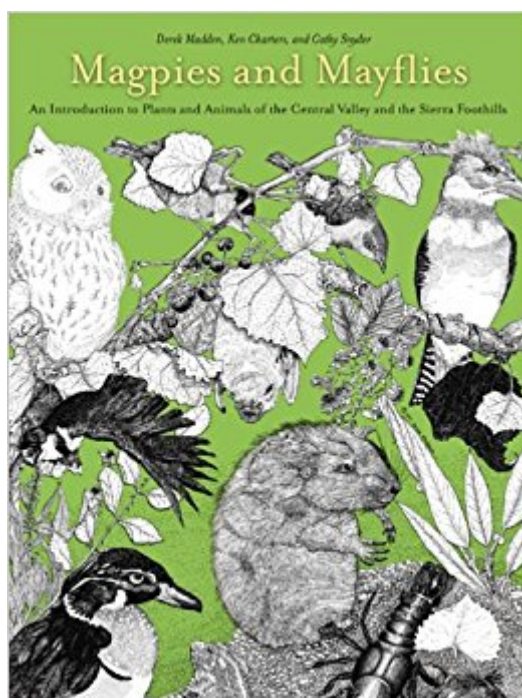


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# Magpies And Mayflies: An Introduction To Plants And Animals Of Central Valley And Sierra Foothills



## Synopsis

Follow biologist Derek Madden as he explores some of California's most diverse ecosystems. Most often associated with rich farmland, bountiful orchards, spreading cities, irrigation channels, and well-traveled highways, California's Great Central Valley and nearby Sierra Nevada Foothills have long hosted abundant, varied, and often surprising plant and animal life. Meet the pickleweed, which survives in intensely alkaline soil by concentrating the salty water on the tips of its branches; lentinus, a hairy-capped mushroom called "train wrecker" because it decomposes railroad ties; the river otter, which has nearly one thousand hairs per square inch of skin; and hundreds of other miracles that carry on their ancient lives in a much-changed environment. Overflowing with fanciful yet accurate illustrations, *Magpies and Mayflies* delves deep into the natural world of the Central Valley and Foothills.

## Book Information

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: Heyday (July 1, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1597140031

ISBN-13: 978-1597140034

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.6 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.5 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,892,121 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #33 in [Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Field Guides > Insects & Spiders](#) #834 in [Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Animals > Insects & Spiders](#) #1934 in [Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Reference](#)

## Customer Reviews

Derek Madden is a professor of biology and the dean of science at Modesto Junior College. He is a recipient of the Charles Spinetta Award for Excellence in Wildlife Art and the Amador Artist Guild Award. Ecologist Ken Charters has documented the natural history of California for over two decades. Cathy Snyder is a science education specialist. As both a tenured primary school teacher and an adjunct professor of biology, Snyder has introduced thousands of students to the natural wonders of this region.

Magpies and Mayflies is written by three scientists which implies the writing is factual and trustworthy. I happen to be a bat specialist so naturally turned first to the chapter on bats and was amazed by the inaccuracies and plain heresy. The authors make the claim that "airborne droplets of urine loosed by bats inside of houses have infected humans with rabies". This is an absolute fairy tale unsupported by any evidence what-so-ever and perpetuates the myth that bats are dangerous and scary creatures. The ONLY case where humans may have contracted rabies through aerosolized virus was two spelunkers in prolonged and intimate contact with MILLIONS of bats in a New Mexico cave in the 1950's - and the validity of even these cases is seriously questioned by the CDC. By chance I flipped to page 121 where the authors claim the red legged frog is "only found in the Coast Range and Golden Gate Park". In fact, colonies of red legged frogs have been under long term study across the Sierra foothills. For a natural science book to be so laced with serious errors does a disservice to any reader who cannot separate the fact from the fiction. I would suggest spending the time reading a few field guides rather than Magpies and Mayflies.

Just found this book on the shelves of my local library. I cannot vouch for the science, but the drawings by Madden are exceptionally fine and worth every penny of the cost. It covers a lot of living things in our Central Valley (Plants, Fungi, Invertebrates, Fishes, Amphibians, Reptiles, Birds and Mammals) so I am not bothered by the critical comment by the expert on one group who gave it only one star. If you want an encyclopedia, you can probably get one-but it will not be carried easily into the field.

Very highly recommended, *Magpies And Mayflies: An Introduction To Plants And Animals Of The Central Valley And Sierra Foothills* is knowledgeably co-authored by Derek Madden, Ken Charters and Cathy Snyder. An invaluable resource for ecological explorers of (and casual visitors to) the central valley and Sierra Foothills. *Magpies And Mayflies* is a perfectly "user friendly", informed and informative guide to flora and fauna of the fields and hills of the beautiful and endless Sierra area.

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