

# Lichen becomes California's latest symbol

By Emily Benson, San Jose Mercury News

California's newest state symbol adorns coastal oaks and conifers like a cloak. Birds pluck it from the branches to line their nests. Deer find it so delicious they've been known to fight over it. Scientists study it for clues about air pollution.

And now, California has turned it into the country's first official state lichen.

This year, lace lichen joined the ranks of the Golden State's 36 other official state symbols, which range from the California grizzly bear, the official state animal, to the saber-toothed cat – our official state fossil.

The California Lichen Society worked with Assemblyman Marc Levine, a Marin County Democrat, to sponsor the bill that gave lace lichen – a tangled, pale green organism named for the delicate nets growing from its tendrils' tips – its new title. Gov. Jerry Brown signed it into law last summer, and it went into effect Jan. 1.

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