

# Redwoods

grades 3–5

The Natural and Cultural Legacy of California

## COAST REDWOODS Real-Life Giants

Coast redwoods are the tallest trees on Earth. They can grow more than 360 feet high! A full-grown apple tree and even a 10-story building would look tiny next to one of these giants. They live near the coast of northern California and southern Oregon.

Besides being so tall, redwoods also live a very long time. Some coast redwoods are over 2,000 years old. These

ancient trees need a healthy forest environment to go on living.

### Activity Box

On a straight sidewalk, mark a line with a stick or string. Taking normal steps (about a foot and a half apart), count out 240 steps from that line. Look back at the mark you made. From where you are standing to that mark is about how tall coast redwoods can grow.

Kathy Kelly



Kathy Kelly

A 360' redwood tree towers over a 10-story building and an apple tree.

# HOW CAN THESE GIANTS GET SO **Tall** AND LIVE SO LONG?

**Y**ou may wonder how coast redwood trees can grow so tall. They start from tiny seeds and keep growing as long as they live. They have many adaptations or characteristics that help them live where they do.

One adaptation is their special bark, which is different from most other bark. Redwood bark is a beautiful red color. It also has tannic acid, which gives it a bad taste. This helps the tree keep away insects and other pests.

Another adaptation is being able to survive forest fires. The coast redwood's tough, thick bark is fireproof. The trees also have a shape that protects them from fires. Their tall trunks have no branches or leaves until high



David Swarthund

above the forest floor, keeping the burnable part out of fire's reach. And, if a fire does burn the tree, it can sprout a new trunk from its base.

Probably the most important adaptation is that coast redwoods can get water from fog. Where redwoods live, there are rainy winters, but little rain the rest of the year. During the summer there is lots of fog. Unlike most leaves, redwood leaves can soak up fog. This keeps the tops of the trees from drying out and helps them grow all year.

These are just some of the adaptations coast redwoods have for living and growing in their special environment.

# COAST REDWOODS NEED A HEALTHY FOREST **Environment**

Coast redwoods naturally grow in only one area in the world – near the coast of northern California and southern Oregon. This area has all the things that coast redwoods need. The weather is just the right temperature. It is never too warm or too cold. Winter rains and summer fog bring moisture all year long. The soil is filled with nutrients. The surrounding mountains shelter the trees from wind and

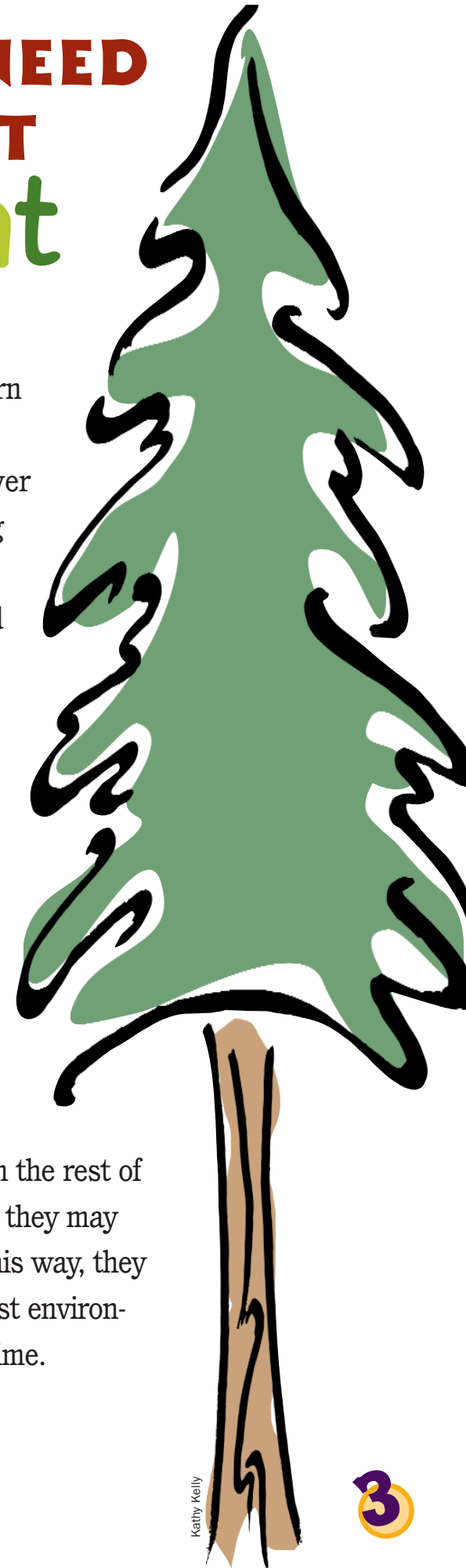
storms. This area is the perfect place for coast redwoods to grow and grow!

But even in this perfect place, coast redwoods cannot live all alone. They need other plants and animals of the redwood forest. If roads or power lines break up the forest, coast redwood trees can

become stranded from the rest of the forest. Although they may live a short while this way, they need a healthy forest environment to live a long time.



Kathy Kelly

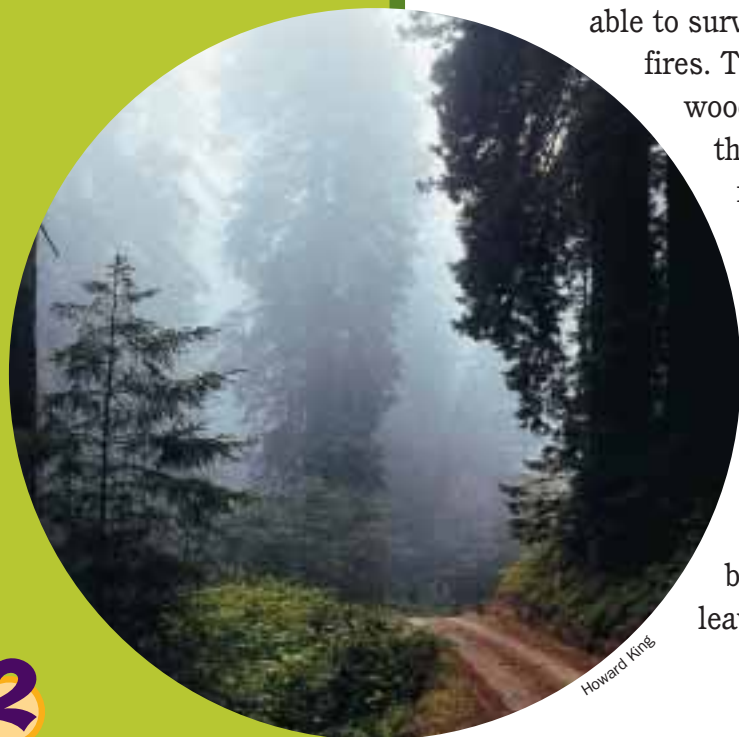


Kathy Kelly



## Activity Box

Find a tree or other plant in your school or neighborhood. Look for adaptations. How does it protect itself from being eaten and from the weather? How does it store food and water? How do new plants grow?



Howard King



Melendy Coll./Humboldt Historical Society



Kathy Kelly

# GET Active

## VISIT A PARK.

Explore a park, nature area, or botanical garden in your area. Interview someone to find out the history of how it came to be.



## FIND A CHAMPION.

Trees that are particularly big for their species can be nominated as champion trees for the National Register of Big Trees. Find out what trees in your area are champions at [www.americanforests.org/resources/bigtrees](http://www.americanforests.org/resources/bigtrees), or P.O. Box 2000, Washington, DC 20013.

## PLANT A TREE.



Help your teacher or family find a good spot for a new tree. Choose a tree that is adapted to your area. Help plant the tree and water it.

## LEARN MORE.

Get books from the library on redwood trees, forests, or adaptations. Check out the Save-the-Redwoods League website at [www.savetheredwoods.org](http://www.savetheredwoods.org).



## SAVING THE COAST REDWOOD FOREST

In 1848, there were 2 million acres of coast redwood forests in California. The next year, in 1849, gold was discovered in California and hundreds of thousands of people rushed there to search for gold. These “forty-niners” as they were called – and the people who came after them – cut lots and lots of trees to build homes and start farms.

In those days, people saw so many trees around them that they could not believe the trees could ever run out. They just cut what they needed, including the giant redwoods. It could take days for two men to saw down a giant redwood.

In a few short years after the Gold Rush, only a small part of the redwood forests were left. Some people worried that the redwood trees would be lost forever. They worked hard to save the remaining trees. Today, thanks to their work, about 70 percent of the ancient redwood forest is protected in parks.

## ABOUT THE SAVE-THE-REDWOODS LEAGUE

Since 1918, the Save-the-Redwoods League has worked to save the great redwood forests for the future. Nearly 70 percent of the acres protected in California’s redwood parks have been preserved with the help of the Save-the-Redwoods League.

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PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

rev. 11/2002