

Native to Greater LA Badge Seniors



GIRL SCOUTS of GREATER LOS ANGELES

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Native to Greater LA Badge (Animals)- Seniors

“When we tug at a single thing in nature, we find it attached to the rest of the world.”

— [John Muir](#)

Before the 405, the 101, the 5 or the 10, there were plants and animals. Before Hollywood, Los Angeles, Malibu, and Long Beach there were people that lived here for hundreds of years. There are unique plants and animals and people, native only to the region that we call home. Some have vanished in the mists of time, however if we listen to the stories told by the buzz of bees, the crashing of the sea and the voices in the wind, we might just be surprised to still find miracles native only to greater LA. Each level of Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors will learn about one of these elements; eventually tying all together the knowledge of Greater LA’s unique natural and cultural history.

For Seniors- As a Cadette, the Native to Greater LA focused on the unique natural plant life in the unique micro climate areas of Southern California. Now as a Senior Girl Scout, you will explore the animal wildlife that exists naturally in these regions. We will focus on the native animal wildlife that is endangered in the beach, riparian/chaparral, desert and mountain areas of Los Angeles. Keep in mind how native plant life will affect the animals in these regions as you learn about their natural habitats and the challenges they face in today’s ever changing world. Become inspired by what is special and unique to Greater LA and fight to protect it for future generations. You will complete at least one option for each of the 5 steps in order to achieve this badge.

1. **Beach:** There are many beaches in Southern California and although some are very similar, in this step of the badge you will explore some wildlife situations specific to our LA area. Work through at least one option to learn about local beach wildlife.
 - a. If you look off the coast of Los Angeles anywhere from Long Beach to Malibu you will probably see off in the distance the outline of Catalina Island. Although a popular tourist destination, much of the island is also protected. Catalina Island is unique in that it was formed volcanically and has never been a part of the mainland so the wildlife there that is endemic- or can only be found there- is very special and needs protection. Look to the Catalina Island Conservancy web page to learn more about the [Catalina Island Fox](#). One of 5 species of Island Foxes native to the Channel Islands, the Catalina Island Fox has faced disease and near destruction. Imagine you live in a world where everything you see on TV is

promoting something good, healthy and caring. Create a “TV Commercial or show” that educates the public on the Catalina Island Fox. You can act it out live to your family or friends or with permission post it to YOUTUBE.

- b. From the 1940’s through the 1970’s a chemical known as DDT was used vastly as a pesticide and was introduced into the environment. The effect of this has caused many birds including the California Brown Pelican and the Bald Eagle to face near extinction and has made some fish inedible. Research DDT, PCB’s and the Montrose Chemical Company originally based in Torrance, CA. Although both the California Brown Pelican and the Bald Eagle have recovered well in the Los Angeles area, imagine the effect if this chemical not been banned! Visit a park within the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy and create a picture collage of pictures you take of wild birds with a message of why it is important to protect these animals. With permission, see if you can post your collage in a public place like a school, library or church for others to enjoy and learn from.
 - c. The white abalone is marine snail found in rocky intertidal and kelp forest environments along the California coast, or at least it used to be. Now facing extinction, these animals were harvested widely between 1950 and 1970. A combination of overharvesting, warming climate trends, and disease have reduced a population once in the millions to a few thousand. Visit the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium to learn more about the white abalone and what they are doing in the Aquatic Nursery to help. Write a speech as if you are trying to convince a group as to why the white abalone should remain as a protected species. If you want, voice your speech in front of an audience!
2. **Riparian/Chaparral:** Riparian environments occur around a river or stream. You may not think of Los Angeles as a river city, but indeed there are many waterways that wind their way through our borders. Flowing from the mountains, down through the valleys and out to the Pacific Ocean, streams and rivers move although Los Angeles supporting life where it is possible. Although present, our riparian environments face some unique challenges as well as the animals that depend on them. Some streams are seasonal and only flow during rainy times, and most are channelized for flood control leaving little natural life along the banks. “Historically, riparian habitats occupied 1 percent of the land mass in western North America. Within the past century, an estimated 95 percent of this habitat has been altered, degraded, or destroyed due to such land use activities as river channelization, unmanaged livestock utilization, clearing for agriculture, water impoundments, and urbanization (Krueper 1995). Due to habitat conversion, natural riparian communities persist only as isolated remnants of what was once a vast,

interconnected system of rivers, streams, marshes, and vegetated washes (Krueper 1995).” Even with these challenges wildlife has adapted or moved to live within Los Angeles. Work through this step by exploring at least one of the following options to discover the wildlife that lives around LA’s riparian and chaparral environments.

- a. Can you believe that there were once deer, mountain lions, and grizzly bears wandering where downtown Los Angeles is now? Many animals native to this area have moved on or gone extinct with the modernization of Los Angeles as a city. Visit the California Science Center or the Los Angeles Natural History Museum to learn more about the Los Angeles River and the native wildlife found there. Draw, sketch or paint a picture of what the LA river might have looked like in its natural state including 5 native animals once found in the area.
 - b. Visit the Ballona Wetlands or a wetland area near you in Los Angeles to discover an environment that is a haven for many native animals and migratory birds. Do some research online or at the library on the Least Tern, the Belding’s Savannah Sparrow and the Least Bittern. All are birds that use the wetlands for part of their life and have been endangered or are near danger. What threatens these birds the most? Create a presentation (either electronically with PowerPoint or with poster board) to teach your troop or other group about how to identify a special wetland bird and what to do to help protect it.
 - c. Insects are not usually one of the first things you think of when it comes to endangered species. Usually it is something furry or large, but in this case it is a very special Butterfly specific to the Los Angeles Area. Do some research on the Palos Verdes Blue Butterfly and the El Segundo Blue Butterfly. What native plants do these butterflies need for survival? What is being done locally to help protect these species? Do a butterfly craft and teach a younger scout(s) about one of these butterflies and what it means to be “endangered” or “extinct”.
3. **Desert:** The Mojave Desert is the majority of desert environment within Los Angeles. In this environment wildlife must be able to endure temperature extremes in both directions. In the winter it is not uncommon to have near freezing temperatures and even snow, and in the summer face searing triple digits. With these extremes in mind, learn about how some animals survive in this environment. Discover through one or more of these options the adaptations necessary for living in the desert around LA.
- a. The Kangaroo Rat is a perfect example of what it takes to survive in the desert environment. There are various mammals that live in the desert including coyotes, bobcats, skunks, small rodents and bats. These animals have adapted

to this environment both physiologically (in their body) and behaviorally. Find out at least 3 ways the Kangaroo Rat has adapted to survive in this environment. Create a “trading card” with a picture on one side and your 3 “fun facts” on the other side. Share with your troop, family or friends.

- b.** Reptiles seem like the typical desert animal. But even these scaly critters need protecting! Visit the Los Angeles Zoo to see the California Desert Tortoise in the Reptile Exhibit. What kind of adaptations do reptiles use to survive in the extreme climate in the Mojave Desert? Do some research on the California Desert Tortoise. What kind of human interactions affect the population of tortoises and what can be done to help? Post a link to a reputable rescue site on social media (with permission) to inform friends about what they can do to help the Desert Tortoise.
 - c.** When you visit the desert it may appear like there is no life at all, until the sun goes down. Many animals are nocturnal, so they are active at night. One such group of animals are bats. Find out about what bats occupy the Mojave Desert. Where do they live, what do they eat and how do they help the desert? Do an activity with a younger Girl Scout or troop to teach them about bats and their importance in their ecosystems.
- 4. Mountains:** There are 4 mountain ranges in Los Angeles county the Santa Monica Mountains, San Gabriel Mountains, Santa Susana and Verdugo Mountains. For this exercise we will also include the San Bernardino and San Jacinto Mountains for the GSGLA camps located in those areas. The Santa Monica, Santa Susana and Verdugo Mountains are all generally low lying mountain ranges with mostly a chaparral environment. However the higher points in the San Gabriel, San Bernardino and San Jacinto mountains have a much different environment. Whether it is mostly chaparral and oak forest or pine forest, the mountain in LA have a lot to offer in terms of wildlife. For this step choose at least one of the following options to complete.
- a.** The Santa Monica Mountains are a host to many animals big and small. The Mountain Lion, although native to most of North American has a well studied population occurring in the Santa Monica Mountains. 30 Mountain Lions are being tracked and studied to see what the affect of urbanization might be on these big cats. Research the mountain lion, its history, geographic range, what it naturally eats and how it lives. Visit these websites recommended from the National Park Service for information on LA’s mountain lions and then take a hike in the Santa Monica Mountains to explore and learn more about mountain lion territory:

- <http://www.urbancarnivores.com/>
- <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/lion/>
- <http://www.cougarnet.org/idguide.html>
- <http://www.mountainlion.org/>

- b.** Do you know what kind of bear is featured on the California Flag? What happened to this bear? Find these answers and then look up information about black bears and brown bears. In the mountains around LA black bears are very common and can often be seen during the summer months. Some bears have even been given local media attention for being sighted multiple times in urban neighborhoods. Why do bears come into neighborhoods, what are they looking for? What is a bear's natural diet and habitat? How can you know if a bear has been in the area, what do bear tracks look like? Write a story or poem about a bear and what it must be like to live around people.
- c.** If you have lived in Southern California for more than a year you have probably noticed that wildfires and forest fires are just as native as the wildlife. With the drought in California being a growing concern the abundance of wild fires is also a concern. Some invasive plants increase the chances of fire to spread faster and farther as well as improper use of outdoor recreation space. Although fires pose many threats to those of us that live near burn areas, they also threaten wildlife, sometimes even sensitive species. One such affected animal is the California Spotted Owl which relies heavily on the Douglas Fir for its habitat. In situations such as in 2011, 10% of this habitat was lost due to forest fire in the Angeles National Forest. Contact your local fire department or ranger station to discuss with a professional about forest fires, fire ecology in Los Angeles, and how to help prevent forest fires and wild fires. Work with a younger Girl Scout troop to teach them about fire safety and proper etiquette around a campfire as well as the animals that live in forests and local mountain environments.
- 5.** Staying wild can be hard for LA's wildlife as our population continues to grow and expand. As you have learned in steps 1-4 no matter where you live in Los Angeles, there is wildlife that is being threatened or endangered and needs our help for survival. Pick one of the following 3 ways to get involved and help wildlife thrive
- a. Beaches and Wetlands:** Visit the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium in San Pedro. Volunteer either at the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium or local wetland to do a beach

clean-up, plant native plant life, or give a presentation on threatened wildlife and how we can help prevent damaging this environment further.

- b. Desert:** Visit a state park within the Mojave Desert and find a way to volunteer helping native wildlife. Build bat boxes to help local bat populations, volunteer at a desert tortoise rescue center or other wildlife rescue centers. Create a scrapbook with your experiences helping to protect desert wildlife.

- c. Mountains/Chaparral:** Plan a hike or trip to the mountains around Los Angeles. Either the Santa Monica Mountains, San Gabriel Mountains, Santa Susana, Verdugo Mountains, San Bernardino and San Jacinto Mountains. Volunteer with local fire departments, ranger stations, Department of Fish and Wildlife, or visitor centers to do a service project helping improve trails, promote fire safety, or educate visitors about wildlife safety.