

Oaks Young and Old

Life and Death in the Oak Woodland

This old live oak may have fed generations of Nisenan Indians and sheltered a gold miner during its long life. When alive, it provided food and cover for a variety of plants and animals. But even in death, the oak tree continues to support a host of wildlife and plants. Tangles of Himalaya berry and two young live oaks grow from between the protective branches of the oak, out of reach of browsing deer. Fungus and insects slowly consume the wood, returning nutrients to the soil for the next generation of oaks.

Try This:

Compare the young live oaks growing in the tangle of berry vines to those struggling to survive on the other side of the trail. Mule deer feed on the tender young leaves and twigs of the oaks in the spring, sometimes stunting the young oak's growth for decades until the trees finally grow above the animals' reach.

