

Hike Statistics**Starting point:****Distance:** 6 miles**Time:** Allow about 2 hours**Grade:** mostly easy, short one steep climb**Suggested age:** Bears and Webelos**Suggested Season:** spring through summer.**Redwood Creek** Redwood Regional Park, Oakland

This is a wonderful loop hike up the Stream Trail along Redwood Creek through a magnificent second-growth redwood forest which is over a century old. The hike is completed by looping back on the East Ridge Trail, which gives access to different scenery and great views.

Directions

Highway 13, take the Redwood Road exit and go east (uphill). At the top of the hill you will cross Skyline Boulevard and pass the Skyline Ranch Equestrian Center on the right. Farther along you will pass Piedmont Stables on the left. Big Bear Staging Area will be on the right about one and one-half miles from Skyline Boulevard, followed by MacDonald Staging Area on the right and Redwood Gate on the left (seasonal parking maybe a \$5 fee).left thru the redwood gate will take you to canyon Meadow staging area you can ask for a map at the gate.

Hike Description

Begin your hike at the Canyon Meadow Staging Area. Take either the Steam Trail (actually a paved road at this point) past the Orchard picnic area and play area, or, for a more peaceful start, cross the creek and head upstream on the Bridle Trail. When the two trails rejoin, you'll probably want to continue on the Stream Trail. At the Old Church picnic area, ask the kids if they can tell why this site was given that name (the kids should be able to find the foundation of the tiny old church).

If you're wondering why the "trail" is actually a paved road, you should know that many years ago the road was open for cars as far as Trail's End, but was gated closed to protect the redwood groves along this stretch.

Continue up Stream Trail, stopping to admire the small cascades in the creek and the redwood trees, as you work your way up to Fern Hut. The boys will enjoy exploring the stone shelters at Fern Hut and Mill Site. These were built in the 1930's and are great for a Webelos overnight.

After Mill Site, the hike begins in earnest. The redwoods continue for a while longer, and then the trail begins a gentle climb. You might wish to take a break at Girl's Camp before beginning the steep climb up to Skyline Gate. Your last chance for a restroom stop is at Skyline Gate.

Continue the hike along East Ridge, where you'll go through an extensive eucalyptus and Monterey Pine forest. The vegetation soon opens up and you'll have some nice views of San Leandro Reservoir to the east and of the hills to the south. Don't miss the turnoff to Canyon View trail, as this is the way back to the parking lot.

Historical and Natural Features

The highlight of this park is the hidden redwood forest tucked into a canyon over the ridge from Oakland. The redwoods were such an important resource that the Alameda-Contra Costa

county line was carefully chosen to divide the redwoods between the two counties. Extensive logging took place here in the mid-1800's, and you can see the remains of this era and the agricultural era which followed - flat areas near the old mill sites, old fruit trees and other non-native plants. During drought years it can be hard to imagine water-powered mills operating in this canyon.

Ask the kids to look for redwoods growing in a circle with an empty space in the middle - these trees are the root sprouts of an old tree which was logged long ago. Also look for redwood cones - the kids will be surprised at how tiny they are (but remember - no collecting!). Sword ferns cover the forest floor.

You can have some fun identifying other trees in this area. Pick up a bay leaf (a dead one from the ground--not from the tree), break it in half, and smell it. These are often used to season soups and spaghetti sauce. Compare this smell with that of the eucalyptus (there's one growing at Fern Hut). The eucalyptus was imported from Australia for lumber, but the wrong species was imported, so that enterprise didn't work out. Eucalyptuses now are used mainly for landscaping, but many people regard them as just very large, highly flammable weeds. Webelos working on Forester should compare the Douglas firs growing at Mill Site with the redwoods. Both trees are important timber resources for California. Wildlife sightings in this park include deer, rabbits, lizards, hawks. Webelos overnight campers will hear owls in the evening. Mill Site and the surrounding area are famous for observing over-wintering ladybugs - you'll see thousands in the winter season!