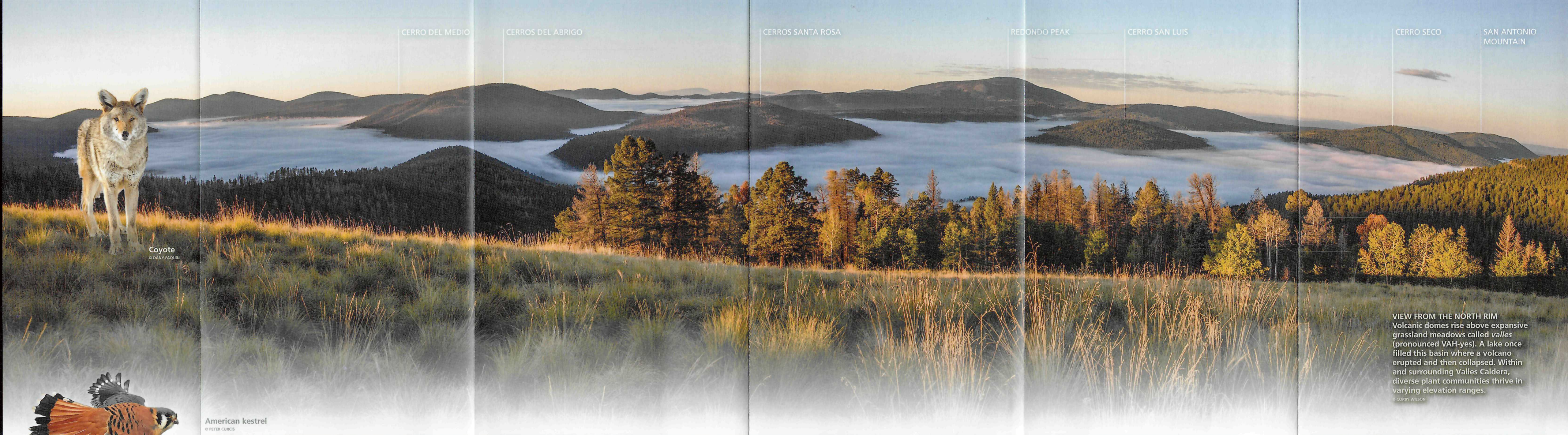




Coyote
© DANNY FROST



American kestrel
© PETER CURTIS

VIEW FROM THE NORTH RIM
Volcanic domes rise above expansive grassland meadows called *valles* (pronounced VAH-yeh). A lake once filled this basin where a volcano erupted and then collapsed. Within and surrounding Valles Caldera, diverse plant communities thrive in varying elevation ranges.
© CORBY WILSON

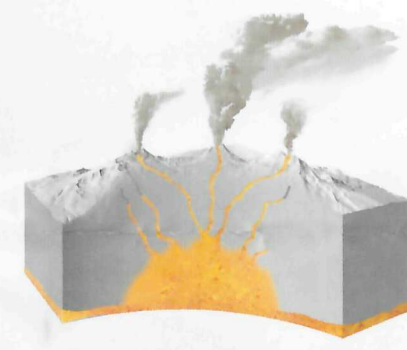
MAJESTIC LANDSCAPE

Vast, wild, and stunning
Lush montane grasslands, scenic vistas, old-growth ponderosa pine, and diverse habitats help make Valles Caldera a land of volcanic enchantment.

This dynamic landscape is recovering from overgrazing, aggressive logging, and road construction. Large, high-severity wildfires, driven in part by climate change, have also disturbed the land.

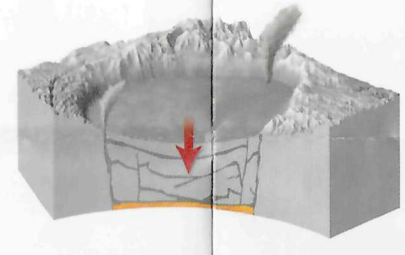
Valles Caldera National Preserve is working to restore these ecosystems and protect the caldera's nature, scenery, and cultural stories for generations to come.

THE POWER OF MAGMA



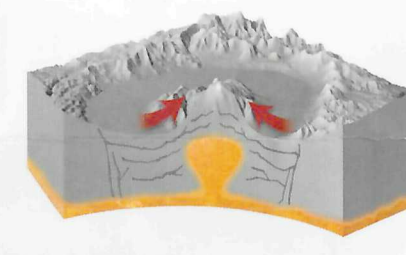
ERUPTION

You are in a sunken volcano. Its eruption 1.2 million years ago was 300 times greater than Mount Saint Helens' in 1980. Ejected ash fell as far as Kansas, Utah, and Wyoming. The science of large-scale explosive volcanism began with studies here.



COLLAPSE

A bowl-like depression formed when a vast amount of magma rapidly erupted, the huge magma chamber emptied, and the land above sank into the vacant chamber. Valles Caldera is one of the world's best examples of an intact volcanic caldera.



RESURGENCE

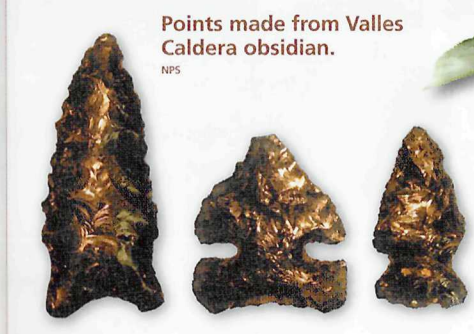
After the collapse, new magma filled the chamber and caused the caldera floor to heave upward. A central dome (Redondo Peak) then formed. Scientists first identified the caldera resurgence phenomenon at Valles Caldera.

DID YOU KNOW? VALLES CALDERA HELPED PROVE THE THEORY OF PLATE TECTONICS!

A classic example of Earth's explosive forces, Valles Caldera features in many scientific discoveries. Scientists, researchers, and visitors continue to come here to learn about geology, volcanology, and ecology.

CULTURAL CROSSROADS

For millennia people were drawn to the caldera by its ample natural resources for making tools, projectile points, medicines, and more. Knives, arrowheads, and spear points of obsidian (volcanic glass formed when high-silica lava cools rapidly) were highly prized. Obsidian from the Jemez Mountains, much of it from Valles Caldera, has been found at prehistoric sites in Nebraska, North Dakota, Texas, northern Mexico, and Mississippi.



Points made from Valles Caldera obsidian.
NPS



Red elderberry, used for medicine and food.
© JAMES GATHER

REKINDLED ECOSYSTEMS

Thriving forests and grasslands depend on cycles of wildland fire. A century of logging, overgrazing, and fire suppression interfered with natural fire regimes. Wildfires in 2011 and 2013 burned two-thirds of the preserve. Large areas lost all living trees and understory vegetation; erosion from monsoons stripped away the soil and created large debris flows. But returning low-intensity fire can restore these fire-adapted ecosystems. Prescribed fires imitate healthy natural fires and can help reduce forest fuels, recycle nutrients, and increase habitat diversity.



Fire managers perform a prescribed burn at the preserve.
NPS



CONNECTING CULTURES

Paleo-Indians (10,000 years ago) first regularly visit the caldera and use its obsidian. They are the first of many peoples known to be present here.

Archaic Period hunter-gatherers (8,000–1,000 years ago) rely on the caldera's plentiful water-fowl, game, fish, berries, roots, seeds, and nuts.

Ancestral Puebloans (800 years ago) settle in the Jemez Mountains. They grow crops and build masonry fieldhouses and pueblos in lower elevations suitable for agriculture.

Spanish settlers (1500s) bring sheep and other livestock to these grasslands. Herding is the land's primary use into the Mexican Period (1821–48).



Hispanic shepherds in the 1900s left carvings in aspen trees.
NPS

The US government grants land, known since as Baca Location No. 1, to private owners (1860).

Hispanic and European American people (1900s) use Valles Caldera for sheep grazing under the *partido* system, cattle ranching, logging, geothermal energy-exploration, and more.

Valles Caldera National Preserve is established (2000). Management of the park is transferred from the Valles Caldera Trust to the National Park Service (2014).

Native people's connections to this land and the cultural values here have persisted throughout many eras of ownership and continue today.

Today, **you** can visit Valles Caldera National Preserve to explore its cultural history, serene beauty, and wild natural wonders in many ways.

CERRO LA JARA

HISTORY GROVE

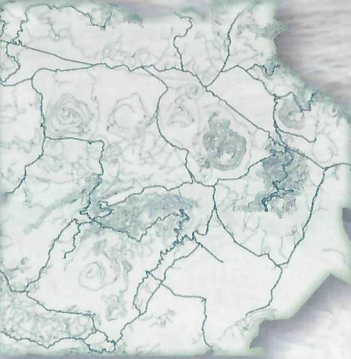
CERROS DEL ABRIGO

VALLE GRANDE

VIEW FROM THE PARK ENTRANCE
Freezing air and dense lake-sediment soils prevent tree saplings from establishing in the grasslands, creating a distinctive inverted tree line.
NPS

Connect with Nature

HEALING HABITATS



Clear-cut logging (1963–71) removed almost all old-growth trees. Logging roads are still visible within the park (left).

Valles Caldera National Preserve is a dynamic living laboratory where over 100 years of exploitative land use are being repaired to foster healthy, balanced ecosystems.

While here, you might think about the complex relationship between humans and nature; engage in recreation, education, or preservation; or “just be” in this vast, rugged landscape—all while helping to protect the caldera’s many treasures.

Abert's squirrel

© MANY AYOALOU



Ponderosa pine

© EDWARD C. JENSEN

Mountain bluebird

© CARA LITBERG

Open grasslands

Stunning and sprawling, these grasslands hold soil in place, retain moisture, and efficiently absorb nutrients.

Rocky Mountain iris

© DAVID RUSK

Gunnison's prairie dog

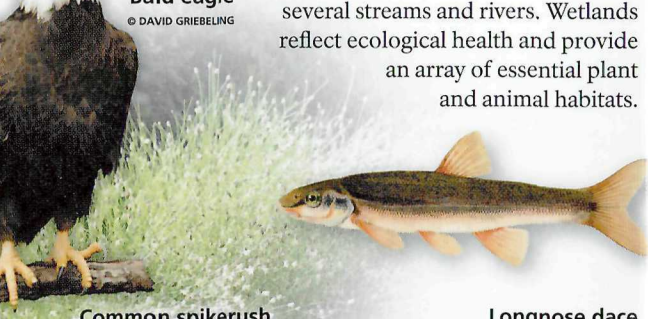
© LARRY JARSA

Parry's oatgrass

© DAVID POWELL

Bald eagle

© DAVID GREENGLUE



Common spikerush

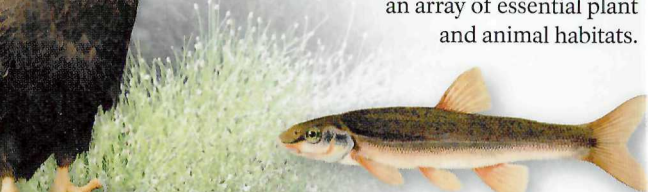
© MELISSA STUDDYANT

Longnose dace

© NEW YORK STATE MUSEUM / ELLEN EDWARDS

Vital wetlands

The park protects headwaters of several streams and rivers. Wetlands reflect ecological health and provide an array of essential plant and animal habitats.



The lungless Jemez Mountains salamander—an endangered species unique to these mountains—needs moist soil to breathe. Logging, road-building, and intense fire adversely affect its limited habitat.

© TROY HIBBITS

VIEW OF CERRO SAN LUIS
Spruce and aspen ring low, rolling ridges—shorelines of an ancient lake. Pine and fir grow on south-facing slopes.

NPS

