willow has an extensive root system that enables it to find moisture in the lower water table even as building sand dunes make the water table less accessible. Willows are fast-growing trees that can be found all over the world. Native Americans had many uses for this plant. The inner bark was made into rope, the shoots used for baskets, and limbs were used for stakes that provided structure for thatched houses.



Photo Courtesy of Alice Abela



Silvery Legless Lizard

Silvery legless lizards are small and slender (4-7 inches long) with a shovel-shaped snout, smooth shiny scales, a blunt tail and have no legs or eyelids. They mostly live underground, burrowing in loose sandy soil. They primarily eat insects, beetles, termites, and spiders. They ambush their prey by concealing themselves beneath the leaf litter.

Photo Courtesy of Roger Zachary



California Thrasher

California thrashers have a long curved beak that they use to probe into the leaf litter or dig in the ground for insects, grubs, and spiders. Their songs are similar to mockingbirds and can be heard year-round. Like the mockingbird, their calls can mimic other wildlife.



Kangaroo Rat

Kangaroo rats are small, seed-eating rodents that can live their whole life without drinking water. They get all the water they need from the seeds they eat. They are solitary animals with a home range of less than one-half acre. Kangaroo rats hop on their hind feet, using their tails for balance. They dig underground burrows to provide shelter from the heat as well as a place to hide from predators such as coyotes and owls.

Silvery legless lizards, California thrashers, and kangaroo rats all need the plants of the park's coastal scrub areas for food and shelter. Stay within designated riding areas to keep coastal dune scrub habitats healthy and intact. Protecting coastal scrub areas helps to protect Oceano Dune SVRA's water quality.