

# Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park



Redwood National  
and State Parks



## Our Mission

The mission of California State Parks is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at **(707) 465-7335**. If you need this publication in an alternate format, contact [interp@parks.ca.gov](mailto:interp@parks.ca.gov).

### CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

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(916) 653-6995, outside the U.S.

711, TTY relay service

[www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov)



Save The Redwoods

LEAGUE

[SaveTheRedwoods.org/csp](http://SaveTheRedwoods.org/csp)

### Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park

127011 Newton B. Drury Parkway

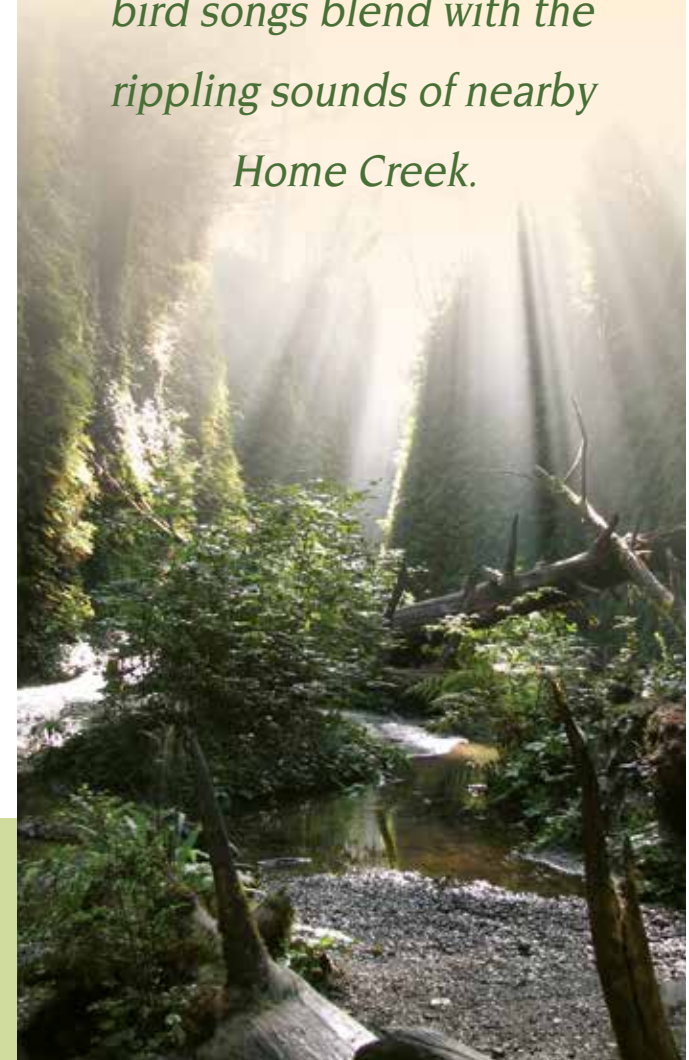
Orick, CA 95555

**(707) 465-7335**

Cover photo courtesy of Save The Redwoods Photo Archives

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*In Fern Canyon,  
earth-fragrant morning  
mists silence the lush  
greenery, while distant  
bird songs blend with the  
rippling sounds of nearby  
Home Creek.*





**A**long California's rocky north coast, **Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park** offers sandy beaches and open meadows grazed by herds of Roosevelt elk. Ferns appear



to flow like a green waterfall down steep canyon walls, and old-growth redwoods stand in primeval majesty.

Summer brings morning fog, which usually burns off by midday. Winter rains bring needed water to the redwoods and ferns.

## **PARK HISTORY**

### **Native California Indians**

Yurok people have lived in and around today's Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park for generations. The temperate climate and abundant wildlife of the north coast promoted a culturally rich way of life that continues today. Yurok people built villages of redwood planks along major waterways. Traveling by dugout canoe, they fished for salmon. They also hunted elk, deer, and other small game and gathered plants.

In 1850, when gold was found near today's Fern Canyon, the Yurok people were overwhelmed by an influx of settlers. Conflict over the land took many forms. The native people were hunted down; any who survived the attacks were forced onto reservations. Newly introduced diseases further decimated their numbers.

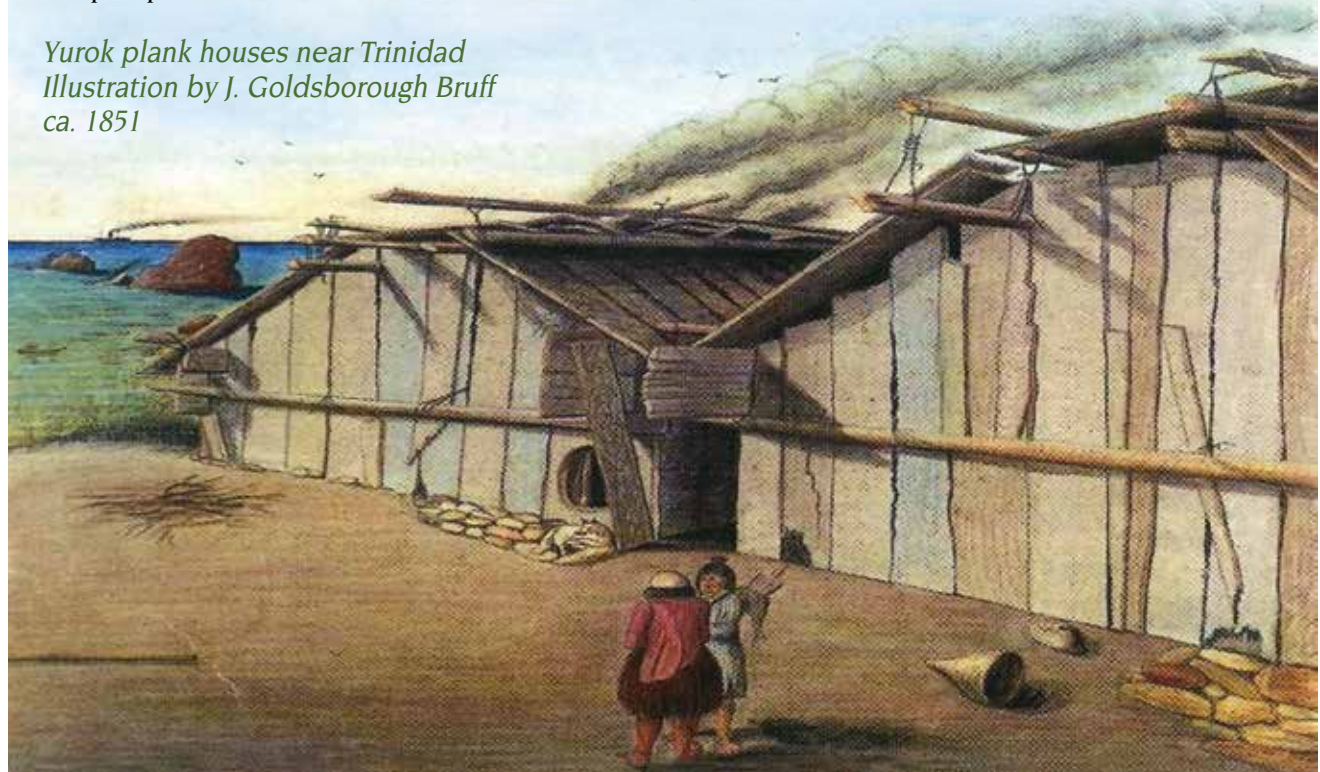
Today, the Yurok have made a remarkable recovery. As the most populous tribe in California, nearly 5,500 Yurok live in Humboldt and Del Norte counties. Tribal members are building a future by revitalizing their ancestral language and traditions based on customs of the past.

### **Settling the North Coast**

The first marine explorers along the Humboldt-Del Norte coast were Spaniard Bartolome Ferrello in 1543, Englishman Sir Francis Drake in 1579, and Spaniard Sebastian Vizcaíno in 1602. The first shore landing, near Trinidad Head, was made by Bruno Hezeta and Juan Bodega in 1775.

In May 1850, miners crossing today's Gold Bluffs Beach saw bits of gold in the sand. Removing the gold proved too laborious, so the prospectors moved on.

*Yurok plank houses near Trinidad  
Illustration by J. Goldsborough Bruff  
ca. 1851*



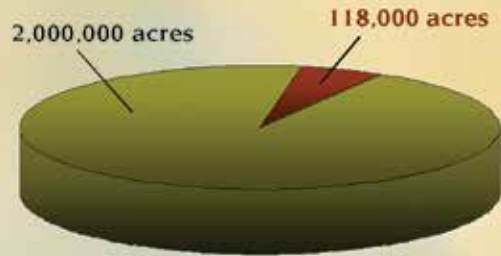
However, settlers needed raw materials to build their homes and towns. By the 1890s, several short-line railroads and steam donkeys had helped create a boom in commercial logging. Lumber quickly became the west's top industry—Eureka alone had nine sawmills.

By the end of the 19th century, farms, ranches, and dairies had been developed along the north coast. Today, several of these historical dairies remain a vital part of the north coast's economy.

### **Conservation and State Parks**

Between 1880 and the early 1900s, thousands of acres of old-growth redwoods had disappeared; in many areas, the trees had been cut to the bare ground.

# The Coast Redwood



Original coast redwood habitat  
Remaining older and old-growth redwoods



## DID YOU KNOW?

- ▲ The coast redwood is the tallest living thing on earth.
- ▲ Fossils show that relatives of today's coast redwoods thrived in the Jurassic Era 160 million years ago.
- ▲ About five percent of the world's old-growth redwoods exist today.
- ▲ More than 95 percent of the world's old-growth redwoods are in California.
- ▲ Of those older and old-growth redwoods still in existence, about 80 percent are protected in parks and reserves.

Alarmed, conservationists established the Save the Redwoods League in 1918 to protect the groves, obtaining donations from lumber companies and concerned citizens. The League and the State of California were able to buy thousands of acres adjoining Prairie Creek. By 1923, some of the grandest old-growth tree stands on the planet had been acquired by the State.

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), a national work program, began during the Great Depression of the 1930s. CCC members built themselves a camp at Elk Prairie, where they lived while building the present visitor center, trail system, campground, and picnic facilities.

### Redwood National and State Parks

In October 1968, the National Park Service (NPS) created Redwood National Park in Del Norte and Humboldt counties.

On September 5, 1980, the United Nations designated Redwood National and State Parks as a World Heritage Site and International Biosphere Reserve.

In 1994, NPS and California State Parks agreed to co-manage four parks: Del Norte Coast, Prairie Creek and Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Parks, and Redwood National Park. Both entities agreed that managing the parks together would ensure commitment to greater protection and preservation of more than 105,000 acres of redwood forest.

### NATURAL HISTORY

Coast redwoods have existed along the north coast for about 20 million years. Ever-

present coastal fog meets about one-third of their annual water needs. Experts fear that Earth's changing climate endangers the redwoods' survival as temperatures increase and coastal fog diminishes. The redwoods and the "soil mats" of leaf litter that collect in the redwood canopy support a variety of other plants and animals.

Coast Douglas-fir also grows among the Sitka spruce, tanoaks, oaks, rhododendrons, and azaleas.

### Fern Canyon

This spectacular, shady canyon's 50-foot walls, draped with seven kinds of ferns, resemble a hanging garden. Prairie Creek's Fern Canyon is draped in mounds of five-finger, deer, lady, sword and chain ferns. The canyon's restful quiet is broken only by far-off bird songs and the distant sound of breaking waves.



Northern red-legged frog

### Wildlife

Many species—including brown bats, red squirrels, black bears, and even coyotes—feed on berries.

In this deep, rich soil, salamanders and slugs thrive. Mountain lions, coyotes and bobcats hunt at night for black-tailed deer, elk, and small game.

Endangered marbled murrelets (closely related to puffins) nest in old-growth redwood trees. Since corvids (crows, ravens, and jays) prey upon murrelet eggs and chicks, do not feed wildlife or drop food or scraps.



Double-crested and pelagic cormorants, common murrelets, and surf scoters can be seen off the coast, while federally threatened Western snowy plovers, gulls, great blue herons, and peregrine falcons fly along Gold Bluffs Beach.

Western garter snakes, northern red-legged frogs and rough-skinned newts are common. Look for Pacific gray whales and dolphins offshore. California sea lions, harbor seals, and Steller sea lions lie on rocks just off the coast.

### Roosevelt Elk

Once teetering on the brink of extinction, the Roosevelt elk now thrive in their habitat. During the elk's mating season—six weeks from August to October—the air resounds with the calls of bulls challenging each other for mating rights. Bull elk and cows with calves can be extremely dangerous.

Approaching elk is not only hazardous, it is also against state law. When taking pictures, please stay on trails, use a telephoto lens or purchase postcards at park headquarters.

Boyes Prairie, commonly used by one of the park's elk herds, is closed to visitors. For your safety and that of the elk, do not veer off any trails while hiking or cycling.

### RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

**Trails**—The park's 75 miles of trails are rated from very easy to strenuous. The "Trails" chart on the map shows mileage and degree of difficulty. Use caution and bring water.

Photo courtesy of Brian Reub



*Roosevelt elk roam free in the park meadows.*

Backcountry hikers can park at the lot near the visitor center. Hikers and their cars must show a free backcountry permit, available at Kuchel Visitor Center in Orick. **Camping**—Elk Prairie Campground has 75 family sites and hike/bike sites. For reservations, call (800) 444-7275 or visit [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov). Gold Bluffs Beach Campground has 26 tent or RV sites and three non-reservable environmental sites. RVs more than 8' wide or 24' long may not use Davison Road or Coastal Drive. No hookups or sanitation stations are available. Call (707) 488-2171 for camping updates.

### ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

**Camping**—Elk Prairie has three accessible sites, restrooms, showers, and travel paths. Gold Bluffs Beach is hard-packed, not paved.

**Trails**—Big Tree Trail: 0.3 mile. Trailhead north of Big Tree lot. Roadside parking.

**Prairie Creek Trail:** 1.5 miles. Trailhead off Newton B. Drury Parkway.

**Revelation Trail:** interpretive 0.25 mile; accommodates visually impaired users.



*Be kind to the forest and stay on the trails.*

Elk Prairie Trail: 1.3-mile loop from Visitor Center. For accessibility updates and details, visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

### NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Patrick's Point State Park  
4150 Patrick's Point Dr., Trinidad 95570  
(707) 677-3570
- Del Norte Coast Redwoods SP, 7 miles south of Crescent City off Highway 101  
(707) 465-7335

### PLEASE REMEMBER

- Dogs must be on a leash no more than six feet long and must be confined to a tent or vehicle at night. Except for service animals, pets are not allowed on trails.
- Natural and cultural features are protected by law and may not be disturbed.
- Never approach elk or other wild animals.
- Do not feed wildlife. Keep a clean camp; store food and scented items in lockers.
- All firearms are prohibited.
- Help keep your park clean and litter free. If you bring it in, take it back out.

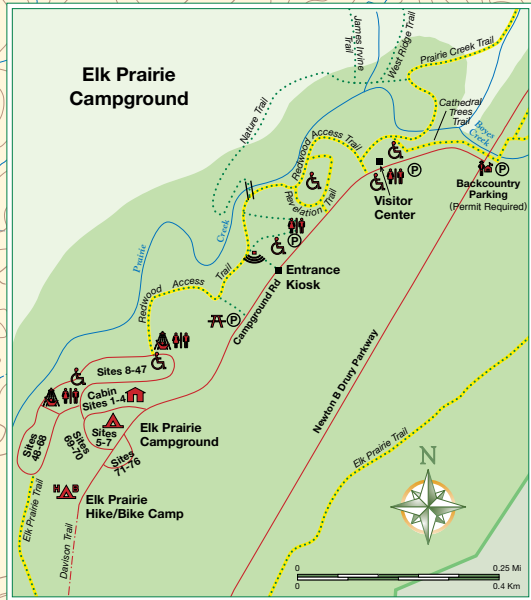
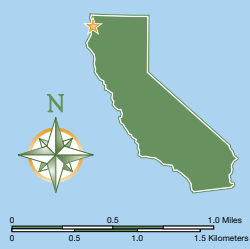
# Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park

TRAILS	MI.	DIFFICULTY	DRURY PARKWAY MILE MARKER
Ah Pah Interpretive Trail	0.4	Easy	133.5
Big Tree Wayside	0.1	Easy	127.96
Brown Creek Trail	1.2	Easy	129.00
CA Real Estate Assn (CREA) Trail	1.9	Moderate	130.17
Carruthers Cove Trail	1.0	Strenuous	
Cathedral Trees Trail	1.4	Moderate	127.27
Circle Trail	0.3	Very easy	127.96
Clintonia Trail	1.4	Moderate	
Coastal Trail	11.4	Easy	
Corkscrew Tree Trail	0.1	Easy	128.0
Davison Trail	2.8	Moderate	
Elk Prairie Trail	1.3	Easy	
Fern Canyon Loop	0.6	Easy	
Foothill Trail	2.2	Moderate	
Friendship Ridge Trail	2.8	Moderate	
Hope Creek/Ten Taypo Trails	3.6	Easy/Strenuous	132.74
James Irvine Trail	4.5	Moderate/Strenuous	
Little Creek Trail	0.2	Easy	131.9
Miner's Ridge Trail	4.1	Moderate	
Mooman Pond Trail	0.3	Easy	
Nature Trail	0.3	Easy	
Ossagon Trail	1.6	Moderate	132.74
Prairie Creek Trail	4.3	Easy	130.19
Redwood Access Trail	0.7	Easy	
Revelation Trail	0.3	Very easy	
Rhododendron Trail	7.8	Moderate	130.54
South Fork Trail	0.9	Strenuous	129.0
Strelow Creek Trail	2.1	Easy	
West Ridge Trail	6.8	Moderate	
Zigzag 1 Trail	0.5	Strenuous	129.37
Zigzag 2 Trail	0.5	Strenuous	130.54

## Legend

- State Park
- Wilderness Area
- Freeway
- Paved Road
- Unpaved Road
- Trail: Accessible (Hike Only)
- Trail: Hike
- Trail: Hike & Bike
- Accessible Feature
- Cabin
- Campground
- Campground: Hike & Bike
- Campfire Center
- Parking
- Picnic Area
- Ranger Station
- Restrooms
- Seasonal Bridge
- Showers

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This park receives support in part through the nonprofit Redwood Parks Conservancy  
 1111 Second Street  
 Crescent City, CA 95531  
 (707) 464-9150  
[www.redwoodparksconservancy.org](http://www.redwoodparksconservancy.org)

Devision Road is limited to vehicles with a maximum length of 24 feet and width of 8 feet. No trailers.

No trailers or RVs year round, no vehicles in winter.