

To make everyone's stay at Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park as enjoyable as possible, please remember a few rules:

- Your dog may camp with you (an additional fee is charged), but keep him on a controlled 6-foot leash during the day and in your vehicle or tent at night. Dogs are not allowed on trails, but are allowed on the beach on a leash.
- Plants and wildlife in state parks are protected. Don't feed the animals, and leave the plants for all to enjoy.
- Loaded firearms are prohibited.
- Help keep your park clean and litter-free-if you bring it in, take it back out.

Prairie Creek  
Redwoods State Park  
Orick, CA 95555  
(707) 488-2171  
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## PRAIRIE CREEK REDWOODS STATE PARK



## Roosevelt Elk



Lords of all they survey, the magnificent Roosevelt elk are California's largest land animal and the largest member of the deer family after the moose. Bulls may weigh seven to eight hundred pounds. Five groups of these elk, including a herd of about forty, can usually be found on Boyes Prairie near park headquarters. Another herd makes its home on or near Gold Bluffs Beach. Roosevelt elk (named for President Theodore Roosevelt) were in danger of extinction in California around the turn of the century when the inroads of white settlers seeking meat and hides seriously reduced their numbers. Elk canine teeth were also much sought after because they were looked upon as good luck charm by Indians and whites alike. Now the elk are protected and today thousands of them range from the Prairie Creek area north to Vancouver, British Columbia. Some even live in Alaska.

Elk, or *wapiti* as the Indians called them, begin to shed their grayish-brown winter coats in March of each year. At about the same time, bulls drop their antlers and begin to grow new ones. By their fourth year, young bulls grow a complete six-point set; mature bulls grow as much as forty pounds of bony antler by August. Then they strip off the "velvet" membrane containing the blood vessels that nourish the antlers. Look for the signs on trees, rocks, and buildings where they have rubbed the velvet away.

Spotted calves, usually one to a cow, are born in May and June. They begin to follow their mothers and eat grass and herbs at about three weeks of age. By late July, they are taking on the solid reddish-brown color of adults, and by fall they have grown to three-quarters of adult size.

Mating season begins in September. The necks of the bulls swell, engorged with blood, and the park resounds with their challenges. The strongest bulls, who live alone or with a few other bulls for most of the year, round up a harem of as many cows and calves as they can manage.

Throughout most of the year the cows wander at will, usually in groups with calves and yearling bulls led by a matriarch of the herd. But once a bull elk has assembled a harem he will tolerate no straying from his flock. Yearling and other young bulls are driven out of the harem and usually join others of their age to form "bachelor" groups. Meanwhile, mature bulls continually look for opportunities to mate and perhaps even acquire a harem by stealing cows from the master bull. He is kept constantly on guard running off competitors and occasionally two big bulls will meet in combat.

The challenges are sounded and the bulls trot toward each other. Then, heads lowered, they meet in a clash of antlers. The cows ignore the action as the bulls push furiously, each trying to bring the other to his haunches. Usually two or three such engagements settle the ownership of the herd without either bull being seriously injured, but sometimes fights are to the death and go on for hours.

The mating period lasts about six weeks. At the end of that time, the once sleek, handsome herd bull has been reduced to gaunt exhaustion. But his purpose has been fulfilled. The fittest bulls have mated to produce the strongest offspring possible.

Remember, Prairie Creek's free-roaming elk are wild animals. State law prohibits approaching them. If you want to take a picture, use a telephoto lens. Slides and postcards of the elk are available at park headquarters. For your protection as well as the elk's, Boyes Prairie is closed to park visitors. If you hike the Elk Prairie Trail, be sure to stay on the trail. One of the elk's natural enemies is the wolf which the dog closely resembles — so be sure to keep your pet on-leash and away from the elk. Dogs are not permitted on any trail.

Magnificent groves of coast redwoods, *Sequoia sempervirens*, are the chief attraction in this 14,000-acre park. Many of them are 300 feet or more in height — among the tallest trees in the world. Some of these groves of tall redwoods grow right along the edge of a high bluff overlooking a broad sandy beach.

This magnificent natural scene was upset briefly in 1851 when thousands of men poured into the area in pursuit of easy wealth — a spin-off of the great California gold rush. They left in frustration and despair after failing to discover an economical way to separate the gold from its mixture of sand and rock. The names of Gold Bluffs and Gold Bluffs Beach, where a major attempt was made to mine the elusive metal, are reminders of this almost forgotten excitement.

### Fern Canyon

Fern Canyon, cut through the bluffs by Home Creek, is one of the park's most beautiful and popular attractions. Lush ferns cover the canyon's fifty-foot walls, and moss carpets the fallen tree trunks.

The most common fern in this area is the five-fingered fern. Its black stems were used by the Indians of this region to decorate basketry. Large but delicate lady ferns are also common in this area as are sword ferns whose leaflets resemble miniature swords complete with hilts.

Giant horsetails can also be seen here along the bottom of the canyon. They can be recognized by the tufts that grow out of their main stems. Like the ferns and redwoods of this area this is a very ancient plant whose ancestry can be traced back many millions of years through the fossil record.

Houseplant fanciers will recognize the "piggyback plant" — *Tolmiea* — growing on ledges along the sides of the canyon. Other residents of the canyon include thimbleberry and salmonberry, wild cucumber with its huge root (a relation of the watermelon and other gourd-bearing plants), and *Oenanthe*, a poisonous member of the carrot family.



Lady Fern

### Campgrounds

There are two developed family campgrounds in the park: Elk Prairie Campground with 75 sites, and Gold Bluffs Beach Campground with 25 sites. Tables, stoves, and cupboards are located in each site. Piped water and restrooms with flush toilets are nearby. Elk Prairie will accommodate trailers up to 24 feet long and motorhomes up to 27 feet. There are no hookups. Hot showers are located nearby.

Gold Bluffs Beach can be reached by motor vehicle by way of Davison Road, an unpaved county road that is open to vehicles up to three tons in weight and up to 20 feet long and seven feet wide. Davison Road intersects Highway 101 about 3.6 miles south of park headquarters.



Gold Bluffs Beach

Separate camps for hikers and bicyclists are located next to both of the main campgrounds, and there is also a backpackers' camp near Butler Creek. It can be reached by way of the West Ridge and Butler Creek Trails and is about 7.5 miles from Highway 101 and park headquarters. This camp has pit toilets. Water must be carried in. Backpackers planning to use the camp must register at park headquarters where parking is also available. Overnight parking is not allowed on the highway or at Fern Canyon.

Campsites at Elk Prairie Campground can be reserved for summer stays, and advance reservations are definitely recommended. Reservations can be made up to eight weeks in advance by contacting any MISTIX outlet. To locate the MISTIX outlet nearest to you call 1-800-952-5580. Reservations can be made by phone between 8 a.m. and 9 p.m., seven days a week, using your Visa or Mastercard. Call 1-800-446-PARK.

Campsites at Gold Bluffs Beach are available year-round on a first-come, first-served basis.

Environmental campsites can be reserved by contacting Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park, (707) 488-2171.

### Interpretive Program

Campfire programs and ranger-conducted hikes are offered on a regular basis throughout the summer. Check the bulletin board for exact times and places. Children will enjoy the Junior Ranger Program which offers opportunities to learn more about the natural environment.

The ever more popular Banana Slug Derby is held each year at Prairie Creek on the third Saturday in August. Visitors enter their (not so very well trained) pets under such titles as Yellow Wonder and Banana King.

Interpretive displays and sale publications describing the plant and animal life of the redwood region are available in the visitor center, a hand-hewn redwood building built by the CCC during the 1930s. The bookstore is operated by the North Coast Redwoods Interpretive Association, a non-profit citizens' group.

### The Revelation Trail

Feel the rough bark of a redwood. Compare it to the smoother covering of a tanoak. Smell the aromatic leaves of the California bay; Listen to the splash of a stream. These are just a few of the many natural realities that can be explored along the Revelation Trail. Wood-and-rope guide rails as well as tape recorders and signs make it possible for the blind or otherwise disabled visitor to venture out into the midst of the forest and explore this fascinating environment independently. The trail is one-third of a mile long and has seventeen stops. It was designed and built by park personnel and prison inmate crews with money donated through the Save-the-Redwoods League. A wheelchair accessible restroom is nearby. Tape players are available in the visitor center bookstore.

### Trails

The trail system within Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park offers a wide variety of experiences. There are all-day hikes and short leisurely strolls. There is even a three and one half mile long scenic drive within the park — Cal-Barrel Road, which climbs a thousand feet above its starting point at Highway 101 near park headquarters. (Look for highway mileage marker 127.58 a quarter mile north of park headquarters.) This narrow, winding, dirt road passes through some magnificent redwood groves and, in spring, a colorful display of rhododendrons and azaleas. The road is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. except during bad weather when it may be closed. Trailers and motorhomes are not allowed.

The Rhododendron, Clintonia, and California Real Estate Association Trails pass through some truly ancient redwood groves. Streamside habitats are explored by the Prairie Creek, Hope Creek, and Brown's Creek Trails. The James Irvine Trail was once a supply route to the Gold Bluffs mining camp. It goes from park headquarters through a forest of redwood, Sitka spruce, and Douglas fir to Fern Canyon.

You may see elk browsing in the meadows as you hike the Elk Prairie or Cathedral Trees Trails. Ossagon Trail leads through a redwood and red alder forest to the open, grassy area above Gold Bluffs. Miner's Ridge Trail, partly an old "corduroy" road of logs, was used by logging wagons around the turn of the century. It connects park headquarters and the beach campground.

The Big Tree Circle Trail goes right by one of Prairie Creek's largest redwoods, and as you take the Five-Minute Nature Loop around the visitor center you will see a hollowed-out and partly boarded up "Chimney Tree" where an entire family lived for a time during the 1930s.

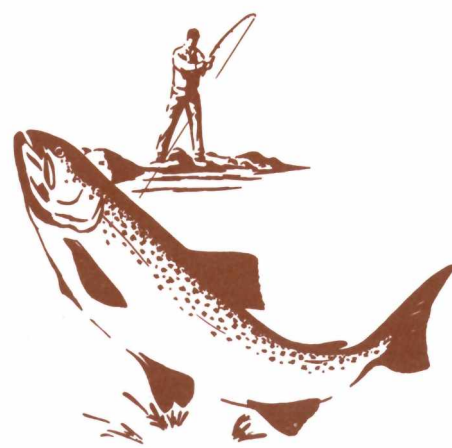
### Fishing

Around the time the alder trees drop their last leaves in the autumn, the annual salmon and steelhead migrations begin. These fish are born in fresh water but spend their lives at sea where there is a better food supply before returning to spawn in the streams where they began life. Prairie Creek is closed to fishing during spawning season.

The park's year-round streams also support a native population of cutthroat trout.

Park visitors enjoy fishing from Gold Bluffs Beach where they frequently catch red-tailed perch. Nets are used at night to catch smelt —small, silvery "night fish." During heavy runs, smelt can even be picked up by hand off the beach.

A California fishing license is required to fish at Prairie Creek Redwoods. Check with the rangers regarding the special seasons.



# THE REDWOODS

California has not one, but two native redwoods — the coast redwood that you see here at Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park, and the Sierra redwood. Millions of years ago, forests of redwoods covered vast areas of Europe, Asia, and North America, but changes in climate have greatly restricted their range. Today they grow naturally only in a long narrow strip near the Pacific coast from central California to southern Oregon, and in widely separated groves along the western slope of the Sierra Nevada. A deciduous redwood, the dawn redwood, survives in one small area of central China.

Nevertheless, the redwoods show no signs of dying out. They are remarkably resistant to insects, fire, and other environmental hazards, and the coast redwood's vigor in sprouting back when cut drove some early settlers to cut them only "in the dark of the moon" to clear the land for farming.

Both California redwoods are evergreen. The coast redwood is taller, sometimes exceeding 350 feet in height, but the Sierra redwood is larger — 35 feet in diameter at the base versus about 20 feet for a coast redwood. Sierra redwood is also apt to live longer, sometimes reaching an age of 4,000 years whereas the coast redwood rarely exceeds 2,000 years of age.

## Coast Redwood Country

The coast redwood "follows the fog" and grows best at less than two thousand feet elevation in areas of heavy winter rains and moderate year-round temperatures. In many areas, redwoods share the forest with other trees — Douglas fir, tanoak, madrone, big-leaf maple, red alder, California laurel (or pepperwood), California buckeye, Oregon white oak, or California black oak. They grow in one long continuous belt rather than in isolated groves like the Sierra redwoods. As a result, in places like Humboldt Redwoods State Park's famed "Avenue of the Giants" along Old Highway 101, you can drive for mile after peaceful mile through unbroken redwood forest.

Many plants grow around the redwoods — feathery ferns, rhododendron sorrel with its pink flowers and purple veins, salal with its leathery green leaves and purple summer fruit, and trillium, Douglas iris, and Columbia lily. Salmonberry, thimbleberry, and huckleberry provide forage for wildlife, and travelers come from miles away to see the lavish displays of scarlet-to-purple rhododendron flowers that decorate redwood country between April and June.

The root system of the redwood is quite broad but very shallow, extending a few inches to at most six feet below the ground. Compacting of the soil over and around the roots — as a result of excessive foot traffic, for example — can disturb the drainage and make it difficult for the roots to extract nutrients from the soil. For this reason you are requested to stay on established trails in redwood parks.

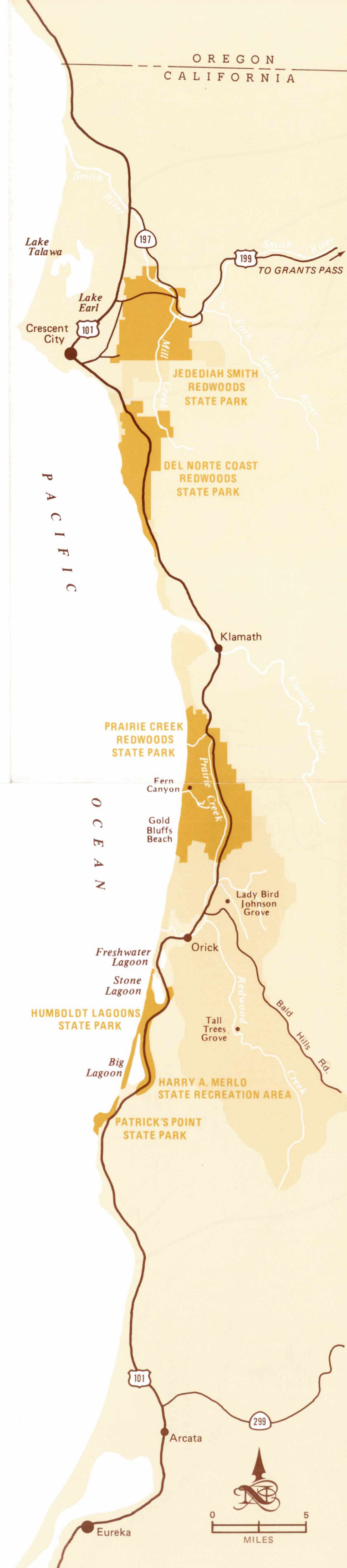
Coast redwood reproduces best by stump sprouting. As a result you will often see a circle of new trees around the remains of a tree that has been felled or badly burned.

## Saving the Redwoods

As early as 1864 people recognized the need to preserve the beauty of the redwood forest. In that year, President Abraham Lincoln signed an act of Congress that created the nation's first state park: Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Sierra redwoods. (These areas were returned to federal jurisdiction in 1905 after creation of Yosemite National Park.) Concerned citizens began work in 1900 to save the beautiful coast redwood groves of Big Basin near Santa Cruz. The Save-the-Redwoods League was formed in 1918 and has since gone on to raise millions of dollars to buy redwood lands for inclusion in the California State Park System. Well over five hundred memorial groves (more than two hundred of them within Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park) have been established with the help of League funds, and several lumber companies have cooperated by preserving redwood forests until the League could afford to buy them. Indeed, the names of quite a few state parks and memorial groves reflect the generosity of lumbermen who donated all or part of them.

In 1968, after almost ninety years of effort by the League, and by other groups and individuals, the federal government established Redwood National Park. Today the park contains about 78,000 acres of federally owned land, plus over 27,000 acres in three state parks — Jedediah Smith, Del Norte Coast, and Prairie Creek Redwoods State Parks with approximately 24,000 acres of old-growth virgin redwood forest.

California's redwood parks are monuments to the dedicated people who had the vision to preserve them for all of us and for the future.



CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

REDWOOD NATIONAL PARK LAND



| TRAILS                                  | MI. | DIFFICULTY           | HIGHWAY 101 MILE MARKER |
|-----------------------------------------|-----|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Beach                                   | 3.0 | Easy                 |                         |
| Circle                                  | 0.2 | Very easy            | 127.96                  |
| Boat Creek                              | 2.0 | Moderate             |                         |
| Brown Creek                             | 1.2 | Easy                 | 129.00                  |
| Butler Creek                            | 1.8 | Moderate             |                         |
| California Real Estate Assn. (C.R.E.A.) | 2.6 | Strenuous            | 130.17                  |
| Campfire Center                         | 0.7 | Easy                 |                         |
| Carruthers Cove                         | 1.0 | Strenuous            |                         |
| Cathedral Trees                         | 1.5 | Moderate             | 127.27                  |
| Clintonia                               | 1.0 | Moderate             |                         |
| Elk Prairie                             | 2.3 | Easy                 |                         |
| Fern Canyon Loop                        | 0.7 | Easy                 |                         |
| 5-minute                                | 0.1 | Very easy            |                         |
| Foothill                                | 2.6 | Easy/Moderate        |                         |
| Hope Creek                              | 1.2 | Moderately Strenuous | 132.74                  |
| James Irvine                            | 4.2 | Moderate             |                         |
| Jogging                                 | 2.0 | Easy                 |                         |
| Miners Cabin                            | 0.5 | Moderate             |                         |
| Miners Ridge                            | 3.9 | Moderate             |                         |
| Nature                                  | 0.3 | Easy                 |                         |
| Ossagon                                 | 1.7 | Moderately strenuous | 132.90                  |
| Prairie Creek                           | 6.1 | Easy                 |                         |
| Redwood Access                          | 0.2 | Easy                 |                         |
| Revelation                              | 0.3 | Very easy            |                         |
| Rhododendron                            | 6.3 | Moderately strenuous |                         |
| South Fork                              | 0.9 | Strenuous            |                         |
| Ten Taypo                               | 2.0 | Moderately strenuous |                         |
| West Ridge                              | 6.1 | Moderate             |                         |
| Zig Zag No. 1                           | 0.5 | Moderately strenuous | 129.37                  |
| Zig Zag No. 2                           | 0.5 | Moderately strenuous | 130.54                  |

