



The Descanso Junction property protects the imperiled Engelmann oak.



## Precious Ecosystems Preserved at Descanso Junction

**W**ithin the boundary of Cleveland National Forest, bordering Highway 79 on the western slope of Guatay Mountain, lies a beautiful 66-acre property called Descanso Junction. Known for its colorful spring wildflowers, the parcel is also home to a number of rare plant and wildlife species with streams that drain into the Sweetwater River watershed, the largest of three local watersheds. Preserving Descanso Junction as public lands helps protect these species as well as one of San Diego's critical riparian ecosystems.

Among the rarer species at Descanso Junction is the Engelmann oak. The tree's twisted limbs spread up to the heavens to form a beautiful open crown. Although the majestic Engelmann oaks are breathtaking, they are the most imperiled of all tree oaks in the U.S. and are one of California's most endangered plant communities.

Also at Descanso Junction are coast live oak and southern mixed chaparral, a resilient shrub community. Chaparral is more common across California, and it provides a suitable habitat for flora like the Dunn's mariposa lily. These rare and delicate lilies, native to San Diego County and Baja California, Mexico, sprout from bulbs and can grow beneath the chaparral's stiff, evergreen leaves.

Within the chaparral vegetation at Descanso Junction, visitors are likely to find the Hermes copper butterfly. Early southern California butterfly enthusiast John A. Comstock was enchanted by the Hermes copper. In 1927, he wrote, "It is a fascinating little sprite as it darts about in the sunlight, or sports its showy colors while balanced on a tuft of wild buckwheat." However, this beautiful butterfly is sensitive to fires and urban development and has been recognized as a candidate species for federal listing.

The Descanso Junction property also includes some small streamside areas that feature willows and mulefat shrubs. These areas are key habitat for local bird species such as song sparrows and lesser goldfinches.

These precious ecosystems are now forever preserved and protected thanks to San Diego Gas & Electric's (SDG&E) restoration work and partnership with the U.S. Forest Service.



# Protecting Imperiled Species

*“The addition of the Descanso Junction parcel helps maintain open space and visual qualities on the Cleveland National Forest. SDG&E worked closely with us to acquire this parcel as public land for the benefit of future generations,”*

-- William Metz, Forest Supervisor, Cleveland National Forest- U.S. Forest Service.

Descanso Junction is home to the most endangered plant community in California, Engelmann oak

## Descanso Junction | Breaking It Down

LOCATION	In Cleveland National Forest, off of Highway 79
SIZE	65.79 acres
WILDLIFE	<p>Hermes copper butterfly</p>  <p>Hermes copper butterfly</p>
VEGETATION	Rare Engelmann oak as well as coast live oak grow streamside among scattered willows, mulefat, southern mixed chaparral, and Manzanita.
MANAGER/OWNER	U.S. Forest Service
PUBLIC ACCESS	To be determined

## Preservation Lands Leave a Living Legacy

SDG&E is preserving forever over 11,000 acres of critical habitat in San Diego and Imperial counties. One of the largest land preservation efforts in the region’s history, it will create sanctuaries throughout San Diego and Imperial counties for endangered and threatened species, including the arroyo toad, several species of birds and the Quino checkerspot butterfly.

Equal in size to more than nine Balboa Parks, these properties will be preserved in partnership with local environmental, recreational and government organizations. SDG&E will preserve more than 10 times the area physically disturbed by construction of its Sunrise Powerlink transmission line.

For more, see [www.sdge.com/environment](http://www.sdge.com/environment).