

# McGrath State Beach



## Our Mission

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



California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park's district office at (805) 968-1033. This publication is available in alternate formats by contacting:

### **CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS**

**P. O. Box 942896**

**Sacramento, CA 94296-0001**

For information call: (800) 777-0369

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

711, TTY relay service

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

**Discover the many states of California.™**

### **McGrath State Beach**

**2211 North Harbor Blvd.**

**Oxnard, CA 93035**

**(805) 968-1033**

*Hundreds of wildlife  
species live and  
raise their young in the  
nine separate  
ecosystems found at  
McGrath State Beach.*



## McGrath State Beach's lush streamside

**woodlands**, coastal dunes, wide beach and marshlands protect a surprising diversity of plants and animals, including more than 245 bird species. The mouth of the Santa Clara River—one of Southern California's last undammed rivers—has been designated as the Santa Clara Estuary Natural Preserve, the highest level of protection within the State Park system.

Located between Ventura and Oxnard, the park enjoys cool summers and mild, wet winters. Spring and fall bring crisp, often windy days. Dense fog rolls in, even in summer, so wise visitors dress in layers.

### PARK HISTORY

#### Native People

For thousands of years, native people, primarily the Chumash, lived in this area. In summer and fall, when the Santa Clara River slowed, the Chumash set up temporary camps and harvested the area's bounty. They used the local spiny rush plant to weave intricately crafted baskets.



*Chumash basket*

Human use of petroleum in this area was first documented when the Chumash used asphaltum deposits to caulk their *tomol* canoes, to waterproof baskets, and to affix decorative items to a variety of objects.

#### Dominick McGrath

Young Dominick McGrath came to California from County Longford, Ireland, in 1848. He made his fortune selling wool, mutton and hides in the gold fields. McGrath purchased more than a thousand acres of land near the mouth of the Santa Clara River and started a highly successful farm. As he prospered, Dominick and his family and friends often visited the river, the beach, and the surrounding area.

Dominick McGrath's descendants sold 295 acres to the State of California in 1961, so the public could also enjoy this coastal wetland habitat. The land was declared a state park in 1962.

#### Oil and Water

The need for fossil fuels can wreak havoc on the natural environment. In 1993, an oil pipeline near McGrath State Beach ruptured, spilling more than 2,000 barrels of crude oil into McGrath Lake, contaminating the lake and some surrounding dunes. After years of cleanup, the lake and its environs are still being restored.

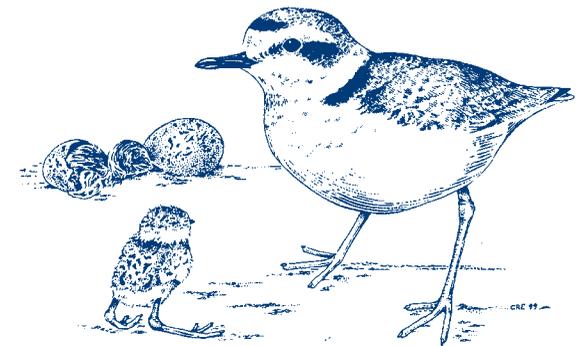
### NATURAL RESOURCES

Nine separate ecosystems meet at McGrath State Beach: river, freshwater marsh, brackish marsh, coastal dune, ocean, sandy beach, estuary, coastal freshwater back dune lake, and riparian woodland. Water patterns on the land change constantly as the estuary and even some campsites are covered by water one day and left drying in the sun the next. As a result, visitors never see the same McGrath State Beach twice.

In spring and fall, visitors can see migrating and year-round native birds. Among the rare, threatened or endangered animals protected here are the California least tern, brown pelican and least Bell's vireo. Native fish include steelhead trout and the endangered tidewater goby. Raccoons, gray foxes, great blue herons, weasels, brush rabbits, legless lizards and bobcats also live here. Plants blooming in the area are rare Ventura marsh milk vetch, once thought to be extinct, salt marsh bird's beak, arroyo willow, beach evening primrose and poison oak.

#### Watch your step!

From March through September, beachgoers must watch out for the well-camouflaged nests and chicks of the western snowy plover, a small shore bird struggling to survive on California beaches. Some activities, like kite flying, are not recommended—nervous plovers may abandon their eggs or chicks if disturbed. Dogs are never permitted on the beach.



*Snowy plover with eggs and chicks*



## RECREATION

**Camping**—The campground has 174 developed sites with picnic tables and fire rings, and restrooms with coin-operated hot showers. A group campsite and a Hike-and-Bike site are also available. Make reservations by calling (800) 444-7275. Reserve the group campsite by calling (805) 648-3918.

**Beach Activities**—Beach walkers, sunbathers and surf fishers enjoy McGrath's 2.5 miles of beach. Swimming, surfing, and water sports are discouraged because of rip currents.

**Adventures in Learning**—A mostly barrier-free nature trail extends .2 miles through jungle-like vegetation along the banks of the Santa Clara River. Pick up a free trail guide at the entrance station. Free summer programs interpret the park's history and habitats.

## ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

Accessibility in California State Parks is continually improving. Call the park district office at (805) 968-1033 or see <http://access.parks.ca.gov> for details.

- The campground has 12 paved campsites, some with accessible tables. Restroom stalls have grab bars and may be usable with help but are too narrow for wheelchairs. Showers are not wheelchair-accessible.
- The .2-mile trail leading from the main parking area near the river has a firm surface and a boardwalk that is mostly barrier-free.
- To reserve a beach wheelchair, call (805) 648-3321 at least one day in advance.

## PLEASE REMEMBER

- Ocean swimming and surfing are unsafe because of strong rip currents. Swim at San Buenaventura State Beach 3.5 miles north.
- You can help preserve the Santa Clara River by avoiding water contact and watersports in this area.
- Dogs must be kept on a six-foot leash during the day and in an enclosed vehicle or tent at night.
- The park's natural and cultural features may not be removed, altered or disturbed.
- City services (stores, hospitals) are located in Ventura and Oxnard.

## NEARBY STATE PARKS

- San Buenaventura State Beach, in Ventura 3.5 miles north on Harbor Blvd. to San Pedro Street (805) 968-1033
- Emma Wood State Beach, in Ventura 9.6 miles north on Highway 101 at State Beaches exit (805) 968-1033
- Carpinteria State Beach, in Carpinteria 25.2 miles north on Highway 101 at Casitas Pass Road exit (805) 968-1033
- Point Mugu State Park, 24 miles south on Highway 1 (818) 880-0363

This park receives support in part from a nonprofit organization. For information, contact Friends of Channel Coast State Parks,  
1072 Casitas Pass Road,  
PMB #185, Carpinteria, CA 93014.



