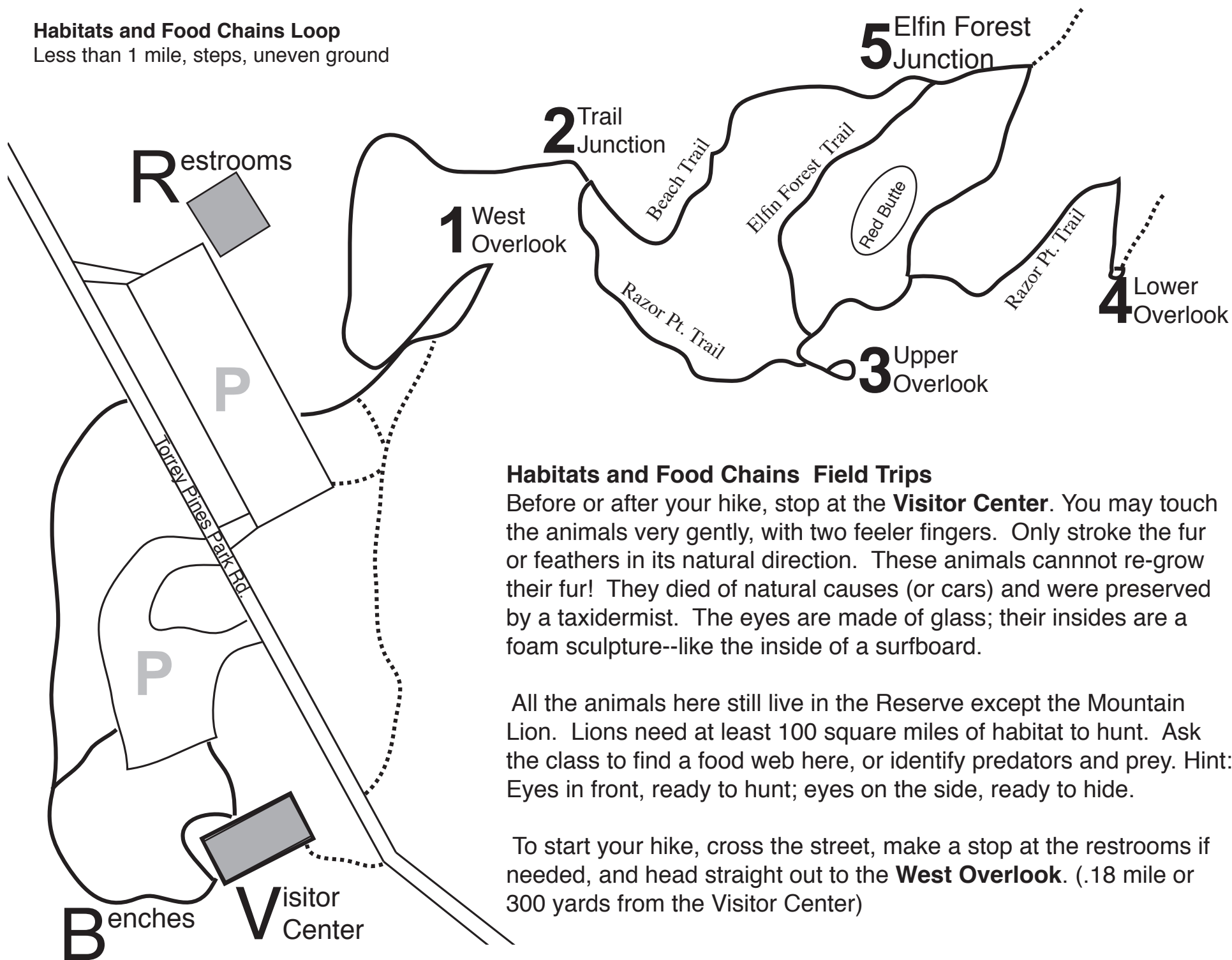


Habitats and Food Chains Loop

Less than 1 mile, steps, uneven ground



Habitats and Food Chains Field Trips

Before or after your hike, stop at the **Visitor Center**. You may touch the animals very gently, with two feeler fingers. Only stroke the fur or feathers in its natural direction. These animals cannot re-grow their fur! They died of natural causes (or cars) and were preserved by a taxidermist. The eyes are made of glass; their insides are a foam sculpture--like the inside of a surfboard.

All the animals here still live in the Reserve except the Mountain Lion. Lions need at least 100 square miles of habitat to hunt. Ask the class to find a food web here, or identify predators and prey. Hint: Eyes in front, ready to hunt; eyes on the side, ready to hide.

To start your hike, cross the street, make a stop at the restrooms if needed, and head straight out to the **West Overlook**. (.18 mile or 300 yards from the Visitor Center)

1. West Overlook

Ask your class to interpret the “No picnic tables” sign. How does human food disrupt natural food chains?

Look out over the many shades of green in the low shrubs. This is chaparral, one of California’s most distinctive ecosystems. Even in hot, dry summer chaparral stays green; these plants have many adaptations that help them survive without water for many months. See if you can find some plants with these adaptations: thick waxy leaves, tiny leaves, light colored leaves, leaves with hairs, greasy leaves. Use the Chaparral Field Guide to help id them. *Turn back toward the parking lot and keep right to the main trail into the Reserve. (.12 mi or 214 yds to Junction)*

2. Trail Junction

Stop and read the rattlesnake sign. Snakes are important members of the food chain. They keep rodent populations under control, and provide food for larger animals. Even the rattlesnake has a predator: the kingsnake got its name because it preys on other snakes, even rattlers.

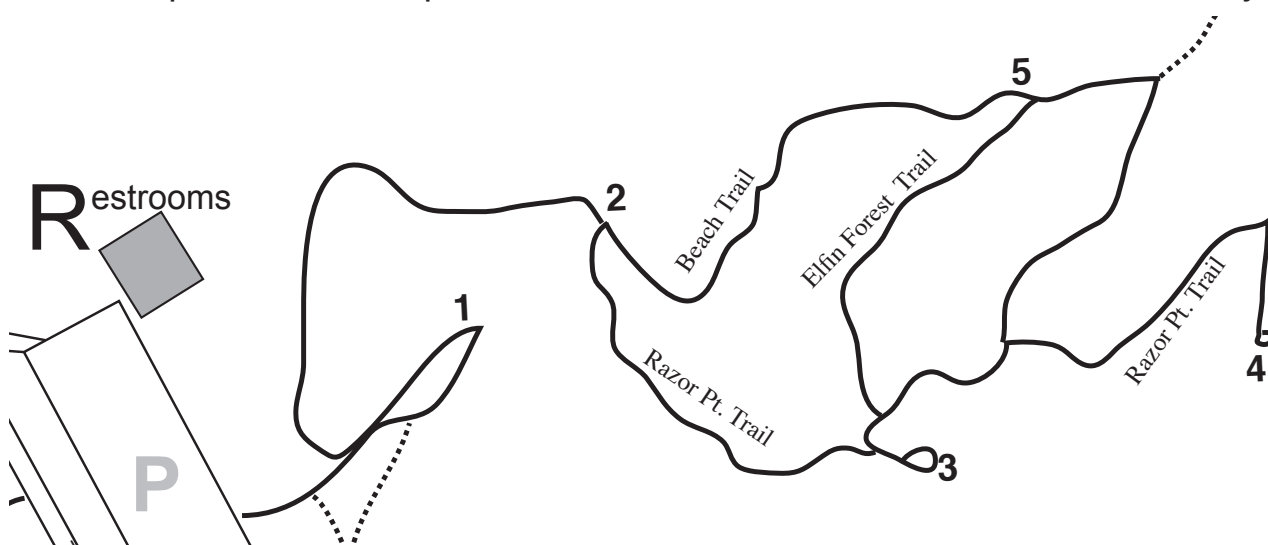
After reading the snake sign, turn around and look on the other side of the trail. Can you see a nest made of sticks? The woodrat who built it would make a tasty meal for a snake. Woodrats, also called pack rats, collect things and keep them. Many of the Reserve’s animals are nocturnal, but we look for signs of them: scat (poop), tracks, or homes like this one. *Take the right fork at the junction. (.07 mi or 127 yds to Upper Overlook)*

3. Upper Overlook: Canyon of the Swifts

Stand quietly for a minute. What natural sounds did you hear? Pass out the food web cards and ask the students to form a food web. *Go back to the trail, turn right and go up the steps. Continue straight down the trail to the next overlook. (.11 mi or 192 yds)*

4. Lower Overlook: Canyon of the Swifts

What adaptations do the plants and animals of the ocean have that are very different from land ones? Look at



the dead Torrey pine tree. Does it provide habitat? *Retrace your steps up to the trail and turn right at the base of Red Butte. Turn left at the bottom. (.13 mi or 248 yds)*

5 Elfin Forest Junction

*Take the left fork to go through the Elfin Forest, a magical chaparral tunnel. At the end of the forest, turn right to head back (.24mi or 419 yds to Parking Lot). **Please return these materials to the Visitor Center!***