

CHAPARRAL VEGETATION COMMUNITY



Chaparral is a vegetation community generally composed of hard stemmed, leathery leaved shrubs. Cacti may also be present. When Chaparral is preserved, a wide assortment of plant and animal species are protected. There are a number of subtypes dominated by specific species, but the most common are represented by: several different species of Manzanita with smooth red bark, (Del Mar, Mission) Scrub oak species, Chamise, *Mimulus* with brilliant red flowers, and several species of Ceanothus which are sometimes referred to as wild lilac with blue or white flowers.

Chaparral is one of the most widespread vegetation communities in San Diego County comprising more than 630,000 acres. While there have been major losses of various forms of Chaparral to agriculture and urbanization, it still occurs throughout the foothills and mountains on exposed slopes and ridges, often forming a mosaic with Oak woodlands and Pine forest. Like many of the vegetation communities in San Diego County, Chaparral has adapted to tolerating wildfire by either resprouting from underground roots after a burn, or producing prolific seedlings after a fire. However, if fires occur more than once every 30 to 50 years, Chaparral vegetation may be replaced with more weedy vegetation often comprised of non-native species.

Chaparral is home to a wide variety of birds including the Spotted towhee, Wrentit, Black chinned sparrow, and California thrasher. A number of reptiles also inhabit this community including Western whiptail lizard, Granite spiny lizard, San Diego horned lizard and Pacific rattlesnake. Mammals that inhabit this community include a number of species of bats, deer mice and pocket mice, Black tailed jackrabbit and Brush rabbit as well as the coyote, bobcat, Mule deer and the occasional Mountain lion. In rocky areas, Ring-tailed cats occur.



Courtesy of the County of San Diego
Department of Planning and Land Use
Multiple Species Conservation Program
5201 Ruffin Road, Suite B
San Diego, CA 92123
www.mscp-sandiego.org