

INTO/THEME SONG

SFX: WALKING THROUGH THE WOODS

MOGLEN: In 1899, painter and photographer Andrew P. Hill, was looking for inspiration in the Santa Cruz mountains and *chanced upon an ancient redwood grove. Hill was awestruck by the beauty of the dense forest and the enormity of the trees...

SFX: WALKING THROUGH THE WOODS

WILLIAMS: and realized there weren't many old growth trees like this left - they were being logged at such an alarming rate.

MOGLEN: That's Kevin Williams, Supervising Ranger for Big Basin Redwoods State Park. He says those trees – called Sequoia Sempervirons – or coast redwoods -- are the tallest trees in the world and have been around for over *2,000 years. Hill knew he'd found something incredible and was determined to save them. He joined forces with other like-minded people to stop loggers from decimating the forest.

WILLIAMS: The San Jose Chamber of Commerce got involved and he convinced them to get some other influential people from Stanford University and together they formed the Sempervirons Club.

MOGLEN: Williams says their mission was to preserve and protect the trees -- which wasn't easy since the idea of saving land was considered *novel at the time.

WILLIAMS: People just didn't feel the need to preserve. There was still a lot of open land and the idea that you would set aside good property that could be logged and not log it was really not heard of at the time. It was really the start of the conservation movement.

MOGLEN: Despite the odds, the Sempervirons persevered and convinced the state of California to purchase 2,300 acres of land from the lumber company that owned the property. In 1902, that land became the *first California State Park -- what is now Big Basin Redwoods State Park. Along with old growth and recovering redwoods, the forest is home to other trees, including conifer and oaks. A variety of animals live in and around the

sequoias -- like deer, owls, and an illusive bird called *the marbled murrelet.

SFX: MARBELED MURRELET – LET THIS FADE OUT UNDER ME.

MOGLEN: Portia Halbert is an environmental scientist for state parks. She says the murrelet is considered one of the last great ornithological mysteries of North America.

HALBERT: They weren't able to discover where it nested so they looked all over on islands and on rocky cliffs for the past couple of hundred years...Well they were unable to find it until 1974.

MOGLEN: That's when a forester, high in the trees, was cutting down some branches at Big Basin.

HALBERT: and saw this small, fluffy, little bird that had webbed feet and he knew he had something unusual.

MOGLEN: What he'd found was the Marbeled Murrelet and its breeding ground. Considered a sea bird, the big surprise was that it lays its eggs up to fifty miles *inland -- and *only in old growth trees -- like what you find at Big Basin.

SFX: MARBELED MURRELET

MOGLEN: Another unusual creature found at the park is the *banana slug. Supervising Ranger Kevin Williams says the bright yellow slugs are nature's garbage disposal:

WILLIAMS: They go through the forest, and they eat on the leaves. They're decomposers. And in a redwood forest like this you have just tons of debris coming off the trees year round and you need something to help break that down, so that the minerals and things can be re-released and used again in the trees.

MOGLEN: Williams says another process that occurs in Big Basin is *critical to air quality.

WILLIAMS: In the photosynthesis process when trees generate energy, you know they take carbon dioxide from the air and release oxygen as part of

that process...which then goes to reduce the impact of global warming. And old growth trees are very significant in that way.

MOGLEN: Williams says compared to the early days of Big Basin, when value was placed on *destroying the trees, today value is placed on *defending them. He says even a local energy company is getting involved.

WILLIAMS: PG&E is actually helping with the Sempervirons Fund to help them purchase redwood lands to offset carbon emissions...

MOGLEN: Big Basin offers many opportunities for enjoying nature in the fresh air. The park has grown to almost five times its original size, consisting of about 18,500 acres where visitors can hike and camp. There are also guided walks and campfire programs. Currently, facilities and hiking trails are undergoing renovation to make them disabled accessible. All this, Williams says, because of the commitment of a small group of visionaries who sought to make the *environment a priority. You can find out more about *visiting Big Basin Redwoods State Park at parks.ca.gov.

OUTRO: If you want to find out more about *supporting all of California's state parks, visit the California State Parks Foundation website and join our 90,000 members. This podcast was brought to you thanks to a generous donation from Denise Grant.