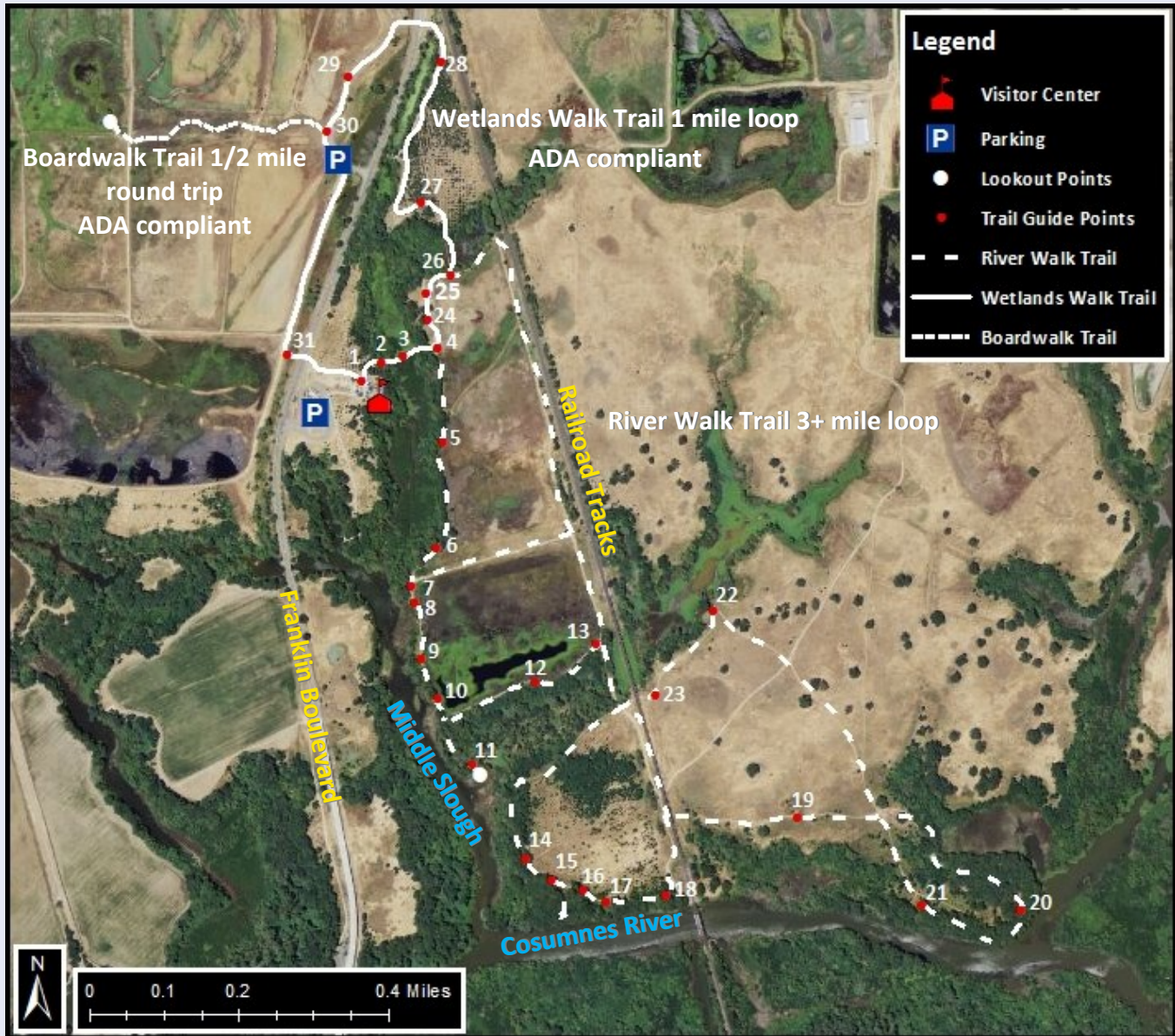




NATURE TRAIL GUIDE



KEEP ON THE TRAILS

The trails are provided for your enjoyment as well as for your safety. We invite you to explore until your heart's content as long as it is from one of the approved access trails.

NO PETS

We love dogs and cats but they tend to chase or scare the wildlife that we are here to protect. Please leave your pets at home.

PACK OUT YOUR TRASH

There is no better way to ruin the day than to throw your trash in other people's way. Help others enjoy the Preserve by leaving no trace.

WALK NOT RIDE

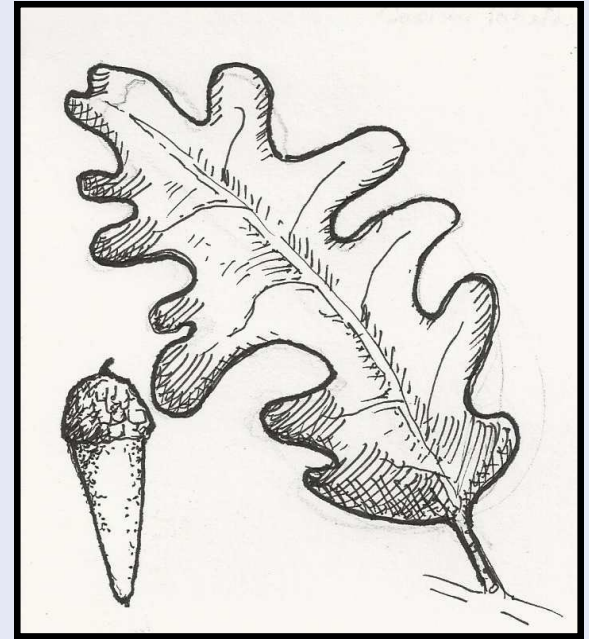
The trails on the Preserve are intended for walking only; please lock up your bike at the Visitor Center.

HELP KEEP THE BIRDS HAPPY

When you scare birds and make them fly they expend energy that they could otherwise use for migration and breeding. The more you scare them the fewer there will be next year when you come visit.

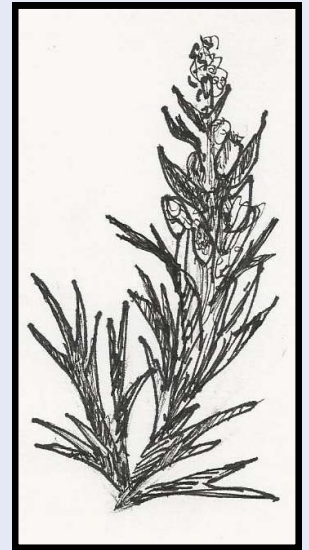
The Cosumnes River Walk, is a 3.3-mile loop trail that begins at the Visitor Center. The trail will lead you on a fascinating journey through wetlands, riparian forest, grasslands, and to the Cosumnes River. It is open sunrise to sunset, year-round, for self-guided walks. The River Walk is a dirt trail and is subject to closure due to flooding.

1. You are at the trailhead for both the Cosumnes River Walk and the Lost Slough Wetlands Walk. Begin and end your journey here.
2. The bridge takes you across Willow Slough. A slough is a river channel that has no outlet. The water in a slough is stagnant or may flow slowly. The sloughs at the Preserve are influenced by the tides from San Francisco Bay.
3. The bushes growing densely on both sides of the bridge are buttonbushes or button willows. Buttonbush flowers are clustered in white “balls” that resemble large buttons. On both sides of the bridge you can also see a number of other willow trees. Miwok Indians, the former inhabitants of this area, used willow poles for the underlying structure of their dwellings.
4. Ahead (east) are managed wetlands. These wetlands are flooded in the late fall and continue to have water throughout the winter and early spring, providing roosting and foraging habitat for hundreds of waterfowl.
5. Along this section of the trail you can find two different types of blackberry bushes. The bushes with red or green thick stems and five leaflets per leaf are non-native Himalayan blackberry bushes, introduced to California from western Europe. The smaller blackberry plant, with thinner white, purplish or green stems and usually three leaflets per leaf, is the native California blackberry. Himalayan blackberries often forms large thickets that crowd out native plant species.
6. The ball-like structures that grow on the valley oak trees here are galls. Galls are formed when wasps lay their eggs in the bark of the oak tree. The tree forms tissue around the eggs, protecting itself from infection and at the same time protecting the wasp eggs from predators. After the eggs hatch, the larvae of the wasp eat some of the gall tissue. The formation of galls does not seem to harm the tree itself.
7. The impressive tree to your left (east) is a valley oak. This tree is likely 150 to 200 years old, and was likely here when the Miwok Indians roamed this forest. The pump station provides water from the slough to the wetlands east of the trail. **Please observe the No Access signs and view the pump only from the trail.**
8. This site offers a good view of Middle Slough. Tules, buttonbush, and sandbar willow line the channel of the slough. This tidal slough would have been a typical feature of the Delta 150 years ago.
9. To your left (east) are 30 acres of freshwater seasonal marsh that have been restored by the Preserve. These marshes provide wintering habitat to migratory birds, as well as habitat for non-migratory birds such as the red-winged blackbird.
10. The depression in the mud here is a river otter slide. River otters climb up the bank of the slough, cross the path, and feed in the marshland on the other side of the trail. Then they slide down this depression and back into the slough. Beavers may also use this slide.
11. From here you can almost see to the confluence of Middle Slough and the Cosumnes River. A portion of this trail has been closed due to frequent flooding and to preserve the wildlife habitat in this area.



Valley Oak leaf and acorn

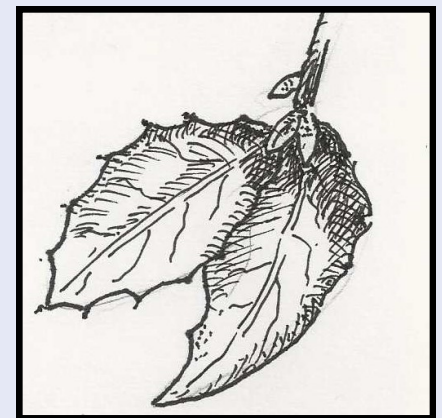
12. To the left (north) of the trail are a number of cattails. Starchy underground roots nourish beaver and muskrat. Miwok Indians wove mats from the flat leaves. They peeled the roots and stems and ate them raw, and roasted and ate the flower heads of the cattails.
13. The plant that grows here in the spring, summer and fall is mugwort. The Miwok Indians chewed mugwort leaves for coughs, crushed the leaves and put them into their nostrils as a decongestant or headache remedy, and rubbed the leaves on their skin as an insect repellent.
14. The valley oak grove on your left (south) is a hint of the extent of the valley oak riparian forests that were once found along the waterways throughout the Central Valley. Today, the total acreage of valley oak riparian forest is less than 2 percent of what it was in the mid-1800s.
15. This is a healthy stand of native Santa Barbara sedge, with bunches of long, flat, dark-green blades. The roots of this plant, often called white root, were used by the Miwok Indians as the sewing strand in coiled baskets.
16. In the spring, summer and fall, poison oak grows along both sides of the trail in this area. Poison oak produces an oily residue that is known for causing an itching and sometimes painful skin reaction. Remember the old adage: "Leaves of three, let it be!"
17. Take the short side path south to the Cosumnes River. You are standing about ½ mile upstream from its mouth, where it flows into the Mokelumne River. Look around to see wild California rose, with delicate pink blossoms in summer.
18. To your right (south) you will see a large wood duck nest box attached to a valley oak tree. Preserve volunteers encourage wood ducks to nest by installing nest boxes on trees near the water's edge. The smaller nest boxes you see attached to poles are for tree swallows, who are also cavity nesters.
19. To the left (north) of the trail is an oak savannah which is a habitat for grazing animals as well as nesting birds and rodents.
20. From this place, called "the Point," you can see the Cosumnes River and the entrance to Tihuechemne Slough. This area is a favorite roosting and feeding place for great blue herons and egrets.
21. This is a live oak tree. It is one of the few live oak trees located along the Preserve's trails. Notice the many differences between a live oak tree leaf and a valley oak tree leaf.
22. Observe this majestic valley oak, likely home to many nesting birds and rodents. To the west is a natural tule marsh where red-winged blackbirds and the black-masked common yellowthroat roost.
23. The railroad tracks in front of you are owned by the Union Pacific Railroad, although you may also see Burlington Northern Santa Fe railcars using the tracks. The Union Pacific is part of the transcontinental railroad system that carries freight across the United States. These tracks have been in use in this area since 1863.



Mugwort



Poison Oak



Live Oak

To start the Wetlands Walk you may retrace your steps back to marker 4 and follow the sign for the Wetlands Walk. You may also continue to walk along the railroad tracks to loop back around to marker 24.

Lost Slough Wetlands Walk is a 1-mile loop trail beginning and ending at the Visitor Center, and takes you through wetlands and riparian forest. It is open sunrise to sunset, year-round, for self-guided walks. The Wetlands Walk is a paved trail and is universally accessible. A wooden Boardwalk Trail, 1/2 mile round trip, is accessible off of the Wetlands Walk.

24. On a pole to your left (west) is a tree swallow nesting box. Preserve volunteers encourage tree swallows to nest by installing nest boxes on poles near water. Tree swallows are cavity nesters, and they can be found at the Preserve year round. Ideally, the forest trees would be of differing ages, including old dead trees, called snags, filled with cavities. You will also see larger boxes for wood ducks nests.
25. The grass that grows here is creeping wild rye, a native perennial that thrives in low-lying areas subject to flooding. Creeping wild rye spreads by rhizomes, or underground stems, rather than by seed. It is easy to recognize this grass in the spring because it quickly grows higher than other grasses. Creeping wild rye often forms dense stands that prevent soil erosion.
26. This bridge takes you across Willow Slough. Some of the plants growing thickly in the slough are tule. The Miwok Indians wove the tules into mats for sleeping, flooring, and cigar-shaped rafts called balsas. Cattails are also seen in the slough. The cattail is a perennial plant with stout stems growing 4 to 7 feet high.
27. The trees to the north and east of the trail are called valley oak trees. These valley oak trees are the first trees ever planted at the Preserve by volunteers in 1988.
28. This pond and the pond to the north of the parking area across the road have water year-round. This is a great place to view the native western pond turtle, California's only native fresh water turtle and the introduced red-eared slider, a non-native turtle that is often illegally released into the wild when it becomes too large to be easily cared for as a pet. During warm sunny days the two species are often seen basking on a log or at the water's edge. The red-eared slider is a larger turtle with yellow stripes on its neck and legs and a red patch just behind the eye. The red-eared slider grows larger than the western pond turtle and is more aggressive, often pushing the pond turtle out of preferred basking and egg laying sites. In addition to turtles, these ponds are a good place to spot river otters and herons.

**Cross Franklin Boulevard to continue on the Lost Slough Wetlands Walk.
Make sure to look both ways and use caution when crossing the street.**

29. The pond to the west of the trail is flooded during the fall and winter, when it becomes a roosting area for sandhill cranes and other wintering birds. Sandhill cranes are wading birds, about 4 feet tall, ashy gray with a bare red-topped head. Their long sharp bills serve them well as they hunt for roots, bulbs, frogs, mice and large insects in moist grassy areas. Two sub-species of cranes winter in the Sacramento region. The greater sandhill cranes, a state threatened species, migrate from their nesting places in northern California and eastern Oregon. The lesser sandhill cranes migrate from Alaska and as far away as the Arctic Tundra. The cranes forage for food during the day in nearby farm fields. They roost in the ponds of the Preserve at night. Be very quiet so that you do not disturb the cranes and other birds.
30. The Boardwalk Trail to your right (west) provides more opportunities to view the wildlife of the Preserve. In the fall and winter the ponds are flooded. You may be able to see swans, geese, ducks and a variety of shorebirds.
The boardwalk is ½ mile round trip.
31. In the spring, this area is carpeted with beautiful purple downingia, commonly called "calicoflower."

**This is the last marker on the Lost Slough Wetlands Walk.
Continue straight ahead across Franklin Boulevard to the Visitor Center.**



Cosumnes River Preserve
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For additional information visit www.Cosumnes.org