

## Our Water Ways May 10, 2024

Q: What is the ancient history of our lakes basin?, a two-part series

Understanding our human and natural history may provide a framework for decisions about the soil, water, plants and animals of our lakes basin. The following notes about human and natural history are quoted from informal sources, cited here to enable further exploration.

Some tribes have been living in the Santa Cruz County area for at least 12,000 years. The oldest known village site in California was found near Scotts Valley.

These cultures stewarded the land by setting intentional fires to open up space by tending to certain plants, removing other plants, and using the cycles of nature and understanding the cycles of nature to have plenty of abundance, according to <https://www.ksbw.com/article/native-americans-have-been-living-in-the-santa-cruz-county-region-for-at-least-12000-years/34352084>

A 10,000-year-old Ohlone village occupied the current Scotts Valley City Hall site, about 1 mile from Spring Lakes Park, according to <https://www.scottsvalley.gov/239/City-Historical-Landmarks>



Approximately ten thousand years ago there was a lake in the **lowest elevation** of Scotts Valley, and Paleo Indians lived near its shores. The lake receded to form a **peat soil bog**. Later, around 2000 BC, Ohlone people occupied areas along the remaining creeks, **spring** and seep areas, along permanent and **seasonal drainages**, and on flat ridges and terraces, according to <https://scottsvalleychamber.com/visit-scottsvalley/history-of-scottsvalley/>.

It is intriguing to picture Paleo Indians living near the shores of Lower Lake, possibly in the same sites as our houses. Would geese have provided them eggs for consumption? Would they have feasted on fish, frogs, crayfish, and freshwater clams similar to those we enjoy watching?

I have not seen a reference to the exact location of the lake where they lived. But some facts match the items in bold type above. On topographic maps, Lower Lake appears to be among the **lowest elevations** in Scotts Valley. Also, FEMA maps outline the area surrounding Lower Lake and Lower Pond as one of **the lowest** four areas in Scotts Valley.

<https://hazards-fema.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=8b0adb51996444d4879338b5529aa9cd>

Samples of our lakes basin soils found the top layer to be **peat soil**, the lakes basin held a former **spring**, and some years Camp Evers Creek and Carbonaro Creek flow only **seasonally**.

In what ways could we enrich our present and future when we discover, remember, and honor the past? Learning, installing signs, planting historically used native plants, hosting speakers, and celebrating our ancient heritage are possibilities.

This story will be followed with a modern history. If you can provide additional information, sources or corrections—or to chat or tour the basin--call Leslie Willoughby (760) 709-6599. 