Tapo Canyon Trail

Introduction: The trail begins on the east side of Tapo Canyon Road just south of the intersect with Lost Canyons Drive. The trail extends to the northeast for 1.4 miles to a pass where the trail forks. To the north the trail loops for 1.0 miles where it intersects with the 0.6 miles southern branch of the trail. The trail extends for 0.3 miles to its intersection with the Chivo Canyon Trail. Hikers may choose a variety of options. 1) to hike from the trailhead up the canyon over the relatively level course (1.3 miles) to the point where the trail becomes quite steep, returning to the trailhead, for a total of 2.6 miles - that portion of the trail extends largely through a bucolic oak woodlands; 2) to extend the hike to the saddle at the head of the western branch of Chivo Canyon and then return to the trailhead for a hike of 2.8 miles; 3) to go over the pass and do the loop and then return to the trailhead for a total of 4.4 miles; or 4) to continue down Chivo Canyon to Cottonwood Drive - for a total hike of 3.3 miles.

History: All of this trail is part of El Rancho Simi, which was granted to Santiago Pico, a retiring soldier in the Spanish army. The name Tapo comes down to us from the name of the premier Chumash Indian village in Simi Valley. That village was named *Ta'apu*. *W*e don't know the meaning of the name. While Dr. Alfred Kroeber and others list the meaning of the name as the California yucca, it is now clear that the meaning of *Ta'apu* is unknown.)

Since the first or second decade of the Twentieth Century the land on which the trail is located was part of the Marr Ranch. The Marr family is based in Texas and their fortune comes from oil and natural gas production. Oil seeps are present on the ranch, including at least in three places within Chivo Canyon south of the eastern terminus with the Tapo Canyon Trail. Many producing wells were drilled. The wells are within the Simi Fault Zone. The wells were shallow and produced a relatively heavy crude.

Geology: The west valley portion of the trail consists of sand and gravel deposits. The hills to the north and south of the trail consists of the Sespe Formation, which in this area are made up of nonmarine fulviatiles of Oligocene and late Eocene age (24 to 40 million years of age. The eastern end of the trail is within the Llajas Formation, which is of marine origin and of middle Eocene age (c. 45-50 million years ago). The formation is made up of gray micaceous clay stone and light gray sandstone. The eastern end of the trail is within the Santa Susana Formation, which is of Paleocene age (c. 56-65 million years old). It is made up of gray micaceous clay shale, including siltstone and thin sandstone strata.

Plant Life: The canyons include oak woodlands while the slopes of the canyons can generally be characterized as coastal sage scrub plant association. North facing slope includes some chaparral species. Plants encountered California sagebrush, purples, black and white sages, California encelia, California buckwheat, deer weed, blue elderberry, toyon, California walnut, tree tobacco (a Brazilian native), Californian pepper (a native of Peru), coyote brush, Mediterranean and black mustards, coast live oaks, horehound (a European native), mule fat, bind weed, purple needle grass, giant rye, prickly phlox, common fiddleneck, chamise, coast golden bush, red berry, yucca, wishbone bush, wild cucumber, bush and arroyo lupine, Indian paint brush, fern-leaf phacelia, curly dock, mule fat, telegraph weed, bush mallow, bullrush, cliff aster, purple nightshade, western sycamore, laurel sumac, sugar bush, Fremont cottonwood, salt grass (important to the Indian as a source of salt), lance-leaf live-forever, western wallflower, narrow leaved milkweed, wooly aster, quail bush, among many others. At the time of the survey none of the annual grasses (from the Mediterranean basin) were mature enough to identify.

Animal Life: Animals that may be seen include: birds, such as turkey vultures redtail hawks, great-horned, barn and burrowing owls, poor-wills, California quail, mourning doves, Anna's hummingbirds, common flickers, scrub jays, mockingbirds, common crows and ravens, California towhees and white-crowned and English sparrows, among many others; reptiles, such as southern Pacific rattlesnakes, San Diego gopher, California king snakes, San Diego alligator lizards, and Great Basin fence lizards; and mammals, such as brush rabbits and desert cottontails, California ground squirrels, agile kangaroo rats, deer mice, dusky wood rats, coyotes, gray foxes, ringtail cats (rarely observed because they are only active a couple of hours each night, but their tracks are often seen), southern California weasels, striped skunks, mountain lions, bobcats and mule deer. Black bears or their tracts are also occasionally observed.

While mountain lions are present in the hills around Simi Valley, encounters are unlikely, but you should always be alert. It is best that you do not hike alone, and that you keep small children close at hand. Rattlesnakes may be encountered — Stay on the trail and avoid them when they are encountered — Be observant and never try to handle them. Do not handle any wildlife, including bats, even if they appear to be injured or sick. Remember, you are visitors to their homes.

Mike Kuhn,
Executive Chair,
Rancho Simi Trail Blazers

*Please see **Trail Safety Tips** at this trail's main page for more info.*