



WILD IRISH HILLS



Home is a habitat

Wide open grasslands and dark green patches of coast live oak woodlands stretch across the Irish Hills Natural Reserve, providing food and shelter for many species of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and insects.



Froom Creek and Prefumo Creek meander through the Irish Hills, lined along their banks with mature native trees. Willows, cottonwoods, sycamores, California bay, and coast live oaks shade and cool the water, providing habitat for aquatic wildlife, including the threatened southern steelhead.

The most widespread plant community growing throughout the Reserve is chaparral. Dense masses of shrubs include chamise, deerweed, manzanita, coffeeberry, California buckwheat, islay (hollyleaf cherry), bush monkeyflower, toyon, yucca, wild cucumber, and black sage. Some of the seeds of chaparral plants, such as toyon, need at least 30 years of accumulated leaf litter before they can germinate. Others require fire or smoke to open their seed cases.

The serpentine soil common in this area supports a distinctive plant community that can tolerate the heavy metals and lack of nutrients that most plants need to grow. As a result, native plants have not been overrun by nonnative grasses and crop plants, and hundreds of species of native wildflowers bloom here throughout the year.



A coyote, listening for the movements of prey underground. Coyotes typically hunt in pairs, but can be heard in town, howling together in larger groups.



Bobcats are twice as large as most housecats, with short 'bobbed' tails.



Mule deer doe and fawns, whose spots help hide them in undergrowth. Mule deer are the favorite food of mountain lions.

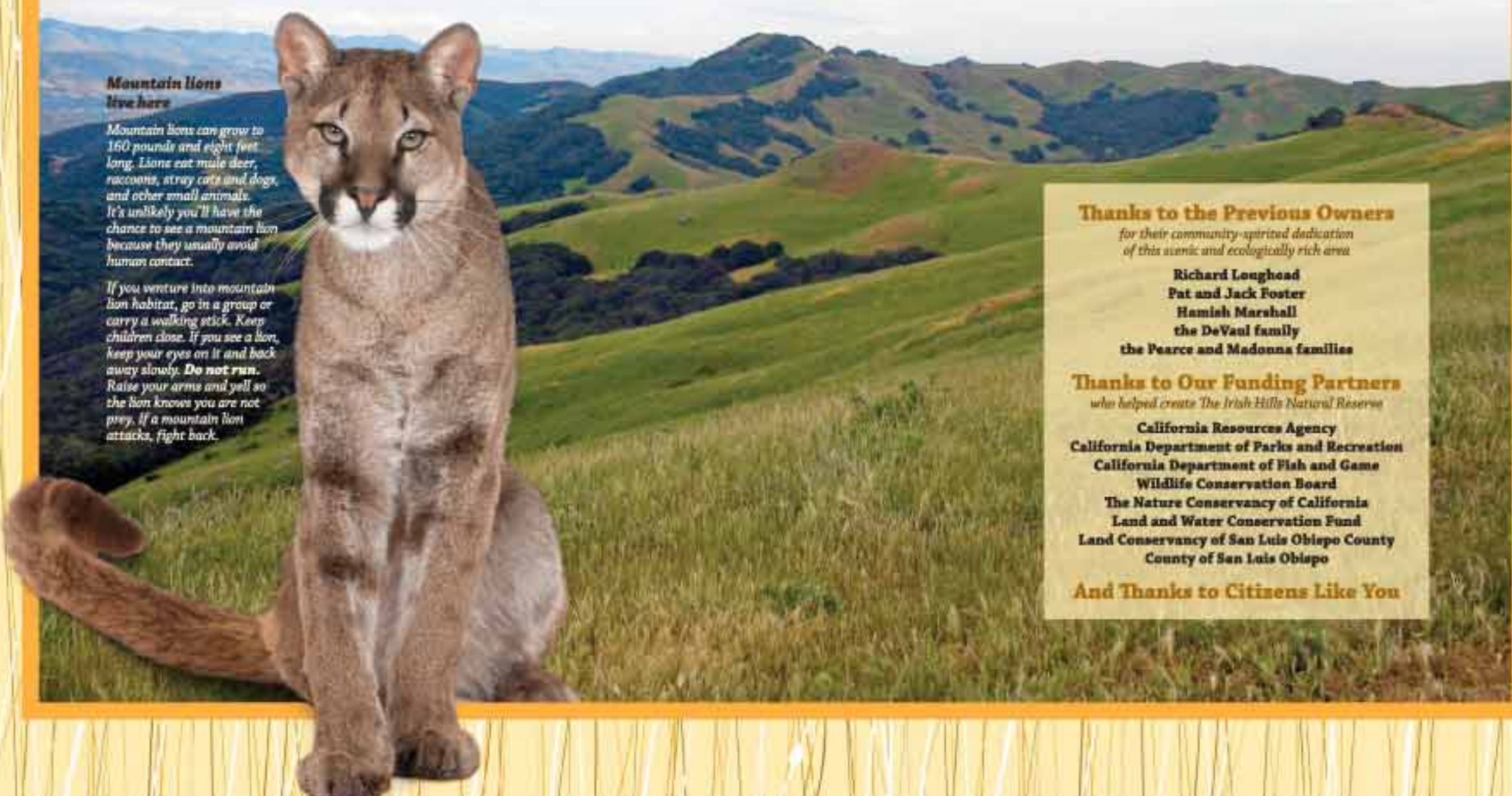
Living in the wild

Mammals living in the Reserve include deer, raccoons, skunks, coyotes, bobcats, and mountain lions. Brush rabbits and rodents such as gophers, California mouse, deer mouse, vole, and ground squirrels form the basis of the food chain. Birds of prey include kestrels, red-tailed hawks (*above left*), golden eagles, peregrine falcons, great horned owls, and barn owls. Rattlesnakes live here, along with tarantulas, alligator lizards, pond turtles, and treefrogs.

Mountain lions live here

Mountain lions can grow to 160 pounds and eight feet long. Lions eat mule deer, raccoons, stray cats and dogs, and other small animals. It's unlikely you'll have the chance to see a mountain lion because they usually avoid human contact.

If you venture into mountain lion habitat, go in a group or carry a walking stick. Keep children close. If you see a lion, keep your eyes on it and back away slowly. **Do not run.** Raise your arms and yell so the lion knows you are not prey. If a mountain lion attacks, fight back.



Thanks to the Previous Owners

for their community-spirited dedication of this scenic and ecologically rich area

Richard Loughhead
Pat and Jack Foster
Hamish Marshall
the DeVaul family
the Pearce and Madonna families

Thanks to Our Funding Partners

who helped create The Irish Hills Natural Reserve

California Resources Agency
California Department of Parks and Recreation
California Department of Fish and Game
Wildlife Conservation Board
The Nature Conservancy of California
Land and Water Conservation Fund
Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County
County of San Luis Obispo

And Thanks to Citizens Like You

IRISH HILLS

NATURAL RESERVE



Welcome to the Irish Hills Natural Reserve

This 1,000-acre natural reserve is the largest of our City's Open Space lands. It includes high-quality native oak woodland and chaparral habitat, bunchgrasses, wildflowers and rare plants, beautiful rock outcrops and great views. A small stream supports the southern steelhead, a rare fish.

For years, local citizens with an adventurous side have been drawn to the Irish Hills for hiking and sightseeing. The old Jeep roads and cattle trails became a system of footpaths and mountain bike trails. Volunteers regularly work with City Rangers to maintain the trails.

Respect habitat, and enjoy!

Because of fractured rock formations, steep slopes, and fragile nature of the habitat, please stay on the trails while you enjoy your visit to the Irish Hills.

TRAIL INFO

From the Prefumo and Madonna Trailheads, it's a moderate to strenuous ascent for about one mile. The trail becomes a plateau where trails are easy to moderate.

From the Madonna Trailhead, KING TRAIL and MARIPOSA TRAIL form a popular loop (1.8 miles) that is moderate to strenuous.

From the Prefumo Trailhead, BOG TRUSTLE TRAIL and MARIPOSA TRAIL form another popular loop. (1.8 mile) No bikes.

All other trails are considered easy to moderate except for OCEAN VIEW TRAIL which is considered strenuous.

AIM your smartphone at the tag to access the City's Open Space Maps on your phone. Get the free app at <http://spring.slo.net>

A PARCEL IN PUBLIC DOMAIN

The OCEAN VIEW TRAIL peaks in the 80-acre BLM property, administered by the Bureau of Land Management. It is a piece of the original public domain, which has never passed into private ownership. Due to the good relations between the City and BLM, it has been made accessible to the public.

The hike to the top of the ridge is a challenge, but the reward is a view that extends to the ocean... very rare in San Luis Obispo!



HARDSCRABBLE



Chromite Ore

Irish Hills prospectors take a shine to chromite

At least three small chromite mining efforts occurred in the Irish Hills between the 1880s and early 1900s. The remains consist only of the actual working faces, and waste dumps of low grade ore. Small sheds probably existed to store fuel, equipment, or explosives, but no larger buildings have been discovered.



Chromite is a mineral found in certain rocks, including serpentine, which underlies much of the Irish Hills Natural Reserve. Chromium is known for its high shine when polished, and is used as a protective and decorative coating on car parts, cutlery, and many other items. A major industrial development was the discovery that steel could

be made highly resistant to corrosion and discoloration by adding chromium to form rustproof stainless steel.



The smaller mines were simple operations: blasting, hand-digging, and hauling broken ore to the railroad.

"As a mining county, San Luis Obispo is most widely known for its production of chromic iron. In years past many mines were worked here, but, owing to the low prices obtained in recent years, nothing is now being done. Chromic iron occurs, however, in large quantities and, under favorable conditions, will again be mined."

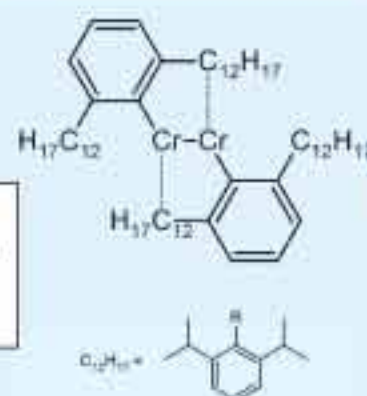
Now, in 1918, 13 years after the above was written, it is interesting to note that, while quicksilver production also adds largely to San Luis Obispo's fame as a mining county, the chromic iron mines are, under present favorable conditions, supplying a steady tonnage of ore to an eager market.

California Division of Mines Bulletin, 1918



Froom's (Mrs.) Chrome Deposits. Mrs. Froom of San Luis Obispo owns some old chrome properties in the southern part of Rancho Laguna, 4.5 miles southwest of the city. There are 5 old tunnels on the property, one of which is still open for 50 feet. This tunnel is driven entirely in serpentine and shows some granules of chrome ore scattered through the rock. There is an old open cut with a face 40 feet high from which it is reported quite a tonnage of ore was extracted in the past. A small amount of prospecting has recently been done on the property.

California Division of Mines Bulletin, 1918



The mines and the form of chromium found here are not considered hazardous. No shafts or other falling hazards are believed to be present, but caution is always urged around such areas due to the danger of unstable slopes or falling rocks.

