

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 or (707) 865-2391 District Office

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*The cathedral-like
trees of Armstrong
Redwoods State Natural
Reserve complement
the rolling, tree-studded
hills of neighboring
Austin Creek State
Recreation Area.*



Armstrong Redwoods State Natural

Reserve and Austin Creek State

Recreation Area share a boundary, but are quite different from each other. Serene, 805-acre Armstrong Redwoods—shaded by ancient coast redwoods—has been a cool summer escape for generations of park visitors. The nearly 6,000 tree-studded acres of Austin Creek provide a bright, sunny place best experienced in spring and fall; summer temperatures here can reach 100 degrees.

PARK HISTORY

Native People

Before the early 1800s, the Kashaya Pomo people lived along the coast and what is now called the Russian River. The ocean and the river's plentiful resources sustained the Kashaya people.

With the construction of nearby Fort Ross in 1812, the lives of the Kashaya were abruptly altered. Fur trappers from the Russian-American Fur Company arrived at the fort seeking sea otter pelts and a place to grow food for their Alaskan outpost. For nearly 30 years, the Russians employed numerous Kashaya Pomo people as



*Colonel James Armstrong
in 1883*



*Elizabeth Armstrong
Jones, ca. 1900*

agricultural laborers—many of whom lived around the fort or in nearby villages. Some Kashaya women intermarried with the Russian immigrants.

Today Kashaya Pomo and other native groups still live in or visit the area to gather leaves, roots and other natural ingredients needed to make some of the world's finest, most sought-after Native American baskets.

Colonel James B. Armstrong

Ohio native Colonel James B. Armstrong was one of the very few 19th-century lumber barons who appreciated both the intrinsic beauty and the commercial uses of the redwood groves.

In 1874 Armstrong moved to Sonoma County with his wife and family. They built their home in Cloverdale, where he invested in orchards and real estate there and in Santa Rosa. Working with crop plants, Colonel Armstrong became a lifelong friend of agricultural pioneer Luther Burbank.

Upon his arrival in Sonoma County, Armstrong began to purchase

land in the dense redwood forest two miles north of Guerneville. He saw that thousands of acres of seemingly inexhaustible redwoods were being reduced to clear-cut tree stumps (thus inspiring Guerneville's original name, "Stumptown"). To preserve some of his land from this fate, he deeded 600 acres of



Colonel Armstrong Tree

the ancient forest to his daughter Kate, with plans for an arboretum and natural park. The Armstrong family allowed the public to visit and enjoy the beauty of the peaceful redwoods.

Armstrong later bought the Big Bottom Sawmill and cut and processed millions of feet of redwood lumber. The redwoods he had deeded to Kate remained intact; 400 of those acres eventually became Armstrong Redwoods State Natural Reserve (SNR).

Armstrong's other daughter Elizabeth (Lizzie) and her husband, Reverend William Ladd Jones, dedicated the Colonel Armstrong Tree. This "monarch of the forest," chosen before his death in 1900, commemorates Armstrong's vision of saving ancient redwoods.

The State of California acquired the grove in 1934; by 1936 Armstrong Redwoods State Park was open to the public.

Armstrong Redwoods became a reserve in 1964, after insight into its ecological importance suggested that this vital resource should be more effectively managed. That same year, the State began



Bullfrog Pond

acquiring the land which now comprises Austin Creek State Recreation Area (SRA) to provide camping and recreational facilities and preserve important wildlife corridors.

NATURAL HISTORY

The remaining coast redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*), the tallest living trees on planet Earth, grow naturally only along a narrow coastal belt from southern Oregon to central California. The wet fog that shrouds this ancient, temperate rainforest helps maintain the moist conditions that the trees—and the wildlife that depend on them—need to exist. Today, scientists are concerned that climate change threatens the fog vital to the redwoods' survival.



Bullfrog Pond Campground



The Redwood Forest Theater, built in 1934, is a serene place to "tree watch."

Habitats and Wildlife

The two parks' distinct habitats shelter a wide range of native wildlife.

Redwood—Coast redwoods shade forest floor plants such as redwood sorrel, trillium, calypso orchids, and sword and bracken ferns. Look for banana slugs, myotis bats and black-tailed mule deer.

Mixed Evergreen/Douglas-Fir—Along ridges and slopes grow a mix of Douglas-fir, Pacific madrone, tanoak and California bay laurel. These trees shelter northern spotted owls, pileated woodpeckers and tree voles. Hound's tongue and common madia make seasonal displays in the sparse understory, which is also home to wood rats and alligator lizards.

Oak Woodland—This habitat includes California buckeye, manzanita, Oregon white oak and California black oak. Band-tailed pigeons, alligator lizards, king snakes and gray foxes nest here. Checker lilies are found among the oaks.



Banana slug

Riparian— Along rivers, streams and other waterways, wood ferns, bracken ferns and maidenhair ferns thrive.

White and red alder, chain fern, giant horsetail, western azaleas and various mosses shelter California newts, Pacific tree frogs, American dippers and belted kingfishers. In streams, great blue herons fish for coho and steelhead salmon or red-legged frogs as river otters play nearby.

Closed Cone Cypress— Stands of Sargent's cypress grow on serpentine rock outcrops.

Chaparral— Chamise, manzanita and sticky monkeyflower make up this habitat. Deep in tangles and thorns, white-footed mice, California quail and other small prey hide from gray foxes. Bobcats can be spotted hunting in chaparral and grassland areas bordered by a mixed conifer forest.

Grasslands— Native purple needle grass and California oatgrass grow wild. Soap plant, clarkia, globe lily and other wildflowers help feed and shelter black-tailed jackrabbits, Oregon juncos, Western fence lizards, and gopher and garter snakes.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Temperatures are mild, with some fog year round. Summer brings heavier fog that usually burns off by midday. Carry plenty of water at Austin Creek, where summer temperatures can be very warm.

Autumn is mild, with slow-moving creeks and blazing colors among the big leaf maples. Winter rain turns everything green.

Camping— At Austin Creek, camping is not available year round. Call (707) 869-2015 to check on campground status. Campsites are available first-come, first-served. Family sites have tables and fire rings with nearby flush toilets (but no showers) and drinkable water.

Backcountry (Primitive) Camping— The first-come, first-served Tom King and Mannings Flat campsites require backcountry camping permits. Sites have tables, fire rings and nearby pit toilets. Water from the year-round stream must be purified before drinking.

When camping is available, register for all Austin Creek camping and get a permit at the entry kiosk at Armstrong Redwoods SNR. In the absence of park staff, follow posted instructions to self-register at the Bullfrog Pond campground entrance at Austin Creek.

Equestrians— Park trails are open seasonally to horses; horse trailers are not allowed beyond the picnic area. For trail condition information, call (707) 869-2015. A horse riding and pack-station concession at Armstrong Redwoods provides guided day trips.

Bicycles— Ride bicycles only on paved and service roads, not on trails. At Armstrong Redwoods, riders must share the flat, paved road with pedestrians and vehicles. At Austin Creek, the paved and service roads gain 1,000 feet of elevation.



Pond Farm Pottery: Shortly after World War II, internationally known ceramic artist Marguerite Wildenhain accepted an invitation from Gordon and Jane Herr to move to their art colony (now part of Austin Creek SRA) near Guerneville. Wildenhain lived, worked, and taught at Pond Farm until her death in 1985.



The accessible Discovery Trail

Trails—The Armstrong Pioneer Nature Trail is a self-guided walk through the redwoods. Discovery Trail is an accessible trail designed for people with visual impairments.

Facilities—The reserve has a visitor center, outdoor amphitheater, self-guided nature trails, picnic facilities and about nine miles of hiking trails. The visitor center (nature store) has interpretive displays and sells a variety of educational items.

Two picnic areas in the redwoods are 3/4 mile from the park entrance. Nearby Fife Creek runs swiftly in winter and slows or dries in spring, summer and fall. A small

waterfall is close by. Amenities include picnic tables, a barbecue pit, grills and nearby restrooms. For group picnic area reservations, call (707) 865-2394.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

Armstrong Redwoods

Picnic Area—Accessible picnic sites are near the trailhead at Pool Ridge Trail.

Parking—Narrow designated spaces are available. Routes of travel from parking area to accessible sites are paved, but help may be needed with slopes.

Exhibits/Programs—The visitor center is accessible; wheelchair users may need help with ramp and path slopes.

Austin Creek

Currently there are no accessible features at this park. Accessibility is continually improving. For updates, call (916) 445-8949 or visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Fort Ross State Historic Park
19005 Coast Highway One,
Jenner, CA 95450
(707) 847-3286
- Sonoma Coast State Park
3095 Highway 1
Bodega Bay, CA 94923
(707) 875-3483 or
(707) 865-2391

This park is supported in part through a nonprofit organization. For more information contact:

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods
P.O. Box 2, Duncans Mills, CA 95430
(707) 869-9177

www.stewardsofthecoastandredwoods.org

PLEASE REMEMBER

- All park features are protected by law and may not be disturbed in any way.
- Stay on designated trails. Off-trail walking and riding cause soil erosion, damage redwood root systems, and expose visitors to ticks, snakes and poison oak.
- Vehicles are permitted only on paved roads. When meeting oncoming traffic at Austin Creek, vehicles traveling downhill must yield to uphill traffic.
- Vehicles more than 20 feet long and vehicles towing trailers or other vehicles may not use the narrow, steep park road.
- Except for service animals, dogs are permitted only on paved roads in both areas of the park. Dogs must be on leash.
- Hunting and the possession of weapons are prohibited anywhere in the parks.
- Fishing is available only in Bullfrog Pond. All streams are closed to fishing to protect vital spawning habitat.

