

# Harmony Headlands State Park



## Our Mission

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



*The pristine and diverse  
beauty of Harmony  
Headlands is reflected in  
its coastal prairie grasses,  
its wildflower meadows,  
and its dramatic coastline  
—all teeming with life.*

California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park office at **(805) 772-7434**. If you need this publication in an alternate format, contact [interp@parks.ca.gov](mailto:interp@parks.ca.gov).

### **CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS**

**P.O. Box 942896**

**Sacramento, CA 94296-0001**

For information call: (800) 777-0369

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

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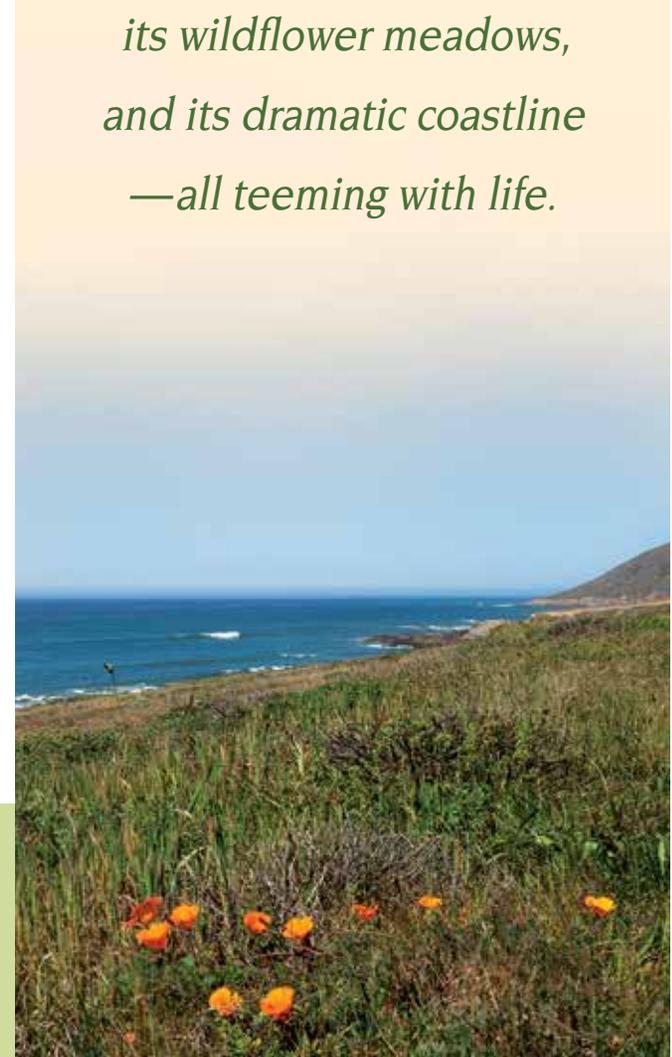
Discover the many states of California.™

### **Harmony Headlands State Park**

**4500 Highway 1**

**Cayucos, CA 93430**

**(805) 772-7434**



**I**n a secluded and peaceful setting along Highway One, Harmony Headlands State Park adorns the stunningly beautiful Central Coast in San Luis Obispo County.

## PARK HISTORY

### Native People

Human occupation along California's Central Coast dates back at least 10,000 years. The native people, ancestors to today's Salinan or Chumash people, lived along the coastal bluffs and further inland. They traveled seasonally up and down stream drainages to take advantage of the various food, shelter, and tool resources needed for survival.

### European Settlement

The arrival of Europeans forever changed the lives of the native people. Recruited into the mission system, they succumbed to diseases to which they had no immunity. Those who survived became part of the labor force that built the missions and later worked on the ranchos. Today the Salinan and Chumash people are working to revive their ancient languages and cultural traditions.

The mission period began in 1769 with the arrival of the Portolá expedition. California was then a part of Mexico, a colony of Spain. In 1821, Mexico gained independence from Spain, and in 1833 the missions were secularized. Lands formerly owned by the missions were granted to individuals. Rancho San Geronimo, which incorporated part of what is now Harmony Headlands State Park, was granted to Rafael José Serapio Villavicencio (later shortened to Villa), who raised cattle. Rafael's son, Roberto, continued



ranching until the mid-1860s. In 1883, the ranch was acquired by Robert Logan, who in 1901 sold it to Joseph Righetti, a dairyman. In 1912, Righetti sold the property to Armando Storni. The Storni family operated a dairy until the mid-1960s.

### Chinese Seaweed Harvesting

Between 1890 and the mid-1960s, Chinese immigrants harvested seaweed along the San Luis Obispo County coast. They burned competing species of seaweed from rocks in the intertidal zone to allow the favored species, *Ulva* or sea lettuce, to thrive. The seaweed was harvested, dried and shipped to China by way of San Francisco.

### Becoming a State Park

Private developers eventually bought the Storni Ranch and secured permits to construct up to 12 ridge-top homes overlooking the ocean. In 2003 before any houses were built, the State Coastal Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Board,

State Parks, and the Coastal Commission together funded the purchase of the 750-acre ranch with \$17 million in voter-approved park bonds. In coordination with the American Land Conservancy, property title was passed to California State Parks to preserve and protect the land in perpetuity.

## NATURAL HISTORY

### Habitats

**Grasslands**—Non-native and native grasslands and coastal scrub are the most common vegetation in the park. The San Luis Obispo morning glory, California buttercups, blue-eyed grass, goldfields, owl's clover, yarrow, coyote bush, and lupine thrive here.

The flat terraces of the bluffs are dominated by native purple and slender needle grass, melic grass, wild rye, and California oatgrass. The steep north- and west-facing bluffs have the largest community of native grasslands and coastal scrub in the park. In spring, wildflowers bloom profusely.

**Scrub**—Coastal sea bluff scrub—including seaside daisy, California aster, goldenbush, lizard tail, coast buckwheat, and sea pink—grow along the terraces, on bluff faces and in other eroded areas. Some shrubs may be dwarfed by constant wind and salt spray.

**Rocky outcrops**—Lichen-covered outcrops lie scattered among grasslands and scrub. Ferns, dudleya, Indian paintbrush, miner's lettuce, golden yarrow, and California sagebrush flourish on outcrops.

**Wetlands**—In these low places where water accumulates, plants such as sedges, willows, rushes, and aquatic grasses grow in profusion.

**Riparian corridors**—These waterside areas are home to ferns, willows and cattails.

**Ponds**—The manmade ponds are fed by rainwater and runoff from surrounding hillsides; they support freshwater marsh habitat with rushes and willows.

**Emergent wetlands**—These low-lying areas—wet about half the year—are home to such freshwater marsh and wetland plants as sedges and rushes.

### Wildlife

Marine mammals are a welcome sight and sound along the intertidal areas. Sky-hunting northern harriers swoop down to seize their favorite meal—meadow voles.



*Southwestern pond turtle*



*San Luis Obispo morning glory*



*Headlands Trail*

Typical grasslands species include California ground squirrels, brush rabbits, skunks, coyotes, mule deer, several varieties of mice, raccoons, and badgers.

The endangered California red-legged frog and the southwestern pond turtle, a species of special concern, live in this area. Black-bellied salamanders, Pacific tree frogs, California alligator lizards, and California king snakes thrive.

Seabirds, shorebirds, songbirds, raptors, and waterfowl call this place home. Abundant grasslands and rolling terrain bring plentiful small game to attract peregrine falcons and golden eagles. Among sensitive avian species, see brown pelicans, double-crested cormorants, white-tailed kites, black oystercatchers, long-billed curlews, and Heermann's gulls.

### Climate

Summer is warm and dry with morning fog; winters are cool and wet. Wind and fog keep temperatures moderate. Coastal weather changes often.

### RECREATION

Harmony Headlands State Park will entice nature lovers, picnickers, photographers, artists, and bird watchers. From the parking lot, the two-mile Headlands Trail offers panoramic ocean views west to the marine terrace grasslands.

### ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

At this time, there are no accessible features. Accessibility is continually improving. For updates, call the park office or visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

### PLEASE REMEMBER

- Hours are from 6 a.m. to sunset.
- Dogs, horses, and bicycles are not permitted in the park.
- Camping and ground fires are prohibited.
- Stay on trails and avoid bushes or grasses where ticks are common.
- Please stay away from sensitive wetlands and pond areas, and back away from birds or marine mammals that take notice of you. Please leave tide pool life undisturbed; it is protected by law.
- Dial 911 for emergencies, or call (805) 772-7434 to reach park staff for problems.

### NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Hearst San Simeon SP & SHM  
750 Hearst Castle Rd.,  
San Simeon 93472  
(805) 927-2035
- Estero Bluffs SP  
Hwy. 1, Cayucos 93430  
(805) 772-7434



*Silvery blue butterfly*

# Harmony Headlands State Park

This park receives support in part through the Central Coast State Parks Association  
 20 State Park Road  
 Morro Bay, CA 93442  
[www.ccsa.info](http://www.ccsa.info)



## HARMONY HEADLANDS STATE PARK

### Legend

-  Major Road
-  Paved Road
-  Trail
-  Creek
-  Intermittent Stream
-  State Park Boundary
-  Parking
-  Restroom
-  Trailhead

