

Wildlife

While the campus does contain a rich array of plant life, it is just as easy to lose oneself in the diverse groups of amphibians, invertebrates, reptiles, birds, and mammals that have all made their homes on campus. UCSC is most well known for its mascot, the banana slug (*ariolimax dolichophallus*), as well as the black-tailed deer (*odocoileus hemionus columbianus*) that roam all over campus. However, a patient or lucky observer can spot many other animals on campus, including bobcats, birds of prey like great horned owls, golden eagles, and American kestrels, amphibians like newts and salamanders, and even mountain lions.



Safety Tip

- *It is important to know how to stay safe in the rare event of a mountain lion encounter. While most encounters rarely exceed a few seconds, it is important to pick up any pets or small children that may be present. If the mountain lion begins to approach do not run. Look it in the eye, and try to appear large and threatening, or throw things if the mountain lion presents a danger to you or someone around you.*
- *For more information on mountain lions check out santacruzpumas.org/*

Leave No Trace

*A common practice employed when enjoying the outdoors is called **Leave No Trace**. This idea has been organized into several principles that one can observe while outdoors:*

Plan Ahead and Prepare

Travel on Durable Surfaces

Dispose of Waste Properly

Leave What You Find

Respect Wildlife.

Be Considerate of Other Visitors.

For more information on Santa Cruz habitats, stewardship, and wildlife, check out these resources:

The Natural History of the UC Santa Cruz Campus (Second Edition)

An Unnatural History of UCSC

The Grounds Services and Site Stewardship website at:
ucscplant.ucsc.edu

The restoration program at:
greenhouse.ucsc.edu/RestorationPage.html

If you are interested in becoming an intern or a volunteer, please email:
grounds_interns@ucsc.edu

Hiker's and Biker's Guide to Stewardship and Habitat Preservation



Santa Cruz offers a highly diverse environment with many beautiful sights and habitats. In order to preserve this beauty, we need to watch our step when we go out into this wilderness, as our actions can have impacts that last for many years. What follows is a small guide to help members of the UCSC community understand their surroundings and learn how to reduce harmful behavior, while still enjoying the beautiful habitats of Santa Cruz.



There are two major types of habitats around campus, which include the **forests** that contain the world's tallest growing tree: the coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*). The presence of the coast redwoods in Santa Cruz has created an ecology that is highly dependent on the redwoods due to the shade, moisture, and leaf litter they provide.



Forests are not the only major environment found at UCSC, as there are several **grasslands** present around the campus. Most notably, these grasslands, the California coastal terrace prairie, tend to dominate the areas around lower campus, but are also present in upper campus. When traveling through these areas, it is important to **stay on designated trails**, as matted plants only provide a few inches of cover for the ground, and can be easily torn up by too many traveling feet.

Although everyone should feel free to explore these wonderful campus habitats, some cautious behavior should be exercised in order to help preserve the habitats longevity so that others may enjoy it.

All around UCSC, dozens, if not hundreds, of trails have sprung up because of people walking off of maintained paths. These ad hoc trails can be identified in several ways:

- Tend to be narrow (because they are made by feet).
- Surrounded by dense vegetation.
- Lack any signage, fences, or other man made structures that indicate an official trail.

While these unofficial trails can be a fun time for hikers and runners, they are a huge detriment to the habitats around campus, and present a danger to the redwood trees and grasslands. **In the forests, soil compaction caused by feet can cause erosion and expose redwood roots and compromise their health. Meanwhile, soil compaction in grasslands prevents the growth of native species, and even promote the success of invasive plants.**



Note the redwood roots, which are highly exposed due to soil compaction and erosion caused by foot traffic and mountain biking.

Mountain Biking

The sport of mountain biking is extremely popular on campus. While the single-track trails around campus can make for some enjoyable rides, **mountain biking tends to cause more damage than the footfalls of hikers and runners that move around campus, and is prohibited on the trails within UCSC.** However, the fire roads in upper campus are open to any mountain bikers who would rather hit the trails!

Stick Structures

All over campus there are several **stick structures** where students often congregate for recreation. Because of this gathering of many feet in a small space, the soil in and around these structures is often stripped of the protective leaf litter and becomes highly compacted. In addition, using fallen branches to build these structures can **interrupt the recruitment cycles of the soil**, as the branches would otherwise decompose and provide the soil with nutrients. The use of these branches also **deprives small creatures of habitats and shelter**, as well as promote the expansion of unmaintained trails, which increases the problems of soil compaction and erosion.