

Excerpts: *The Outdoor World of the Sacramento Region*



Miner's Lettuce (*Claytonia perfoliata*)

This annual has a cluster of stems rising 6 to 12 inches from a group of spatula-shaped leaves. The outstanding feature is the round disk that encircles the stem that bears the small white or pink flowers. It is common throughout California, growing in the shade of oaks and other trees. In the early spring it presents a very lush appearance. This species is exceedingly variable, with different forms in different environments.

As the name implies, miner's lettuce was used in the early days for food by miners and Spanish Californians. The tender, pale green discs are good eating and taste like young leaf lettuce. This plant was also an important food for local Indian tribes. . .

Brazilian Free-Tailed Bat (*Tadarida brasiliensis*)

The Brazilian free-tailed bat, at one time called the guano bat, is the most common of free-tailed bats. . . . The fur of the body is a soft velvet brown. Half of its tail extends below the membrane of the wings and distinguishes it as a free-tailed species. The guano (excrement) deposited in caves and other bat roosting sites is the source of valuable fertilizer.

. . . Their insect-catching habits, however, make them welcome visitors on summer evenings . . . seen flying in a seemingly erratic pattern at dusk or during the night in search of moths and mosquitoes. . .



California Tiger Salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*)

This large, stocky salamander is 3 to 6½ inches long. Yellow or cream spots on a dark background give the California subspecies the tiger look.

These uncommon salamanders are found in and near vernal pools in the southern part of Sacramento County. The best time to see them is shortly after rain during the spring . . . Most of the time they are underground in the burrows of ground squirrels and gophers.



Garden Spiders (*Araneidae*)

The garden spider is often noticed because of its large size, bold markings and the beauty of its web. . . . The beautiful orb web is stretched sometimes 3 feet or more between supporting plants. Orb weavers generally have poor vision and locate prey by the vibrations of the threads in their web. . . . the spider will rush to that spot and quickly wrap the victim in a bundle of silk. The web is certainly more attractively designed than that of the black widow, but it is not as efficient a trap. . .



Pacific Lamprey (*Lampetra tridentate*)

Slender and eel-like in appearance, lampreys are not true eels. They belong to a class of jawless fish with a circular, leathery sucking disk around the mouth and skeleton which is cartilage rather than bone. The mouth is fashioned in a way that enables it to attach itself to a host fish and suck nourishment . . .

The native Pacific lamprey is the largest and most common lamprey found on the west coast. It grows 30 inches long and is light brown to bluish black . . . Lampreys are anadromous. . . . The adults migrate to the sea, spend one or two years . . . before returning to fresh water to spawn and die. . . .

