

**BIG SUR**  
LAND TRUST

For the lands you love

# *Mitteldorf Preserve*

## **HIKING GUIDE**



*Mitteldorf Preserve's majestic landscape is home to the oldest known redwood in Monterey County. The Preserve features ridge-top vistas stretching 50 miles over Carmel Valley to Año Nuevo north of Santa Cruz.*

## Preserve Hours

Monday through Sunday: 8:00 am – 3:00 pm

## Directions to Mitteldorf Preserve

### ► From Monterey:

Take **Highway 1 South** towards Carmel.

Make a **left on Carmel Valley Road**. Continue for **2.2 miles**.

Turn **right onto Rancho Carlos Road** and continue for **1.1 miles** to arrive at the **Santa Lucia Gatehouse**.

Continue on Rancho San Carlos Road for **4.2 miles**.

Make a **right on the dirt road** with the sign that says, **“Williams Canyon.”** *Park on the left side of the road in the grassy area before the bridge.*

### ► From Salinas:

Head **west on CA-68 W**.

Turn **left on Laureles Grade**. Continue for **5.8 miles**.

Turn **right onto W Carmel Valley Road**. Continue for **7.4 miles**.

Turn **left onto Rancho Carlos Road** and continue for **1.1 miles** to arrive at the **Santa Lucia Gatehouse**.

Continue on **Rancho San Carlos Road** for **4.2 miles**.

Make a **right on the dirt road** with the sign that says, **“Williams Canyon.”** *Park on the left side of the road in the grassy area before the bridge.*

### ► From Castroville:

Head onto **CA-1 S/Monterey**. Continue for **17.9 miles**.

Use the left 2 lanes to **turn left onto Carmel Valley Road**. Continue for **2.2 miles**.

Turn **right onto Rancho Carlos Road** and continue for **1.1 miles** to arrive at the **Santa Lucia Gatehouse**.

Continue on **Rancho San Carlos Road** for **4.2 miles**.

Make a **right on the dirt road** with the sign that says, **“Williams Canyon.”** *Park on the left side of the road in the grassy area before the bridge.*

*Please note Mitteldorf Preserve is located in a private neighborhood. Please observe posted speed limits.*



## Property Rules

Welcome! We invite you to:

- Enjoy this amazing place conserved and cared for by the generous donors and funders of Big Sur Land Trust.
- Experience all that nature has to offer, safely and respectfully.

In order to keep this beautiful place open and thriving, please follow these simple rules:

- Dogs are not allowed in this preserve. This is for the safety of your dog while in mountain lion habitat and for the responsible stewardship of the Preserve.
- Leave no trace. Pack it in – pack it out. There are no garbage cans on the trails. Please dispose of waste (including dog waste) properly outside of the Preserve.
- Please only use established trails. Do not follow deer trails and do not take shortcuts, which can contribute to erosion.
- Respect and be cautious of local wildlife.
- Bikes are NOT allowed at Mitteldorf Preserve. Bike tires can cause plant destruction, animal habitat disruption and erosion.
- Drone flights are prohibited on Big Sur Land Trust properties.

## Please Report Trail Maintenance Issues

Please get in touch with us if you notice any of our trails have an issue that needs our attention. For example, if there is a tree down across a trail, repairs needed on signs or facilities, or anything else that may improve our guests' experience we appreciate you letting us know.

Please email your observations to [hiking@bigsurlandtrust.org](mailto:hiking@bigsurlandtrust.org) with the subject **“Report Trail Maintenance”**, date, property, trail name, and nearest landmark.

## Hike Logistics

There are many hiking routes for hikers to enjoy at Mitteldorf Preserve.

- ‘Out-and-back’ hikes take hikers to a destination and have them retrace their steps back to the trailhead.
- A ‘lollipop’ hiking route is a hike to a loop trail, completion of the loop, and then a return to the trailhead. There are several loop trails at Mitteldorf, all of which are accessed by hiking in along Williams Canyon Road.

## **Hike to Lodge (out-and-back)**

- Easy/Moderate

From the parking area, the 2-mile hike to the Lodge is along Williams Canyon Road, originally built as an old logging road. Along this route you will cross ten bridges in total; the tenth was installed in September 2021 to replace the previous bridge that had been severely damaged in the Soberanes Fire of 2016. Once completed, the tenth bridge restored access to the lodge, Nature Loop Trail, and the oldest known redwood in Monterey County. It also helps protect habitat for Federally-protected steelhead trout.

## **The Nature Loop**

- Moderate

The 0.75-mile Nature Loop is accessed by hiking in/out along Williams Canyon Road (total distance is 4.75 miles). This moderately difficult lollipop route immerses hikers in the redwood forest ecosystem and crisscrosses Williams Creek on newly restored bridges that were destroyed in the 2016 Soberanes Fire.

## **Echo Ridge Trail and Headwaters Road**

- Strenuous

The Echo Ridge Trail and Headwaters Road form a loop that is accessed via hiking in/out along Williams Canyon Road, making for a strenuous and rugged 9-mile (2000 ft. ascent) lollipop route. Hardy hikers should plan a full day for this hike, which includes steep sections and significant elevation gain, and sweeping views from Monterey Bay to the inland ranges and valleys.

## **Headwaters Road and Bunkhouse Trail**

- Strenuous

The Bunkhouse Trail and Headwaters Road form a loop that is accessed via hiking in/out along Williams Canyon Road, making for a strenuous and rugged 8-mile (1600 ft. ascent) lollipop route. Hardy hikers should plan a full day for this hike, which includes steep sections, significant elevation gain – and a not-to-be-missed lunch spot at the Bunkhouse picnic bench!

To reach the Bunkhouse picnic bench without hiking the steepest section of the Headwaters/Bunkhouse loop (between the picnic bench and the bunkhouse), hikers may instead reach the picnic bench via an out-and-back route on Headwaters Road and Bunkhouse Trail (~11 miles, 1600 ft. ascent).

## **Patriarch Ridge**

- Very strenuous!

The trail through Mitteldorf Preserve extends up and onto Patriarch Ridge. Hardy hikers should plan a full day for this hike which gains approximately 2500 vertical feet over a very strenuous

6-mile one-way trip from the parking area (total distance for this hike is 12 miles).

To reach Patriarch Ridge, walk up Williams Canyon Road from the parking lot for 2 miles to the “Welcome to Mitteldorf” sign. Turn left and head up the hill. Before you get to the bunkhouse, take a right onto Headwaters Road. After 1.5 miles the road forks; stay left onto Patriarch Ridge Road. Hike 1.4 miles to the boundary sign at Joshua Creek Ecological Reserve and turn around.

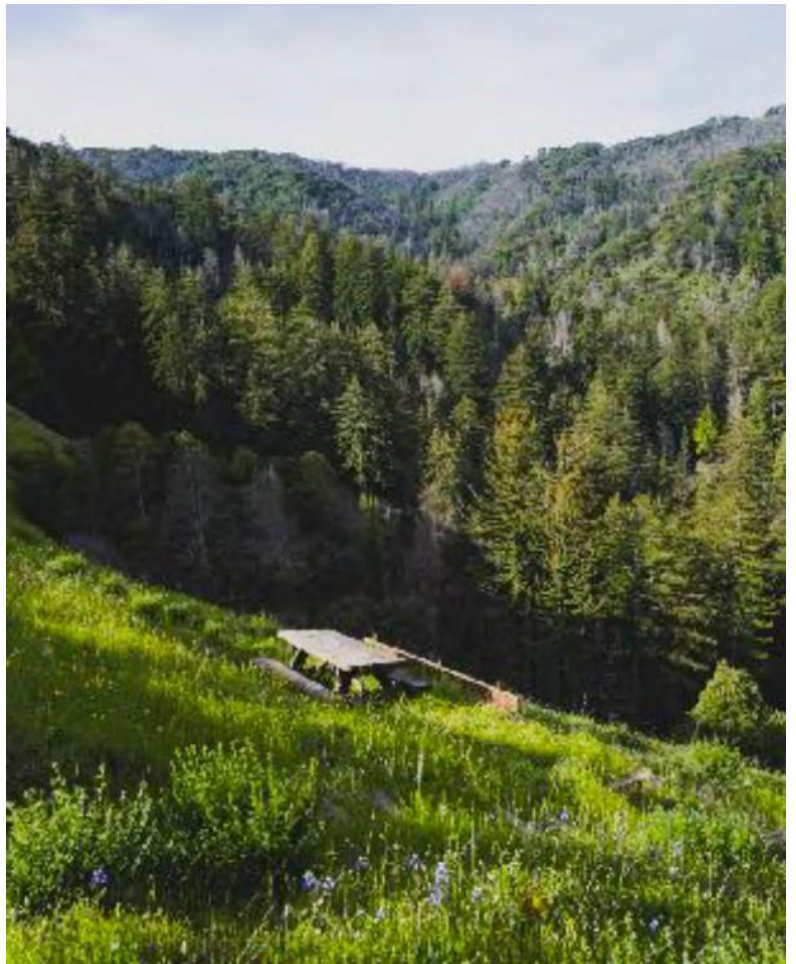
## History

Mitteldorf Preserve has a long and eventful history including Indigenous Peoples that remain in the area to this day, as well as people who received Mexican land grants and pioneer ranchers to logging companies and recreational retreats.

It is home to the oldest known redwood in Monterey County. Boasting a 60’ circumference, this sentinel is at least 1,286 years old. The surrounding forest was threatened by destruction from commercial logging before Big Sur Land Trust’s intervention and protection of the property, which was made possible through the generosity of Harriet and Arthur Mitteldorf and other donors. The 1,100-acre property is now held in title by Big Sur Land Trust and maintained as a nature preserve for its conservation values, hiking, and to provide back-country access in case of emergencies.

In 1817, Don Esteban Munras came to California from Spain and became a prosperous merchant trader and later built one of the large adobe homes that defined the new town beyond the Presidio walls. He married Doña Catalina Manzanelli. The Munras family became a part of Monterey’s commercial elite and beneficiaries of the patronage that successive Mexican governors dispensed on local residents.

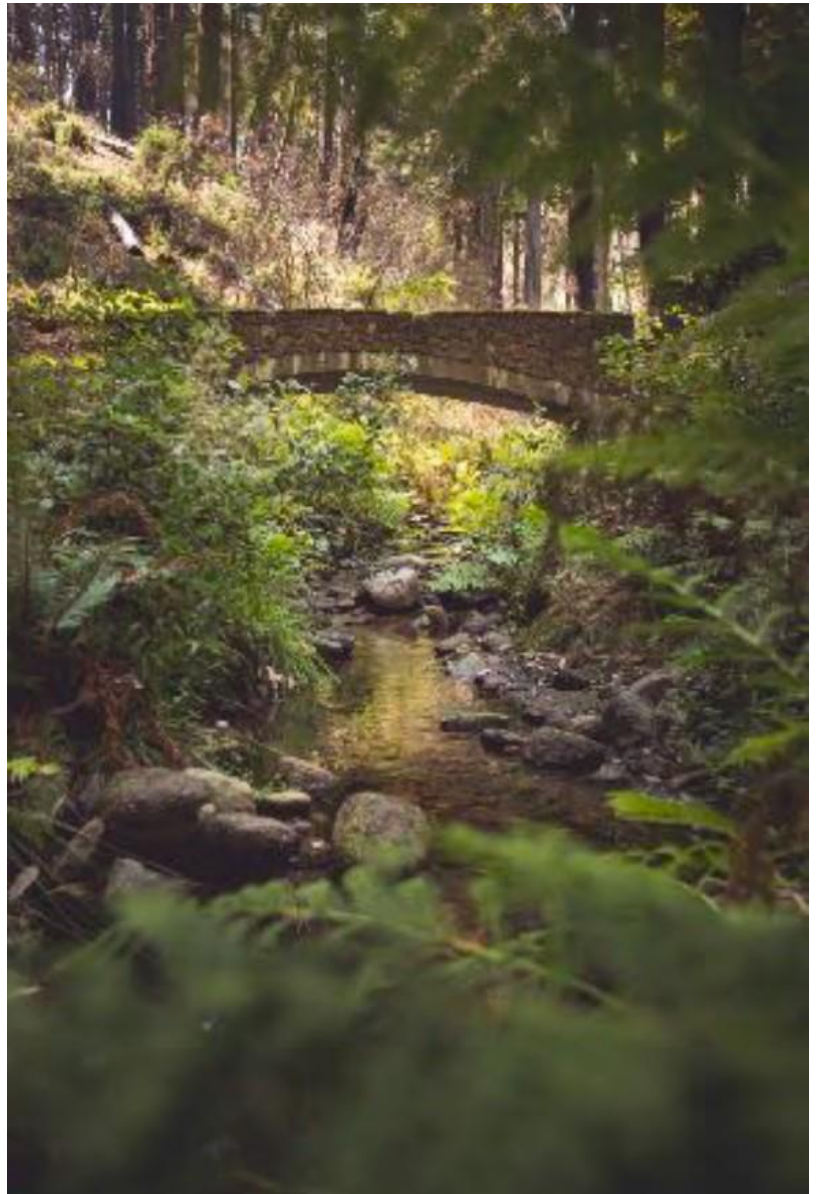
In the 1850s, California’s Land Commission recognized the couple’s three Mexican land grants totaling 31,000 acres. (This act confiscated Rumsen Indian communal land). Two of the land grants—San Francisquito and Laguna Seca—went to Catalina in an era when women seldom held property in their own name.



The Munrases had five children including a younger Catalina who inherited a portion of the San Francisquito grant and carried it into her marriage to Thomas Jefferson Field. Field came to Monterey with the Southern Pacific Railroad but settled into a career in banking and real estate. They built a family home where the Casa Munras Hotel is now. In the 1870s, Field sold most of the San Francisquito grant to the Sargent brothers, Monterey businessmen and large landowners who consolidated the original grant with several homesteads.

Steven Field, son of Catalina and Thomas, retained a portion of Catalina's property. In the early 1930s, Steven built the log house and cabin that still grace the property.

After Steven passed in 1952, the 5,500-acre ranch had a series of four owners. Mrs. Frank Bishop of Reno, Nevada, bought the property from Field and resold the ranch in 1958 to the Carter brothers of Pacific Grove, who used the land for hunting and recreation. Lloyd and Mary Morain bought the property in 1963 to preserve the redwoods and provide a meeting place for environmental groups. For nearly 150 years the conservation of the natural landscape was the priority at the ranch. But that changed in 1978 when Lloyd, faced with rising property taxes, sold the property to Westbrook Lumber Company of Eureka, California, who promised that they wanted the land for recreational rather than commercial use. Morain, who was not represented by counsel, soon learned he had been deceived.



In 1984 Westbrook was granted a timber harvest permit by the state to cut 105 acres of redwood, madrone, and oak forest totaling over three million board feet of lumber. Locals protested.

While the opponents of Westbrook did not give up, some of the old growth timber was logged and staged at flat landings carved into the steep hillsides.

Earl Moser, a trustee of BSLT at the time, tried to persuade Westbrook that it would be more profitable to sell the property than trying to commercially log more remote, and less accessible trees. For years BSLT looked for ways to preserve the forest. In December 1988 BSLT showed the property to Arthur and Harriet Mitteldorf who had just relocated to Pebble Beach from the east coast and became supporters of BSLT. Harriet said it was “love at first sight” for her and Arthur who were already dedicated nature lovers. While surrounded by redwoods, the couple

agreed on the spot to finance the majority of the \$1.35 million purchase with the understanding that the land would become a nature preserve held permanently by BSLT. The Mitteldorf’s gift was supplemented by a bequest of \$50,000 from the estate of Helen Hobart for the preservation of redwoods. Mitteldorf Preserve was established in February of 1990.



## **History of Patriarch Ridge**

Patriarch Ridge is the prominent ridgeline that borders the southern and eastern edge of Mitteldorf Preserve. The ridge was named for the massive, old madrone and canyon live oak trees that are found high above the redwood canyons. Sadly, many of these impressive trees were burned in the 2016 Soberanes Fire.

In April 2020, Big Sur Land Trust acquired and conserved 83.5 acres of old growth mixed evergreen woodland, chaparral, and grassland habitat along Patriarch Ridge adjacent to the Land Trust’s Mitteldorf Preserve in Carmel Valley when Al and Anne Washburn of Monterey sold the stunning, undeveloped property located at the top of Patriarch Ridge to Big Sur Land Trust. The Washburns purchased the land in the early 1970s and worked with the Land Trust to protect this magnificent and biologically diverse open space. The roadway along Patriarch Ridge winds across the ridgetop portion of the Washburn’s former property and connects Big Sur Land

Trust's Mitteldorf Preserve with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Joshua Creek Ecological Reserve.

Patriarch Ridge is a very important part of the Esselen Tribe's sacred lands and includes the upper watershed divide between Williams Canyon and the Garzas Creek drainage. It has been used by countless generations of Esselen and Rumsen people for ceremonies and as a travel route and corridor for bringing in important food sources from the northern Big Sur coast at the villages of Sarhentaruc and Ixchenta. Tribal members would travel from the coast to the inland villages of Echilat and Soccoranda in Carmel Valley and would use the ridge as a resting spot where they would stay overnight. They also used it for gathering medicinal plants and vision quests. The Esselen name for Patriarch Ridge was 'Tebitylat' – meaning 'resting spot'."

## Current Uses

Mitteldorf Preserve is conserved for its habitat values and is currently used for hiking.

## Conservation Value

In the mid-1800s, the Gold Rush drew hundreds of thousands of people to California, creating an explosive demand for lumber. After the devastating 1906 San Francisco earthquake, that demand grew exponentially. Ancient old growth redwoods, valued for their strength, resilience, and beauty, suffered as a result of extensive logging for construction.

Coastal Redwood forests, along with Giant Sequoia forest in the Sierra Nevada foothills, are home to the tallest and largest trees on the planet. These forests store more carbon from the atmosphere than any other forest ecosystem and they support communities of life found nowhere else on earth.

Before 1850 there were 2 million acres of old-growth redwood forests. Today only 5% of the old-growth coastal forest remains. Only 23% of coastal redwoods, including old and second-growth forest, are currently protected.<sup>1</sup>

## Flora and Fauna

- Pacific madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*): Also called Madroño, this tree is closely related to blueberries, mountain laurels, rhododendrons, and manzanita. The Pacific madrone thrives in full sunlight and depends on periodic fire to create forest openings. Its upper red-brown bark peels each summer in thin strips to reveal smooth, greenish-yellow bark that ripens into a deep, dark red color. White, fragrant, urn-shaped flowers dangle in clusters at the ends of branches. Scarlet red, bumpy berries ripen in the fall and may last into early winter. Birds, like robins, cedar waxwings, band-tailed pigeons, and quail eat its berries. Other madrone berry-eaters include mule deer, raccoons, and bears. Woodpeckers and other cavity nesting birds, like mountain chickadees, house wrens, and

western bluebirds nest in madrones. The Pacific madrone reproduces vegetatively more than by seed. After a disturbance, like fire, burls at the base of the tree produce root crown sprouts, forming a multi-trunked tree. Bees and possibly hummingbirds pollinate its flowers.

***Recommended hike: Patriarch Ridge. Hikers near the crest of Patriarch Ridge will find themselves among mature Pacific madrones.***

- Leopard lily (*Lilium pardalinum*): Often found growing near streams, they typically grow 2 meters high. They flower in June and July. Leopard lilies have multiple beautiful flowers with upturned orange petals that are speckled with dark dots. The scientific name pardalinum comes from the Greek and Latin word for panther, or leopard.

***Recommended hike: Williams Canyon Road. Hikers walking along Williams Canyon Road are often treated to leopard lilies that bloom along Williams Canyon Creek in the summer (often July).***

- Great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*): Great horned owls nest at all elevations and most habitats throughout Monterey County. They are nocturnal and roost in trees or on cliff ledges during the day. They forage on small mammals but can swoop down to catch larger prey like skunks, rabbits and even house cats. At Mitteldorf Preserve, great horned owls may outcompete the rare California spotted owl and actually displace the smaller owls from their habitat in dense, tall tree cover. Essential for the well-being of the owls, regurgitated pellets (fuzzy wads of indigestible animal remains like fur, feathers, and bones) are a boon to biologists, as they can analyze their content and gather invaluable information on the birds' feeding habits.
- Yuma myotis (*Myotis yumanensis*): Its range extends from Canada to Mexico. Commonly found foraging near bodies of water or roosting in the thousands in caves, attics, buildings, mines, underneath bridges, and similar structures. But in May and June, when the females are giving birth to (commonly one pup each) solitary males may seek refuge under loose bark of redwood and other trees.
- Arboreal salamander (*Aneides lugubris*): As their name implies, they are excellent tree climbers. These salamanders can be seen walking around on the ground at night looking for insects to eat, or climbing on walls and trees, especially during or after rains. They may also be found under wood or branches that are on the ground. In the dry season, some arboreal salamanders retreat to rodent burrows to stay moist. When space and moisture is limited, arboreal salamanders come together in groups of a dozen or more.



Pacific madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*)

*Photo taken at NPS*



Great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*)

*Photo by Mary Rumple, Macaulay Library*



Yuma myotis (*Myotis yumanensis*)

*Photo by Michael Durham, Minden Pictures, Bat Conservation International*



Leopard lily (*Lilium pardalinum*)

*Photo by Jose Carlos Navarro*

## **Be an iNaturalist for the lands you love!**

Please join us in recording the amazing biodiversity found on our preserves by downloading and using the iNaturalist app whenever you visit.

By taking photos in iNaturalist (and making sure to upload them when you get home) you will be contributing to a powerful biodiversity dataset.

iNaturalist can also instantly suggest identifications of the flora and fauna you photograph, thereby serving as a handy pocket field guide and powerful educational tool.

To use iNaturalist:

- Download the iNaturalist app to your mobile device.
- Create your iNaturalist account.
- Under “Community,” select “Projects” and search for Big Sur Land Trust. On the Big Sur Land Trust project page, click “Join.”
- In the iNaturalist app, take photographs of the biology and evidence thereof that you encounter on Big Sur Land Trust’s preserves. This can be plants, animals, fungi – or even just evidence of them (scat, feathers). Optional: After taking the photo, click “What did you see? View suggestions” for identification suggestions. (You can also save this step for later.)
- Click SHARE.
- When you get home, confirm that your observations have been uploaded.

## **Mitteldorf Preserve is now an eBird hotspot!**

eBird hotspots allow multiple birders to enter data into the same shared location, creating aggregated results available through [eBird’s “Explore” tools](#). Next time your visit includes birding activities, be sure to select the hotspot affiliated with the Big Sur Land Trust preserve or property you are visiting. Recording checklists while you are birding is not only fun, but the data you submit will contribute to our understanding of the lands we all love, the winged critters that love them too, and best practices for conserving both.



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