



Portola and Castle Rock Foundation

Inspiring the Protection of Castle Rock and Portola Redwoods State Parks Through Quality Educational Experiences and Infrastructure Improvements

President's Message

Thank you for your support. In this newsletter, we bring news from the parks, announce a special Members hike on September 5, we share a story about time spent outdoors and provide some insight into the natural indicator of an old growth forest, trillium. With support from donors, members, and volunteers, the Portola and Castle Rock Foundation will continue to make a difference. Hope to see you on the trails soon!
--James Rauhen

State Park News

Lisa Mangat was officially sworn in as Director of the California State Parks Monday, May 4 by Governor Jerry Brown. Director Mangat had served as the Department's acting director since July 2014.

"I'm honored to have been appointed by Governor Brown as Director of California State Parks," said Director Mangat. "I look forward to continue working with the outstanding parks staff and volunteers, the legislature and our partners in improving California's finest and most diverse collection of natural, cultural and recreational resources, our state park system."

The Drought

Both Castle Rock and Portola Redwoods are being affected by the California drought. Camping is currently allowed at Portola Redwoods, but showers and day use bathrooms are closed to save water. If the water level in Peters Creek gets too low,

camping will close at Portola for the rest of the season. So don't delay, make plans today.

Camp fires are currently allowed at Castle Rock, but once fire season is declared by CalFire, camp fires will be snuffed out until fall.

Portola Redwoods Visitor Center

The Portola Redwoods Visitor Center received a newly reupholstered sofa for use by park visitors. We are grateful to have this new addition to the Visitors Center.



We also have a new display in the Visitor Center Store made by Eagle Scout Tom Crammond especially for the store.



Why Do We Hike the Long Trails...and Why Do We Need the Wilderness Parks Like Portola Redwoods?

I was born in Hollywood, California just a couple of blocks away from the Star's Walk of Fame, Rodeo Drive, Beverly Hills and Grumman's Chinese ... So why is it that I consider hiking the trails at Portola Redwoods as a feeling of "going home"?

To start, my father was a fisherman, a trout fisherman to be exact, and his idea of "roughing it" was to bundle the family off to a High Sierras resort where we would eat all our meals at a restaurant with oiled table cloths and gingham napkins. Each summer when I would say that I wanted to sleep in a tent and eat my meals around a campfire, he would point me down the hall to our linen closet and then to our grass backyard and tell me to "go for it but to forget about the campfire...."



So I grew up avidly consuming anything I could get my hands on about the life out of doors. Sports Afield, Outdoor Life, Field and Stream anything at the library about hiking, camping, mountaineering, Colin Fletcher, Pacific Crest Trail all had my name on the checkout ticket. As soon as I had some coin in my pocket and my own transportation I was buying up all the camping and hiking gear I could afford and was cajoling, coercing and otherwise convincing friends, family, co-workers and even distant acquaintances to join me in exploring great outdoors places with adventurous sounding names like the Devil's Backbone, Hell's Calderon and Starvation Lakes and very quickly found that I was very soon cajoling, coercing and trying to convince, friends, family, and co-workers who had become distant acquaintances after having survived some of my earliest adventures, to join me on further hiking excursions ... how was I to know that glissading down a half mile ice sheet from a ridgeline to an alpine cirque below, or maneuvering out to the edge of a waterfall that only had eight inches of water flowing in the stream bed, or that taking a shortcut through a damp meadow that would end us up in a swampy bog filled with quarter inch ravenous mosquitos that

could bite right through your clothes, was a bad idea...nothing about that in any of the books I read. Today we just google and pull up YouTube and get all the latest expert techniques and equipment, but back then you learned by experience, and while Mother Nature is a very beautiful lady, she can be an extremely harsh and unforgiving mistress.

Why do we return to hike the long trails over and over again? Why do we wonder at nature's sights and brave the hardships and endure the discomforts of the great outdoors? Everyone agrees that we are all drawn to beauty, to that something special that constitutes the beautiful in our lives. When we are out on the long trails in a park like Portola Redwoods, we feel like we are in a ways on a trek to a sacred place, a place where we can remember who we are and who we are not. We begin to understand that not only do we save the lands but they save us and if wild nature is a deeply held part of our human values then we can feel great satisfaction in knowing that we have made the decision that beauty is not optional, that we value wild nature in these places because we are of this place and this is where we originated from. The fact that we made the decision that Portola Redwoods would still be here, and will continue to be here gives us the inspiration that allows us to be the best of who we are as human beings.

If parks like Portola Redwoods represent our highest ideals of what it means to live with an enduring grace that will survive us, then every time we hike the trails we are, in fact, fulfilling vows that we will live beyond ourselves and care not just about short term gains but about long term values and the sacredness of the land. We are saying this is where we were, where we came from, this is what we loved and into future hands will we entrust these lands and trails.

Why do I personally hike the long trails? For me, at some point something changed. There was a turning point where I was no longer a visitor to spectacular and unfamiliar sceneries and equally no longer a member of a species that sought to dominate and control the landscapes and everything that existed upon and within it. I moved beyond that notion and became a part of something bigger than mankind itself. I had become a part of it all and I was returning to a special place that I could call home.

Looking for a defining moment in your life? Search for it on the long the trails and look for me while you are out there. Let's get out in the Redwoods and hike! This story contributed by John Abe, PCR Foundation board member and volunteer.



Membership

Become a Foundation member and help protect and restore these Park jewels and enhance the experience for all its visitors. More information is available on our website.

Members Hike - Portola Redwoods - Saturday, September 5th

Join Board member and avid hiker Andy Vought on a trek to the Peters Creek Redwoods, located in Portola Redwoods State Park. This approximately three mile hike will access the Peters Creek loop of stunning old growth trees through land acquired by Save The Redwoods League, normally closed to outsiders. We'll meet at the Portola Redwoods State Park visitor center at 10:00AM - bring a bag lunch. Expected duration is three hours.

Save the Date

We will have a Members event on Sunday, October 25th. More information will be forthcoming; imagine brunch among the redwoods.

Email List

We can save more trees by sending our quarterly newsletter to you via email. You can also receive information about upcoming events. Submit your email details today to Info@PortolaAndCastleRockFound.org.

Portola Redwoods Visitor Center Store ... Book Review

Part naturalist detective story and part environmental inquiry, *Rare Bird: Pursuing the*



Mystery of the Marbled Murrelet celebrates the fascinating world of an endangered seabird that depends on the contested old-growth forests of the Pacific Northwest for its survival, specifically, the old growth forests within Portola Redwoods State Park.

This book and many others are available for purchase at the Portola Redwoods Visitor Center Store. Proceeds are used to provide interpretive resources for both Parks.

Western Trillium (*Trillium ovatum*)- an Indicator of the Wild!

Deep in the forest, a small flower pushes its way up through the damp earth from its network of rhizomaceous roots and announces the arrival of spring! A triad of delicate petals, pink to white, cap the small herbaceous plant, which often goes unnoticed by hikers whose eyes are drawn to the giants above. And yet, this bright and unassuming flower may be a key to understanding how healthy forests function. Trillium has an affinity for wild places, and shies away from human disturbance. As such, it can be considered an indicator of natural forest, or “old forest,” conditions.

Forests that have never been logged, or managed to any significant degree, are referred to as “old-growth,” a state that brings with it a suite of distinctive characteristics. Ancient gnarled trees of extraordinary size are the star attraction, but there is also a supporting cast that one begins to appreciate once they have spent time in the redwood forest. Mushrooms and ferns, wood rats and spiders, tell a tale of an ancient community more complex than we can imagine. Under our feet networks of mycelium connect tree-to-tree, and plant-to-plant, in a grand symbiosis. The modest Trillium flower is no stranger to this community, and has been known to dip its toes in the mychorhizal pool.

After a century and a half of logging, less than five percent of the original primeval redwood forest remains. These unmanaged forests have great value, not only for their scenic beauty, but also as a template for recovery. The study of naturally functioning environments, where ecological processes can occur unfettered, allows researchers to define what makes old-growth forests unique – and to compare them to forests that have been tamed by management. In Portola Redwoods State Park we are lucky to have continuous tracts of old-growth forests that flourish in magnificent neglect. While ecological management efforts such as thinning and burning can be common in parks with higher visitor numbers, Portola Redwoods has been generally left to thrive! As a result, it provides excellent reference for true old-growth conditions.



One of the distinguishing traits of old-growth redwood forests is an abundance of shade loving herbaceous species. Violets and sorrel, milkmaids and wild ginger, blanket the forest floor in some of the groves – and then of course there is Trillium! Trillium blooms from mid-February to mid-April in the vicinity of Portola Redwoods and then retires as a small tri-leaved herb. Research on forest recovery after logging has demonstrated that not only does Trillium prefer old-growth forests, but that there is a positive correlation between the age of a forest, and the abundance of the species. The older the forest, the more Trillium! Additional research indicates that Trillium responds negatively to human induced forest edges (created by roads, logging, etc.) with the herb retreating to the forest interior until the edge begins to recover. Fortunately, the preliminary results of an ongoing study indicate that of all of the Redwood Parks in the Santa Cruz Mountains, Portola Redwoods has the lowest percentage of human induced edges, and the greatest percentage of forest interior. This wildwood flower is safe within its borders.

This story contributed by Will Russell, Associate Professor, San Jose State University and PCR Foundation Board member.

Do you have a story about your first hike at Portola Redwoods or Castle Rock State Park? Share it with us at Info@PortolaAndCastleRockFound.org. We might feature it on our website or in a future newsletter.