



# USC



## Native Species Project

Californian nature information & conservation  
Newsletter, February 2026

**Next hike:** February 28, Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve (subject to change). Email [sigurdse@usc.edu](mailto:sigurdse@usc.edu)

**The real bosses of the university.** We sometimes get some interesting observations even in the middle of campus. This is probably thanks to nearby parks and trees, as well as the fact that LA has a good amount of wildlife for such a large city. Some species are better at handling human presence than others. At USC, there are now a pair of peregrine falcons that appear to be preparing to nest on top of our tallest tower. The great horned owl is also remarkably adept at living near humans and has been spotted in several places in and around campus.

**Peregrine falcons at USC (*Falco peregrinus*).** The world's fastest predator is looking down on us from our tallest building. This species was recently covered in the Dec. 2025 newsletter, but it has since become clear that a pair are interested in nesting on campus (many thanks to Prof. Andrew Gracey for reporting). The peregrine falcon prefers to hunt in the open skies, which is why they would prefer such a nesting place.



Pair of peregrine falcons at USC Photos: Left, Trond Sigurdson. Right: Robert Drummond.

**Great Horned owls at USC (*Bubo virginianus*).** At night, the great horned owls hunt in and around campus. Previously covered in the Jan. 2024 newsletter, this quintessential American “hoot owl” is amazingly adaptable, and it can be found all the way from Alaska to South America. Near human habitats they often hunt rats, birds, and skunks (which is why their nests are frequently stinky, but they don't seem to mind).



Great horned owl adult and chick near the USC University Park Campus and the Natural History Museum (Photos: iNaturalist.com).

**Supporting local flora and fauna:** Nature and wildlife have been shown to improve both physical and mental health, so parks and wildlife near urban areas certainly help us. This is intuitive; for instance, most people prefer to live near a forest rather than a huge parking lot. Leave the wildlife alone as much as possible. Nesting birds are more likely to be successful in rearing young if given space.



<https://dornsife.usc.edu/bisc/undergraduate/usc-native-species-project/>

