

# Ramona Home JOURNAL

# Julian JOURNAL



# Ramona Home JOURNAL

# Julian JOURNAL

MENU

## FEATURES



PONY Teams Compete in End-of-Year Tournament



'A Great Community' Supports Youth at Junior Fair



Fair Marks the Height of Summer Fun



Ramblers Seek Fellow Travelers

## Nature News: Getting Squirrely With California Ground Squirrels



PONY Teams Compete in End-of-Year Tournament



'A Great Community' Supports Youth at Junior Fair



Fair Marks the Height of Summer Fun



Ramblers Seek Fellow Travelers



California ground squirrels are a common sight in grassland areas and rarely travel far from their burrows. Photo by Angela McLaughlin

Small, furry creatures scurrying about in the ground, nose twitching, appears, tail flicking back and forth as it takes in its surroundings.

The California ground squirrel is a common sight around San Diego County, particularly in the back-country. As the largest ground squirrel in the county, these curious little creatures are spotted so frequently



that people may forget the interesting aspects of their existence.

Also called the Beechey ground squirrel, named for 19th century explorer Frederick William Beechey, these rodents are found throughout much of California, Oregon and parts of Washington.

According to Vanessa Potter, wildlife animal care supervisor for Project Wildlife, "They prefer open habitats with areas that have boulders, stone walls, earthen banks or lumber piles — basically, habitats that are sufficient for escape from predators."

She adds that they are often abundant in agricultural fields, pastures, oak savannahs and mountain meadows, but they avoid dense chaparral and thick woodlands.

California ground squirrels are excellent diggers, efficiently excavating the burrows in which they live. These burrows may be for an individual squirrel or used for communal living, however, each squirrel will typically have its own entrance. And they never stray too far from the safety of their home, often remaining within 100 feet of the entrance.

"The length, depth and diameter of a burrow and the complexity of a system will vary depending on soil type and if the burrow is for an individual or family group," says Potter. "For example, burrows in clay-like or adobe soil will be shallow, simple and narrow. But those dug in alluvial soil tend to be long, deep, wide and complex — especially if they house a colony."

Considered an omnivore, ground squirrels eat mainly seeds and vegetation, including oats, acorns, nuts and fruit, which they carry in their cheek pouches. Potter adds that most animal matter is consumed in the form of insects, though they have also been known to eat carrion, birds, eggs and lizards.

While often looked at as a pest animal, California ground squirrels certainly play a role in the structure of the ecosystem. They serve as prey for hawks, eagles, coyotes, foxes, snakes and other predators. Their high-pitched call is used as an alarm to warn of an impending threat, and Potter says some populations have even evolved a resistance to Pacific rattlesnake venom.

In addition, Potter says their abandoned burrows may offer shelter for burrowing owls, California toads, gopher snakes and more.

In spite of the squirrels' benefits, many people still wish to avoid having them in their backyards. The best deterrent is prevention — the squirrels are drawn to food and water sources, such as birdseed from feeders and vegetable gardens.

By keeping a clean yard and utilizing rat-proof and squirrel-proof birdfeeders, residents may be able to avoid attracting them in the first place. Fencing a garden or yard with chicken wire or a similar material may also help deter them. It is important to remember the cascading adverse effects of utilizing a rodenticide as a means of control, as this will negatively impact the animals that may consume the squirrels — including domestic animals.

While some may not be thrilled by the presence of squirrels, they are quite entertaining to observe if given the chance. They use a variety of vocalizations and tail signals to communicate, including tail-flagging and sand-kicking when a threat is perceived.

California ground squirrels breed between December and mid-April, so residents may spot young squirrels scampering around as they venture from the burrow in the spring. While it may be easy to habituate the squirrels to human presence, it is in the best interest of all parties to maintain distance.

The next time you spot the swish of a tail or hear a distant call, pause for a moment to watch this small and often overlooked

animal that we share our landscape with.

[+ Share](#) [f](#) [t](#) [e](#)

[+ Share](#) [f](#) [t](#) [e](#) [Like 0](#)

[ARCHIVES 2019 - Ramona Home Journal](#) »

[RAMONA HOME JOURNAL](#) »

[ARCHIVES 2015](#) »

[ARCHIVES 2011](#) »

[ARCHIVES 2019 - Ramona Home Journal](#) »

[RAMONA HOME JOURNAL](#) »

[ARCHIVES 2019 - Julian Journal](#) »



[ARCHIVES 2014](#) »

[PHOTO GALLERY](#) »

[ARCHIVES 2019 - Julian Journal](#) »



[ARCHIVES 2018 - Ramona Home Journal](#) »



[ARCHIVES 2013](#) »

[ARCHIVES 2018 - Ramona Home Journal](#) »



**ARCHIVES 2015**



**ARCHIVES 2014**



**ARCHIVES 2013**



**ARCHIVES 2011**



**PHOTO GALLERY**



---

Ramona Home Journal • 621 Main Street • Ramona, CA 92065 • Phone: 760-788-8148

Ramona Home Journal • 621 Main Street • Ramona, CA 92065 • Phone: 760-788-8148

© Copyright [Ramona Journal & Julian Journal](#). All rights reserved. © Copyright [Ramona Journal & Julian Journal](#). All rights reserved. Si

---