



# MUIR WOODS

NATIONAL MONUMENT

*California*

# Muir Woods

## NATIONAL MONUMENT

In a mountain valley just north of San Francisco is a cathedral-like grove of virgin redwoods, preserved in Muir Woods National Monument. Though virgin forests of other types are found in a number of National Parks, this is the only area in the National Park System which contains redwoods.

The monument lies at the south foot of Mount Tamalpais. The area was donated to the United States by Congressman William Kent and his wife, Elizabeth Thacher Kent. At their request it was named in honor of John Muir, noted traveler, naturalist, and writer.

### The Trees

Visitors to the west coast often confuse the redwood of the coast with the giant sequoia of the Sierra. Both belong to the genus *Sequoia* but are separate species of that genus. The species growing in Muir Woods is *Sequoia sempervirens*, commonly called redwood.

Redwoods grow only in the coastal region from about 125 miles south of San Francisco to the southwest corner of Oregon. They are known to exceed 2,000 years in age. A representative of this species, the Tall Tree, in Rockefeller Forest of the Humboldt Redwoods State Park, Calif., is 359 feet high, the tallest living thing on earth. Its largest diameter is about 20 feet.

The species growing in the Sierra Nevada, at altitudes between 4,000 and 8,000 feet, is *Sequoia gigantea*, commonly known as giant sequoia. Trees of this species attain diameters of nearly 35 feet, but average considerably less in height than redwoods. Many of the giant sequoias exceed 3,000 years in age.

There are magnificent groves of giant sequoias in Sequoia, Kings Canyon, and Yosemite National Parks.

In Muir Woods the charred stumps and the deep scars in the living trees resulted from periodic fires, the last of which occurred between 150 and 200 years ago. Circles of large trees that sprouted from the roots of the fire-killed or fire-scarred trees now surround these old veterans.

Smaller associates of the stately redwood include Douglas-fir, California-laurel, tanoak, red alder, and California buckeye.

### Other Plant Life

In addition to its beauty, Muir Woods is noted for various odd growths, such as burls and albino shoots on some redwoods, and such peculiarities as natural grafts on other trees. Burls are lumpy growths from a few inches to several feet in diameter. Large root burls look like boulders at the bases of trees; smaller burls form a variety of shapes and sizes on trunks.

In addition to the trees already named, many other plants grow here. Probably most distinctive are the ferns—the profuse western swordfern, ladyfern, western bracken, giant chainfern, and others.

Muir Woods is too shady to encourage wildflowers in the quantities found on the more open surrounding hillsides. However, there is a large variety in limited numbers. The flowering season begins as early as February. Most plentiful are California fetid-adderstongue, trilliums, and red beadlily. Western azalea, a tall shrub along the creek, blossoms through June and July and fills the air with its fragrance. The blooming of this plant signals the end of the flowering season.

Oregon oxalis is abundant at the bases of many redwoods, but only some of these plants bear flowers.

### Animal Life

There are many deer in the monument; however, you are likely to see them only in early morning or late evening, except in autumn, when there is better feed in the valley than on the hillsides. Raccoons are plentiful, and bobcats and skunks are occasionally seen. Birds are numerous and varied, but most of them stay in the tree-tops or on the higher hillsides, so that it is not easy to see them.

Fry and fingerlings of coho salmon and rainbow trout are numerous, moving about in the pools during summer and autumn. When Redwood Creek is swollen by winter rains, you may see, but are not permitted to catch, the mature salmon and trout, fighting their way up the rapids to spawning beds in the monument.

### About Your Visit

You may visit the monument from sunrise to sunset. During this period a park ranger is available on request to guide you through the main area and explain points of interest.

Souvenirs and refreshments are available at the Muir Woods Shop in the visitor center.

There are no camping facilities or other overnight accommodations in the monument.

The following rules are necessary for protection of the natural beauty of your monument and for your convenience:

Visitors must stay on trails.

Dogs are permitted only on leash or otherwise under physical restrictive control.

Picnicking or lunching is permitted only in the picnic area; no fires may be built.

Flowers or ferns may not be picked or mutilated; property, trees, or plants must not be damaged, defaced, or removed.

Games which tend to destroy vegetation are not allowed.

Fishing, hunting, or possession of fire-arms is not permitted.

*Redwood and California-laurel in the monument*



