



Redwood

(*Sequoia sempervirens*)

REDWOOD, also known as Coast Redwood, grows in a very narrow strip along the coast of California from the extreme southwestern corner of Oregon to 150 miles south of San Francisco. This area is about 500 miles long and rarely more than 20 or 30 miles wide, in a region of frequent thick summer fog, moderate year-round temperature, and considerable winter rainfall. Redwood does not grow naturally beyond the belt affected by this combination. The trees have been transplanted extensively to areas of the world where the ground does not freeze in winter. Redwood trees are generally found in mixture with other species, principally Douglas Fir, and hardwoods—tanoak and madrone. In the northern part of their range, they are also associated with some white fir, western hemlock, and Sitka spruce. Redwood also occurs in pure stands, usually on alluvial soils. The original range of Redwood forest extended over about 2,000,000 acres and in 1909 the total stand of this species was estimated to be over 100 billion board feet.

Paleobotanists have found fossils of the Redwoods in rocks estimated to be 160 million years old. The Redwoods have probably been limited to their present narrow natural range by the advance of glacial ice over millions of years. The coastal summer fogs also provide essential moisture during the dry summer months.

Redwood is a rapidly growing tree and some individual trees have been measured at more than 360 feet in height, making this tree the tallest measured tree species on the earth. In favorable situations, trees 20 years old may average 50 feet in height and 8 inches in diameter. Average mature trees are from 200 to 240 feet high with diameters of 10 to 15 feet at 4 feet 8 inches above the ground. Exceptional individuals sometimes reach a height of 350 feet, a diameter of over 20 feet, and an age of approximately 2,000 years. Such trees were about 17 feet in diameter when America was discovered. The "Founders Tree," dedicated to the founders of the Save-the-Redwoods League, located in Humboldt Redwoods State Park in California, is one of the tallest trees known, and another is the world's tallest measured tree, the Howard A. Libby Tree, 367.8 feet tall, located on Redwood Creek in the Redwood National Park.

The Redwood leaves are green, flat, and sharp-pointed. The brown cones are egg-shaped and only one-half inch in diameter. Their seeds average about 123,000 to a pound.

The soft, reddish-brown bark, six to twelve inches thick, is one of the Coast Redwood's most distinguishing characteristics and together with the wood names the species. On older trees the bark has a grayish tinge, is deeply furrowed, and gives the tree a fluted appearance.

The heartwood of Redwood varies in color from bright cherry to a dark mahogany. The sapwood is narrow and almost white. The wood is light, soft, moderately strong, generally straight-grained, easily worked, and very rot resistant. It is difficult to season and neither shrinks nor swells much. It is one of the few woods resistant to attack from termites, those wood-eating insects which closely resemble white ants.

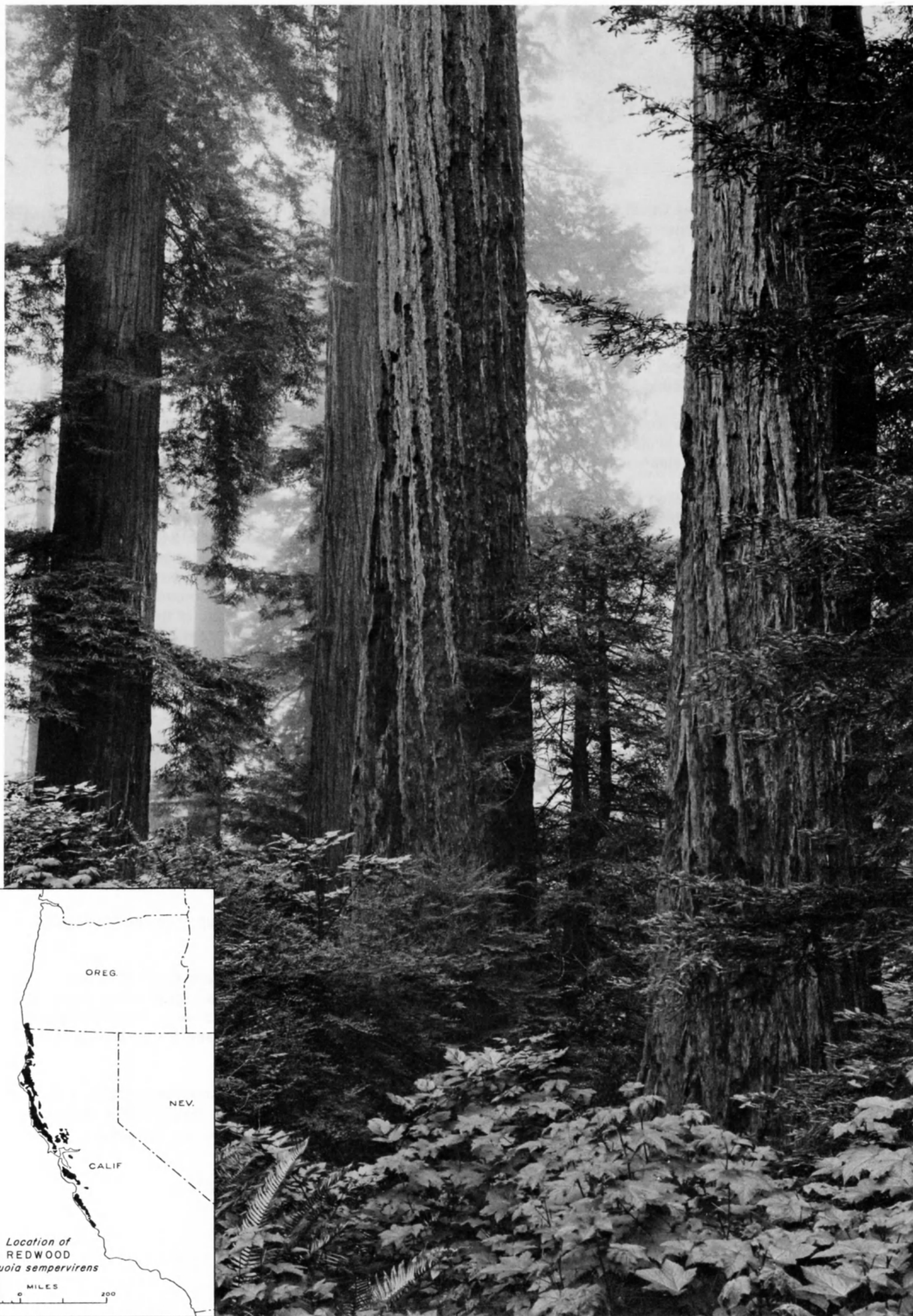
Burls are common near the base of Redwood trees. On large trees these burls made up of adventitious buds may be several feet wide and extend up the trunk as much as 10 feet or more.

Although the thick bark of older trees is relatively fire resistant, repeated fires can damage these trees considerably. The large hollows or "Goosepens," frequently found in the base of large trees, give evidence of this fact. Fire also either seriously injures the young growth or kills it outright. Redwood, however, is exceptionally free from fungus diseases, and there are no insects which materially harm it. Human demand for lumber is responsible for most of the destruction of first growth Coast Redwood forests.

By 1925 more than one-third of the Redwood area had been logged. Save-the-Redwoods League, founded in 1918, has helped purchase and protect the many outstanding groves in the California Redwood State Parks and in portions of the Redwood National Park so that future generations may know and enjoy the beauty and majesty of these trees—the worlds' greatest forests.

Save-the-Redwoods League

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Del Norte Coast Redwoods State Park

Photo by Howard King