

HISTORY

Bishop Peak was named by the Spanish missionaries who perceived a resemblance between the peak and the cap or mitre worn by the bishops at that time; hence the name Bishop Peak. It has also been a source of some economic exploitation over the years, principally for stone. At least two small quarry operations have gone on at various locations around the base of the peak over the years. However, these were all small or intermittent operations, and none succeeded in removing large quantities of material from the mountain. Bishop Peak, along with other Morros, has long been perceived as a community landmark. Many were interested in preserving the peak to provide public access to it, and to preserve its natural beauties forever. In 1977, the heirs of the Gnesa Ranch donated the land above the 800-foot elevation to the State Parks Foundation. Since 1993, through an agreement with the State, the County of San Luis Obispo has managed portions of Bishop Peak for recreational use. In 1995, an additional 140 acres were donated to the City of San Luis Obispo as the Ferrini Ranch Open Space. In 1998, 108 acres was purchased from Ray Bunnell, and has brought the Bishop Peak Natural Reserve to its present size of approximately 360 acres. The property now has a trail that goes from the Patricia Street and Highland Avenue entry points to the summit, a distance of two miles, with an elevation gain of 1,000 feet. Another trail, the Felsman Loop, traverses several canyons in the northern part of the preserve and provides interesting views of oak woodland, chaparral, and coastal sage scrub, and attractive views of the surrounding area.

WILDLIFE

The varied plant cover and the steep, rocky cliffs provide attractive habitat for a wide variety of birds, mammals, reptiles and other wildlife. Over 200 species of birds are found within the San Luis Obispo area, and as many as half of these may be found on Bishop Peak. Among the more notable bird species are golden eagles, bald eagles—which are occasionally sighted during the wintertime—hawks, owls, vultures, kestrels and other birds of prey. More commonly seen are the numerous jays, and a wide variety of perching birds.

Deer are fairly common on the peak. Foxes, coyotes, bobcats and mountain lions have also been occasionally seen. At night, raccoons and opossums can be often seen around the base of the mountain or moving into urban areas from the cover provided by the dense brush of the mountain.

VEGETATION

The rocky soils derived from the volcanic rocks of the Morros have been undisturbed for a long time and have retained their original vegetation in pristine form. Many woody plants are found here which are not found on the finer soils that surround them. Common vegetation types on Bishop Peak include oak woodland, coastal sage scrub and chaparral. The most prominent tree species on the mountain are coast live oak and California bay, with an occasional sycamore indicating the site of a spring or seep. Beneath the oaks is the ubiquitous poison oak, the most common shrub found on the peak. Together with California blackberry, this woodland understory creates some of the best wildlife habitat that can be found in our area.

Common species of coastal sage scrub include coyote bush, black sage, monkeyflower, and California sagebrush. These plants are aromatic, with clearly recognizable odors of sage or other minty smells. In certain areas of Bishop Peak and on the other Morros, chaparral species such as chamise, manzanita, mountain mahogany, toyon and ceanothus can often be found.

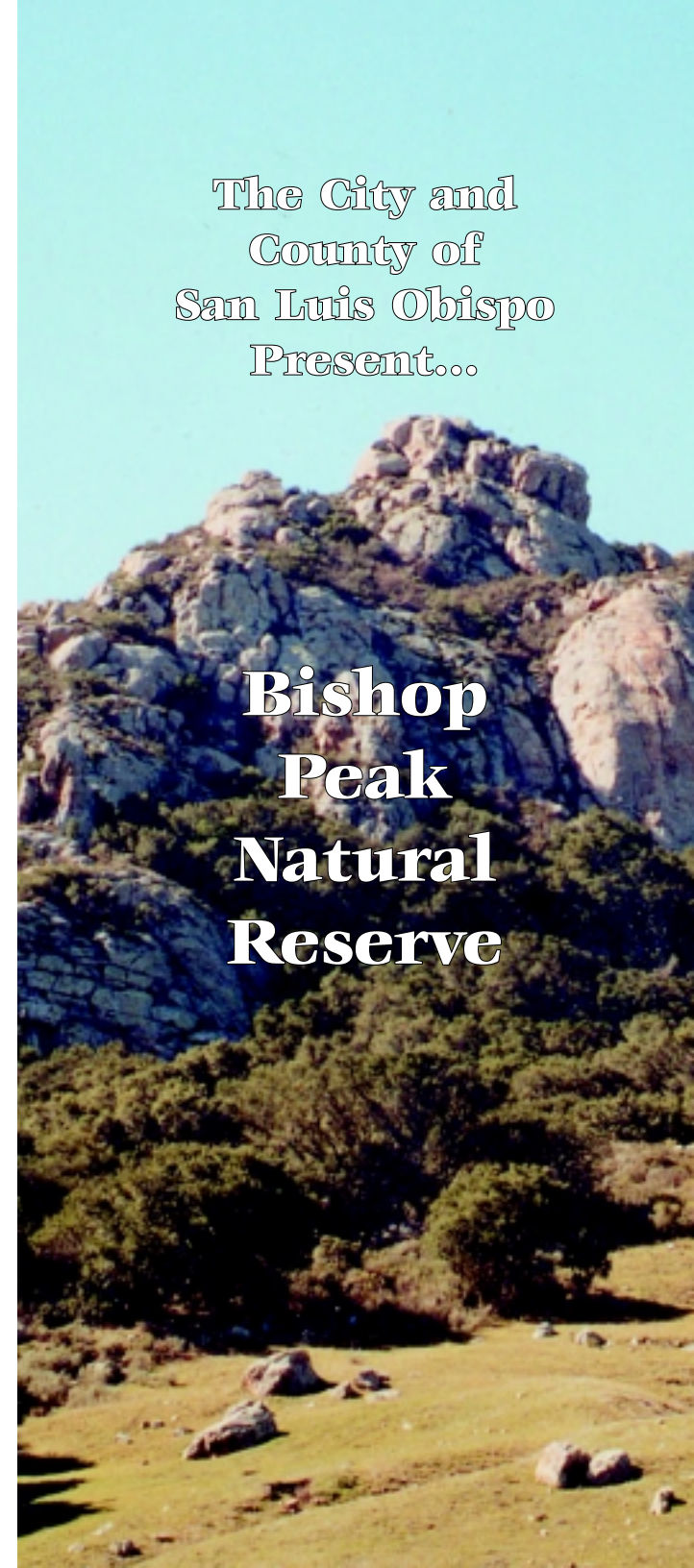
GEOLOGY

Bishop Peak, like all of the Morros, is made up of volcanic intrusive rocks. These are rocks intruding into preexisting, unrelated rocks, broke through, and, with subsequent erosion, formed the peaks that are so prominent today. The Morros are not true volcanoes; they did not erupt and spew lava or ash over the countryside. Instead, magma deep within the earth found a weak spot in the Earth's crust, and pushed through the overlying rocks like toothpaste being squeezed out of a tube. The rocks of the Morros, a type of basalt known as dacite, are between 24 and 26 million years old. Since that time, the overlying rocks have eroded away and the hard, erosion-resistant dacite has remained, leaving the prominent Morros seen today. This material, like most volcanic rocks, is quite resistant to erosion. It has formed steep sides and other features that contribute to the striking quality that forms along the skyline of the San Luis Obispo area. The Morros begin inland just beyond Islay Hill and extend in a chain all the way to the ocean at Morro Rock. Depending on how the Morros are counted, there are anywhere from seven to fourteen of these peaks.



The City and County of San Luis Obispo Present...

Bishop Peak Natural Reserve

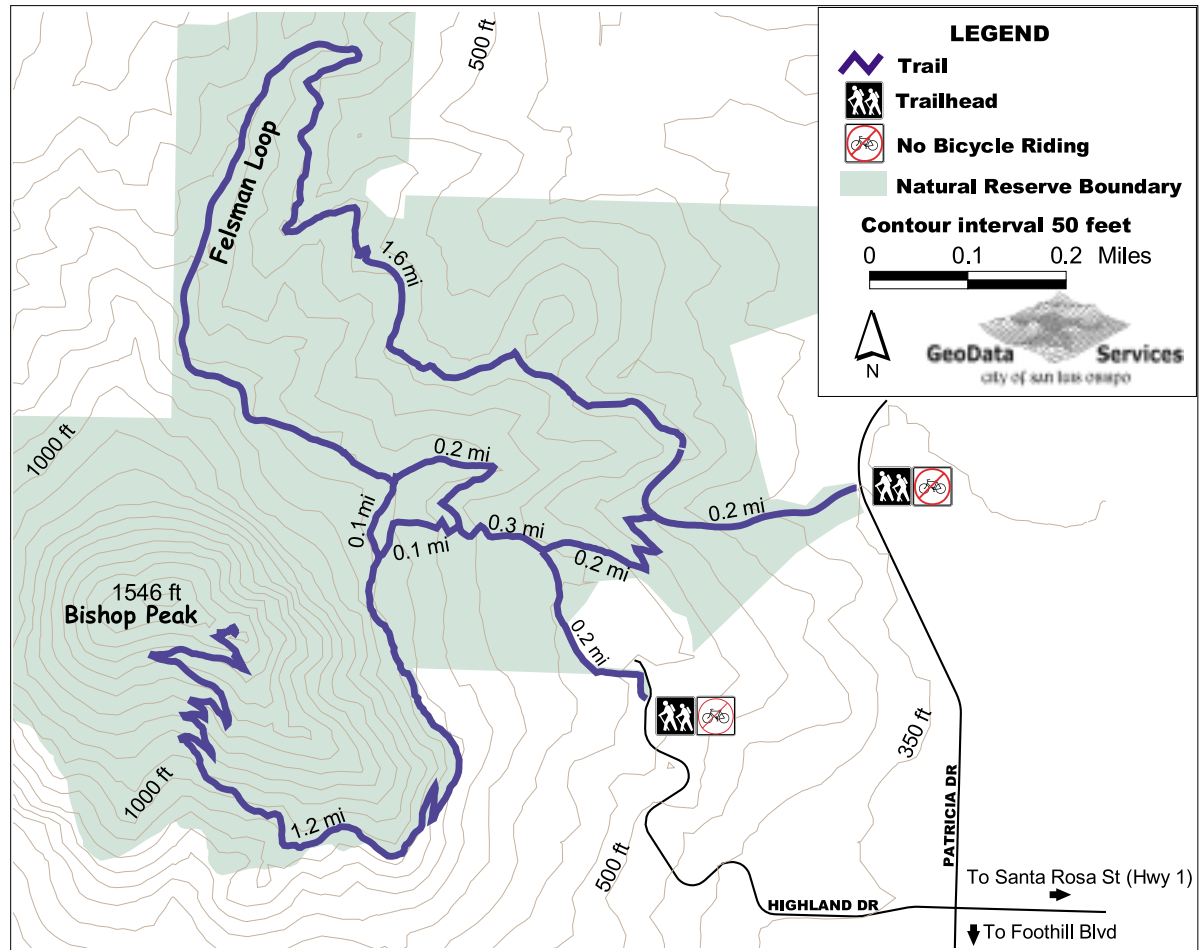




OPEN SPACE GUIDELINES

For hiker's safety, please assist the Ranger Service by complying with the following:

- ⇒ Hike only on designated trails. Hiking off trails can be hazardous
- ⇒ Wear proper hiking shoes
- ⇒ Bring Plenty of water
- ⇒ Use sun protection
- ⇒ Open Space Access Permitted from dawn to dusk only, **CAMPING IS PROHIBITED**
- ⇒ Possession or consumption of alcohol is prohibited
- ⇒ Dogs must be on a leash
- ⇒ Unauthorized trail construction prohibited
- ⇒ All bicycling prohibited
- ⇒ Pick up dog waste
- ⇒ Pack it in, pack it out
- ⇒ City/County does not establish, designate, maintain or promote any rock climbing areas

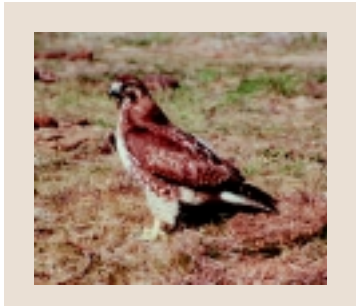


Keeping dogs on leash in open space helps preserve the habitat and wildlife.

Trail hiking provides a quality family activity for all ages and levels.



From the Patricia Drive Trailhead the following roundtrip mileage:
 Felsman Loop=2.5 miles, moderate
 Bishop Peak = 4 miles, strenuous



This hawk is just one of many beautiful creatures seen around Bishop Peak.