Environmental Hazards

An observant park visitor takes delight in both the common and rare plants and animals. Depending on the habitat and season, you might spot dolphins feeding, a Monarch butterfly migration, a peppery red skimmer dragonfly, goldfinches feeding on thistle seeds, a coyote hunting at dusk, magical fly agaric mushrooms in the pine forest, encounter an invasion of beached jelly by-the-wind-sailors, or nibble ripe coastal strawberries or wild blackberries.

Fly Agaric (*Amanita muscaria*)

Avoid Potential Hazards

For some people, getting a dog opens the door to their first adult exploration into the outdoors, a world which can contain unfamiliar hazards. Most experiences will be safe and enjoyable, but here are a few potential hazards to keep in mind.

Poison Oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum).*

Poison oak has urushoil oil, which can cause a severe rash when it contacts skin. Your dog is protected by fur, but you can get poison oak from urushoil oil on your dog's coat. Poison Oak has a variety of appearances, but always has 3 leaflets and no thorns. In the spring and summer, the leaves are green and lush. In the fall the leaves often turn an attractive red. The bare winter stems can also cause a rash. If you touch poison oak, thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water or specialized hand cleaners like Tecnu.

Poison Oak

Foxtails (*Hordeum murinum)*

Foxtails have pointed seeds which can be inhaled by your dog, or become embedded in your dog's skin. The seed can migrate through the body and produce in an abscess or other infection. In the spring, sprouting seed heads are green and harmless. In late spring and summer, the dry seeds drop to the ground. These loose barbed seeds are hazardous. Prevent "heavy sniffers & tennis ball hunters" from playing in foxtail infested areas. Check your dog's coat for barbs, particularly around the feet & ears.

Foxtail

Death Cap mushroom (*Amanita phalloides)*

Each year people and dogs die in the Bay Area from ingesting this mushroom. The yellowish-green mushroom cap pokes up like an egg and will flatten as it matures. Death caps are abundant near oak trees, particularly in Marin County. Death caps are also found in San Mateo and East Bay counties, but are not yet common in San Francisco (2010). If you find them in areas frequented by people and dogs, you might bag and securely dispose of them. (They are safe to touch.) If you suspect your dog has eaten one, do not wait for symptoms to appear. Get the dog to the vet immediately with a sample of the mushroom for identification.

Death Cap (*Amanita phalloides)*

Dead seals and sea lions

Sea mammal carcasses washed up on the beach can be infected with the bacteria *leptospirosis,* which might be transmitted to your dog. The opportunity to roll in a dead seal is attractive to many dogs. If you come across a live stranded seal or seal lion, contact the Marine Mammal 24-hour hotline at 415-289-SEAL. The Marine Mammal Center has recognized the valuable role dog walkers play in <u>notifying the Center of stranded mammals</u>. Keep humans and dogs away until rescue arrives**.**

Seal Carcass

Cliffs

Dogs and people have fallen down the cliffs. Do not climb on the cliffs. Direct your dog away from the cliffs, especially during games of chase or fetch.

Drowning

Dogs and people have drowned after being pulled into the Pacific's rough surf. Confine wading and swimming to calm areas or inland lakes.

Respecting Nature and Others

Relative to scientifically documented threats, dog companions do not have a significant effect on wildlife populations. To support the continuing coexistence of people, their dogs, plants and animals, and natural features, please:

- ✓ Carry out litter (dog litter, food trash, dog fur)
- ✓ Do not chase or disturb wildlife
- ✓ Respect other visitors who may be uncomfortable around dogs
- ✓ Avoid walking or playing in erosion-prone areas
- ✓ Do not enter streams or ponds where eggs or sediment may be disturbed
- ✓ Always keep an eye on your dog
- ✓ Leave only paw prints