

# Montgomery Woods State Natural Reserve



## 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.



California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at **(707) 937-5804**. If you need this publication in an alternate format, contact [interp@parks.ca.gov](mailto:interp@parks.ca.gov).

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LEAGUE®

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### Montgomery Woods State Natural Reserve

15825 Orr Springs Road

Long. 39.235153, Lat. -123.396442

Ukiah, CA 95482

(707) 937-5804

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*One of Mendocino's  
last unspoiled  
redwood canyons has  
endured through time,  
withstanding threats  
from timber harvesters  
and wildfires.*



Photo courtesy  
Peter Buranzon

**S**tep into the majesty of the redwood-lined canyon along upper Montgomery Creek. The old-growth trees in this oasis of solitude have survived for thousands of years. This redwood forest enjoys a mild Mediterranean climate. Summer temperatures can reach 88 degrees in July, while on winter days, the thermometer can dip below 40 degrees. Rain often falls between November and April.

## PARK HISTORY

### Native People

Archaeologists have determined that humans have lived in this area for more than 14,000 years.

The last native people here before Europeans arrived are known today as the Northern Pomo.

The Pomo made and used tools of local rock and volcanic obsidian from their home in the Clear Lake area. Bird feathers and beads made from seashells decorated some of the elaborate, highly prized baskets that Pomo women coiled or twined from plant parts.

Today's Pomo descendants honor and perpetuate the cultural and environmental practices of their ancestors.

### European Settlement

Parties of European explorers sailed by the Mendocino coast beginning in the 1500s, but the rocky shores precluded landings.



*Pomo basket*



Historians think that the Pomo people's first non-native contact was with the Russian fur trappers who eventually colonized Fort Ross in 1812.

Spanish and Mexican colonists eventually found their way to the Mendocino area, and the 1848 gold rush brought hordes of eager settlers to California, creating a huge demand for lumber. The native people lost their homelands, and those who survived the settlers' violence and the contagious fatal epidemics they brought were relocated to one of many reservations, including the one at Fort Bragg from 1857 to 1864.

One-time Mendocino county assessor Andrew Jackson Montgomery and his wife, Elizabeth Anderson Montgomery later filed a homestead claim here on 160 acres in 1884. Montgomery Woods is named for them.

### Logging

The late 1800s brought to the Mendocino coast a profusion of timber harvesters eager to cut down the big trees for their lumber value. Most of the coast redwoods in the area were quickly logged, but the steep canyon along Montgomery Creek made these trees harder to reach.

As mechanized logging became more sophisticated, the heart of this redwood grove also faced the logger's axe. Part of an old logging road can be seen between the Kellieowen and Ynes Mexia groves on the trail.

### Saving the Redwoods

Noted botanist Ynes Mexia (1870-1938) collected more than 150,000 global plant specimens for the California Academy of Sciences. Concerned about logging, Mexia wrote to the newly formed Save the Redwoods League in 1919, enclosing her dues and pleading that the League intervene before these remaining coast redwoods were gone. League Secretary Newton Drury asked the State's Committee on Redwoods Investigation to inspect the area, and tree cutting was halted by 1920.

Local conservationists also fought for the area to be preserved, and in 1945, Orr Springs owner Robert Orr donated the first nine acres for the reserve. The League's work continues to result in subsequent donations of land and dedicated groves; the natural reserve's size is now 2,743 acres.

## NATURAL HISTORY

### Geology

Montgomery Woods lies in an area formed during

*Ynes Mexia,  
Botanist*





the Cretaceous period more than 66 million years ago. Two components make up the rocks and soils underlying the woods—a granitic-metamorphic complex and marine deposits of sandstone, shale, and chert, known as the Franciscan Formation.

### Vegetation

About half of this reserve's habitats encompass the mature redwood forest and a mixed conifer (Douglas-fir and redwood) forest. Oak woodlands include tanoak, black, Oregon white, and canyon live oak. More than 500 acres of grasslands contain both introduced and native species.

Forest understory plants include profuse ferns—giant chain, bracken, and sword—as well as huckleberries and redwood sorrel.

### Wildlife

Amphibians find the reserve an ideal breeding ground. Montgomery Woods supports habitat for such species as the foothill yellow-legged frog, rough-skinned newt, coast-range California newt, and red-bellied newt.



*Foothill yellow-legged frog*

### Montgomery Trail

The reserve has a two-mile trail, which loops back on itself. The steep entrance

leading into the woods has about a 900-foot elevation gain. In wet weather, the trail can be muddy or flooded.

### ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

The restroom, interpretive panels, and shaded picnic tables at the park entrance are accessible. The beginning of the natural reserve's unpaved trail may be too steep for many wheelchair users. Accessibility in parks is continually improving. For updates, visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

### PLEASE REMEMBER

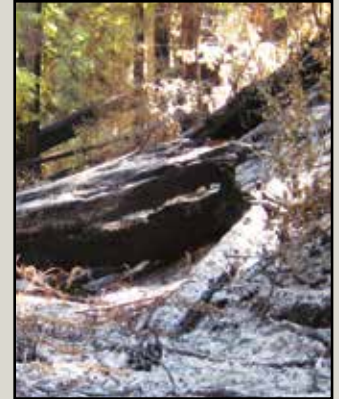
- The reserve and its natural and cultural resources are protected by state law and may not be disturbed.
- Firearms and hunting are prohibited.
- Except for service animals, pets are not permitted on the trail or in the reserve.
- Stay on the trail to avoid poison oak and to protect vegetation.
- The center of the reserve contains a marshy flat, which attracts mosquitoes.

### NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Mendocino Woodlands State Park  
39350 Little Lake Road  
Mendocino 95640 (707) 937-5755
- Van Damme State Park  
Three miles south of  
Mendocino on Highway 1  
Little River 95456 (707) 937-5804

### FIRE AND REBIRTH

Coast redwoods have adapted to withstand fire over millennia. Their great height and thick bark, devoid of flammable resin, help them resist flames. Burls, dormant buds that form at the base of redwoods, will sprout



*Immediately after the fire*

new growth after a tree burns.

A June 2008 lightning strike at Montgomery Woods resulted in the Orr Complex fire. The low-intensity fire scorched the tanoaks and huckleberries and scarred many redwoods, but today little evidence of the fire remains.

Most trees and understory species here have endured through fire—an important part of the natural forest ecosystem. Periodic forest fires also clear mounded duff and tree



*Several years after the fire*








debris. The park's once-burned areas now attest to the restorative powers of fire.

**Montgomery Woods**  
State Natural Reserve

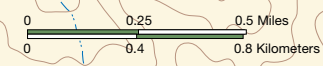
**MONTGOMERY  
WOODS  
STATE NATURAL  
RESERVE**



**Legend**

-  Paved Road
-  Trail: Hike
-  Accessible Feature
-  Parking
-  Picnic Area
-  Restrooms
-  Trailhead

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This park receives support from  
Mendocino Area Parks Association  
P.O. Box 1387  
Mendocino, CA 95460  
[www.mendoparks.org](http://www.mendoparks.org)