

Richardson Grove State Park



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.



*Historic gateway to the
north coast redwoods,
these ancient giants
have inspired people
for centuries.*

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SaveTheRedwoods.org/csp

Richardson Grove State Park

1600 U.S. Highway 101, #8

Garberville, CA 95542

(707) 247-3318

Marbled murrelet photo courtesy of Rich MacIntosh

Richardson Grove State Park—traditional destination of countless vacationing families since the early twentieth century—is one of the north coast’s first redwood state parks. Situated in the majestic redwood forests of southern Humboldt County, “The Grove” began in 1922 with 120 acres and has since grown to approximately 2,000 acres. Located 200 miles north of San Francisco and seven miles south of Garberville, the park is bisected by U.S. Highway 101 and the South Fork of the Eel River.

CULTURAL HISTORY

The first known inhabitants of this region, the Sinkyone people, hunted, fished, gathered food, and lived sustainably among the Grove’s ancient redwoods, which they considered sacred. These Athabascan-speaking people trained their dogs to drive game toward waiting hunters. Both men and women were basket makers. Today’s Sinkyone descendants maintain cultural and spiritual ties to the Grove.

The first recorded settler in the area, Kentuckian Ruben Reed, bought the land on the South Fork of Eel River in the late 1860s. His brother and their widowed father homesteaded 160 acres, now part of the park. In the early 1900s Henry Devoy bought Reed’s land; Devoy leased the redwood grove in 1920 to Edwin Freeman, who built a store, a dining room and cabins at the site of today’s visitor center.

In 1922, the Save the Redwoods League, concerned about the potential destruction



Richardson Grove Lodge, ca. 1947

of the trees by highway construction and logging, persuaded the State to acquire 120 acres of the redwood grove. Between 1922 and 1932, Freeman operated the new park as a concession and lobbied to name the park for Governor Friend W. Richardson. The Richardson Grove Lodge, which is now the visitor center, was built between 1928 and 1930. In 1933, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) began building campgrounds, picnic facilities, trails, water systems and restrooms in the main grove.

Periodic flooding of the Eel River, particularly during the floods of 1955 and 1964, has damaged CCC-built facilities and trees. In February 1986, the river again overflowed its banks, destroying the campfire center and picnic area. Later, new facilities were built outside of the main grove. Today, only the visitor center remains in the main grove, lessening the human impact on its fragile ecosystem.

NATURAL HISTORY

Plant Communities

The most notable natural feature of Richardson Grove is the old-growth redwood forest, which thrives in the area’s mild climate. Many trees in the grove are more than 1,000 years old; several are more than 300 feet tall. Strolling among these towering redwood giants is an unforgettable experience. One can see some of the world’s tallest coast redwoods, a walk-through tree and the fallen tree growth-ring exhibit that has drawn visitors to the park since 1933.

Coast redwood branch

Redwood sorrel, ferns and mosses take advantage of the deep shade in the heart of the forest. Younger redwoods, Douglas fir, California laurel, various oaks and madrones compete for sunlight and moisture outside the established groves. Undergrowth includes huckleberry, hazel, Douglas iris, calypso orchids, poison oak, and redwood violets.

Wildlife

The South Fork of the Eel River—named for the Pacific lamprey—runs through the park. During fall and winter, spawning salmon and steelhead return to the river. Wildlife includes black-tailed deer, gray foxes and river otters. Occasional visitors include black bears and mountain lions.



Juvenile marbled murrelet

Native birds include bald eagles, great blue herons, osprey, belted

kingfishers, California quail, and acorn and pileated woodpeckers. Endangered marbled murrelet chicks and eggs can fall prey to ravens, crows and jays if food scraps dropped by visitors attract these *corvids*.

Be sure to ask park staff about the “bat tree” where the *Yuma myotis* roost. These little brown bats are welcome residents that help to reduce the mosquito population.

VISITOR CENTER

The visitor center in the 1930s Richardson Grove Lodge—where families once watched movies, ate ice cream and danced under the towering trees—offers interpretive displays that encourage children to handle selected natural items. The Grove Nature Trail begins at the visitor center.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Camping—Richardson Grove has 169 family sites in three campgrounds. Huckleberry has one site for hikers and bicyclists. Oak Flat Campground is open only during summer. The Dawn Redwood Group Campground can accommodate from 9 to 40 people. For more camping details, information and reservations, call (800) 444-7275 or visit www.parks.ca.gov.

Picnicking/Day Use—The picnic area is near the South Fork of the Eel River under redwoods and maples. The river is popular

for swimming and sunbathing during summer and for salmon and steelhead catch-and-release fishing during winter. The park’s several hiking trails range from gentle to strenuous.

Events and Programs—Check bulletin boards throughout the park for details.

- Summer evening campfire programs feature songs, storytelling and interpretive talks.
- The Junior Ranger Program teaches children aged 7 to 12 about the park’s natural and cultural features.
- The Litter-Getter Program encourages children of all ages to respect their environment through recycling.
- Guided walks interpret natural features.

PLEASE REMEMBER

- Diving and jumping into the river are not permitted.
- No lifeguards are on duty. Children should be supervised at all times.
- Fires are permitted only in fireplaces provided. No ground fires are allowed.
- All park features are protected by law and must not be disturbed in any way.
- Do not leave food scraps out or feed wild animals.
- Pets must be on a leash no longer than six feet during the day and must be kept in your tent or vehicle at night. Except for service animals, pets are not allowed on hiking trails.
- Bicycles are not allowed on hiking trails.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

The visitor center, the Grove Nature Trail, Dawn Redwood Group Campground, the picnic area and three campsites in the Madrone Campground are accessible. For updated information, call (916) 445-8949 or visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

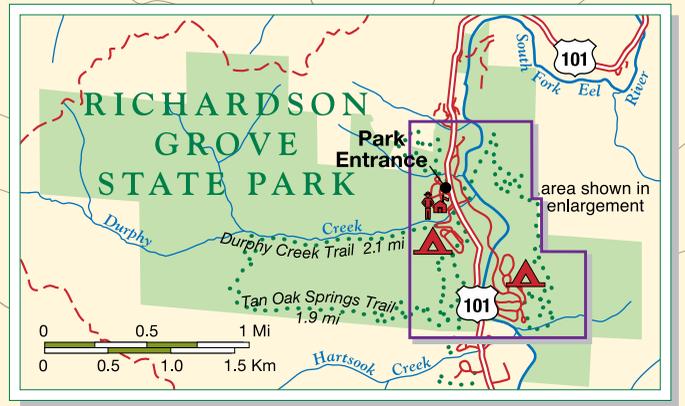
NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Benbow Lake State Recreation Area 5 miles north on U. S. Hwy. 101 at Benbow Dr. (707) 923-3238
- Sinkyone Wilderness State Park, Briceland Road (Co. Road 31) Whitethorn 95542 (707) 986-7711
- Standish-Hickey State Recreation Area, 69350 U.S Hwy. 101 Leggett 95545 (707) 925-6482



This park receives support in part from a nonprofit organization. For more information, contact: Richardson Grove Interpretive Association, 1600 US Hwy. 101, #7 Garberville, CA 95542 (707) 247-3378

Richardson Grove State Park



Legend

- Paved road
- Unpaved road
- Trail: Hiking
- Accessible Trail
- Accessible Feature
- Bridge
- Campfire Center
- Campground
- Firewood Sales
- Gate
- Group Campground
- Hike/Bike Campground
- Parking
- Picnic Area
- Ranger Station
- Restroom
- Shower
- Swimming
- Viewpoint

