



Six of the world's tallest 10 trees can be found in Redwoods National Park. Besides Hyperion, there is Helios, Nugget, Icarus, Laurelin, and Orion. Most of them have names taken from ancient Greek mythology.

half of the world's coastal redwoods. The Pacific's humid climate, abundant rainfall, mild winters, and ideal soil conditions contribute to the extraordinary growth of these ancient trees, which live up to 2,000 years. Besides the redwood forests, the parks also include many miles of pristine coastline with tide pools and sandy beaches, as well as rivers and prairie—not to mention an imposing fern canyon.

For thousands of years, these lands have been inhabited by Native Americans of Asian descent. Among them are the Yurok people, who use the hard and weather-resistant redwood timber to build their shelters and long canoes, which they use to navigate the area's rivers. The Yurok consider redwoods their "eternal spirits." Nature is an essential part of their life. They weave elaborate baskets from roots, fern shoots, and grasses. For millennia, they have gathered plants and fruits and used fires to burn down the undergrowth in deciduous forests so that they could better gather acorns and other tree fruits.

Things got ugly after gold was discovered in the mid-1800s, first outside and later inside today's park boundaries, as miners kept pushing deeper and deeper into the forest. As settlers encroached on native lands, conflicts inevitably arose. The settlers, claiming that the Yurok Tribe was violating their property claims, decided to raid their villages. They murdered, pillaged, and raped the natives, whose numbers had already dwindled due to a smallpox epidemic. The last Native peoples were deported to a reservation in 1855. But the destruction of the forest had only begun.

Most prospectors found little to nothing to mine and soon turned to a new source of income: the red gold of the forest. The tremendous population growth on the West Coast had led to an



enormous demand for lumber, and coastal redwoods were highly sought after since their wood is particularly weather-resistant and not susceptible to fungi. In 1902, an average redwood covered the material needs of 22 houses, making them highly attractive to loggers. After the Second World War, bulldozers carved roads into the hillsides, and heavy trucks hauled the logs to the sawmill. Entire groves and rainforests were clear-cut.

The call to protect the redwoods was raised as early as 1872 when Yellowstone National Park was established. It wasn't until after the turn of the century, when San Francisco had to be rebuilt following a major earthquake, that people began to see just how few redwoods remained. The "Save the Redwoods League" managed to secure the designation of three state parks between 1923 and 1929. Over the next fifty years, the association worked to transfer even more land from private ownership to national or state ownership, and in 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the charter for the new Redwood National Park. By then, 95 percent of the old-growth forest had already been irreversibly lost.