About the Trail
The Crest Canyon Open Space Park Preserve is a gem nestled in the western corner of the San Dieguito River Park. Threatened by development in the 1970s, the canyon was protected as open space when local citizens convinced the cities of San Diego and Del Mar to purchase the land instead. Originally included in the plan for Torrey Pines State Preserve but then omitted because of cost considerations, Crest Canyon provides critical upland habitat to complement the wetlands in the San Dieguito Lagoon. It is also part of the County of San Diego’s Multiple Species Conservation Program, which aims to preserve networks of open space for the protection of biodiversity.

Despite its urban setting, Crest Canyon is a beautiful example of coastal sage scrub intermingled with southern maritime chaparral, both rapidly disappearing with development along the coast. Rare plants such as Del Mar manzanita find a home here among vast displays of lemonadeberry, bush sunflower and coastal goldenbush. The canyon is dotted with Torrey Pines, found only in this area of San Diego County and on Santa Rosa Island off the Santa Barbara coast.

Visitors to Crest Canyon can enjoy two gently sloped trails which diverge in the middle of the canyon and meet again near the trailheads. The north trailhead is accessible from I-5 by taking Via de la Valle west to Jimmy Durante Blvd., going past the Del Mar Fairgrounds and then left on San Dieguito Drive to Racetrack View Drive. The south trailhead is accessible from I-5 by taking Del Mar Heights Road west, then turning right onto Durango Drive. Parking is available on the street at both trailheads.

For maps and information about all the trails and activities in the San Dieguito River Park, visit www.sdrp.org. For information about membership, contact the San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy at www.sdrvc.org.