

# Discover Wildcat Canyon

*Year opened:* 1936 *Acres:* 2,789  
*Highlights:* Hiking, biking, horseback riding, picnicking, surviving structures from Civilian Conservation Corps work projects completed in the 1930s.  
*Did you know?* This park originally included today's Tilden Regional Park, which was split off in 1937 and renamed in honor of Charles Lee Tilden, the Park District's first general manager.

**HISTORY** Today's Wildcat Canyon Regional Park is likely located entirely within the homeland of the Huchiun, an Ohlone tribe whose members spoke the Karkin language. The Huchiun thrived for generations in a region that extended from today's Temescal Creek, north to at least the lower San Pablo and Wildcat Creek drainages. They used land management techniques that caused the plant materials and the shellfish they harvested, and the other animals they netted, trapped, snared, and variously hunted, to occur in larger and healthier populations than if they never used them. The 1772 and 1776 arrival of Spanish expeditions signaled a time of severe disruption, dislocation, and upheaval. Despite these changes, today's Ohlones are bringing ancestral cultural traditions forward into the future.

By 1840 most East Bay land had been parceled out in land grants, and Juan Jose and Victor Castro were awarded all vacant lands between the already established ranchos. The Castros kept a small portion, and speculators shared the rest with a water company and the township of Orinda. At this time the streams and springs of Wildcat Canyon became the focus of a struggle over water rights. In the mid 1920s, when the East Bay Municipal Utility District brought Mokelumne River water to the East Bay, the "water wars" came to an end.

In 1936 the East Bay Regional Park District acquired 1,910 acres to create Wildcat Canyon as one of its three original parklands. Additional acquisitions since then have brought the parkland to its current 2,789 acres.

**ALVARADO PARK** is at the north end of Wildcat Canyon Regional Park. This area began as a private park in 1909 and was taken over by the City of Richmond

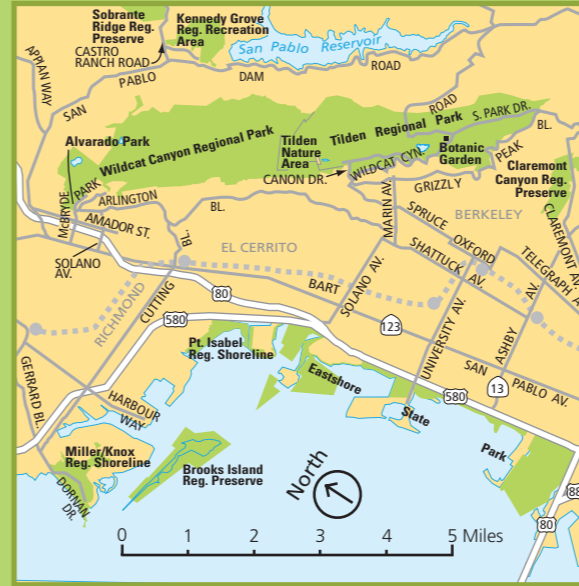
in 1923. It remained a city park until 1985, when it was transferred to the East Bay Regional Park District to become part of Wildcat Canyon Regional Park. The original facilities at Alvarado Park included an open-air pavilion and dance platform, later converted to a roller rink. These are now gone, but masonry work, retaining walls, a stone bridge, and stone light standards remain.

Alvarado Park is considered a unique variation on the National Park Service-style of "rustic park architecture." Its stone masonry was constructed during the City of Richmond's ownership through various Depression-era work programs. Because of these unique features, Alvarado is included in the National Registry of Historic Places.

**GEOLOGY AND WILDLIFE** The hills and valleys in Wildcat Canyon are marked by squatters' struggles and water wars. Old and fresh landslides and slumps are numerous. Springs and ponds are common. Small earthquake faults have left their traces. Large coast live oaks, bay laurels, and a scattering of bigleaf maples and madrones grow on east-facing slopes. North-facing hillsides support some beautiful, nearly pure stands of bay laurel fringed with coast live oak. Moist chaparral of coyote brush, poison oak, elderberry, snowberry, bracken fern, and blackberry grow high on north-facing slopes.

A riparian forest of alder, willow, creek dogwood, and bay laurel grows in the gorge of bedrock-cutting Wildcat Creek. The forest extends the length of the creek and partway up the tributaries. The west- and south-facing canyon slopes are covered with introduced annual grasses (oat, rye, barley, etc.). A few stands of native bunch grasses persist. There are many native wildflower species vying for growing room with such introduced plants as poison hemlock, mustard, radish, and an advancing army of cardoon thistle.

Foxes, raccoons, skunks, and opossums range nightly through the canyon. Deer, ground squirrels, and voles forage by day. Gopher snakes, king snakes, and western racers inhabit the fields and meadows; garter snakes hunt the ponds and stream verges. Rubber boas and ringneck snakes inhabit the forest. Redtail hawks, American kestrels, sharpshinned and Cooper's hawks, and turkey vultures soar aloft. Great horned owls inhabit the night. There are also many varieties of songbirds. Remember: please do not take animal or plant life, as all such resources are protected for the enjoyment of everyone.



To reach Alvarado Park and the Wildcat Canyon Staging Area: From El Cerrito, take I-80 east to Richmond and exit at Solano Avenue. Turn left at the bottom of the off ramp onto Amador St. Continue on Amador, turn right at McBryde Ave., and continue to the first stop sign. The entrance to Alvarado Park is on the left. Park on the street and walk across and into Alvarado Park. To reach the staging area and trail access, continue straight, through the stop sign, onto Park Ave. Wildcat Canyon Staging Area is approximately .25 miles ahead. From North Richmond and Pinole, take I-80 west to the McBryde Ave. exit. At the bottom of the ramp, turn left and follow McBryde Ave. to the second stop sign. The entrance to Alvarado Park is ahead on the left. Follow the directions above to reach the Wildcat Canyon staging area and trail access.

Public Transit: AC Transit #70 and #74 stop at San Pablo Dam Road and Clark Road weekdays with an approx. 1-mile walk to the Clark-Boas Trail. Line #67 goes to Grizzly Peak Blvd. and Spruce St. daily and into Tilden Nature Area on weekends. Bus service is subject to change: AC Transit: 511 or 817-1717; TDD/TTY: (800) 448-9790; Para-Transit: (510) 287-5000.

# Wildcat Canyon

## Regional Park

Richmond, San Pablo, El Cerrito

East Bay Regional Park District



East Bay Regional Park District  
2950 Peralta Oaks Court,  
P.O. Box 5381  
Oakland, CA 94605-0381  
1-888-EBPARKS (1-888-327-2757)  
www.ebparks.org Rev. 5/15