

WHAT ARE THE “UNIQUE” PLANTS, ANIMALS AND HABITAT THAT DHOSA WANTS TO PRESERVE?

Simply climb to Dictionary Hill’s summit and look west to the San Diego Skyline and harbor, then to the northwest to Cowles Mountain and southwest to Otay Mesa. Every peak over 1000 feet is either already developed with residential projects or has come under a plan of protection by the County or some other agency. Dictionary Hill is the last natural hill of its kind at San Diego’s urban boundary that is not protected in some way by park status or by some other means.

The plants that live on Dictionary Hill Summit and its surrounding ridges and canyons are some of the last remaining Coastal Sage Scrub habitat that exists on San Diego’s urban boundary. This kind of habitat consists predominantly of aromatic sages and the strongly scented California sagebrush and is some of the most diverse in the world.

Dictionary Hill is home to such rare species as: the Coastal Cactus Wren, the tiny California Gnatcatcher, San Diego Horned Lizard, the Orange Throated Whiptail Lizard, and the Rosy Boa Snake. (Both of the lizard species can only feed on Native Ants which will only survive in areas untouched by irrigation runoff.) Plant species in the area include the Coastal Barrel Cactus and the miniscule Variegated Dudleya which lives on a rare thin layer of volcanic soils also associated with *Plantago erecta* (the cottony carpet-like fields that were host, in decades past, to the extremely rare and endangered Quino Checkerspot butterfly).

In addition to the animals and plants cited previously, several Hawk species, Owls, Coyotes, Grey Fox, Bobcats, Raccoons, and Deer are either residents of this area or visitors from the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge from the South. Hundreds of other plant and animal species also live on the hill.

Coastal Sage Scrub habitat cannot be found north of Santa Barbara County and it exists only for 100 or so miles into Northern Baja California. It is not found further inland than nearby San Miguel Mountain because it is restricted to the coastal influences and to elevations under about 1500 feet in most cases. It is

the most diverse habitat amongst the dozen or so habitats that exist in San Diego County.

In the 1960's, Dictionary Hill was the site of the first scientific description of the "hill topping" phenomenon. This is the means by which numerous insect species, particularly the more noticeable butterflies, seek food and mates by using thermal wind currents, to fly with less energy exertion to the top of ridges and hills.

Many botanists and zoologists feel that San Diego County is among the top ten "hotspots" for biodiversity in the United States. About 50 species are considered rare in the County. On this website, Photos page, are pictures of many of these animals and plants which were taken by DHOSA members while hiking on the hill or in Bancroft Creek Canyon.

We need to save our unique geographical and biological heritage by saving this hill from development.