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IT'S ALL CONNECTED

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Unintended Consequences of Blazing New Trails

Exploring the great outdoors is a wonderful pastime. Getting outside whether a local park or further away in nature can boost our immune systems and our mood. The good news is that many people are getting that message and taking advantage of our wonderful open spaces. The bad news is that not everyone understands that some behaviors can be damaging to the outdoor places we love.

The phrase “loving it to death” is quite appropriate nowadays in many of the most popular parks we have. Not only are crowds hard on the environment, but the sheer numbers mean that folks are often not staying on trails. Venturing off trail, even a little can be quite detrimental. One person taking a new path on their own doesn’t seem too bad, but that isn’t what happens in most cases. Others also notice these new routes and step out onto them as well. These “[social trails](#)” begin looking like regular trails after a while. The problem is these trails are not maintained, can be hazardous, may cause trekkers to get lost, and cause tremendous damage within the habitat they cut through.

Here is one of many signs reminding visitors to stay on designated trails. What I particularly appreciate about this sign is the double meaning. Plants die by being trampled (by foot), and larger portions (a foot, or 12" or more) die off faster than they can grow back when people walk on them.



With ongoing funding cuts, park staff everywhere face shortages which means trail maintenance operations are often impacted. [Signage and education](#) about keeping on designated trails is helpful, but those inevitable social trails do present another problem for everyone and the nature they go through. We can all be good stewards and enjoy our outdoor time using the [Leave No Trace](#) principles. Even better, we can lead by example and gently remind others when you see them veering off course.

Taking steps now to **protect the beautiful open spaces** we love, means our kids and grandkids will be able to enjoy them as well. And that's a gift worth giving.

Nature Is Resilient

[Nature is recovering in the wake of the devastating L.A. fires.](#) (This article from the L.A. Daily News is behind a paywall, so it may not be accessible.) The basic reveal is that in only six months the wildlife, both flora and fauna, have returned to the Eaton Canyon fire burn area which lies in the Altadena and Pasadena neighborhoods of greater Los Angeles. Coyotes, deer, bears, cougars, raccoons, snakes, birds, butterflies, and more have reappeared, and some with babies in tow. The plants have also rebounded beautifully, especially the “fire followers” such as lupine, wild rose, chaparral bushmallow, elderberry, chamise, buckeye, laurel sumac, and more. And, of course, the mighty oaks have survived the fire...which is not unexpected since they are some of the best fire adapted organisms in the landscape.



Because of safety concerns, some trail access to these burned wilderness areas have been closed. **Trail closures like this have the extra benefit of allowing plants and animals to reclaim their wild places without being disturbed by people and their foot traffic.** Though terrible destruction was left in the wake of the fire, it is clear that fire itself is also an important rejuvenator. Given the time and space to recover it is obvious that nature is quite resilient and that is something to celebrate.

Quick Connections

Books, websites, documentaries, podcasts, events, quotes, and more



Using [humor to address climate change](#) is an engaging way to address a difficult topic. The good folks at Climate Science



Quote we're pondering

"Nature, with its fragile yet resilient magnificence, models for us what

Breakthrough have done just that and it is worth watching.



Worth a few minutes of your time to virtually [travel along with Rewilding Earth down to Argentina](#) and see the successful rewilding efforts of jaguars and giant otters.

aliveness means and reminds us that we are mortal." - **Maria Popova**



Love Birds and getting that perfect shot? Cornell Lab has two great resources highlighting some [best practices](#) for photographing birds without [scaring them away](#).

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Thank you,

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