The most common remains found in the Paleontology park and west of Rocky Ridge. These occur outside the south boundary of the park under six million years old. The oldest rocks in Mulholland Formation sediments thought to be under 10 million years old and are typically found in the park to the west of Rocky Ridge. The youngest rocks in the park are from the Oligocene Epoch, 33.9 million years ago, and are typically found in the park to the east of Rocky Ridge. The uplift and exposure of well-preserved fossils is due to the Las Trampas and Bollinger faults, which account for the uplift and exposure of well-preserved fossils. Underground aquifers and springs. Two major Bay Area faults – Account for the uplift and exposure of well-preserved fossils. Las Trampas is known for its geologic and paleontologic resources as well as its underground aquifers and springs. Two major Bay Area faults – Account for the uplift and exposure of well-preserved fossils.

Geology
Las Trampas is known for its geologic and paleontologic resources as well as its underground aquifers and springs. Two major Bay Area faults – Account for the uplift and exposure of well-defined geologic formations. Rocky Ridge and Las Trampas Ridge represent the floors of ancient seas that once covered most of the present area of the Coast Ranges. Some of the youngest rocks in the park are Mulholland Formation sediments thought to be under six million years old. The oldest rocks in the area are marine sandstone, conglomerate and shale thought to be about 135 million years old. These occur outside the south boundary of the park and west of Rocky Ridge.

Paleontology
Fossil deposits at Las Trampas represent a fauna that is thought to be about ten million years old. One of the more interesting finds was a complete lower jaw of an ancient elephant known as Gomphothereium, found just northwest of the park. The most common remains found in the vicinity of the park are teeth from an extinct three-toed horse. Remains of ancient camel, small squirrels, toads, and the honey badger have also been found, along with a variety of fossilized marine clams.

Animals
The park's extensive and isolated wilderness provides habitat for much wildlife, including deer, raccoons, foxes, coyotes, opossums, bobcats, skunks, and squirrels. Chaparral habitat suitable for the Alameda whipsnake, a species listed as threatened by the State of California, encompasses a large part of the parkland. Be wary of rattlesnakes in the warmer months. If you see a rattlesnake, do not approach or harass it.

Vegetation
The dominant woodland vegetation on the western and southern exposures of Las Trampas and Rocky ridges is black sage, chamise, and buck brush. There are some creek dogwood along Bollinger Creek. Beware of poison oak, a shrubby or bushy plant with oak-like glossy green or reddish leaves that occurs in threes and can cause a long-lasting, itchy rash if the oils come in contact with skin, clothing, shoes, or pets. Tree species include coast live oak, bay laurel, buckeye, big leaf maple, canyon live oak, black oak, and scrub oak. The latter, with its mistletoe, prefers the ridgeline habitat at the end of Chamise Trail.
Las Trampas Wilderness Regional Preserve

Year Opened: 1966  Acres: 5,593

Highlights: hiking, horseback riding, group camping, birdwatching, wildflowers in season, The Ranch at Little Hills (swimming, picnicking), Las Trampas Stables (horse riding and boarding)

Fun Fact: Eugene O’Neill wrote several plays while living in the Tao House, his home adjacent to the park. O’Neill inspired the trail name “Corduroy Hills,” saying the long, dry grass on the hills was like corduroy.

Growing a Parkland

Las Trampas had its beginnings in the 1964 passage of a state bond that provided funding to counties and local jurisdictions for park development. The Contra Costa Board of Supervisors designated “Bollinger Canyon” as a future park, and a 2,000-acre park was envisioned by the Park District to include hiking, riding, and primitive camping. The Park District began acquisition of private properties for the wilderness area in 1966.

Pre-Parkland History

The Tackson, one of six Bay Miwok-speaking tribes, inhabited the hills and valleys along the San Ramon Creek drainage. They managed the land using specialized techniques that enhanced the numbers and health of the plants and animals on which they relied. Bay Miwoks continue to live in the Bay Area and are active in the protection of local ancestral cultural sites.

The first Mexican land grant in the area was the 8,000-acre Rancho San Ramon, given to Mariano Castro and Bartolome Pacheco in 1833. It comprised the San Ramon Creek watershed through present-day Danville and Alamo, including the eastern side of today’s parkland. In 1843, the brothers Jose and Inocencio Romero applied for a 20,000-acre grant that included the northern extent of Las Trampas.

In 1855 Joshua Bollinger settled in today’s Bollinger Canyon area. Richard and Kurt Mueller moved to Bollinger Canyon in the 1930s. They planted many exotic trees, some of which still grow on the site. In 1955, the Muellers oversedated a 100-acre parcel of land in Bollinger Canyon that they named “Corduroy Hills,” saying the long, dry grass on the hills was like corduroy.

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Facilities

The Ranch at Little Hills is a 100-acre picnic park located adjacent to Las Trampas on Bollinger Canyon Road. The facility is available for group picnics by reservation only. Call (925) 837-8158, or see bookyourpark.com.

Las Trampas Stables offers western horseback riding lessons for adults and children older than age 8. Call 925-837-2439.

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