

# Armstrong Redwoods

State Natural Reserve

## Austin Creek

State Recreation Area

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#### **Armstrong Redwoods State Natural Reserve**

**Austin Creek State Recreation Area**

**17000 Armstrong Woods Road**

**Guerneville, CA 95446**

**(707) 869-2015**

**Russian River District (707) 865-2391**

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## Armstrong Redwoods State Natural Reserve

Located in the Russian River region 75 miles north of San Francisco, this 805-acre park features a magnificent grove of ancient redwoods, self-guided nature trails and picnic facilities.

As you stroll through this beautiful old-growth redwood forest, you will see some of the tallest and oldest trees remaining in this part of California. The Parson Jones Tree is about 310 feet high, and the 308-foot Colonel Armstrong Tree is more than 1,400 years old.

### History

During the 1870s, this area was set aside as a natural park and botanical gardens by Colonel James B. Armstrong, an early-day lumberman who recognized the beauty and natural value of the forests he harvested. Today this is the largest remaining ancient-growth redwood forest in Sonoma County. It is a living reminder of the magnificent primeval redwood forests that covered much of this area before logging operations began during the 19th century.

### Native Trees

Along with the coast redwoods in this grove, there are a number of other tree species, including tanoak, Douglas fir, California laurel, and big-leaf maple. In springtime the forest floor is carpeted with clover-like redwood sorrel, trillium, fairy bells and redwood orchids. In winter, mushrooms, mosses, lichens and liverworts exhibit their fantastic shapes and colors.





## World's Tallest Living Thing

The coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) is the world's tallest living thing. In fact, the tallest redwood is 381 feet high. The coast redwood is also one of the world's oldest living things (some survive for as long as 2,000 years). They grow naturally only along a narrow coastal belt from southern Oregon to central California where the moderate climate combines with heavy winter rain and frequent summer fog. Coast redwoods reach their maximum size and height on alluvial flats like the one beside Fife Creek.

## Park Interpretive Services

Interpretive facilities designed to help park visitors enjoy and learn about this ancient redwood grove include a visitor center at the park entrance that is staffed daily 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. by knowledgeable docents, self-guided trails and trailside displays. Visitors can obtain park information and publications and view the center's natural history exhibits before beginning their tour of the grove.

The self-guided Armstrong Nature Trail is an easy walk through the grove. Another interpretive feature in the grove, the Discovery Trail, was designed for people who are visually impaired, though it can be enjoyed by all park visitors.

The Redwood Forest Theater is of historic interest. From 1934 to the early 1980s, the theater was used for various artistic events, after which it was closed for habitat restoration efforts. It now provides visitors with a majestic place

to sit and ponder the beauty of the surrounding grove. In 2006 the theater was again opened for the annual Old Grove Festival to raise funds for park interpretive programs.

Tables and barbecue facilities are available in the picnic area, which includes a group picnic site that can be reserved through the Russian River District office. Check with park staff for current information about any interpretive programs that may be scheduled during your visit.

## Austin Creek State Recreation Area

Twenty miles of hiking and equestrian trails invite energetic visitors to explore and enjoy this wild and scenic area. Though Austin Creek State Recreation Area's 5,683 acres are close to urban development, the park's rugged topography gives a sense of isolation from the hustle and bustle of civilization. Elevations within the park range from 150 feet above sea level to almost 1,900 feet on Marble Mine Ridge.

The park's open forests and rolling hills offer a striking contrast to the cool, dark redwood grove in Armstrong Redwoods. Springtime wildflower displays include Douglas iris, buttercups, lupines, brodiaeas, California poppies and shooting stars.

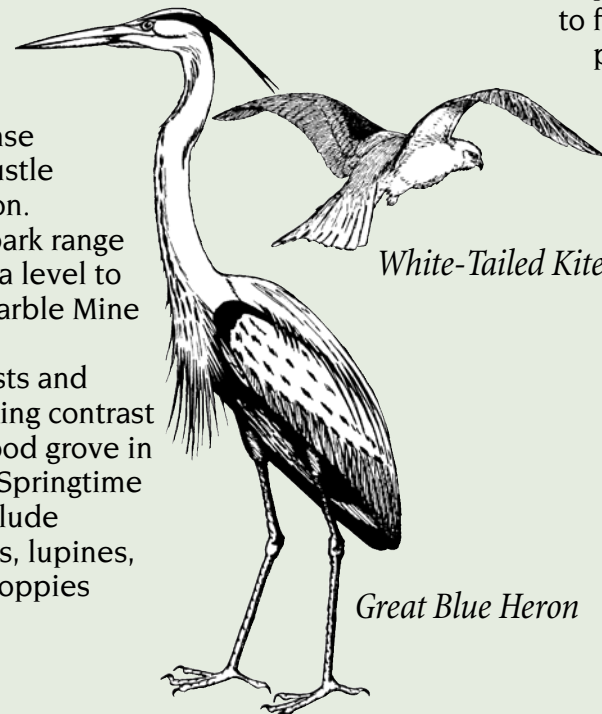
## Native Animals

The grasslands, chaparral, conifer, oak woodland and riparian habitats of Austin Creek State Recreation Area are home to a wide range of native animals and birds. Squirrels, deer, raccoons, foxes, coyotes, skunks, bobcats, black bears and occasionally mountain lion are some of the native animals seen here. Turkeys and feral pigs are among the introduced species commonly seen.

Bird life in the park includes the colorful wood duck and the rare spotted owl. Great blue herons, white-tailed kites, quail, various woodpeckers, ravens, hawks and flycatchers are frequently seen. Aquatic animals in Bullfrog Pond include sunfish, black bass and bullfrogs. Trout, salmon and California newts are found in the streams.

Licensed anglers may fish the pond, but all park streams are closed to fishing in order to protect vitally important spawning habitat.

Austin Creek's historic Pond Farm Pottery was the home, workshop, and school of the internationally renowned ceramic artist, Marguerite Wildenhain, who settled here after World War II. Formerly a student at Germany's famous



Bauhaus school of design, Wildenhain enjoyed and was inspired by the peace and natural beauty of this area.

## Camping

Twenty-four first come, first-served family campsites are located near Bullfrog Pond. Campsites are available throughout the year. Tables, fire rings, flush toilets and drinkable water are provided, but no sinks or showers are available. Vehicle access to the campground is by way of a steep, narrow, winding, two and one-half mile mountain road. For safety reasons, vehicles more than 20 feet in length are not allowed on this road. Vehicles with trailers or other towed vehicles are also prohibited.

Backcountry trail camps are located at the Tom King and Mannings Flat campsites. Each campsite has a table and fire ring. Pit toilets are located nearby. A year-round stream is nearby, but the water must be purified before drinking. Use of a microfilter is recommended. The backcountry camps are available on a first-come, first-served basis. A backcountry camping permit is required and can be obtained at the Armstrong Redwoods ranger station during business hours or at the self-pay area at the entrance to Bullfrog Pond Campground. Permits for day hiking are not required. Ground fires are prohibited during periods of extreme fire danger. However, camp stoves can still be used for cooking in all but the most critical periods of fire danger, when camping is not permitted at all. Summertime temperatures

often exceed 100 degrees. Winter temperatures occasionally drop below freezing, and the 50 inches of annual rain generally includes an occasional snow flurry.

## Equestrian Recreation

All of Austin Creek's trails are open to horses, although horse trailers are not permitted beyond the picnic area. Check at the visitor center or ranger station for up-to-date information about trail conditions. A horse riding and pack station concession providing guided day and overnight trips is located one-half mile west of the Armstrong Tree in Armstrong Redwoods State Reserve.

## Bicycle Recreation

Bicycles are permitted only on the paved and service roads, not on trails. Conditions for bicyclists in the two parks vary significantly. Within Armstrong Redwoods, bicycle riders share the flat paved road with both pedestrians and vehicles. The terrain of Austin Creek State Recreation Area requires biking experience, as the paved and service roads include 1,000-foot elevation gains. The paved road to Bullfrog Pond from the picnic area is two and one-half miles long. Approximately six miles of service roads access the backcountry campsites. Once you have descended into the East Austin Creek valley, the terrain becomes relatively flat.

## Please Remember

### All plants and animals are protected.

Please do not disturb the natural features you find in the park. If you see a rattlesnake near a campground, please report it to a park ranger.

**Stay on designated trails.** Soil erosion and damage to the root systems of the redwoods are the result of off-trail walking and riding.

**Vehicles are permitted only on paved roads.** The maximum speed limit is 15 miles per hour. All park roads are narrow, so be prepared for oncoming traffic. Vehicles traveling downhill must yield to uphill traffic on the mountain roads of Austin Creek.

**Dogs must be kept on a leash** during the day and in a vehicle or tent at night. Dogs are only permitted on paved roads and in developed areas of the park.

**Hunting** and the possession of weapons are prohibited anywhere in the park.

**Fishing** is not permitted in any of the streams.

**Dead and down wood** must be left undisturbed to replenish the soil and provide food and shelter for other plants and animals. Firewood can be purchased at the park entrance, in the visitor center, or from the park ranger.

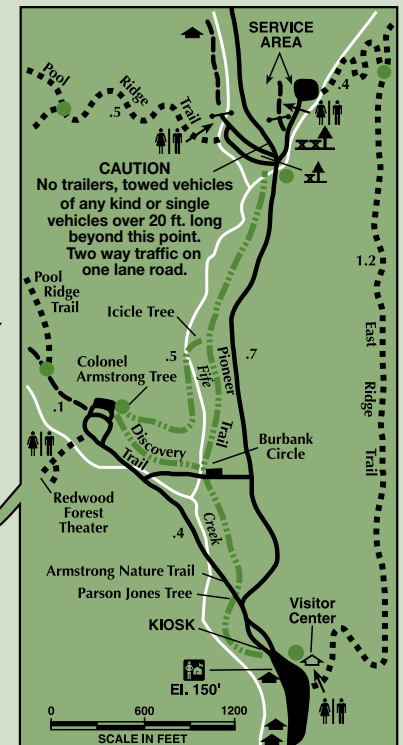
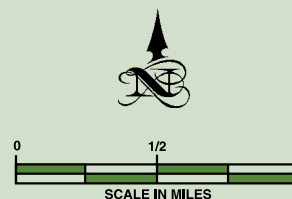
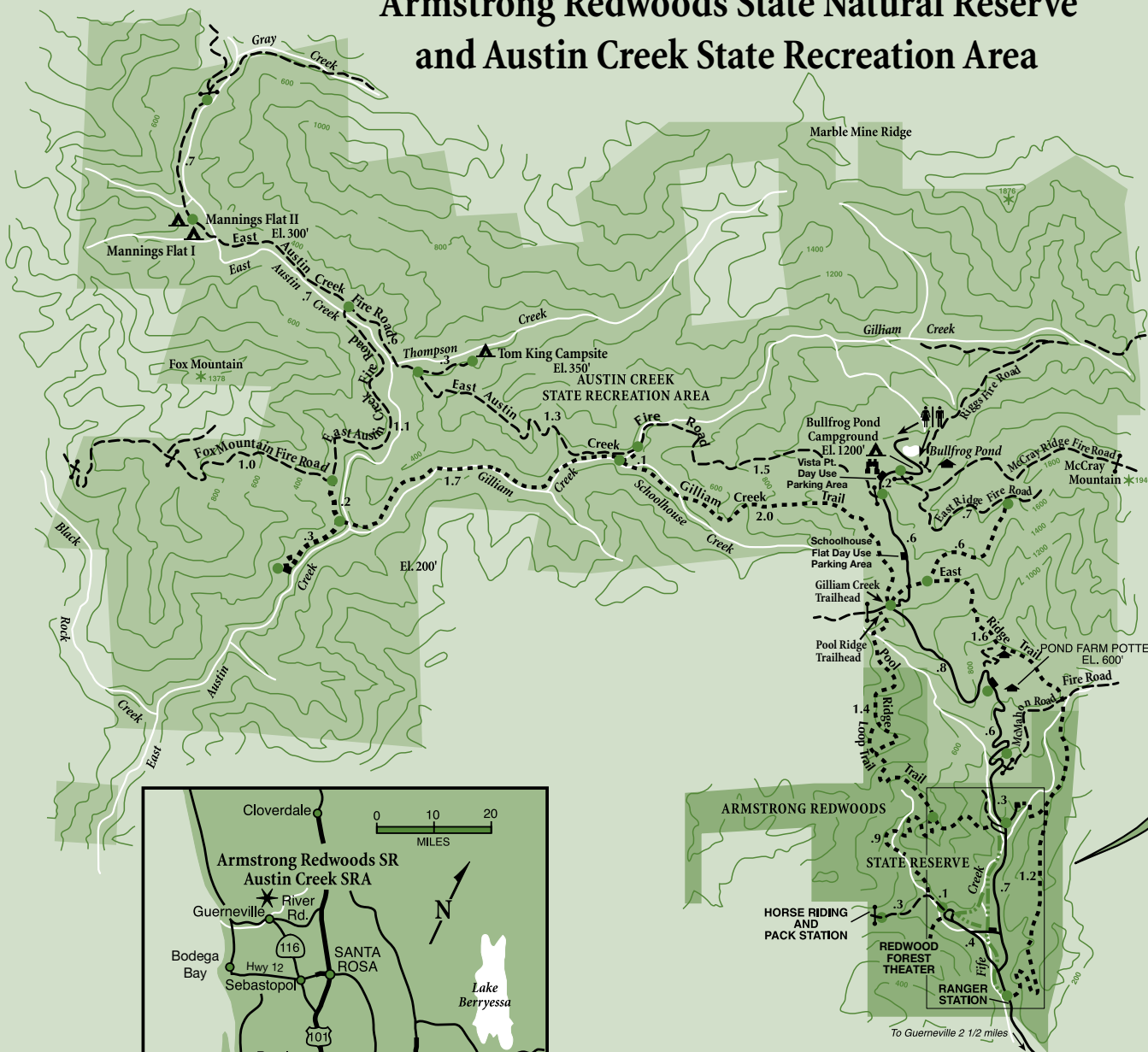
**Open fires** must be confined to the stoves provided. Check with the visitor center or ranger station on fire restrictions.

**Campground quiet hours** are from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. Amplified music that can be heard outside your immediate area is prohibited at all times.

# Armstrong Redwoods State Natural Reserve and Austin Creek State Recreation Area

## LEGEND

- PAVED ROAD (Open to public)
- SERVICE ROAD (no dogs or unauthorized motor vehicles on fire roads)
- EQUESTRIAN & HIKING TRAIL (no vehicles, dogs or bicycles)
- HIKING TRAIL ONLY (no vehicles, bicycles, horses, dogs or pack stock)
- PARKING AREA
- DISTANCE IN MILES BETWEEN POINTS
- CAMPGROUND
- GROUP PICNIC AREA
- LOCKED GATE
- PARK RESIDENCE
- PICNIC AREA
- RANGER STATION
- RESTROOMS
- VIEW POINT
- VISITOR CENTER



Park hours: 8 a.m. to one hour after official sunset

No overnight stays permitted in Armstrong Redwoods State Reserve

Park boundaries periodically change, and private property surrounds the park in all directions. Please respect all signs and fences.

This park is supported in part through a nonprofit organization. For more information and to register for school group visits and docent-led programs contact:  
Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods  
P.O. Box 2  
Duncan Mills, CA 95430  
(707) 869-9177  
e-mail: [stewards@mcn.org](mailto:stewards@mcn.org)  
[www.stewardsofthecoastandredwoods.org](http://www.stewardsofthecoastandredwoods.org)