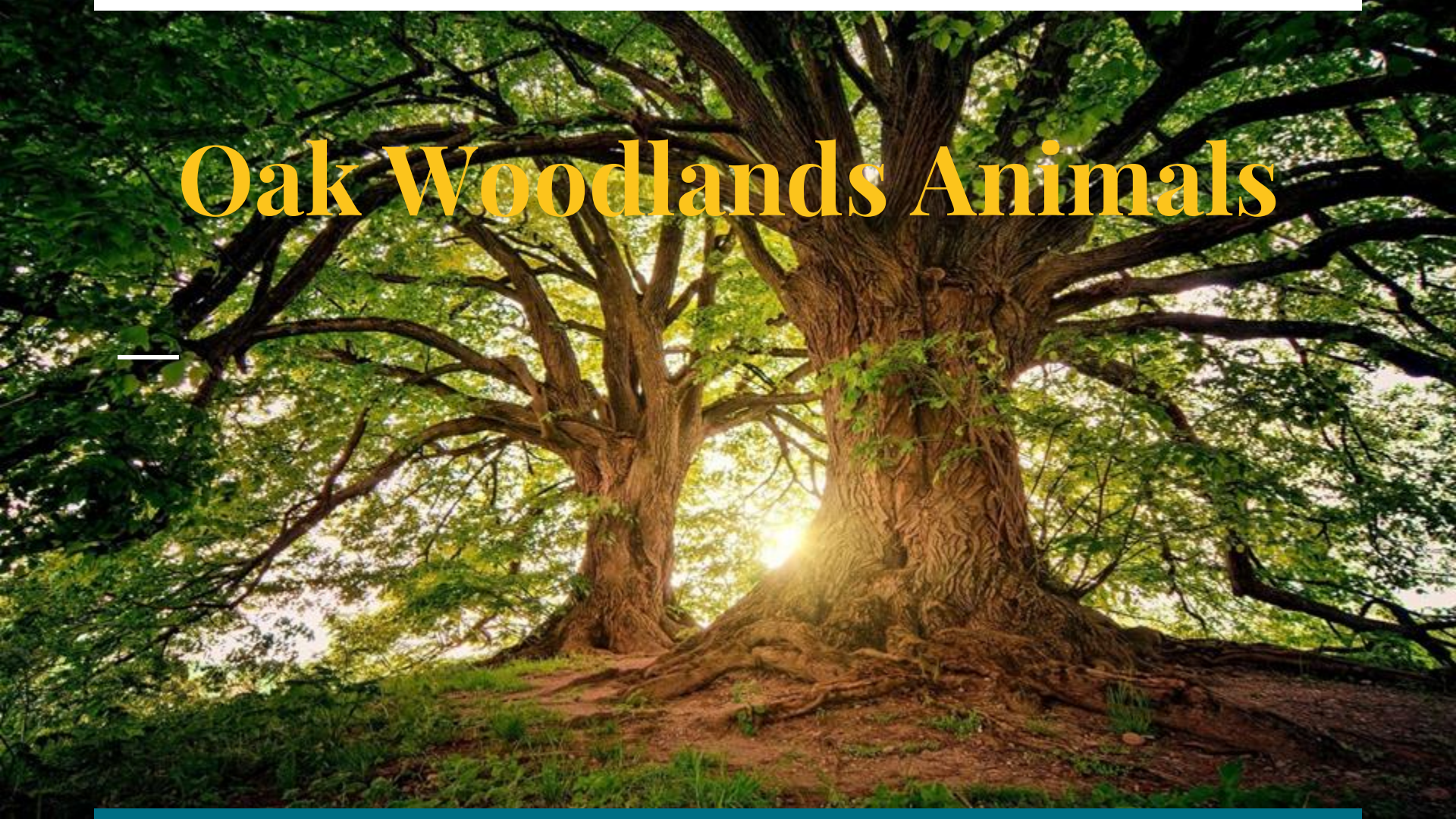


# Oak Woodlands Animals



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# California's Mixed Oak Woodland Ecosystem

The important thing about an oak forest is that it is a unique environment that is home to different animals and plants.

California's mixed oak woodlands, where you find California bay laurel, madrone, and redwood trees, are a special kind of home for many animals.

Almost half of the vertebrate animals in California live there!

# California Scrub jay, *Aphelocoma californica*

California scrub jays eat a variety of foods, like seeds, nuts, fruits, and berries.

They also eat insects, spiders, frogs, lizards, and even eggs.

You can often see them searching for food in pairs or with their families.



California scrub jays live in oak woodlands, riverside woods, and pine forests in the foothills.

They search for food in thick grass, brush, and low shrubs.

- When it's time to nest, they build nests shaped like baskets out of twigs, lined with soft fibers and hair.



# Acorn woodpecker, *Melanerpes formicivorus*



- Acorn woodpeckers are very social birds.
- They make their homes in holes they make in dead trees, called cavities.
- They live in groups called flocks, where several birds work together to store food and take care of their babies.
- Acorn woodpeckers mostly eat acorns and other seeds and nuts.
- They store acorns and nuts together in tree holes, called *communal granaries*.
- By using their storage places, they spread acorns and seeds around, which helps forests grow again.



The Acorn woodpecker has a very unique appearance!

Listen to different woodpecker calls: [audubon.org](https://www.audubon.org)

# Northern pygmy owl, *Glaucidium gnoma*

Pygmy owls are small and compact raptors.

They mostly hunt and eat birds, and sometimes they catch rodents or insects.

Even though they are small, they can catch prey that is up to three times their size!



Pygmy owls live in forests that have a mix of different kinds of trees, not in forests that are very thick and dense.

They don't build their own nests. They use holes that woodpeckers have made in trees for their nests.

# Western gray squirrel, *Sciurus griseus*

- Western gray squirrels live in trees. They build nests, called "drays," from leaves and twigs. Inside, they use shredded bark, grass, and moss to stay warm.
- They eat nuts, acorns, and seeds from pinecones. Sometimes, they also eat berries, fungus, bark, sap, and insects.
  - During the fall, squirrels find acorns under oak trees. They gather lots of food to store for winter.
  - They bury nuts about 3-4 inches deep in the ground to save them for eating later when it's cold outside.



# Dusky-footed woodrat, *Neotoma fuscipes*

*The Dusky-footed woodrat is not a pest!*



- Dusky-footed woodrats are great climbers.
- They make their homes in trees.
- They eat plants, fruits, nuts, insects, and small animals.
  - They live together in groups, sometimes in 15 or more nests.
  - They can live in many different places like woods and areas with lots of bushes, near streams or rivers.



# Amphibians

Amphibians are small animals that need water or wet places to live. Toads, frogs, salamanders, and newts are amphibians.

They can all breathe and drink water through their very thin skin.

Frogs are a kind of *amphibian*. Frogs spend part of their lives in the water and part on land.





# California tree frog, *Pseudacris cadaverina*

**California tree frogs are tiny frogs with big toe tips.**

They eat insects, spiders, centipedes, and other small creatures.

- When they are tadpoles, they eat organic matter like dead plants and bits of plant material.

They can be different colors, but usually, they are light green or brownish, with some dark spots.

California tree frogs hide in shady spots under rocks and trees, near the water.

Streams and pools can flood when it rains!

- California tree frogs find higher up places like trees and big rocks, where they are safe from floods.



# Gray fox, *Urocyon cinereoargenteus*



- Gray foxes eat a variety of foods: mammals like gophers, brush rabbits, and mice. they also eat birds, fruits, insects, berries, nuts, and grains.
- They have strong, curved claws that help them climb trees.
- Gray foxes climb trees to hunt small animals and to get away from bigger predators.

They can live in many habitats, but having water nearby is important for them.

They make dens in hollow trees, logs, under big rocks, and sometimes underground.

Some gray foxes have learned to live near neighborhoods and cities.

[Video](#)

# Bobcat, *Lynx rufus*

- Bobcats hunt and eat small animals like rabbits, squirrels, birds, rats, and mice.
- Bobcats are most active at night, but they sometimes start hunting before the sun sets.
- During the day, they hide in dens they find in hollow trees, thick bushes, or rocky holes.



Their fur is brown or gray with black spots and stripes.

Bobcats are known for their short, "bobbed" tails and tufts of fur on their ears.

They are fast runners– they can run 25-30 miles per hour!

# WHO'S THAT CAT?

Bobcats are often confused with their larger cousin, the mountain lion. So how can you tell the difference between California's cats?

**Mountain lions** sport tawny, unpatterned coats and have round ears. Adults can reach up to 7 feet long with a thick, 2-3 foot long tail and range from 70-150 lbs.

**Bobcats** have spotted coats with banding down their legs and across their faces, including on their distinctive facial ruff. Such patterning varies between individuals and can be fairly light. The ears are pointy and tufted, colored black on the back with a noticeable white spot. Their tails are 5-9 inches long. Adults can weigh 12-25 lbs.

**Domestic cats** vary in size and color, but generally have longer tails and are shorter & smaller than bobcats.



Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area



# Mountain Lion, *Puma concolor*

Mountain lions are large animals that are at the top of the food chain.

Mountain lions hunt large animals like deer, elk, moose, mountain goats, and wild sheep, but they prefer deer the most.

They don't use dens. Instead, they rest in daybeds to stay safe from bad weather, and to raise their babies.

They use caves or shallow spots on cliffs. In forests, they use thick bushes, under big tree roots, or under fallen trees as their daybeds.



# Oak Trees and Indigenous Peoples



Indigenous (native) peoples of California spread oak woodland forests throughout California!

They used oak acorns for food, and different communities used parts of oak trees for medicines, to make baskets, furniture, and other everyday tools.

**The important thing about Oak woodland forests is that they are unique environments that need to be respected and protected.**