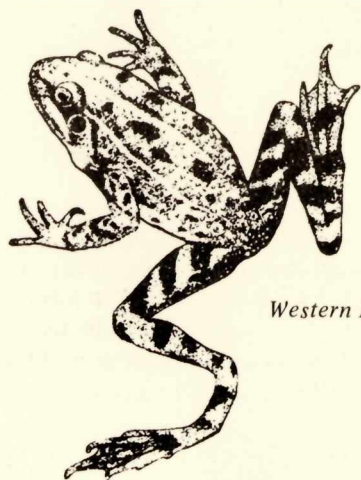
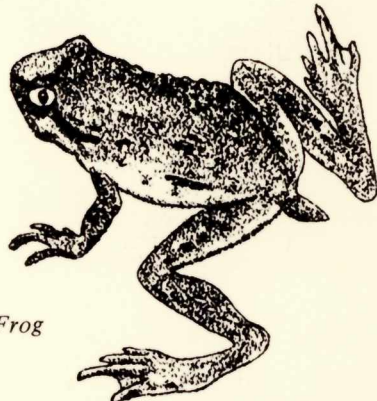


Coastal Cutthroat Trout

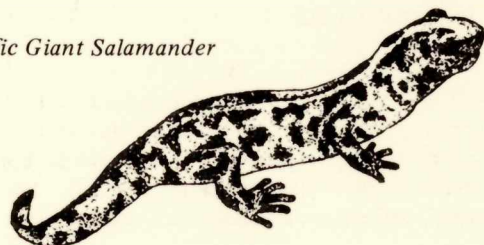


Western Red-legged Frog

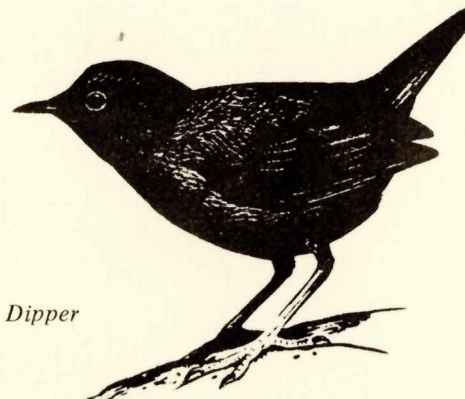


Tailed Frog

Pacific Giant Salamander



Only two birds actually live in the canyon — the dipper, a sparrow-sized bird that you can see bobbing up and down in the stream as it searches for insects on the bottom, and the winter wren, a small wren that lives in the canyon's cool, dark places. You can hear its "tick-tick-tick" call as it scurries along rotten branches eating insects.



Dipper



Winter Wren

These are only a few of the plants and animals of Fern Canyon. Linger here awhile, visit the meadow above, and get to know them here in their home, set aside for you and future generations to enjoy.

Drawings in this brochure are from
Pacific Coastal Wildlife Region
by Charles Yocom, PhD., and Raymond Dasmann
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department of parks & recreation

State of California—the Resources Agency
P.O. Box 2390 • Sacramento, 95811

4/82

Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park

FERN CANYON TRAIL

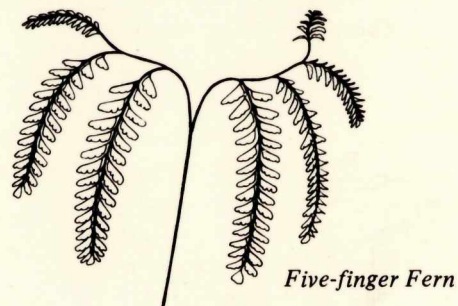
Welcome to Fern Canyon, the jewel of Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park. The canyon and Gold Bluffs Beach were acquired by the State Park System in 1964 to preserve their pristine beauty and unique natural history.

At the Pacific Mining Company's peak of activity in the 1880s, about three hundred people were searching for gold in this vicinity. But mining proved unprofitable, and most activity ended in the 1920s. Thanks to the forgiving nature of the north coast forests, Man's imprint here has almost vanished.

Fern Canyon's walls are a wonderful geologic window where you can see gravels deposited by the ancestral Klamath River around four million years ago. The gravels were once part of the Klamath Mountains, forty miles to the east. The rough ocean waves eroded these relatively loose gravels over the last several thousand winters to help create the flat floor that you see in the lower reaches of the canyon, rather than the steep slopes of most North Coast streambanks.

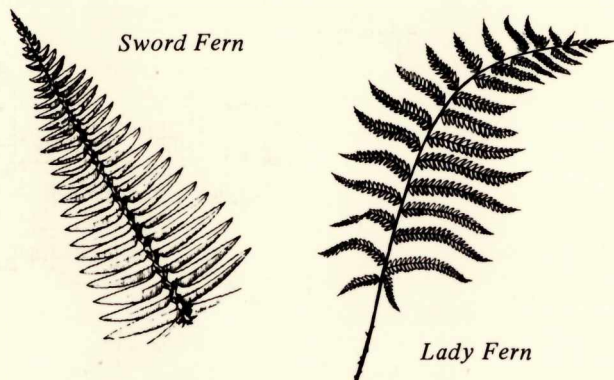
Look around; study the canyon walls; listen to the sounds. . .this pamphlet will introduce you to some of the plants and animals that make their home in this beautiful place.

Eight species of ferns have been found in the canyon — the most abundant of them is the **five-finger fern** (*Adiantum pedatum*), which grows on the moist sides of the canyon. The native people of the region harvested this fern for its black stems, which they used to weave designs into their grass baskets.



Five-finger Fern

Sword fern (*Polystichum munitum*) is the large dark green plant that grows on the canyon floor and shady areas. Its leaflets resemble tiny swords, complete with miniature hilts. This evergreen fern can reproduce from underground stems — rhizomes — as well as from spores as do all ferns.



Sword Fern

Lady Fern

Varieties of the lady fern (*Athyrium felix-femina*) that you see clinging to the canyon walls can be found from Alaska to Argentina. Many people consider it medicinally valuable; its rhizomes have been dried and powdered to make a preparation supposed to drive out intestinal worms.

On the ledges and flat areas of the canyon grows a small dark green plant called **tolmiea** (*Tolmiea menziesii*). In garden shops they call it the "piggyback plant" or "youth-on-age" because its new leaves sometimes grow on top of the older ones.



Tolmiea



Salmonberry

The **salmonberry** (*Rubus spectabilis*) has a pink-purple flower in April and May, and an orange berry in June and July. It is found in areas of heavy rainfall along the Pacific Coast from Northern California to Alaska.

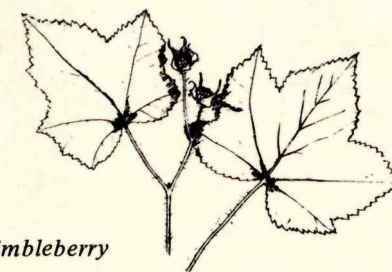
Common in Fern Canyon is **oenanthe** (*Oenanthe sarmentosa*) which, like many other members of the carrot family, is poisonous. If you pick wild plants for food, it's best to leave members of the carrot family strictly alone.



Oenanthe

Look under the fern fronds along the walls of the canyon for a thin, flat, shiny green plant growing in the moss. This is the **giant liverwort** (*Concocephalum conicum*), a primitive plant that, like ferns, reproduces from spores. Since it cannot bring water or nutrients up from the ground, it must depend on rain and fog to live.

Thimbleberry (*Rubus parviflorus*), a large shrub that is a close relative of the salmonberry, is sometimes called the Kleenex plant because its broad leaves feel just like tissue. Its red berry, not surprisingly, resembles a small thimble.



Thimbleberry

One of the few vines in the canyon, **wild cucumber** or **manroot** (*Marah oreganus*) is closely related to the watermelon, cucumber, and other gourd-bearing plants. Its large, starchy root sometimes reaches the size of a full-grown man. This plant grows above, around, and through other shrubs, and bears small white star-shaped flowers in August, at the end of its growing season.



Wild Cucumber

The stream running through Fern Canyon is filled with many different kinds of animals. **Coastal cutthroat trout** come from the ocean in early spring to lay their eggs in the undisturbed gravel beds; the **western red-legged frog** is common in the moist areas; and the rare **tailed frog** also prefers this cool, moist canyon. The **Pacific giant salamander** lives in the canyon's still pools — one of the largest western salamanders at up to ten inches long, nearly twice as long as most species of salamander, it has been known to catch and eat mice.