



# California State Parks

## Video Transcript



### *Mount Livermore Nature Hike at Angel Island State Park*

Hello and welcome to Angel Island State Park. My name is Casey Lee, and I'm going to be taking you on a tour of the island today. We're going to head up the North Ridge Trail to Mt. Livermore and come back down the Sunset Trail. Hopefully we'll see some interesting things today.

This is a really good place to see an example of one of our non-native species here on the island. And that is the blue gum eucalyptus. The eucalyptus was planted here by the military starting around 1863. They were using it for camouflage, windbreak, and they hoped to build things out of the wood, which proved unsuccessful. From here we're going to cross the perimeter road and go back onto the North Ridge Trail. We'll see some smaller plants there, including miner's lettuce.

So here on this hillside we see miner's lettuce. And it is a plant typical of the oak woodland that we have here in the park. Miner's lettuce, when it starts to grow, has a heart-shaped leaf, and as it grows it becomes a circle. Miner's lettuce got its name because the miners used to eat it during the Gold Rush. And they would pick the miner's lettuce and eat it, and it helped keep away scurvy, because it does have vitamin C in it. Native Americans also ate it. They would one-up the miners though. They would even put it near anthills so that the ants, as they walked over it, would secrete almost like a vinegar-tasting substance that would give the salad, salad dressing.

As we go further up the North Ridge trail, we're going to be seeing more flowers typical of the oak woodlands. Right here we have a little oakmoth larva. And you can see he's hanging from a silk thread. The larva will eat on the leaves of the coast live oak here and eventually grow into an oakmoth.

This part of the island is a coast live oak woodland. And that just means that everything in this habitat revolves around the coast live oak. It's the cornerstone to the habitat. The coast live oak can be in a more bushy form, and it grows eventually into a tree. The tree itself does have acorns.

The acorns were used by Native Americans as a main food source. They would have to, of course, leach out the poison that is in acorns before they were able to eat it, and they would usually mix that meal that they ended up with with other meat or berries to make it taste a little better. It really doesn't have its own flavor. Sometimes they would even flavor it with other plants, season it to enhance the flavor.

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So right here we have one of our native grasses, and this is rattlesnake grass. And you can see that these actually do look like a rattlesnake tail, but as the summer goes on these will dry out, and when the wind blows, they will make a rattling sound just like a rattlesnake. Angel Island doesn't have any rattlesnakes, but sometimes when the wind is blowing just right in the summer, it sounds like we have them.

Now if you look at these small purple flowers, this is filaree. It's actually a fodder plant. It was used to feed cattle. You can also see its seed, which is this right here. And as, again, this dries out and matures, it will actually become a corkscrew. If you walk past it, it will get caught in your socks. That's how the plant is transported from one place to another. It was brought here when the island was used as a cattle ranch. A lot of exotic plants were introduced that way because the cattle brought them in with their feed.

This plant here is the pitcher sage. The pitcher sage is actually in the mint family. You can tell that by its fuzzy leaves and its square stem. The pitcher sage is also very deer-resistant. So it's an excellent plant to plant at home. It is a native, so it belongs here in California. And the deer just don't like to eat it. So it will thrive in your backyard.

This is one of the little wildflowers that we've found along the trail. This is purple sanicle, or snakeweed. And just a little further up we have blue-eyed grass. You'll notice that this is not blue, and it is also not grass. It's a purple flower with a yellow center.

All along this hillside here you can see some of these golf tee lichen. Lichen are decomposers. They help break down things, and in this case they're on this rocky hillside breaking down the rocks into soil so that other plants can grow. And, as you can see, little plants have started to creep into every little crevice where there is any soil, and they've begun to grow.

These yellow flowers that you see are actually wild pansies. One of the other names that they go by is Johnny-jump-ups. And yet another name is Johnny-jump-up-and-kiss-me-by-the-garden-gate. Flowers sometimes get interesting names, and go by lots of different names, but this one is simply just a wild pansy.

This plant here is the hound's tongue. The hound's tongue is easy to identify because of its broad leaves that look very much like a hound's tongue.

Near the hound's tongue is also the maidenhair fern. The maidenhair fern has green leaves and black stems. Native Americans used to peel the leaves off of these and then make baskets out of the stems.

Behind me is poison oak. Poison oak is something that every Californian should be able to identify because poison oak causes a rash if you come in contact with its oils. There are some people that are not sensitive to poison oak, and historically Native Americans were not sensitive to the oils. But when Europeans came to North America, their immunity was diluted, and they have since become sensitive to poison oak. Poison oak can come in many forms. It can be a small plant, it can be a large bush, or it can even grow in the vines like you see here behind me--kind of snake vines growing all over usually trees like oak trees. In this case our

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coast live oak is covered with the poison oak. There's a saying to help you remember how to identify poison oak and that is, "Leaves of three let it be; if it's hairy, it's a berry" because poison oak leaves comes in groups of three but so do berry bushes. Berry bushes have thorns to protect them, while the poison oak uses the oil. So if it's hairy, it's a berry.

Over to my left you can see ceanothus. Ceanothus is a native plant, and it has the blue flowers. If you remove the flowers from the plant and add water, you can make a mild soap. You can use it to wash your hands, and Native Americans even used it to wash their hair.

The ceanothus signals a change in an environment. We are moving into the chaparral, which is a drier, more arid part of the park. You'll see hardier plants there that are more drought-tolerant. And as you can see we have entered the chaparral. It is signified by hardy plants that can deal with the small amounts of rainfall that come to the chaparral.

The manzanita is an example of that. The manzanita has small berries on it, hence the name manzanita, which means "little apple" in Spanish. We also have Indian paintbrush, which is the red flower. Indian paintbrush can live on its own, but if it can, it will take advantage of other plants and help itself by using the energy from those other plants--almost a parasitic relationship.

Right now we're crossing the fire road, but right here we have another good example of ceanothus--that plant that you can use as a soap or shampoo. We're going to keep heading up the North Ridge Trail. We're already 400 feet above sea level, but we have about 400 more to go. Up at the trail we'll see a very beautiful meadow. Let's go on the trail.

So you can see here that this centipede is having a fight for its life with these ants. Apparently it came too close to where the ants felt comfortable, and the ants are now attacking it. Probably the ants will win this fight because the ants just completely outnumber the centipede. Centipedes are poisonous. This is actually the first time I've seen a centipede here on Angel Island. So it's good to know that those are around here. This animal is known for living in drier areas like the chaparral here.

This is galium or cleave or nature's bedstraw or nature's Velcro. This plant has a lot of different names. As you can see it kind of sticks to itself, and it even sticks to me. Sometimes we are inspired by nature when we invent things. And this is nature's Velcro. This was one of the inspirations for Velcro that we use today. It was also used to stuff mattresses--bedstraw. You could stuff your mattresses with the dry plant, and you'd have a much more comfortable place to sleep.

Down here on the ground we have some examples of soap plant. Soap plant was used as soap. The root is actually what is used. There's a bulb that is covered by a fibrous material that was removed by Native Americans. The fibrous material was used as a brush. The bulb was broken down and mashed, and you add water and it's a soap.

But you could also put it into a lake or a pond or a stream and shock fish. The fish would be uncomfortable with the chemicals in the water, and they would float to the surface. It made it easier to catch fish. The Native Americans also could cook the bulb and eat it. It was a difficult process to make it edible. They actually wrapped the bulb in poison oak leaves and

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cooked it for a long time before they could eat it. You can see here the leaves have a wavy edge to it. And that's how you can tell it apart from this plant right here. Which is zigaden or the star lily. And we're going to see some flowering star lily just ahead.

We're now in the meadow just below Mt. Livermore, and this is a good place to see the Douglas iris. This is actually the end of the season for the iris. So you can see they're starting to fade. But they do come in lots of colors--anywhere from deep purples and blues to white.

This is the plant that we saw earlier, but this time it's in bloom. This is the star lily or the zigaden.

This is another native tree to Angel Island. This is a bay laurel. And the "bay" of bay laurel is in fact the bay leaves that you use for cooking. If you break these leaves you can get that smell that you use in your spaghetti sauce.

This is a dead Monterey pine. Pine trees are exotic here. They're not supposed to be on Angel Island. So the state park has actually girdled this tree. If you look down at the bottom, you can see a line has been cut around the base of the tree. This cuts the living part of the tree that is just under the bark, which eventually does kill the tree. As you can see, the insects have already started to break down this tree. Dead trees are important to the environment. Birds use them, like woodpeckers, to hide their acorns; so they drill holes into the sides of the dead trees and store their food in there. Owls and other birds of prey will perch on dead snarls to get a better view or to rest. So these trees are important even as they're dying.

These checker lilies or mission bells are a native plant to the island. They are called mission bells because the flower faces downward and gives it a bell like shape.

Now we're very lucky today--we ran into a mule deer. The deer have always been on Angel Island. Native Americans came to Angel Island to hunt and fish. And we have found evidence of deer bones in their middens, which were basically their discarded garbage. The mule deer here are actually a little smaller than most mule deer off the island. When the military had control of the island, they, too, hunted the deer. Eventually the deer population became low enough that they imported more deer to supplement the herd. When the military left the island in 1962, the hunting stopped completely, and the population started to grow.

This is the wild cucumber. It's also known as manroot. Some people are comfortable calling it manroot than wild cucumber because it implies that it's edible and it is not. It does produce a fruit, a little, small, round fruit, but it is poisonous unlike the cucumbers that you eat with your salad. Now it has these spiral tendrils that come out of the plant, which helps it grab on. You can see it's kind of stuck in the grass here. It's also able to climb that way, so it can climb up trees.

As we head down the Sunset Trail, we are leaving the chaparral. So it's our last chance to see things like coyote brush and wild sage. Wild sage . . . I have heard that you can cook with it, and that you can't cook with it. Some people have found it edible; others have not. Wild sage does smell just like the sage you use in cooking.

And we also have sticky monkey flower right next to it. Sticky monkey flower, or sticky monkey

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bush, when it blooms has orange flowers.

From here we're going to head down across the fire road towards the oak woodlands once again and to Ayala Cove.

Behind me is the toyon--the last of the native trees here on the island. The toyon actually can be a shrub or a tree. It's also known as the holly berry or the Christmas berry. We have some of the berries right here, and it does look just like the holly berries that you get at Christmastime. Actually Hollywood was named after the toyon that grew in that area, mistakenly thought of as holly berries.

Down here at the bottom of the Sunset Trail is Pride of Madeira or echium. One of the most beautiful exotics we have here on the island.

Thank you for joining us at Angel Island State Park. And we hope that you can come and see us soon and enjoy the park for yourself.

Running Time: 17:46  
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