

Asilomar

STATE PARK GUIDE



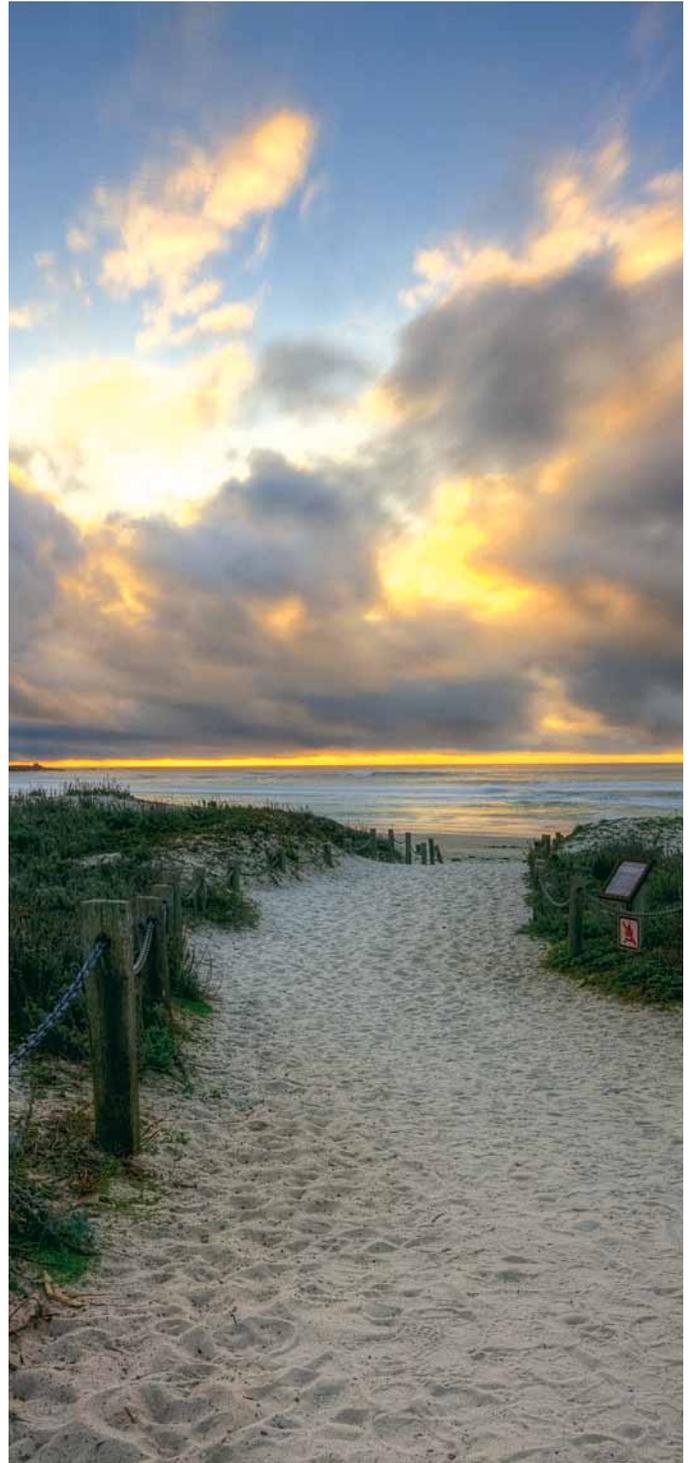
ASILOMAR STATE BEACH AND CONFERENCE GROUNDS
2011-2012 • ISSUE 11





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Meaning “refuge by the sea,” Asilomar was founded by the Young Women’s Christian Association in 1913 to serve as a conference and summer camp. Architect Julia Morgan designed the original structures. In 1956, the YWCA sold Asilomar to California State Parks; Asilomar continues to operate as an overnight and conference facility.
- 14 Asilomar Architects**
San Francisco architect Julia Morgan designed the original buildings in the Arts & Crafts architectural style. After Asilomar became a unit of California State Parks, subsequent architects were hired to design additional lodging and meeting rooms to complement those designed by Morgan.



© California State Parks. Photo by Peter Nichols

18 Sand Dunes

The last 25 acres of undeveloped dunes in Pacific Grove have been saved in the Asilomar Dunes Natural Preserve. A walk on the dune boardwalk will lead you through a living environment that has been restored and preserved.

22 State Beach and the Blue Pacific

California's coast is one of the world's richest and most diverse habitats for marine life. Hundreds of species of animals and plants live in its waters and along its shores. Exploration along Asilomar State Beach offers visitors a glimpse of this rich treasure.

28 Forest Ecosystem

Asilomar's Monterey pine forest has changed dramatically over the last 100 years. Today, measures are being taken to improve the forest vegetation to save the ecosystem.

33 Wildlife

The natural landscape at Asilomar has been preserved to allow its resident wildlife population to roam freely and exist within the park's boundary.

40 Nature's Questions & Answers

Park Rangers answer some of the most frequently asked questions.



© California State Parks. Photo by Peter Nichols



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Contact Us

While staying at Asilomar, you can contact the State Park staff by calling (831) 646-6440.

For ARAMARK on grounds services, dial 2232 from any house phone. House phones are located at each building and are for in-house calls only. A telephone directory is in the Guest Binder in your room. TDD device is available at the front desk.

Asilomar State Beach & Conference Grounds
804 Crocker Avenue
Pacific Grove, CA 93950
Phone: (831) 646-6440
771, TTY Relay Service
email: asilomar@parks.ca.gov
website: www.parks.ca.gov

California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park's concessionaire, ARAMARK, at (831) 372-8016. This publication is available in alternate formats and on the Asilomar State Beach & Conference Grounds website: www.parks.ca.gov

This publication is ©California State Parks, 2011
Front cover: Asilomar State Beach. Photo by Peter Nichols.



Michael Ferry
Park Superintendent

ASILOMAR

Refuge by the Sea

Welcome

California State Parks and our concessionaire partner, **ARAMARK Parks and Destinations**, welcome you to Asilomar State Beach & Conference Grounds. Asilomar is unlike any other park in the world with its natural beauty and its history.

Completely self-sufficient and not reliant upon any state funds to operate, all revenue for the park's operation is generated by you as park visitors. Through a shared vision and strong partnership, we continue to provide a positive and memorable experience.

Explore

Whether you are here to meet and confer with colleagues, reaffirm family ties, or are simply an overnight guest, the best way to experience Asilomar is to get out there! Several opportunities exist to help you explore—walking trails, self-guided brochures, audio tours, interpretive displays, and a walking tour led by park staff.

A favorite is the self-guided walk—Nature's Forest. This 30-minute walk explains the Monterey pine ecosystem at Asilomar. Native Monterey pine forests are one of the rarest forest ecosystems in the world.

Stroll along a meandering boardwalk in the Dunes Natural Preserve. Plants growing in this environment are hardy yet fragile. Two endangered plants found in the dunes are Menzies' wallflower and Tidestrom's lupine.

Walk on the soft white sand at Asilomar State Beach and dip your toes in the chilly blue Pacific Ocean. During low tides, you can explore tide pools. Be careful on slippery rocks and remember everything in the marine reserve is protected by law. A walk along the coastal bluff trail offers vistas of the ocean and Monterey Bay. The sprays of gray whales can be sighted from the shoreline during the winter months.

On the conference grounds, visit the historic buildings designed by famed architect, Julia Morgan. Don't miss the classics—Merrill Hall, Phoebe A. Hearst Social Hall, and Dodge Chapel Auditorium. Morgan's buildings at Asilomar are registered National Historic Landmarks.

Our Future

California State Parks and ARAMARK Parks and Destinations have a shared vision to provide a quality visitor experience for all. In the next few years, Asilomar's pathways and buildings will be in compliance with the accessibility requirements mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act. New signage for roadways and buildings will be installed to help park visitors get to where they need to go, whether driving or walking.

In 2013, Asilomar will celebrate its centennial. Check the centennial story in this visitor guide to see how you can participate.

Help Us

You can play a major role to determine just how successful we are in meeting our goals. You can send your comments directly to the park, email at asilomar@parks.ca.gov or by writing to: Asilomar Park Office, 804 Crocker Avenue, Pacific Grove, CA 93950.

ARAMARK has a guest survey card you can pick up at the gift store, front desk, or dining room. ARAMARK's electronic survey is at MyGuestExperience.com

We're pleased to have you here. Enjoy your stay!

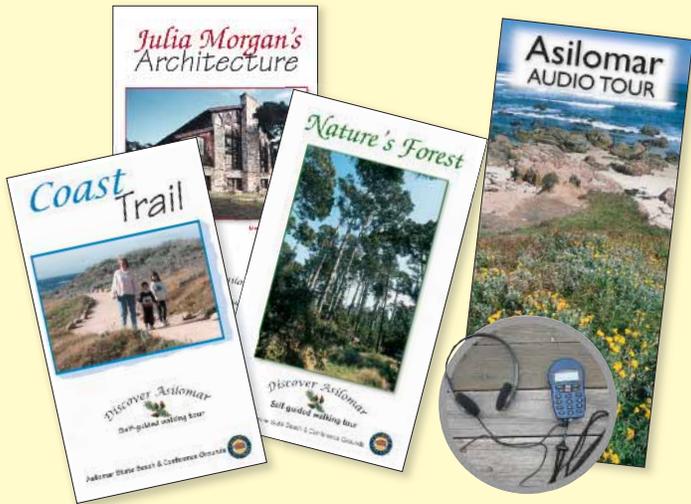
Michael Ferry
Park Superintendent





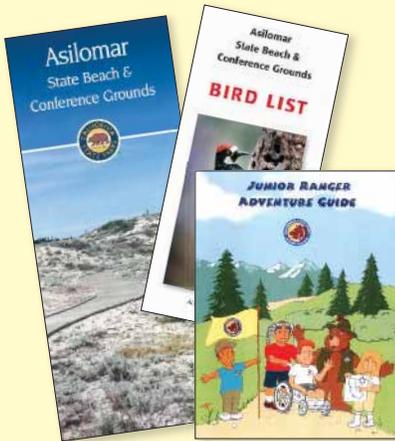
Call for reservations for park led walks at Asilomar, (831) 646-6443.

ASILOMAR SELF-GUIDED WALKS



PARK BROCHURES

Discover and enrich your Asilomar experience



Available free at the front desk and at the State Park Office

SHORT DRIVES

There are a number of California State Parks located near Asilomar. You can explore the secluded trails of Point Lobos State Natural Reserve, discover the rich Spanish and Mexican heritage of Monterey State Historic Park, and camp under starry skies at Big Sur. Park information is available at www.parks.ca.gov.

Monterey State Historic Park

(831) 649-7118

Local State Beaches

(831) 649-2836

Point Lobos State Natural Reserve

(831) 624-4909

Big Sur State Parks

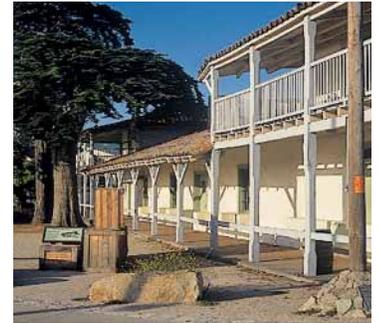
(831) 667-2315

San Juan Bautista State Historic Park

(831) 623-4526

Henry W. Coe State Park

(408) 779-2728



Custom House, Monterey State Historic Park



Point Lobos State Natural Reserve



San Juan Bautista State Historic Park



Pfeiffer Big Sur Campsite



© ARAMARK



ARAMARK Parks and Destinations would like to welcome you to the Monterey Peninsula and Asilomar State Beach and Conference Grounds.

Awarded the concession contract and operating the conference grounds since September 2009, ARAMARK Parks and Destinations is proud to add this “refuge by the sea” to the jewel properties it manages within the National Parks and Forests, State Parks, and cultural attractions in the United States.

Managing these jewels is a responsibility we don’t take lightly. ARAMARK staff at Asilomar has a direct role in supporting California State Parks to preserve and protect, as well as provide for the enjoyment of all visitors at this special place.

Whether you are here for a multi-day conference, a leisure guest here for a wedding or family reunion, or just getting away from it all for a night or two, we hope you enjoy your stay and the friendly service our talented staff love to provide.

Healthy Environment

Building upon the tradition of caretakers before us, and in the culture and tradition of ARAMARK, Asilomar’s environmental management system is built around continual improvement. Look for the

Green Thread™ logo around the property to see where we are making a difference in the many things we do – from providing the tools to reduce water and energy consumption, reducing waste from landfills through composting and recycling, and providing healthy, fresh and local food in the dining hall, thereby reducing impact to the environment.

You can help us meet our goals by:

- Using the recycle bins provided throughout the property
- Turning off the faucet while washing your hands
- Turning out lights and turning off the heat if leaving your guest or meeting room
- Walking or biking around the property rather than driving your car
- Letting us know if you see anywhere we can improve our environmental performance – a faucet dripping or a location that needs a recycle bin. All suggestions are welcome.

Healthy Food

In the spirit of encouraging healthy people and doing our part for a healthy planet – Executive Chef Danny Abbruzzese and the food and beverage team are working hard to ensure that, as much as possible, our produce and proteins (meat, fish and dairy) are organic, seasonal and, most importantly, local.

We have been working closely with distributors to ensure that everything possible comes from within a 100-mile radius of Asilomar. That means you won't find out-of-season fruits and vegetables being served in the dining hall or at catered events. You can expect the freshest ingredients cooked in a minimal way to retain the flavor and health benefits.

In addition, we are partners in the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch Program and ensure that all fish being served comes from the "Green" or "Yellow" list, meaning, it is sustainably fished or farmed.

You don't have to stay here to enjoy a meal. Meal vouchers can be purchased at the Front Desk for breakfast, lunch or dinner.

Just looking for coffee, snacks or a sandwich to go? The gift shop, located in the Social Hall, serves Peet's coffee and has a large variety of snacks and to-go items.

In 2012, we will see the opening of a new café in the Social Hall serving coffee, tea, cold beverages, wines, as well as a variety of freshly-prepared baked goods and local snacks. The café is part of a multi-million dollar renovation to the Social Hall and Crocker Dining Hall complex.



© ARAMARK

Healthy Mind and Body

As part of California State Parks, the Asilomar Conference Grounds is open to the public 365 days a year. Some of the activities you can enjoy at Asilomar include:

- A walk on the boardwalk and coast trail
- A self-guided audio tour to learn about the park (see the front desk for details)
- A scenic bike ride along Monterey's coastline
- Play pool or board games in the Social Hall
- Sit out on the deck with a book or cup of coffee and enjoy the fresh air and the view
- Book a wedding or family reunion
- Plan an overnight weekend escape
- Bring an organization or your church group for a conference or gathering for a day or week

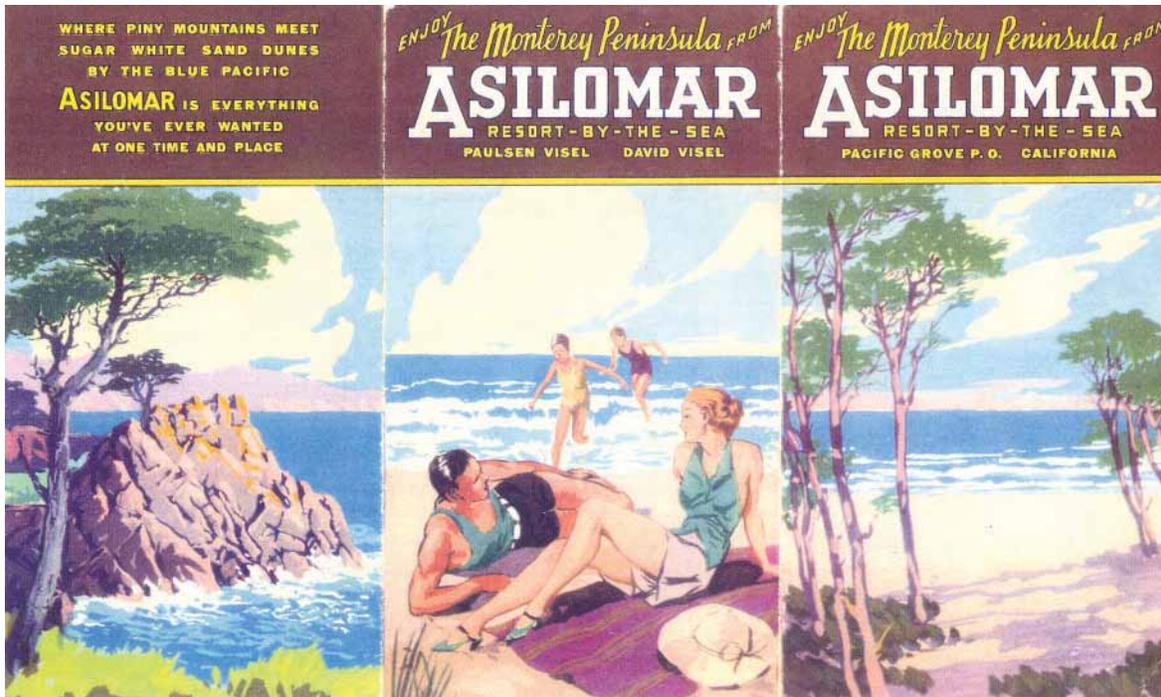
We hope to see you soon!

*The ARAMARK team at the
Asilomar Conference Grounds*



© ARAMARK

ASILOMAR CENTENNIAL



Asilomar will celebrate its centennial in 2013. For 100 years, it has captured the hearts of people from around the world, offering a special place of learning, a reunion of family and friends, and a “spirit of place” that pulls people back each year.

We will launch a year-long celebration in 2013. Plans are set for monthly lecture series, walking tours by park staff, souvenirs, and special overnight packages. Information about the events will be coming soon on the Asilomar website www.parks.ca.gov and ARAMARK’s website www.visitasilomar.com.

What is your Asilomar story?

As the 100 year anniversary draws near, State Parks and ARAMARK are beginning a project called “100 Years, 100 Stories.” It will be a culmination of stories, poems, and pictures that tell Asilomar’s history from those who have been here.

You can help us now with this project by submitting your story of Asilomar. The project calls

for material that captures the rich history, visitors’ and employees’ experiences, and Asilomar’s natural beauty.

The State Park staff will accept submissions from June 2011 through July 2012. A selection committee will review the material and select 100 that capture Asilomar’s “sense of place” and aspire to toast Asilomar’s centennial. Send your stories, poems, and pictures to:

ASILOMAR STATE PARK OFFICE

Centennial Project
804 Crocker Avenue
Pacific Grove, CA 93950
or

Email asilomar@parks.ca.gov



Asilomar Joins California Park System

Monterey Peninsula Herald

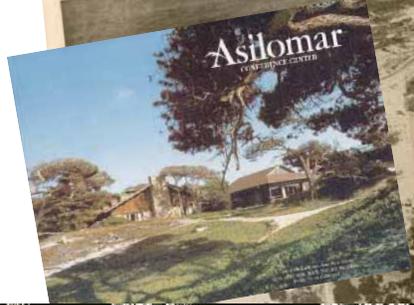
A Presidential Hopeful Meets the Press at Asilomar



Long-range Economic Plan Asked
Kennedy Urges America

Sen. John F. Kennedy To Speak at Asilomar

Annual Civil Liberties Conference Set This Weekend at Asilomar



60 Acres of Pines and White Dunes Permanent Conference Ground



Congratulations to the City of Pacific Grove on the Acquisition of ASILOMAR
17 Mile Drive Cottage Court
91 Bond & Washington Cor. Pacific Grove
The File Report on Asilomar

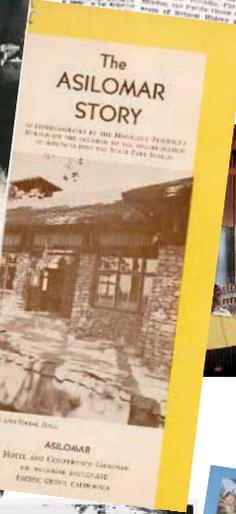
Monterey Peninsula Herald

Young African Leader To Speak at Asilomar

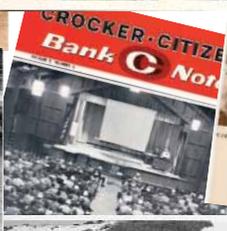
National Audubon Society Holds Weekend Convention at Asilomar



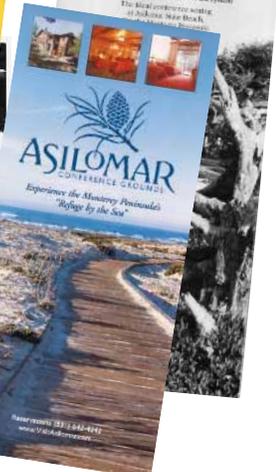
Psychic Group Sets Meeting at Asilomar



The Board of Directors of the Pacific Grove-Asilomar Operating Company
and the
California Department of Parks and Recreation
and the
United States Department of the Interior
have joined to award a
Dedication of the Asilomar Conference Grounds
as a
National Historic Landmark



Asilomar CONFERENCE CENTER



Dedication
THE VIEW CRESCENT

Dedication
CROCKER HALL ADDITIONS

Dedication and Tour
of the
Long View Group
Asilomar
December 12, 1960

Dedication
of the
SEA GALAXY



Asilomar dunes boardwalk nearing completion

More fences, walkway go up on Asilomar dunes



Former Institute Asilomar 1966

YWCA BUILDS ASILOMAR



© California State Parks

Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA)

The YWCA held its western leadership conference camps in the 1890s at hotels and private homes of benefactors. The Hotel Santa Cruz in Capitola, CA, was a frequent site for these conferences. After the hotel burned and the YWCA could not find another suitable place, they decided to build their own conference camp.

Needing financial support and patrons, the YWCA looked to Phoebe Apperson Hearst to champion their cause. Mrs. Hearst was known for her dedication to the advancement of women’s organizations. She agreed to hold the 1912 leadership conference at her home in Pleasanton, CA. Mrs. Hearst invited politicians, socialites, and the media to see and hear firsthand the work of the YWCA and their grandiose idea to build a conference grounds. Hearst’s public relations blitz was a success. Soon, lavish donations began spilling into the YWCA.

In February 1913, the YWCA negotiated a land deal with the Pacific Improvement Company on the Monterey Peninsula. The company would lease 30 acres of land “facing the ocean” in Pacific Grove if the YWCA would make \$35,000 of improvements on the land within 10 years and pay \$1 per acre per annum. If these lease conditions were met, the land would be deeded to the YWCA.

To name their new conference ground property, the YWCA held a contest. Out of hundreds of entries, a winner emerged. Helen Salisbury, a Stanford University student, combined the Spanish word *Asilo*, meaning asylum or refuge, with *mar*, meaning sea, and *Asilomar*, a *refuge by the sea* was born.

The first national summer conference camp

Architect Julia Morgan was hired to design the facility. Morgan chose the Arts and Crafts architectural style, which matched the spirit of this venture. Construction began in February 1913. Her first completed structures were two stone pillars marking Asilomar’s entrance, the Phoebe A. Hearst Social Hall, a circus tent for dining, and tent houses for lodging.

Asilomar opened its doors for the first time in July 1913. Hundreds of high school girls and young college women arrived by train and were greeted by Asilomar’s Director, Mrs. Mary Sroufe Merrill. Camp was 10 days and cost \$1 per day. Leadership workshops were taught in addition

to driving lessons, instructions on sewing with electric sewing machines, and typewriting classes. Women’s health issues were important to the YWCA, so recreation became an integral part of the camp with swimming lessons and team sports.

As donations to the YWCA were received, Julia Morgan continued adding permanent buildings to the grounds. In 1915, the Chapel Auditorium was completed and dedicated to the memory of the first national YWCA president, Grace H. Dodge. By the end of 1918, Mary A. Crocker Dining Hall, Scripps Class Hall, Stuck-up Inn, Guest Inn, and Visitor’s Lodge were built. The stipulated \$35,000 of improvements had been met and the Pacific Improvement Company deeded the 30 acres to the YWCA in 1923. Morgan finished her last building, Merrill Hall, in 1928.

Summer Staff

To round out the summer staff, Mary Merrill hired college women to work at Asilomar. These women immediately banded together into a self-styled sorority, calling themselves “Stuck-ups.” They soon became the informal hostesses and entertainers of all that went on. *(Today, their vintage photos hang on the hallway walls in Stuck-up Inn, celebrating their colorful legacy.)*

The Stuck-ups formed traditions and wrote songs and poems about their days at Asilomar, which they shared with all who passed through.



Phoebe A. Hearst Social Hall c.1910s

© California State Parks



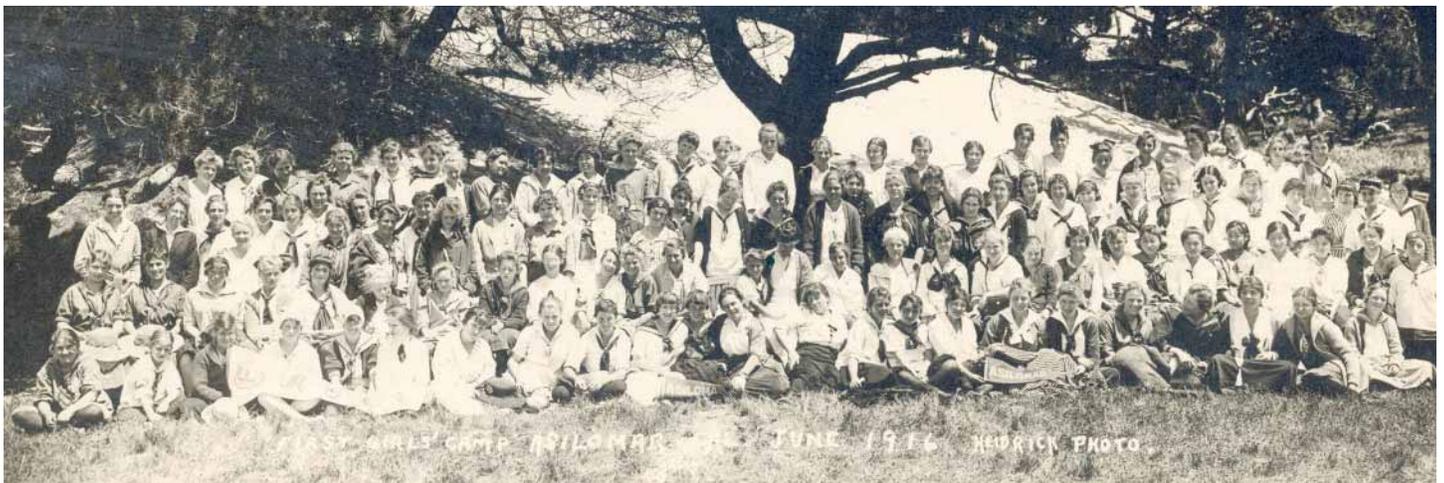
YWCA Pacific Coast Field Committee with Mrs. Hearst (wearing the Chinese jacket) c.1912

© Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley

Asilomar, Asilomar, Oh How We Love You!

(Sung to the tune of Jingle Bells)

Asilomar, Asilomar, oh how we love you.
Asilomar, Asilomar, grand old ocean view.
Asilomar, Asilomar, pine breath in the air,
The finest people on all the earth,
The cream of everywhere!



Asilomar Girls Camp 1916

© California State Parks-McCord collection

“Of all the gifts the State has received, I have never accepted any with greater pleasure.”

State Park Commission Chairman Joseph R. Knowland

Pirates

In 1917, the YWCA hired a group of Pacific Grove high school boys and young men from California colleges to assist at camp. It proved to be one of the most unexpected and memorable chapters in the history of Asilomar. Dubbed “pie rats” because they were often caught raiding desserts in the kitchen between meals, these young men joined in the theatrics and high merriment. Calling themselves “Pirates,” they served as mechanics, bus boys, dishwashers, and general maintenance staff. But their favorite job was teaching the young women how to drive.

(Pirate history and a collection of photos hang in the main hallway of Pirates’ Den, reminders of those treasured summer days.)



Pirates, 1923

In flux

Harsh economic times caught up with the YWCA in the 1930s. The National Board of the YWCA needed to liquidate some of their assets and voted to close Asilomar. Asilomar was put up for sale in 1935 but no one was interested in buying it.

The grounds were leased to the Visel brothers who ran it as a year-round resort motel for the next five years.

In 1940, it became the training grounds for the National Youth Authority; when World War II broke out, the USO contracted to house military families from Fort Ord in Asilomar’s empty rooms.

After the war, the YWCA regained occupancy and operated Asilomar as a full-service conference facility.

The National Board of the YWCA, still wanting to sell Asilomar, announced in 1951 that Asilomar would again be placed on the market.

Asilomar joins California State Parks

The YWCA received two offers for the property in 1951. The first offer came from the Del Monte Sand Plant. They wanted to expand their current sand mining operation across the street from Asilomar, onto the Asilomar dunes. The second offer came from a developer wanting to convert the grounds into a gated senior community with modern beach residences. Both offers were refused. The YWCA clung to their hope of finding a buyer that would embrace their original vision of Asilomar as a refuge by the sea.

In 1952, a group of concerned Pacific Grove and Monterey Peninsula citizens formed “Save Asilomar.” They actively worked with the YWCA to find a buyer that would respect the YWCA’s vision and protect the local environment. Soon, an announcement came that California State Parks was interested in acquiring the property for its sand dunes after their recent purchase of beach property across from the Asilomar grounds.





© California State Parks

The YWCA agreed to sell Asilomar to California State Parks for \$350,000 (half the appraised value) with the understanding it would continue to operate as a conference grounds “providing an inspirational setting for all.”

Senator Fred Farr and State Assemblyman Alan Pattee wrote the legislation. The bill stated that Asilomar must be self-sustaining and could not use state funds to operate. The bill was unanimously passed and signed by Governor Goodwin Knight. On July 1, 1956, the Asilomar conference grounds was added to the state beach to become a unit of California State Parks. State Park Commission Chairman Joseph R. Knowland accepted the keys to the property and said, “Of all the gifts the State has received, I have never accepted any with greater pleasure.”

Concessionaires

State Parks contracted with the city of Pacific Grove to manage the conference grounds in 1956. Pacific Grove, in turn, subleased to a concession to handle the hospitality business and generate funds. When Pacific Grove ended its 13-year lease in 1969, State Parks assumed full management and contracted directly with the concessionaire to run the hospitality business.

Since 1956, four concessions have operated the hospitality business on the conference grounds— City of Pacific Grove (1956-1969), Pacific Grove-Asilomar Operating Corporation (1969-1996), Delaware North Parks & Resorts (1996-2009), and in September 2009, California State Parks contracted with ARAMARK Parks and Destinations to operate the conference and lodging business for the next 20 years.

Asilomar State Beach & Conference Grounds

Today, the park unit totals 107 acres and has an annual visitation of nearly 400,000 people.

Subsequent architects have designed and built additional lodges and meeting rooms for the conference grounds that harmonize with Julia Morgan’s original buildings.

California State Park staff has restored and preserved Asilomar’s dunes and coastline and is currently working on restoring Asilomar’s Monterey pine forest.



© California State Parks

State Park dedication ceremony July 1, 1956, in Merrill Hall



The YWCA, Julia Morgan, and other women — Phoebe Apperson Hearst, Mary Merrill, Ellen Browning Scripps and Grace Dodge, had great foresight that gave Asilomar life. The citizens of California, California State Parks, and ARAMARK will ensure that this legacy lives on and continues for generations to come.

ASILOMAR ARCHITECTS

A Blueprint for Success



Merrill Hall, completed in 1928, is one of sixteen buildings designed by architect Julia Morgan.



Julia Morgan
c. 1926

JULIA MORGAN

When the decision was made by the YWCA to hire an architect to build Asilomar, San Francisco architect Julia Morgan was their definitive choice. She had successfully confronted the barriers of prejudice and preconceptions about a woman's position in the workplace and helped redefine this role for others. She was, in essence, a reflection of California's progressive era.

Morgan chose to design Asilomar's buildings in the Arts and Crafts style, an architectural movement sweeping California at the turn of the 20th century. An element of the Arts and Crafts was to use local materials and the structural beauty of the building would become the art of the building. The philosophy behind Arts and Crafts was that lives were healthiest and happiest when they maintained a close relationship with nature.

Asilomar's quintessential building material was redwood with granite stones covering concrete supports and foundations. Morgan's design plan included interior open spaces to be as expressive as the exteriors, and natural light would accentuate the structural beauty of the wood.

Julia Morgan's layout of the grounds complemented the natural landscape. The social hall, dining room, and chapel auditorium were placed in a circular campus at the edge of the forest but sheltered from the ocean by sand dunes. The lodges and tent houses were tucked back into the trees.

Julia Morgan's work at Asilomar spanned nearly two decades, from 1913 to 1928. It is her largest collection of Arts and Crafts style buildings in one location. Today, these buildings are a National Historic Landmark.

© Julia Morgan Papers, Special Collections, California Polytechnic State University



© California State Parks

Woodlands Dining Room floats above ground on concrete pilings. Designed by John C. Warnecke & Associates and completed in 1961.

JOHN CARL WARNECKE

After the acquisition of Asilomar by California State Parks in 1956, a “master plan” for the new park was developed. Under the architectural direction of John Carl Warnecke, a 20-year, \$5.5 million building program was initiated.

Warnecke’s architectural firm in San Francisco had the reputation of “brilliant works.” His office not only designed buildings but had its own building contractors, interior designers, and landscape architects. Warnecke was internationally known for his design of the United States Embassy in Thailand and the state capitol building in Honolulu, Hawaii. By the late 1970s, John Carl Warnecke would head one of the nation’s top architectural firms, operating branch offices in New York City, Washington D.C., Boston, Honolulu, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

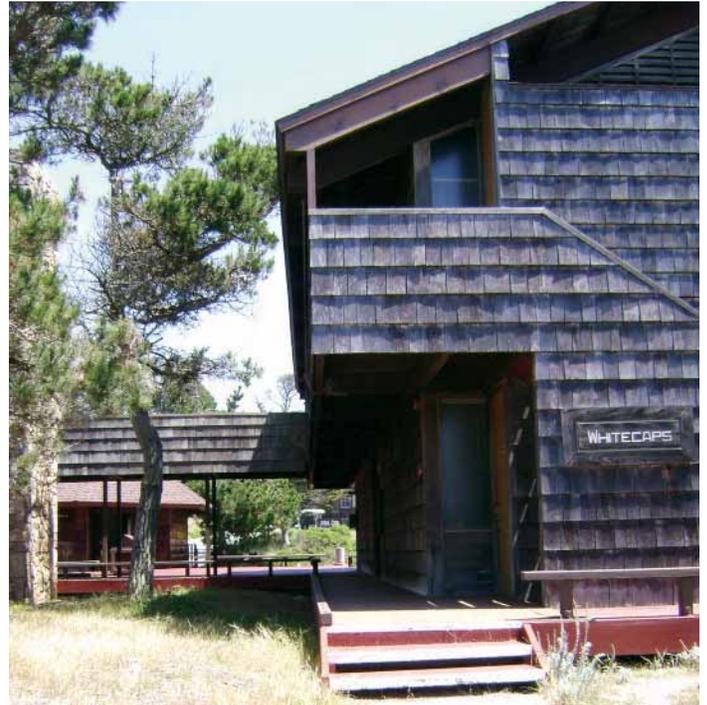
The Warnecke buildings at Asilomar complemented those designed by Julia Morgan. Their locations continued Morgan’s original vision of preserving prime open space and vistas of the sea and forest. He raised his buildings on exposed cylindrical concrete pilings to preserve the natural contours of the dunes and to keep wind-driven sand out of the rooms. Wood decks and walkways around the buildings were to be used as gathering areas to enhance the park visitor’s experience of the natural surroundings.



John Carl Warnecke c. 1956

© California State Parks

Warnecke had the reputation of “brilliant works.”



© California State Parks

Whitecaps lodge rooms and Marlin meeting room.

Warnecke clustered lodge rooms and meeting rooms into groups, designing mini-conference centers throughout the grounds. The lodges of Whitecaps, Breakers, and Spindrifft along with the meeting rooms of Marlin, Curlew, and Sanderling is one example.

His meeting room interiors had a sparse but inviting ambiance as the usual clutter of visual aids such as chalkboards, tack boards, and projector screens were concealed in the walls and ceiling beams.

Today, the Warnecke buildings at Asilomar stand as a testament to his architectural ability to enhance our experience of Asilomar and to appreciate its architecture.



© California State Parks

Manzanita sleeping lodge was built atop the underground garage while Acacia and Toyon meeting rooms are at the underground garage level. Designed by the architectural firm of Smith, Barker & Hanssen and completed in 1972.

SMITH, BARKER & HANSSEN

The architectural firm of Smith, Barker & Hanssen was hired in 1971 to design additional sleeping rooms and meeting rooms, as well as the State Park training center at Asilomar.

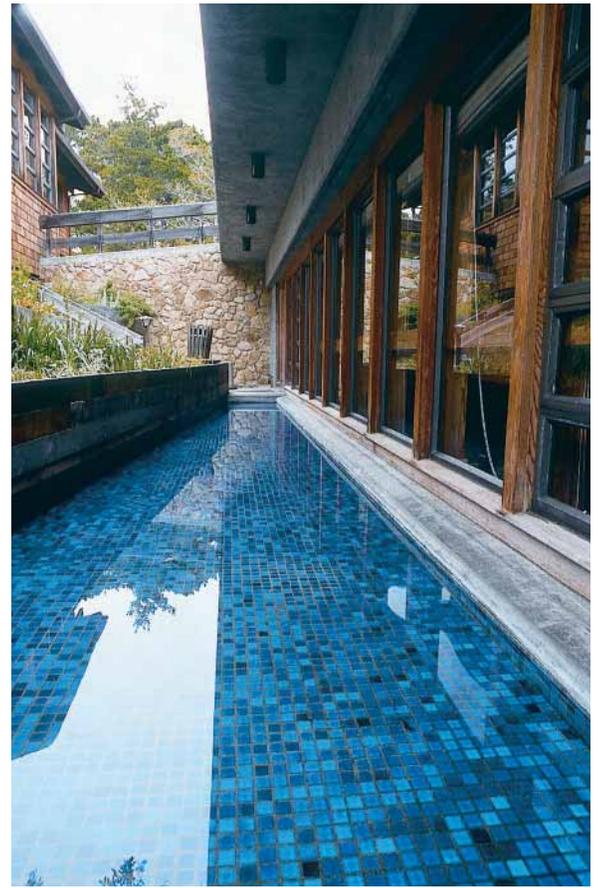
Integrating the rustic elegance of Morgan's and Warnecke's works, the architects designed Willow Inn, Manzanita, and Oak Knoll to combine sleeping rooms and living rooms on each level of the two-story buildings. Cedar shakes and local stone mirrored the style of the older buildings, and large windows offered views of the park's woodlands and ocean.

The Heather, Toyon, and Acacia meeting rooms were placed at the same level as the garage with a glass wall to allow natural light to illuminate inside. The blue tile reflecting ponds suggested the natural element of water.

To preserve outdoor open space and to eliminate the visual blight of parked cars, the complexes were designed with an underground parking garage.

The William Penn Mott, Jr. State Park Training Center and lodging was completed in 1973. Integrating the training center building into the environment, the second-story roof angles upward, giving it the appearance of being sculpted by the prevailing winds. The building spreads out across the landscape and into the hillside like the wide-sprawling oaks that grow nearby.

The interiors of the lodge buildings incorporate warm woods and built-in furniture similar to the buildings designed by Julia Morgan. Wood slate walls give a visual pattern and the wooden staircase doubles as a room divider. A large stone fireplace in the living rooms provides warmth and a social area for gatherings.



© California State Parks

Reflecting pond at Heather meeting room.



© California State Parks

Live Oak sleeping lodge has built-in furniture and a staircase that doubles as a room divider. Built in 1973.

STONE, MARRACCANI & PATTERSON

The Fireside and Forest Lodge complexes were the last buildings completed at Asilomar between 1979 and 1982. The architectural firm of Stone, Marraccani & Patterson (today known as SmithGroup, Inc.) was hired for the project. They had offices open in San Francisco, New York, and St. Louis. Their practice was built on three keystones: high-quality architectural design, technical excellence, and service to their clients. Noted for innovative design, Michael Kelly and William Diefenbach were the project architects.

The Fireside complex, which includes Farr Forum, Kiln and the lodge buildings of Hearth, Embers and Afterglow, perpetuate the timeless character established by Julia Morgan. Exposed roof trusses and redwood ceilings draw attention to the interior. Glass walled meeting rooms fold open onto the patio, allowing park visitors the feeling they are outdoors while being sheltered by the building. Every sleeping room is complemented with a fireplace and outdoor balcony. A communal living room and central courtyard create gathering places.

Forest Lodge was originally operated as a motel from 1961 to 1977. When State Parks purchased the old motel, it was structurally sound but architecturally out of character. Rather than



Farr Forum

© California State Parks

demolish the building, it was recycled. The old motel parking lot was reclaimed with two new meeting rooms—Oak Shelter and Evergreen.

Two other old, two-story motel buildings were recycled to provide 12 additional guest rooms for Woodside. The old exterior entrance doors were converted to sliding glass doors and private decks. Access to the rooms was replaced with an interior entry circulation. A living room, large fireplace, and second-story open walkway connected the two buildings.

The Fireside/Forest Lodge project was honored with a 1981 Design Award from the California Coastal Commission. The award reads, “It combined design excellence with coastal protective measures to preserve natural resources, minimize adverse environmental impacts, and enhanced scenic resources.”



Woodside living room

Courtesy of Smith Group, Inc.

Asilomar’s architecture manifests the original philosophy of the Arts and Crafts movement—lives are healthiest and happiest when they are close to nature.

SAND DUNES



© California State Parks

**When you are ready to set out
on a nature walk to renew your spirit,
the sand dune boardwalk may just be the answer.**

Asilomar's 25 acres of sand dunes represent the last remaining area of contiguous, undeveloped dunes in Pacific Grove. Once covering some 480 acres of sand dunes along the western edge of the Monterey Peninsula, from Point Pinos in Pacific Grove to Point Joe in Pebble Beach, the sand dunes have changed dramatically since Europeans began to settle here in the 1800s. Logging, cattle grazing, sand mining, and residential and resort development have each, in turn, taken their toll from the original dune ecosystem.

Once Asilomar opened in 1913, people unknowingly trampled the surviving plants, which caused further deterioration and permitted the loose

sand to blow away in the wind.

After Asilomar became a state park, early efforts to prevent the sand from shifting and engulfing the buildings introduced non-native plants, particularly ice plant. Ice plant provided neither food nor shelter to the native wildlife and proved aggressive towards the remaining plant life, quickly crowding out and holding the nutrients needed for native plants to grow.

As years passed, the dunes wore away and the Monterey pine forest became more exposed to the ravages of salt spray and wind. First to die were the wind-twisted pines closest to the sea, followed by the tall pines in the forest. By 1984, the dunes were a virtual wasteland of bare sand and ice plant.

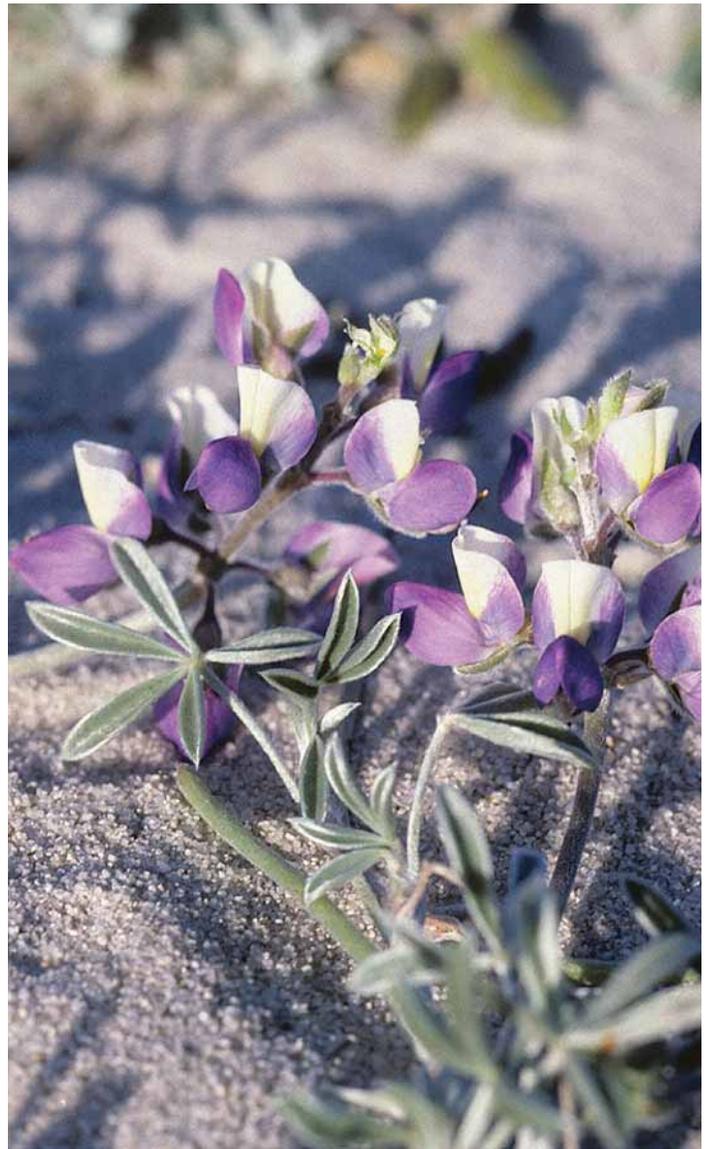
Something had to be done

The park staff and concessionaire agreed that strong action had to be taken if the dunes were to be saved. They embarked on an ambitious project in 1984 to restore the dunes to its “pre-European-influence” condition by creating a self-sustaining ecosystem.

Luckily, amidst the desolation, a few isolated pockets of relatively pristine habitat remained. These became the models upon which a plan was developed for the restoration work.

The challenges were clear

The restoration project was based on the principle that a dune environment could be preserved in its natural condition while accommodating public use. But, this simple principle had significant challenges. The first challenge was to collect enough native seeds from the isolated pockets of native habitat remaining. Second, was to build a plant nursery to begin the delicate process of propagating and growing the plants. Next, all non-native plants had to be eliminated from the dunes using environmentally safe methods. The fourth challenge was to use bulldozers to reconstruct the dunes, sculpting them in the same way the prevailing winds would have naturally shaped the dunes. Once the dunes were reshaped, it was time to vegetate the area by hand planting and hydroseeding. Lastly, a split-rail fence was put around the restored dunes and a half-mile boardwalk trail was built to protect the dunes and accommodate public access. Each step of the way, local citizens volunteered their efforts to help the State Park staff meet these challenges.



Tidestrom's lupine

© California State Parks

1984...



...the present

In time, the dunes began to resemble its pristine state as native plants took hold and thrived. The plant nursery provided an economical source of dune plants. To date, more than 400,000 plants representing 25 different native plant species have been grown and transplanted in the dunes and along the shoreline bluffs. Their survival rate exceeds 90 percent.

Boardwalk

To guide park visitors safely through the restored dunes, a boardwalk was laid out. The boardwalk meets federal and state accessibility standards. Its path meanders gracefully around bends and atop the

crest of dunes. Benches provide resting spots. Vistas along the path offer panoramic views of the Pacific Ocean, as well as opportunities to discover dune plants and wildlife. The boardwalk promises that each footstep taken will ensure the survival and success of the restoration project.

Asilomar Dunes Natural Preserve

A major milestone was reached in 2005 when Asilomar's dunes were designated a Natural Preserve, giving it one of the highest levels of protection in the State Park System. From restoration to preservation, Asilomar's sand dunes represent the largest, most ecologically intact dune ecosystem in Pacific Grove.

Top 10 Dune Wildflowers



Beach sagewort has silver gray foliage with spikes of yellow flowers. Blooming June to August, it is the most abundant plant in the dunes.



Tidestrom's lupine has a short stock of purple and white flowers. Leaves are palmate. Blooms May to July. This flower is viewed as a barometer for the health of the dunes as a whole. Listed on the federal and state endangered species' list.



Yellow sand verbena has trailing stems with thick, succulent kidney-shaped leaves. Blooms from May to October.



Menzies' wallflower has clusters of yellow, four-petal flowers. Blooms February to April. Listed on the federal and state endangered species' list. Wire cages are placed over the plant to protect it from grazing deer.



Pink sand verbena has narrow arrow-shaped leaves with reddish trailing stems. Blooms most of the year.



Beach poppy has yellow petals with an orange center. Blooms May to October.



Thrift has light pink flowers atop a single stem, growing from a cluster of slender leaves. Blooms May to September.



Seaside painted cup has red-orange bracts which obscure its tiny white flower. Blooms February to September.



Beach primrose has basal rosette leaves with 4-to-20 inch trailing stems. Yellow flowers bloom at the stem's tip. Blooms April to August.



Beach aster has purple bracts that surround a center of tiny yellow flowers. Blooms May to August.

DUNE STILE



© California State Parks

Dune Stile c. 1890s

One of the landmarks at Asilomar is the stile located in the dunes along Sunset Drive.

A stile, with steps rising through its center posts, was originally established in the dunes in the late 1800s as a gateway when the dunes were fenced and used for livestock grazing. After 1913, when the property belonged to the YWCA, the stile designated the main foot path through the dunes to the beach.

A replica of the stile was erected in 1988 at the boardwalk. The dimensions were based on the original stile, without the steps. Its redwood posts and shingled roof continue to mark a gateway for Asilomar—welcoming park visitors out to the state beach and back home to the conference grounds at the end of the day.



© California State Parks

Dune Stile c. 1940s

The original stile was rebuilt at least three times during the past century. Only the skeletal remains of two large redwood posts can be seen today.



© California State Parks

Dune Stile c. 2010s

STATE BEACH & THE BLUE PACIFIC



The craggy coves and a long stretch of sand on Asilomar State Beach offer a myriad of places to explore. Here, you'll find treasures everywhere. As you explore, keep in mind that each form of marine life, from sea birds to the smallest invertebrates, plants, and rocks, is protected in this marine reserve.

Asilomar's White Sand

Santa Lucia granodiorite rock forms the rocky coast along Asilomar State Beach. This dense, hard rock is comprised of large rectangular crystals of orthoclase feldspar, gray translucent quartz, creamy plagioclase feldspar, and black biotite mica. It formed over 100 million years ago from a molten mass deep in the earth under the ocean. It was transported here through massive uplifts and plate tectonics. This movement most likely caused the fissures you see in the rocks today. These cracks weaken the integrity of the rock, making it more vulnerable to erosion.

Over time, the erosion of these rocks eventually wears down to fine white sand. This sand is suspended in the sea water and, in time, deposited onto the beach by wave action.

Marine Life

Shells scattered on the beach are actually the cast-off external remains of sea creatures. These shells are efficiently recycled back into nature by other marine animals. The hermit crab uses the empty shells to create its own protective home. The giant green sea anemone attaches pieces of shell to its skin for disguise and for protection from the sun.

A world of marine organisms thrive under the white beach sand—worms, crabs, shrimp, and some creatures so small they can live in the tiny spaces between the grains of sand. When sea water washes over the beach, it percolates down, carrying with it plankton and dissolved oxygen that nourishes these marine animals.

Marine life in the tide pools depend on the advance and retreat of the tides. Approximately every 12 hours, the tides change, covering then uncovering the rocks along the shore. Each species that calls the rocky habitat home must be able to survive the crashing waves and

© California State Parks, photo by M. Aker

submersion during high tides and the exposure to drying winds, sun, and rain during low tides. As you explore the tide pools, remember not to remove animals and plants from the rocks.

Harbor Seals

Harbor seals are in Monterey Bay year round. Frequently seen hauled out onto rocky outcroppings at low tide, these 250-pound marine mammals rest after feeding cycles. They are considered to be one of the world’s finest deep-sea divers. They can descend as deep as a half a mile to catch their prey. Although they breathe air as we do, seals are built to remain underwater for remarkable periods—20 minutes is common.

Harbor seals spend time on dry land to molt, give birth, nurse and care for their pups.

Whales

Every year, starting in August, migrating humpback and blue whales appear in Monterey Bay waters. The whales spend their summers in the nutrient-rich cold water, feeding on small fish and krill. When fall approaches, the whales travel south to the warmer waters of the tropic seas.

As humpbacks and blue whales depart Monterey, the Pacific gray whales begin arriving in November. Sightings increase each day until their numbers peak around the second week in January. Pacific gray whales travel round trip, about 12,000 miles each year, from the Chukchi Sea between Alaska and Russia to their breeding grounds in Baja California, Mexico, and then back to the Chukchi Sea.



Ochre sea stars

© California State Parks, photo by M. Aker



Harbor seals

© Charles M. Bancroft

It’s nice after dinner to walk down to the beach and find the biggest thing on earth relatively calm.

A. R. Ammons



Asilomar State Beach

© California State Parks, photo by M. Aker



Monterey Bay Aquarium © Frans Lanting

Sea Otters

Undeniably, the most sought-after animal in Monterey Bay is the sea otter. They are fairly easy to spot because they spend most of their time floating on their back, eating or sleeping in giant kelp fronds on the surface of the ocean.

Its scientific name, *Enhydra lutris*, means “otter in the water.” This name is most fitting because otters spend almost all their time in the ocean—they eat, sleep, mate, give birth, and feed their young at sea. They are the most aquatic of all otters.

Otters are the only marine mammal without a layer of fat to keep it warm in the cold ocean; its thick fur must keep it warm. The fur is the thickest of any animal in the world. It is so dense, it would be impossible to part it with a comb and see its skin. Otters have two types of fur—*guard hairs* are long, coarse strands, and *under fur* are shorter, fine hairs.

Clean fur is a matter of life and death; it must be groomed and cleaned constantly. Otters use their sharp claws as a comb to scratch and brush the fur to untangle and clean it. The otter’s coat is loose on its body so it can pull it around to clean areas that are hard to reach.

Giant Kelp

Several different species of kelp, also known as algae, grow just offshore. Their “*beds*” of floating fronds and bulbs are frequently seen on the water’s surface. Kelp attracts feeding sea otters, circling gulls, and diving cormorants. All this activity hints at the riches that lie below the beds in the kelp forest.

Giant kelp (*Macrocystis pyrifera*) is the most common algae in the forest. It grips rocks on the ocean bottom with “holdfasts” and uses air-filled bulbs found at the base of each kelp blade, to float the long fronds to the surface. This floating ability enables the kelp, which can reach 100 feet tall, to rise towards sunlight so photosynthesis can take place.

Special barges enter Monterey Bay to harvest the top several feet of kelp, which can grow as much as a foot each day during the summer months.

Giant kelp contains algin, a chemical common in many products we use. The extracted algin is an effective emulsifier and suspension agent in salad dressing, ice cream, fruit drinks, water-based paints, adhesives, food wrappers, toothpaste, surgical jellies, and hand lotion.

Tide pools

Along the rocky shoreline, tide pools form as sea water washes over the rocks and fills the basin spaces.



Giant kelp washed up on the beach

© California State Parks

Tide pools range from small, shallow puddles high up on shore to large, deep pools nearer the sea. The best time to explore tide pools is during the lowest of low tides that occur during a full moon or new moon phase.

Tide pools are home to dozens of different animals and plants. When sea water flows into the pools, it brings fresh oxygen and food to its inhabitants. Some animals spend their whole lives in one pool while others swim in and out with the tides. Between tides, some smaller pools become too warm and begin to dry up. Many of the animals take shelter under cool, damp rocks and moist seaweeds so their bodies do not dry out before the tide comes in again.

It is important to remember the coastline at Asilomar is part of the Asilomar Marine Reserve and the Monterey Bay Sanctuary. All plants and animals are protected by laws. No fishing or collecting is allowed.

Tide pools closest to shore are home to the hardiest plants and animals. Some kelp varieties in this zone need “drying time” in order to release spores. Snails, limpets, and some barnacles nestle onto rocks and in crevices while hermit crabs scurry confidently along the pool’s edge.

The next level in the intertidal zone is home to more delicate species, those which can only survive out of water less than six hours. This is where multi-colored sea stars drape over rocks and goose-necked barnacles and black mussels pack into tight mosaic crowds. In the water-filled pools, sea anemones open in flower-like shapes as their tentacles capture prey with a sharp paralyzing sting. If you are lucky, you may spot an immature green-colored, purple spiny sea urchin wedged in the rocks.

Brilliantly colored nudibranchs and sponges are found in the deepest pools. Small sculpin fish and rock prickleback dart about in search of food among the surf grass.

For all its splendid display, life in the tide pools is harsh. Forever at the mercy of the elements and constantly vulnerable to predators, the tide pool animals and plants are in an endless dance between life and death.



Tide pool with bat stars

© California State Parks, photo by M. Aker

OCEAN SAFETY



© California State Parks

The ocean along Asilomar's shoreline is beautiful but can be potentially deadly for those unaware of its power and unpredictability. Ninety percent of rescues performed by State Park Lifeguards each year are for people who do not use common sense and have become reckless.

Common hazards to watch for:

1. Wind crossing thousands of miles across uninterrupted water can generate large crashing waves that can sweep you off your feet and into the water. Never turn your back on the ocean!
2. When wading, watch for unexpected drops in the ocean floor. One step can take you from waist-deep water to over-your-head water.
3. Rocks are particularly hazardous. Often covered with wet algae, they can be extremely slippery. Use caution.
4. The average water temperature is 54°F, cold enough to cause hypothermia within minutes. Always wear a wet suit when planning a long exposure in the water.

RIP CURRENTS

Rip currents, also known as rip-tides or undertows, are common off Asilomar beach. Rip currents are long, narrow bands of water that quickly pull any object away from shore and out to sea. They are dangerous, but you can escape if you stay calm.

INCREASE YOUR CHANCES OF SURVIVAL

Do not struggle against the current

Most rip current deaths are not caused by the tide itself. People often become exhausted struggling against the current and cannot make it back to shore.

Do not swim toward shore

When you are in the rip current, you may feel as if a vacuum is pulling you out to sea. Don't swim toward shore; you will be fighting the current and you will lose.

Swim parallel to shore, across the current

Generally speaking, a rip current is less than 100 feet wide, so swim parallel to shore until you are beyond the pull of the current.

If you cannot swim out of the rip current, float on your back and allow the rip current to take you away from shore until you are beyond the pull of the current.

Rip currents generally subside 100 to 200 yards from shore. Once the rip current subsides, swim parallel to shore and then back to shore.

Be aware

Rip currents occur more frequently in strong winds. Streaks of sandy water moving out to sea through the surf zone are signs that rip currents are present. Also look for areas of reduced wave height in the surf zone and depressions in the beach running perpendicular to shore. While in the water, if you feel as if a vacuum is pulling you out to sea, you are in a rip current.

JUNIOR LIFEGUARD PROGRAM



© California State Parks, photo by E. Landry

A group of young people, ages 9 to 16, will have lots of fun this summer while learning to be safe in the ocean. The Junior Lifeguard program, sponsored by California State Parks, is a four-week program led by State Park Lifeguards.

Youngsters learn first aid, CPR, oceanography, and beach and marine ecology. They experience swimming, surfing, snorkeling and kayaking in Monterey Bay, along with field trips to the Monterey Bay Aquarium, Point Lobos State Natural Reserve, and Santa Cruz.

For information about becoming part of this program, call (831) 649-7144. For similar programs that may be offered near your home, check the state beaches in your area.

“The goal is to teach water safety and to learn respect for the oceans around us.”

Erik Landry
State Park Lifeguard

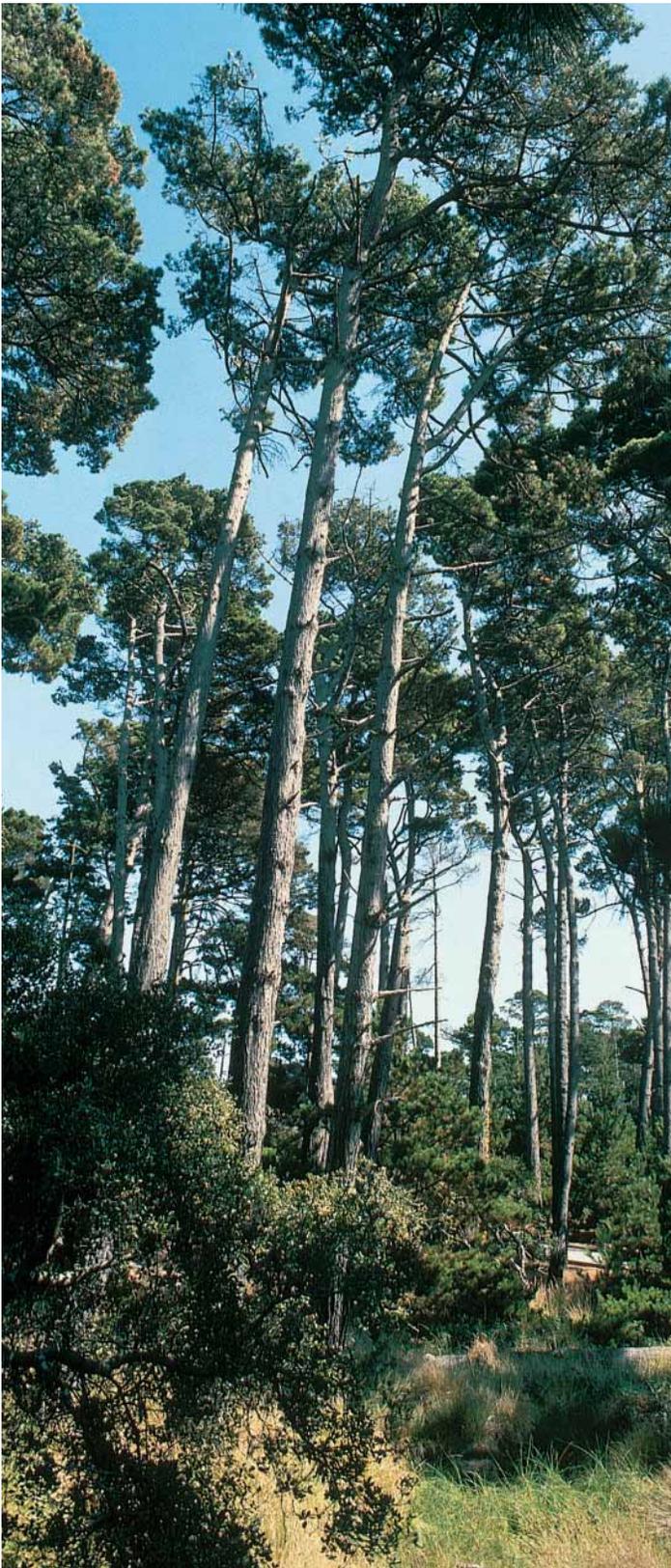


© California State Parks, photo by E. Landry



© California State Parks, photo by E. Landry

FOREST ECOSYSTEM



© California State Parks

Monterey Pines

Since Europeans first viewed the pines along the fog shrouded California coast over 400 years ago, the beauty of a Monterey pine forest has been valued by explorers and scientists and portrayed by artists.

Today, genetically-altered Monterey pines are one of the most popular trees in the world. It is planted for its stately grace in gardens and public landscapes, as well as for its economic value. Fast growth and quality wood make it ideal for the timber industry overseas. These pines are extensively grown in New Zealand, Australia, Chile, South Africa, and the Mediterranean region. The *native* Monterey pine forests in California are of great importance to these forest industries as they function as banks of genetic diversity for the development of new strains of Monterey pines.

Thousands of years ago, native Monterey pine forests grew along much of California's coast. Due mainly to climatic change, and more recently to urban and agricultural development, these majestic native pines are now one of the rarest forest ecosystems in the world, limited to just a few places—Monterey, Santa Cruz, San Mateo, and San Luis Obispo counties and a small island off Baja California, Mexico. The largest and most diverse native Monterey pine forest is here on the Monterey Peninsula.

The Forest at Asilomar

Asilomar's forest covers 55 acres. It is dominated by Monterey pines with some coast live oaks and planted Monterey cypress intermixed.

Studies show that, historically, the pine canopy in the Asilomar area was once dominated by trees that became established between 1850 and 1910 (McBride and Stone, 1976). A major fire in 1901 burned many trees; but, in some parts of the Asilomar forest, many older pines—50-65- and 75-year-old trees survived (Smith 1994). Monterey pines are well adapted to regenerating after fires as most cones remain closed until exposed to a sudden drying agent, either fire or extreme dry conditions. It is estimated that 5,000 to tens of thousands per acre of young pine seedlings can establish after a fire.

The studies concluded that, overall, the Asilomar forest was uneven-aged.

What we are witnessing at Asilomar today is the accelerated demise of that pine forest by the presence of pitch canker and other impacts. The stress on these pines has made the forest more susceptible to pest, disease, and an invasion of non-native species, which have displaced the natives. With the loss of more than 60 percent of pine trees in the last 20 years, the forest management priority is to reestablish the pine trees and canopy to this ecosystem.

Pitch Canker

Pitch canker is a disease caused by a fungus (*Fusarium circinatum*). It was first recognized in California in 1986, causing mortalities in non-native Monterey pines in landscape settings. Prior to its appearance in California, pitch canker was primarily known as a plantation and nursery problem that affected non-native Monterey pines. In 1992, pitch canker was first identified within *native* Monterey pine stands at Asilomar and in the Del Monte Forest of Pebble Beach. By 1994, it had spread to all the native stands of Monterey pines on the central coast.

Native bark, cone, and twig beetles carry the fungus pathogen to branch tips and cone whorls. Engraver beetles have been shown to transmit the fungus to the bole of the tree. Symptoms of pitch canker disease are characterized by a resin exuding on the surface of the shoots, branches, exposed roots and boles. The wood is soaked with honey-colored resin. Needles on the tips of infected branches fade to yellow, then to rust, and fall from the tree. Trees with advanced symptoms of the disease have significant crown dieback due to the large number of infected branch tips.

As early as 1997, pitch canker at Asilomar was in 72 percent of the pines; by January 2001, less than 2 percent of pines were free of pitch canker symptoms. The mortality was staggering. Sixty percent of Asilomar's Monterey pines were dead.

A Small Window of Hope

A small percentage of trees at Asilomar and in the Del Monte Forest appeared to be fully resistant to pitch canker. Scientists from the University of California at Davis and at Berkeley devised a mechanism known as Systemic Induced Resistance. They took seeds from the small population of resistant trees and grew seedlings. The plan was to

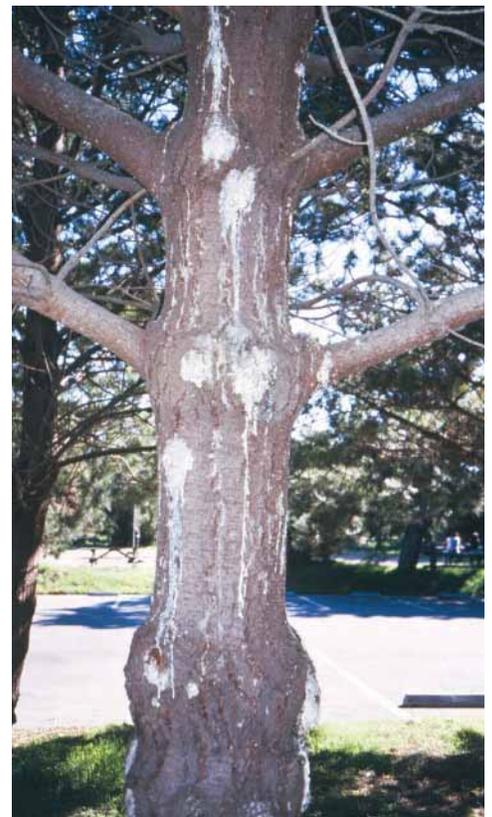
inoculate these young pines with repeated exposures of the fungus. If the young pines survived, they would become more resistant to pitch canker as they matured. The plan worked!

Today, the Asilomar State Park resource staff grows native Monterey pines from seeds taken from trees that survived the outbreak. In the plant nursery, they repeatedly inject these young pines with the fungus. Those that survive are eventually transplanted in the forest.



© California State Parks

Pine trees with dead needles at the tip of branches and weeping sap are signs of pitch canker.



© California State Parks

Buildings, pathways, and roads fragment 30 percent of the forest canopy. This adds to the stress of the pine's health.



© California State Parks

Other Challenges

While pitch canker has been a primary cause for the rapid decline of Monterey pines at Asilomar, the mortality of the forest ecosystem has been affected by other factors as well.

- **Forest fragmentation**

The pine and oak forest was thinned for the construction of buildings beginning in 1913 and continued until 1981. Thirty percent of Asilomar's forest is fragmented with buildings, parking lots, roadways, and pathways. This fragmentation prevents the pines from developing a dense canopy.

- **Competition from invasive plants**

The loss of the pine canopy that once created ideal conditions for native understory plants to grow is lost. Longer periods of sunlight weaken the shade-tolerant plants and dry out the soil. Conditions on the forest floor now favor non-natives. Weedy annual grasses, herbs, vines, shrubs, and trees are included in the more than 60 species of non-native plants that occur at Asilomar and are considered the greatest threat to native plants.

- **Coast live oaks**

A less apparent threat to the forest comes from the Monterey pine's closest neighbor—the coast live oak. In a mature pine forest, the two live harmoniously, with oaks surviving beneath the pine canopy. However, the longer-lived oaks can eventually dominate the forest as the pines are unable to regenerate under the shade of the oaks.

- **Non-native wildlife**

The loss of native vegetation has reduced or eliminated native wildlife populations. The void is being filled with non-native species such as the house sparrow, starling, red fox, and red fox squirrel.

The Forest Plan Strategy

In 2007, State Parks created an Asilomar Forest Management Program. It established a framework of protection, restoration, and maintenance for the Monterey pine forest ecosystem.

We will never replicate the pre-European forest conditions at Asilomar with today's landscape of buildings, parking lots, and roadways; but, we can work towards a mosaic of representative trees and try to mimic small areas of remnant vegetation on less developed sites in the park.

Growing native Monterey pines in the plant nursery will continue for many years. To achieve reforestation at Asilomar, we estimate that 700 pine trees per year over a 5-year period need to survive.

A number of healthy trees, resistant to pitch canker, have been planted and are now thriving. To assist the reforestation success, many trees are partially screened. The screen gives protection from heavy winds, offers passive shade that prevents the soil from drying out so quickly, and protects the young tree from the trampling and browsing of deer and the rubbing of bucks during the rut season.

Another way to increase the stand density is to spread wood-chipped plant material, that includes viable pine seeds, over openings created by recent pine mortality. The chipped material suppresses the growth of non-native annuals and increases a greater success of survival for natural pine seedlings (trees not grown in the nursery and hand-planted). Plastic tubes with air holes are placed around these seedlings for protection.

The removal of non-native plants and oaks that inhibit the growth of pines are performed on a routine basis. Cypressess are not native to Asilomar. An active program is underway to control cypress numbers and growth.

Dunes Help Protect the Forest

In the ecological context of the forest, dune soil and topography play a significant role in shaping the forest at Asilomar. In other words, preserving the sand dunes protects the pine forest.

The soil in young dunes nearest the coast is little more than loose sand. It is composed of loose deposits of quartz and feldspar with high permeability, low water-holding capacity, and low fertility. As pines grow on the eastern edge of the dunes, a change in plant species growing under the trees are more weighted to a pine forest rather than a dune and, in turn, a change in the soil type occurs.

Further inland, the soils are associated with the oldest dune parent material with clay and iron in the subsoil and higher organic matter. The water-holding



© California State Parks



© California State Parks

Protective shelters protect young pines from the browsing and rubbing of black-tailed deer.

By their age, by their size, by their majestic beauty...
Nature's supreme achievement is the evolution of trees.

Francois Leydet

capacity in the soil is significantly higher. The end result is larger pines and oaks and the establishment of forest vegetation.

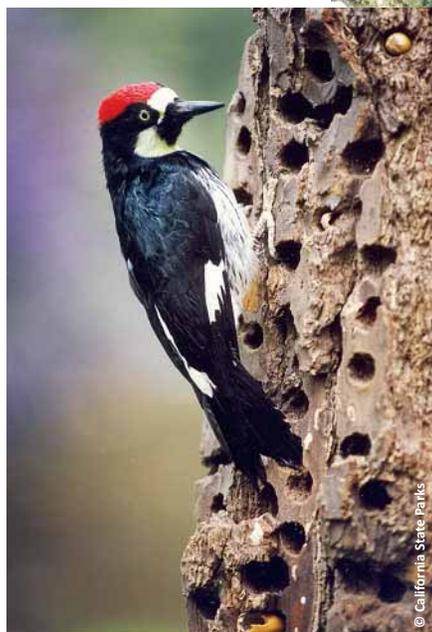
The topography of the conference grounds ranges in elevation from sea level to some 90 feet above sea level. The entire property lies over partially stabilized dunes of differing ages, creating wide and gentle slopes. The topography of these surfaces plays a significant role in soil and vegetative development.

Where the topography consists of a ridge-swale pattern, moisture tends to accumulate in the lower swale area, creating favorable conditions for plants. Ridges offer swale areas protection from wind and salt spray. As pines develop and spread laterally along the eastern edge of the dunes, it alters wind patterns. The wind-topped pines push wind currents up and away from the surface, providing a wind barrier for the forest vegetation.

Further inland in Asilomar's forest, the topography of ridges is wide, gentle slopes. Pines and cypresses exist on these ridges, as well as in the lower swale areas, reaching their greatest heights due to the fact that they are largely sheltered from wind. Coast live oaks are restricted to the swales.

Vegetation Habitats for Wildlife

Lastly, the diversity of habitat vegetation in the forest is important for managing the health of wildlife populations. The many wildlife species that occur at Asilomar have various needs for nesting, food, and cover. These requirements vary seasonally, depending on the life cycle of the plants and animals. Animals that nest or den in one type of habitat are likely to forage or get water in adjacent habitats. Therefore, the ability to move between these areas is critical. The health of trees and vegetation in different zones is key to their livelihood on the Asilomar grounds.

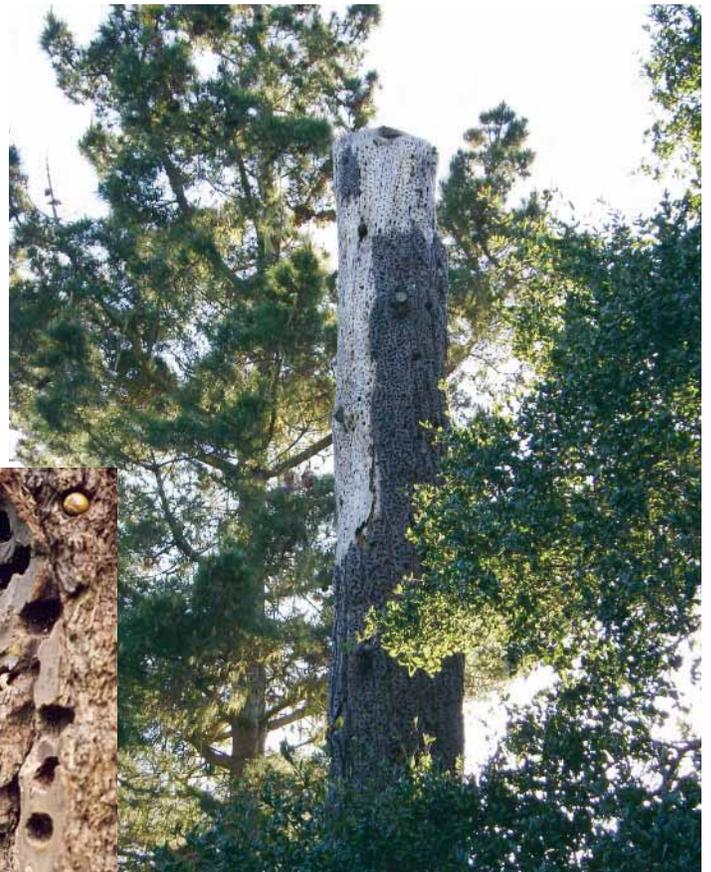


Acorn woodpecker

A Snapshot of Asilomar's Forest Today

It is evident when taking a quick examination of the Asilomar forest that it is in poor condition as a result of the advanced age of most of the trees, acts of forest fragmentation from development, and disease. But a closer look will reveal sites in the forest where young, healthy trees have been planted and are thriving. In the years to come, this reforestation will create a juvenile forest stage with pockets of dense, small trees that have hardly been available for wildlife at Asilomar for some time. The denser tree growth and more shade will also slow and probably help reduce the growth of invasive non-native plants.

It is important that we act wisely now because, in fifty years, another generation will be living with the results of the forest we save today. Every small effort on our part will ensure Asilomar's Monterey pine forest ecosystem will continue to exist.



Some dead pines are intentionally left standing for acorn woodpeckers. The trees are used for nesting sites, granaries to store acorns, and to hunt for insects.

WILDLIFE



© California State Parks

Because most of the natural landscape at Asilomar has been preserved, wildlife is seen roaming freely. Many animals are residents and are seen throughout the day and evening hours.

While it is always a delightful experience to see these animals in the park, it can also pose a danger to park visitors and to the animals if precautions are not taken.

- As you drive, always scan the road for wildlife that may be about to cross. Not only will this help you avoid harming or killing wildlife, but it will also increase the time you will have to brake for other hazards such as bicyclists, children and slow-moving vehicles.
- Be especially watchful for wildlife at dawn and dusk when many species are most active.
- Assume animals do not know to get out of your way. Young animals, in particular, do not recognize that cars are a threat and roads are dangerous. Newly fledged birds have not yet developed the flying skills they need to help them dodge cars.
- Remember that where there is one animal crossing, there may be more—young animals follow their mother or male animals are pursuing a mate.
- Many wildlife species at Asilomar have grown used to seeing people and may appear tame at our presence, but they are wild and can cause injury. State laws protect these animals from human interference. Harassment and feeding are strictly forbidden.

Black-tailed Deer

Nearly everyone's favorite, the black-tailed deer are seen year-round in the park. They browse primarily on the buds and leaves of trees, poison oak, shrubs, and lichen. Local neighbors around Asilomar can tell you the deer also have a fondness for ornamental plants and flowers.

Only the bucks (males) have antlers, which are shed each winter. A new set of antlers starts to grow in spring. Normally, a mature buck has four "points" on each antler. Contrary to popular belief, the

number of “points” does not correspond with age; rather, it is a factor of diet.

The rut, or breeding season, for deer at Asilomar is August to October with fawns born about seven months later. Fawns are born with spotted coats for camouflage but lose their spots when they are weaned, about 90 days after birth.

Asilomar’s deer herd varies from 25 to 35 deer, depending on deaths and the number of fawns that survive.

Black Legless Lizard

The black legless lizard is one of the most secretive and least seen animal at Asilomar. It lives in the sand dunes where there is moisture, warmth, plant cover, and loose sand to burrow in. It feeds mainly on insects and snails.

This reptile is about the size of a pencil and looks like a snake. Its scaled skin looks polished and is usually black above, yellow below. Unlike snakes, lizards have moveable eyelids.

The black legless lizard is a species of special concern in California because its habitat is easily threatened by human disturbances. Do your part in protecting black legless lizards by staying on the boardwalk when you are in the sand dunes.

Raccoons

Perhaps the most familiar animal in the park is the raccoon. Its tail is approximately 15 inches long and marked by dark rings of fur. Across the eyes is a dark band of fur, giving the raccoon the appearance of wearing a mask.

Generally seen during the evening hours, they hunt for fish, birds, rodents, insects, seasonal berries, and acorns.

Adaptability to living in an urban setting has caused some raccoons to associate people with food. They use aggressive antics to try to lure food from humans, often causing injury to people. Do not feed them. Discourage them with loud noises.

In Monterey County, raccoons and skunks have been known to carry rabies.

Red Fox

A non-native, the red fox is seen in the Asilomar dunes and forest in the early morning hours and just after sunset. It hunts for rodents, insects, reptiles, and berries. During the day, it stays hidden, resting among tree hollows, dense brush areas, and



Black legless lizard



Raccoon



Red fox

occasionally under Asilomar’s buildings.

Introduced into Monterey County in the 1930s, the red fox first appeared in Pacific Grove in 1993. It has aggressively competed with the native gray fox for habitat and won. No gray fox has been seen at Asilomar since 2000. The red fox population at Asilomar is three to five animals.



© Charles M. Bancroft

Mountain Lions

Mountain lion tracks and a deer killed by a mountain lion were found on the Asilomar grounds in 2000. This was the first evidence that a mountain lion was hunting on the Monterey Peninsula. Over the past decade, only a handful of actual sightings of the mountain lion have been made; but, deer kills have been regularly found, not only at Asilomar, but throughout the Peninsula. According to the Department of Fish & Game, this mountain lion makes its seasonal hunting trek onto the Peninsula at least once a year.

More than half of California is mountain lion habitat. They live in many different parts of California, from deserts to coastal forests and from sea level to 10,000 feet. They generally exist wherever deer are found and where they can find adequate cover.

Mountain lions are solitary and elusive, and their nature is to avoid humans. However, they are unpredictable; we have all read, from time-to-time, about the rare occasion when a mountain lion does attack a person.

Mountain lions live an average of 10 years. Adults may be six to seven feet long from nose to tail and weigh between 65 and 150 pounds.

There are several separate populations of mountain lions throughout California. Some populations are increasing, some are stable, and some are decreasing. There is no reliable way to count mountain lions over a large area. Their territory ranges from 30 to 125 miles.

To reduce the chances of an encounter:

- Avoid walking alone, especially between dusk and dawn when mountain lions normally hunt. Make noise to reduce the chances of surprising the mountain lion.
- Keep children in sight. Mountain lions seem to be drawn to children because of their small size.

To reduce the chances of an attack when encountering a mountain lion:

Do not attempt to approach a mountain lion. Most mountain lions will avoid confrontation. Give them a way to escape.

- Stay calm and face the mountain lion. Do not run; this may trigger the mountain lion's instinct to attack. Try to appear larger by raising your arms and opening your jacket.
- Pick up small children so they don't panic and run. Avoid bending over or crouching.
- If a mountain lion approaches or acts aggressively, shout and throw branches or whatever can be obtained without turning your back or bending over.
- Fight back if attacked. A good walking stick can be useful in warding off a mountain lion. Because a mountain lion usually tries to bite the head or neck, try to remain standing and face the attacking animal.

Report any mountain lion sightings to Park Rangers.

Birds

Every season at Asilomar brings new delights for birdwatchers. During spring, swallows and warblers return to the forest. Male white-crowned sparrows in the dunes are exceptionally bold, giving you the opportunity to identify them and learn their call.

Summer is breeding season for most birds. Bird songs are less frequent as nest-building and incubation occupy their time. By midsummer, young birds take their first clumsy flights of the year.

Autumn brings the migration of Townsend's warblers and pygmy nuthatches passing through the park.

Winter months have the fewest species in the park, making it easy for new birdwatchers to learn their first birds.



Western sandpipers

© California State Parks

Shorebirds

At dawn and dusk, flocks of sandpipers shift in synchrony along the ocean's edge in search of food. Plovers, on the other hand, feed by walking or running several steps, then stopping. Step, step, stop. Step, step, stop.

The killdeer is readily identified from other plovers by its two black chest bands and black and white tail tip. The killdeer protects its nest by developing elaborate distraction techniques. Pretending its wing is broken, it hobbles away from the nest, dragging its wing and tail to distract the predator away from the nesting site. Once it's a safe distance from the nest, the killdeer flies off in perfect form.



Killdeer

© Cornell University

“I resolved to return to my childhood vision of studying nature and try to protect the wild things of the earth.”

*Margaret Morse Nice,
Ornithologist 1919*



Killdeer feigning a broken wing

© Cornell University

Forest Birds

Throughout the conference grounds, the scratchy cawing of the American black crow can't be missed. Smart and bold, their calls alert other crows to both danger and food. Easy to identify, it is the only solid black-colored bird from beak to toes.

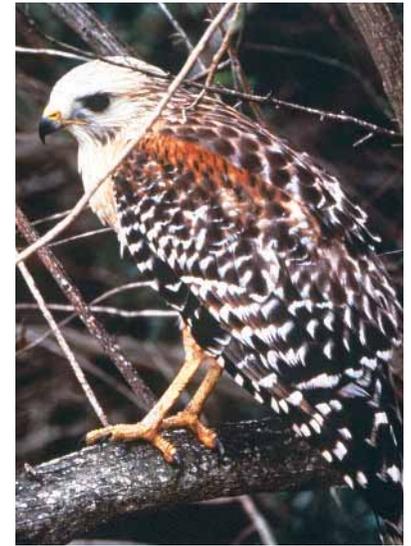
The red-shouldered hawk is frequently heard in the forest with its persistent screaming call before it is seen. Hunting mainly from perches, it "drops" onto its prey, capturing it on the ground. Its diet includes small mammals, birds, reptiles, and some insects.

Once darkness falls, great-horned owls may be heard exchanging calls. Owls are uniquely adapted to their role of nocturnal hunters. They have keen hearing, their eyes are huge to maximize low light levels, and they have distinct facial disks that help concentrate sound. The owl's feathers are adapted for nearly silent flight. The surfaces of their feathers are fuzzy, or velvety. This velvet surface helps dampen the sound of feathers rubbing together. The forward edges of the largest flight feathers are fringed, reducing air turbulence and sound, a great silent advantage as it swoops down to capture prey.



Crow

© California State Parks



Red-shouldered hawk

© Cornell University

Birds can increase your awareness and your enjoyment of the world around you.



Scrub jay

© Cornell University



Stellar jay

© California State Parks



Red-shafted flicker

© Cornell University



Pygmy nuthatch

© Cornell University



Dark-eyed junco

© Cornell University



Yellow-rumped warbler

© Cornell University



Anna's hummingbird

© Cornell University



European starling

© Cornell University

Pacific Tree Frog

The Pacific tree frog is one of the smallest but loudest amphibians in the park. Its “rib-bit” sound claims its territory and attracts mates.

It can change its skin color from bronze-brown to pale lime-green within a few minutes. This color change is related to temperature and humidity, not to the color shades of its surroundings as in most other amphibians.

Tree frogs benefit us by consuming annoying flying pests.

It can live in shallow ponds in forested areas.

It is an “indicator species” of a healthy ecosystem since it is sensitive to disturbances such as pollution.



© California State Parks

Pacific tree frog is 3/4 to 1 inch in length

Lucia Slender Salamanders

The Lucia slender salamander is another amphibian found at Asilomar. This salamander is a member of the family Plethodontidae—lungless salamanders. As you probably guessed from the name, these salamanders do not possess lungs and do not have gills for breathing. They breathe through their skin!

While many amphibians, like California frogs and toads lay their eggs in water, the Lucia slender salamander lays its eggs on land. When the eggs hatch, the babies look like miniature adults.

Salamanders play an important role in the food chain, both as predator and prey. They feed on small invertebrates like springtails, worms, and small insects. In turn, birds, snakes and other larger species of salamanders eat them.



© California State Parks

Lucia slender salamanders are 4 inches long

Groups of Animals

Oftentimes, groups of the same animal are seen together in the park. Here’s a list of the commonly seen groups:

Army of ants
Band of jays
Cast of hawks
Charm of hummingbirds
Colony of gulls
Flock of geese
Herd of deer

Murder of crows
Nest of wasps
Parliament of owls
Pod of whales
School of fish
Smack of jellyfish
Swarm of bees



Barn swallow chicks

No matter how cute they look,
no matter how hungry you think they are,

remember...

keep wildlife in the park
healthy and safe.

DON'T FEED THEM

and

KEEP A SAFE DISTANCE AWAY

NATURE'S QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



© California State Parks

Velella velella



© Cornell University

White-crowned sparrow



© California State Parks

Gray squirrel

Q. What is the blue animal that occasionally washes up on the beach?

A. *Velella velella*, also known as by-the-wind-sailors, is easily recognized by its blue color and angular projecting sail. Velella secrete a chitinous exoskeleton, forming an elliptical float with tubes containing air and a transparent sail that allows this predator to drift in colonies on the open sea. The sail is angled to the left or right on the main body axis so that in a breeze the animal drifts 45 degrees to the left or right of the true wind direction. Nearly all of California's velella have sails angled to the right. The Pacific Ocean's prevailing northerly winds tend to hold the population offshore; but, if the winds shift, blowing from the south or from the west, the animal drifts toward shore and is often left stranded on the beach.

Q. Who has the best bird song at Asilomar?

A. Our favorites are the house finch and the white-crowned sparrow. Bird songs and calls play an important role in the annual life cycle of many birds as they initiate courtship and define territorial boundaries vital to producing and successfully rearing offspring. Songs and calls can also serve to communicate other messages such as aggression, alarm, distress, and location of food.

Q. What happened to this pine cone?

A. Squirrels have gnawed off the pine cone scales to get to the seeds. Their upper and lower incisors grow throughout the animal's lifetime to combat the abrasion of hard nuts and pine cones.

Q. What causes the small holes in the beach sand?

A. The two main causes for the small holes are birds and water. Some shorebirds forage in the sand for crabs, worms, and insects, leaving behind holes. Water also causes “pin holes” when water sinks into dry sand and displaces the air between the sand grains. This displaced air rises to the surface in a series of bubbles that create small pin holes.

Q. What causes the low and high tides?

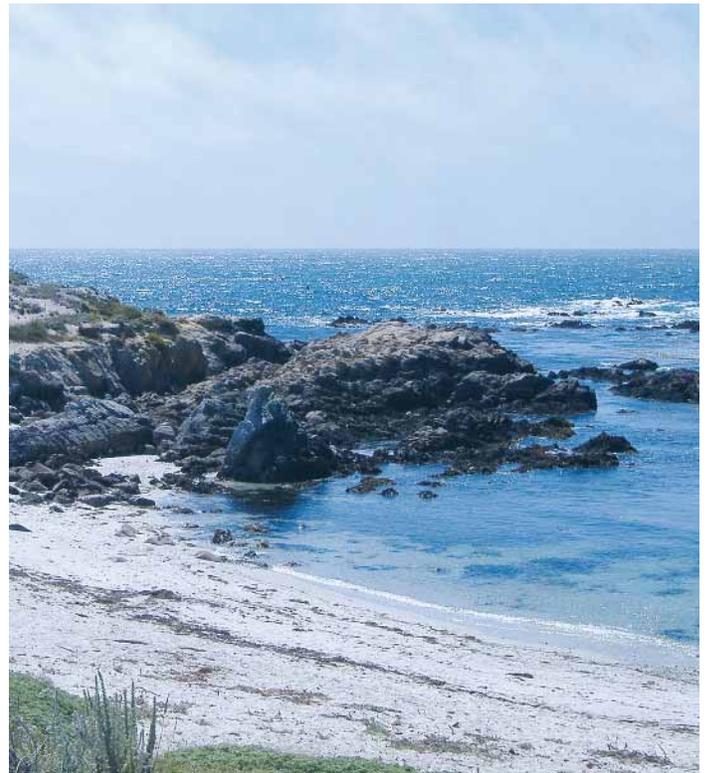
A. Tides are caused primarily by the gravitational pull of the moon. Although the sun is much larger than the moon, the moon is closer to the earth and exerts more pull than the sun. The moon’s gravitational pull causes a movement with the ocean’s water like a massive “wave.” One wave movement occurs on the side of the earth facing the moon and another wave occurs on the opposite side of the earth. The earth makes a complete revolution once every 24 hours. This constant motion puts different sections of the earth’s oceans under different gravitational influences during the course of a day, resulting in a daily cycle of two high tides and two low tides. This tidal cycle occurs, on the average, every 24 hours and 50 minutes. The extra 50 minutes is due to the rotation of the moon around the earth.

Q. Why can you hear the ocean when holding a seashell to your ear and you’re miles away from the ocean?

A. The sounds you hear is the merging of air coming from outside the shell and the sound of your blood rushing through your ear. Because the shell has a smooth interior and shape, the noises are echoed and re-echoed.

Q. What Native American Indians used the shoreline at Asilomar?

A. The indigenous people of the Monterey Peninsula were the Rumsien. The men would hunt birds, seals, sea lions, and fish along the shore. The women would collect shellfish from the tide pools such as turban snails, abalone, mussels, and crabs. Bird bone whistles were made from the wing bone of gulls and pelicans. Shells were extensively used for jewelry and trade.



Asilomar State Beach

© California State Parks

**Animals are extraordinary.
An ant can smell with its antennae.**

Q. How can you tell the difference between a butterfly and a moth?

A. Butterflies are closely related to moths and distinguishing the two can be challenging. While butterflies are generally active during the day and moths at night, there is some overlap, notably the Sphinx moth. A general way to tell them apart is by their antennae. Butterfly antennae are smooth, with a slightly wide or clubbed tip. The antennae of moths appear feathery.

Q. What is the fastest insect at Asilomar?

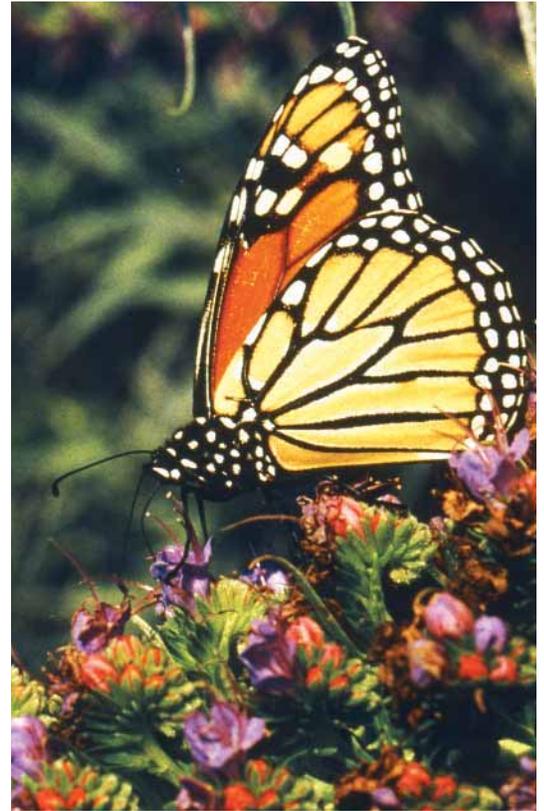
A. Dragonflies are the fastest, not only at Asilomar but in the insect kingdom. They can dart past you at 50 MPH!

Q. How do insects help the forest?

A. Insects can improve the soil. When insects feed on decaying material or on dead animal matter, they break up the material, increasing its exposure to air and water and increasing its rate of decay. The organic material is returned to the soil and can be reused by plants. Among the groups of insects that are particularly valuable are earwigs, the larvae of flies, and darkling beetles.

Q. What insect causes the white foam commonly seen on plants during the spring?

A. The immature stage of a spittle bug. Plants provide food for the insect. The thick, white, frothy mass consists of self-made bubbles which provides protection from dry air, predators, and potential parasites.



Monarch butterfly

© California State Parks



Darkling beetle

© California State Parks



Spittle bugs on a pine tree

© California State Parks

Q. What is the oldest building in the park?

A. The Phoebe Apperson Hearst Social Hall is the oldest building. It was built in 1913 and designed by architect Julia Morgan. The building was used for guest registration and social gatherings and continues to be used in a similar way today.

Q. Did John Steinbeck own a cottage on the Asilomar grounds?

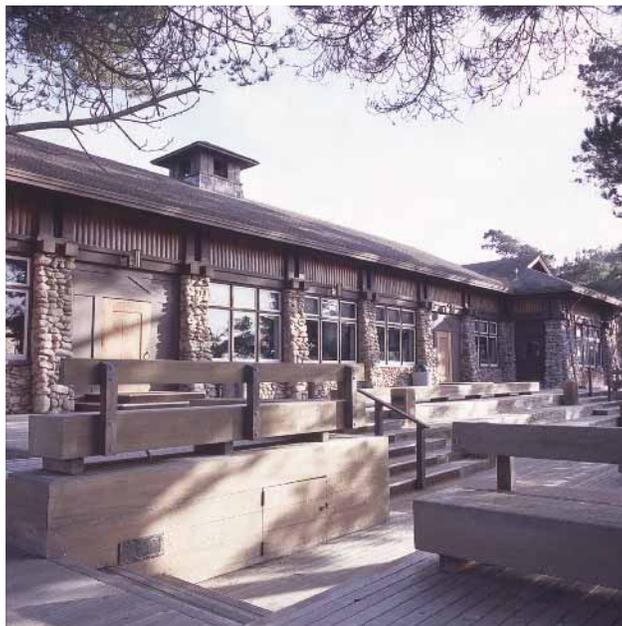
A. No. John Steinbeck's oldest sister, Esther Steinbeck Rogers, and her husband, Carrol Rodgers, did own a small cottage at 825 Asilomar Avenue that is now part of the Asilomar conference grounds. The cottage was purchased by California State Parks in 1972.

Esther and Carrol Rodgers owned an apple farm in Watsonville, CA, and bought the small house on Asilomar Avenue in 1932 for "their seaside cabin."

John Steinbeck and Gwendolyn Conger stayed in the cabin in 1941. In 1946, Steinbeck wrote to a friend stating he was writing the *Log from the Sea of Cortez* when he and Gwen "were hiding in the pine woods" in his sister's cabin. Steinbeck wrote, "She would sleep late and I would get up and build a big fire and work until noon when she woke up. That would be the end of work for the day and we would go walking in the sand dunes and eat thousands of doughnuts and drink coffee. I worked very hard." The *Log from the Sea of Cortez* was published in the spring of 1951.

Q. When was the swimming pool built?

A. 1927. Mr Herbert Fleishhacker, president of Portland Cement Company, gifted funds for the pool and oversaw its construction. The pool was filled with salt water from the Pacific Ocean through a pump and filter system. In 1951, the swimming pool was switched to fresh water; it was heated by the 1960s.



Phoebe A. Hearst Social Hall

© California State Parks



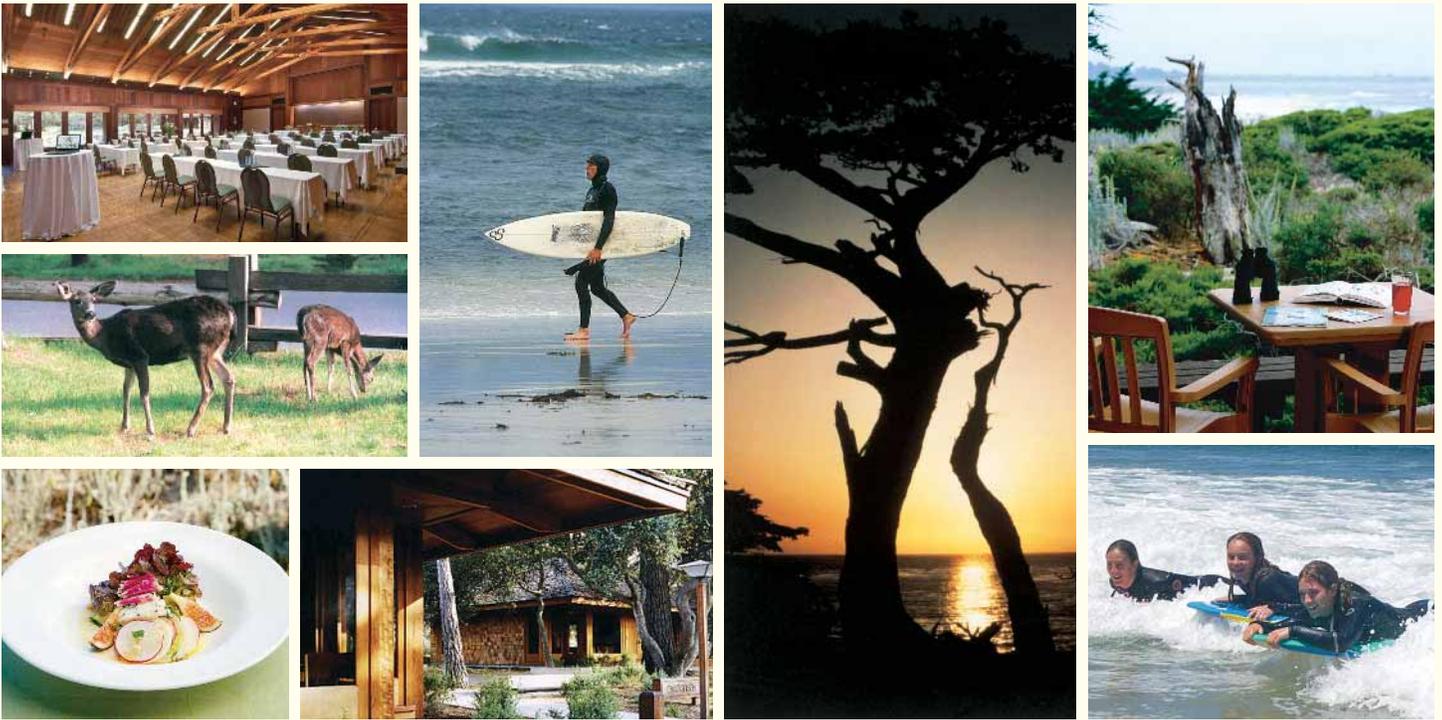
825 Asilomar Avenue. Today, the cottage is called Guest Inn.

© California State Parks



Asilomar swimming pool

© California State Parks, photo by Peter Nichols



Whatever the Reason

People come to Asilomar from around the world and just down the street. Whatever your reason for being here, it is our hope your visit is a pleasant one and your memories of this *refuge by the sea* will be retold for a lifetime.



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.