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Our Mission

The mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation 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.

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Butano State Park



Butano State Park, with more than 3,500 acres, is situated in the Santa Cruz Mountains midway between Santa Cruz and Half Moon Bay. It stands out for the diversity of its wildlife and the depth of its solitude. Nature here falls into patterns, and processes are revealed—earthquakes by the bend of a redwood tree, floods by the root of an alder tree growing towards the ground from eight feet up the trunk. First-time visitors to Butano are astonished at this “secret” park with its lush



Little Butano Creek

central canyon, not yet realizing that the process of discovering the beauty of Butano has just begun.

CULTURAL HISTORY

The human and natural histories of Butano State Park are very closely linked. Though the first humans to arrive in the region profoundly altered the natural landscape, they also remained intimate with and dependent upon it.

NATIVE AMERICANS

The first settlers on this continent are thought to have been nomadic peoples who crossed over from Asia on an ancient land bridge across the Bering Strait. For thousands of years, they and their descendents hunted game, gathered grass seeds and acorns, and built small villages between which they would travel from season to season. When they abandoned their summer camps in the fall,

the people would set fire to large tracts of land in order to maintain the grassland habitat that was both a source of edible seeds and a lure for game. The burning also reduced the amount of brush that might hide bears, natural predators that humans feared and respected.

EUROPEANS

The names and histories of the area's first residents were lost when the European migration brought new settlers to the region, beginning with the Spaniards and the Portolá expedition of 1769. When the native people were brought into the mission system, they no longer had access to the lands that were vital to their survival. Those who took these lands—ranchers, farmers and loggers—depended almost as heavily on nature as their predecessors. In the late 1860s, three families lived at what is now Butano State Park. The Jackson family resided at Jackson Flat on the north side of the canyon, and the Taylor and Mullen families at Goat Hill on the south side. Along with a man named Purdy Pharis, these settlers logged the canyon, thus transforming an old growth redwood forest into a variety of successional habitats. Logged stumps and exotic vegetation are now the only signs of the logging that ended in the early 1900s. Descendents of the European settlers lingered in the canyon until it was purchased by the State of California, and on September 23, 1961, Butano State Park was dedicated.

NATURAL HISTORY

Butano State Park harbors six distinct natural communities, each sheltering a rich diversity of wildlife and allowing an understanding of the inner workings of an ecosystem. The communities are usually named for their most abundant tree or plant.

Coastal Grassland—The area around the park entrance is grassland dominated by bush lupine and coyote brush. Blue-eyed grass and coastal suncups grow here. Ample forage attracts deer, and the large population of rodents encourages bobcats and coyotes to visit the park. Sunrise and sunset are the best times to see these and other wildlife.

Alder Woodland—The first half mile of Little Butano Creek is shaded by a grove of alder trees. Beneath their canopy, blackberry, stinging nettle, elderberry, dogwood and willow provide food and shelter for insects, small mammals, reptiles and a variety of birds. The creek harbors trout, crayfish, and federally protected red-legged frogs. Berry plants are the stars here. Look for flowering currant, twinberry, thimbleberry, salmon-berry, osoberry, gooseberry and baneberry.

Oak Woodland—On the north side of the canyon above the park entrance, grasslands give way to a grove of live oaks. Bright orange chanterelle mushrooms—coveted by gourmets—sprout from the prickly oak duff. (Mushroom collecting is not allowed in Butano State Park.)

The duff also provides a garden bed for honeysuckle, coffeeberry, blackberry and poison oak. Look for arboreal salamanders on





Photo courtesy of Ken Gardiner

Calypso

the ground and chickadees and warblers overhead.

Douglas Fir/Redwood—Most of the interior of the canyon is dominated by towering redwoods and mossy Douglas

firs. Huckleberry bushes top the stumps of fallen giants. Western wake-robin and false Solomon's seal bloom at ankle height. Look closely for the red cap and long stalk of the redwood roter mushroom. The park's star attraction, the purple calypso orchid, blooms from February to April. Redwoods hollowed out by ancient forest fires provide homes for bats. Newts and banana slugs wander the redwood duff in the wet season. (Please watch out for them on the trail.) Winter wrens darting around the logs and stumps will seem more like mice than birds until you hear their mellifluous song.

Vernal Wetland—At Jackson Flat on the north side of the canyon and Goat Hill on the south, the trees open onto mountainside marshes. The terraces on which they lie are probably the heads of ancient landslides—the work of earthquakes along the San Gregorio fault. These marshes dry up in summer, yet they are vital to wildlife such as newts, which breed there in winter. Here, Pacific tree frogs and California newts swim among the cattails, and giant skunk cabbages and other water-loving plants grow.

Chaparral—On the ridge tops, softer soils turn into the chalky gravel of the Santa Margarita sandstone, and tall firs and redwoods give way to shrubby, sap-encrusted knobcone pines, scrub oaks, manzanitas and chinquapin. Western fence lizards scramble underfoot, and rattlesnakes may be encountered. The fragrance of the chaparral and the sight of blooming ceanothus, monkey flower and Indian paintbrush are well worth a summer hike.

RECREATION

Family Camping—Ben Ries Campground's 39 family sites, each accommodating up to eight people, have tables, food lockers and fire rings. Twenty-one are drive-up sites, and 18 are a 20- to 50-yard walk from the walk-in parking lot. Restrooms with flush toilets are nearby. Two cars are allowed in drive-in sites; one car is allowed for each walk-in site. Reserve campsites by calling (800) 444-7275.

Trail Camp—Backpackers must register at the park entrance or the visitor center, and may camp only at designated sites. Pit toilets are available. Bring your own drinking water. Ground fires are not allowed; only gas stoves may be used.

Hiking—The loop "walk" is up the Mill Ox Trail to the Jackson Flats Trail to the Butano Fire Road then back to the Mill Ox Trail. Inviting walks might provide a chance to photograph mushrooms in January, to spot newts in February and orchids in March, or simply to stroll in the morning light among the alders on the Six Bridges Trail. Along the way you can enjoy the sight of the ocean from several viewpoints.

Picnicking—Picnic grounds are located about 200 yards past the park entrance. Seven sites are equipped with picnic tables and upright barbecue grills, with parking and pit toilets located nearby.

(Picnicking is not allowed in the campground.)

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

The visitor center is generally accessible. Designated accessible parking is usable. The restroom in the campground by site #10 is usable, but assistance may be needed to get to the sidewalk from adjacent parking space.

Accessibility is continually improving. Call the park for the latest information.



California Newt

PLEASE REMEMBER

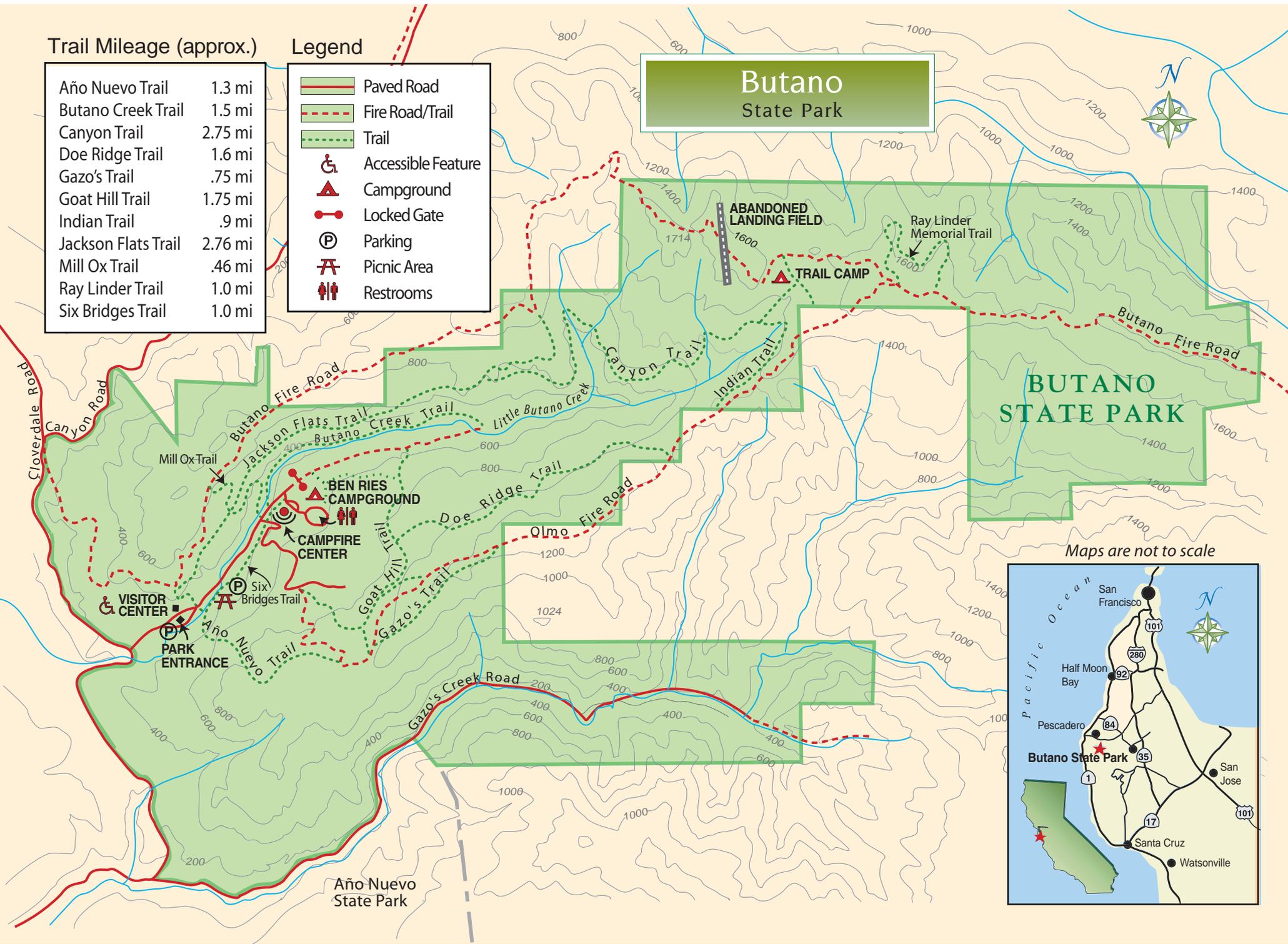
- All park features are protected by law. Do not remove or harm plants, animals, or other natural features of the park. Firewood gathering is prohibited.
- Dogs must be on a leash no more than six feet long during the day and enclosed in a tent or vehicle at night. Dogs are allowed in campsites, picnic areas, on paved roads and fire roads, but not on hiking trails.
- All single-track trails at Butano are closed to bikes and horses. Check for fire roads open to bicycling.
- Safety and resource concerns prohibit ball games, horseshoes, badminton and similar activities in the park.
- Fires must be kept in the fireplaces provided and must not be left unattended. Camp stoves are permitted. Firewood is available for sale at the camp host site or kiosk.
- Quiet time is 10:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. daily. Do not operate generators between 8:00 p.m. and 10:00 a.m.

Trail Mileage (approx.)

Año Nuevo Trail	1.3 mi
Butano Creek Trail	1.5 mi
Canyon Trail	2.75 mi
Doe Ridge Trail	1.6 mi
Gazo's Trail	.75 mi
Goat Hill Trail	1.75 mi
Indian Trail	.9 mi
Jackson Flats Trail	2.76 mi
Mill Ox Trail	.46 mi
Ray Linder Trail	1.0 mi
Six Bridges Trail	1.0 mi

Legend

-  Paved Road
-  Fire Road/Trail
-  Trail
-  Accessible Feature
-  Campground
-  Locked Gate
-  Parking
-  Picnic Area
-  Restrooms



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Maps are not to scale

