

Connect with nature on the Hirschman Trail

Just a short one-mile walk from downtown Nevada City, Hirschman Trail is an easy to moderate forested adventure found in the Deer Creek Watershed. Now teeming with wildlife, the trail's showpiece is Hirschman Pond, created by hydraulic mining during the Gold Rush.

Like most of Nevada County, the landscape of this 85.34 acres of land owned by the City of Nevada City, recounts stories of a complicated past. The original Nisenan people called the land home for thousands of years before greed brought men with powerful water canons looking for gold in the hills. Interpretive signs dotting the trail spin a narrative of environmental catastrophe and Nature's ability to heal.

One of the earliest hydraulic mines in the area, Hirschman's Pond is named after the Hirschman brothers who purchased the mine in 1866. Following mineral deposits, miners washed away entire hillsides in their search for the precious metal. The aftermath was a surreal landscape framed by sheer cliffs and speckled with boulders. Mine relics like water canons, old pipe and broken flumes can still be found along the trail built by volunteers and [Bear Yuba Land Trust](#).

The first 0.4 mile of trail was constructed to ADA standards, providing a wide, mostly level grade, wheelchair access to Hirschman's Pond.

Walk quietly and look for tracks of wildlife like deer, rabbit, bobcat, fox and coyote known to frequent this urban open space. Common native plant species include Ponderosa pine, Pacific madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*), incense cedar, black oak (*Quercus kelloggii*), interior live oak, ink honeysuckle (*Lonicera hispidula*), mountain misery (*Chamaebatia foliolosa*) incense cedar, black oak poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*) and deerbrush (*Ceanothus integerrimus*).

At elevations ranging from 2,500 to 2,650 feet, the property gets some snow in winter. Be sure to wear rugged hiking boots in the winter months, as the trail tends to be mucky. Please stay on the trail and be respectful of the wildlife that find refuge here. Dogs are not encouraged during nesting season. If you do bring

a dog, keep them on a leash and pick up dog poop. Please practice a Leave No Trace philosophy.

Willow and cattail grow at the water's edge and the pond and seasonal overflow areas provide habitat for resident populations of Western pond turtles (a state species of concern), Pacific chorus frogs, and many migrating and resident waterfowl species.

West of the pond, the trail narrows and meanders through a mixed conifer forest for an additional two miles. Note the numerous fallen trees on the ground, recent casualties of drought and bark beetle infestations. For years, [Sierra Streams Institute](#) has stewarded the watershed and led California Naturalist classes here.

Keep walking to Woods Ravine, a major tributary of Deer Creek, which flows into the Yuba and Feather Rivers and ultimately the Sacramento River and San Francisco Bay. A loop can be made by connecting to Indian Flat Road and walking through neighborhoods and paved streets, or turn around and retrace your steps back to the trailhead. See link to map, below.

What to Bring: Water, snacks, sturdy walking shoes, warm clothes in winter (beanie, gloves, dress in layers). Be sure to bring a camera and/or binoculars for observing and identifying birds at the pond. Bring a journal and a well-worn copy of [The Laws Field Guide to the Sierra Nevada](#) to chronicle the plants and animals you find. It's a special place to pause, stretch your legs, take a break from screens, connect with yourself and the natural world. Enjoy.

Distance: 2.4 miles, one way

Altitude change: 150 feet

Tread: Dirt and gravel

Trailhead: From Highway 49, across from Nevada County Government Center, 115 Cement Hill Road. Find a parking spot in the parking lot. Avoid residential driveway and do not disturb residents. If walking from Broad Street, Nevada City, please use extreme caution crossing Highway 49!

Learn more and find a map: <https://www.bylt.org/trail/hirschman-trail/>