

SANTA CRUZ

WORLD SURFING RESERVE





World Surfing Reserves

This book is dedicated to the Santa Cruz Surfing Museum and its many volunteers, who since 1986 have devoted themselves to honoring local surf history by collecting and displaying an engaging and educational array of videos, print media, surfboards, wetsuits and other artifacts. Housed in the Mark Abbott Memorial Lighthouse, overlooking the legendary waves of Steamer Lane, the museum preserves Santa Cruz's rich surfing heritage for future generations.



SANTA CRUZ SURFING MUSEUM. PHOTO: COURTESY OF RYAN CRAIG.

A LIQUID PLAYGROUND

BY RICHARD SCHMIDT

Growing up in Santa Cruz as a surfer was an incredibly fortunate experience. I rode my first waves at the Rivermouth on an inflatable mat, along with my parents and three brothers. This was back before Boogie Boards, and some days there'd be as many as 40 mat riders out there mucking around, having a ball. It was a magical time to be a kid, and the sense of magic only intensified as I grew older and came to discover that Santa Cruz was awash in great surf spots—one liquid playground after another.

Eventually my brothers and I talked our parents into buying a longboard from a guy named Otto, who operated a surf shop near the base of the wharf. We spent endless hours taking turns on that old log at Cowell's. I'll never forget the feeling of gliding across the bay on that heavy missile, absolutely filled with adrenaline while gazing up at the coastal range and its redwood forests running to the sea. Once I caught that fever, there was no looking back, and from there it was onto a shortboard and into the bounty of surf up and down the coast. In the years since, I've been lucky enough to travel and surf around the world. But regardless of where I go, I always look forward to coming home.

It's incredible to think of all the great surf spots stretched between Natural Bridges and New Brighton. No matter who you are, Santa Cruz has a wave that

will fit your ability. They may not break every day, but almost all of them can produce world-class waves when conditions come together.

The most consistent breaks are along the two major points: Steamer Lane and Pleasure Point. Many times I've searched for surf north and south of town only to find that the best waves around were right under my nose at the Lane. My friends and I affectionately call it Hoover Point (as in the vacuum), because of the way it sucks up any swell—north, west, south, or any combination thereof. The innermost spot at the Lane, Cowell's, is one of the world's best beginner breaks, where waist-high waves will taper a quarter mile over a forgiving sand bottom. Up the

I'll never forget the feeling of gliding across the bay on that heavy missile, absolutely filled with adrenaline while gazing up at the coastal range and its redwood forests running to the sea.

point a bit, Indicators offers long, carveable walls for up-and-coming rippers to draw whatever lines they please on its wide-open canvas. And up at the top of the point, you'll find old-school chargers air-dropping

into draining, 15-foot, second-reef lefts.

Across town, Pleasure Point also serves up a smorgasbord of options with an array of kelp-groomed coves from Sewer Peak to Capitola. The waves here don't have as much power as the Lane, but they make up for it with the huge range of choices: the sling-shot rights at Sewer Peak, the snappy little bowl with a wall at First Peak, the long, Trestles-like walls from Second Peak, and the longboard-friendly rollers of 38th Avenue (which can transform into a rifling barrel on a big south swell). Beyond that you have Ranch-like setups from the Hook down to Capitola, especially on a pumping swell.

Between Steamer Lane and Pleasure Point is Midtown, also known as the city's banana belt. It doesn't have the long point waves, but it does offer up the occasional gem, most notably the San Lorenzo Rivermouth. It may not break every year, but when it works—with a spinning peak that churns out draining rights and lefts—local surfers rejoice.

If all this variety isn't enough to stoke local surfers, throw in a national marine sanctuary filled with wildlife.

An offshore upwelling produces nutrient-rich water, so the coastal ecosystem thrives here. I've had dolphins glide just below me in water so clear I could see them turn sideways to get a closer look, no doubt feeling pity for the terrestrial interloper who flaps about in



RICHARD SCHMIDT (ABOVE) AND SON RICHIE JR. (BELOW). PHOTOS: COURTESY OF REUBEN RUIZ.

the sea through which they glide so effortlessly.

One reason surfing has become indelibly etched into the Santa Cruz identity is because the breaks just look so tasty as you gaze down on them from the cliffs. Both the Lane and Pleasure Point are natural amphitheaters—all the action takes place directly below bluff-top walkways. Anyone out for a seaside stroll inevitably has his or her attention drawn to the fortunate souls cruising across those inviting green walls. Even locals who've never surfed eventually give in to its appeal, and as a result the whole community has surf fever. When the swell is up and the sun is out, stoke fills the air like sea mist. Everywhere you look, you see smiling surfers—from frothing groms to creaky seniors and everything between.

From a geographic perspective, it's almost as if nature designed the coast of Santa Cruz specifically for surfers to enjoy. While the prevailing wind blows from the northwest, most of the town's beaches face south. This means that when spots north and south are blown ragged by the breeze, the waves in Santa Cruz, with its chop-controlling kelp, are often glassy or groomed by offshore winds.

As a surfer, father and devoted local, I'm heartened to see that so many people appreciate how special this coastline is, and grateful that some of my peers have put in the hard work to have it declared a World Surfing Reserve. Now, when I watch my own sons playing on these waves, it comforts me to no end to realize that their kids will someday be able to do the same.



WHAT IS A WORLD SURFING RESERVE?

World Surfing Reserves (WSR) proactively identifies, designates and preserves outstanding waves, surf zones and their surrounding environments around the world. Launched in 2009 by Save The Waves Coalition (STW), along with key partners National Surfing Reserves (NSR) Australia and the International Surfing Association (ISA), the program is directed and led by STW. The WSR program serves as a global model for preserving wave breaks and their surrounding areas by protecting the positive environmental, cultural, economic, and community benefits of surfing areas, through outreach, planning and community capacity building.

World Surfing Reserves is an effort to identify and preserve the world's most outstanding surf zones and their surrounding habitats.

Save The Waves along with the World Surfing Reserves Vision Council, an international advisory group made up of 15 different individuals, select each World Surfing Reserve on an annual basis. WSRs are evaluated and selected based on how they meet the four principal criteria;

1) Quality and consistency of the waves; 2) Unique environmental characteristics with clear avenues to protect them; 3) A rich surf culture and history; and 4) Strong community support and capacity.

At each World Surfing Reserve, Save The Waves works collaboratively with the local partners to create the key components: a Local Stewardship Council (LSC), a Local Stewardship Plan, a WSR dedication ceremony, a booklet for the Reserve, ongoing support for projects identified in the stewardship plan of the Reserve, and identifying long-term avenues for protection. Save The Waves guides the community through a stewardship planning process that identifies critical threats to the Reserve, root causes, strategies, and concrete actions to protect the Reserve.

Save The Waves and the local community work hand in hand in implementing the action items to protect the Reserve for the long-term.



STEAMER LANE SURFER. PHOTO: COURTESY OF RICK PUCKETT.



KEN "SKINDOG" COLLINS, NATURAL BRIDGES. PHOTO: COURTESY OF RUSSELL ORD.

WHY SANTA CRUZ?

Santa Cruz has earned the sheltered status of a World Surfing Reserve because of its diverse mix of surf breaks, its pervasive and deep-rooted surf culture, and its thriving but fragile coldwater habitat.

Most surfers who've spent any time in Santa Cruz agree that the quality, consistency and aesthetic appeal of its waves make it the best all-around surf town in the continental United States. The reserve's seven miles of serrated coast features more than a dozen quality spots—from one of the West Coast's best beginner breaks to a heaving deepwater peak where big-wave legends train. The wide array of points, reefs and beachbreaks suck in Pacific swells from all directions, and the prevailing winds blow favorably year-round.

Santa Cruz's surf roots date back to 1885, when three Hawaiian princes rode hand-hewn redwood planks in waves breaking near the San Lorenzo Rivermouth—the first documented surf session on

the American mainland. A small but devoted core of local surfers kept the sport alive through the first half of the 20th Century, but it wasn't until surf fever swept from coast to coast in the 1960s that surfing became forever woven into the very fabric of the community. In the decades since, innovative Santa Cruz surfers and manufacturers—from wetsuit designers to surfboard shapers—have influenced wave riders worldwide.

Today, Santa Cruz is home to thousands of surfers, many of whom are devoted to protecting the coast from the ongoing threats of coastal developers and inland polluters. The success of these coastal stewards is evident to anyone who ventures near the coast here on a day when the sun is out, the wind is right, and a solid swell is running. From Natural Bridges to Capitola, the surf zone buzzes with hundreds of shortboarders and longboarders, groms and geezers, heroes and kooks—all vying for sets in the cool, green, kelp-rich sea.



KYLE THIERMANN, SEWER PEAK, PLEASURE POINT. PHOTO: COURTESY OF RYAN CRAIG.



PETER MEL, STEAMER LANE. PHOTO: COURTESY OF PATRICK TREFZ.



SANTA CRUZ SURFER STATUE. PHOTO: COURTESY OF CHRIS BURKARD.

SURF CITY NORTH

By Ben Marcus



(LEFT) DON PATTERSON. PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE HARRY MAYO COLLECTION. (RIGHT) THE THREE PRINCES—JONAH KUHIO KALANIANA'OLE, DAVID KAWANANA KOA AND EDWARD KELIAHONUI—WHILE STUDENTS AT ST. MATHEW'S HALL, CIRCA 1885. PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE GEOFFREY DUNN COLLECTION.

A long time ago, in a decade far, far away, during a time called the Nineties, the City of Santa Cruz got wrapped up in a silly-serious debate with the City of Huntington Beach over which town deserved the official title of Surf City. Huntington Beach had its arguments. Santa Cruz had its arguments. In the end, the SoCal town prevailed, but not due to a lack of strength on Santa Cruz's claim.

Anyone who knows anything understands that Huntington Beach has history on its side—from Jan and Dean to Chuck Dent to the Op Pro to Brett Simpson. But anyone who knows anything also knows that Santa Cruz has the surf on its side—and no small amount of history: from 19th Century Hawaiian princes to 21st Century vermin.

The surfing coast of Santa Cruz faces south, and the boundaries of the World Surfing Reserve (from Natural Bridges to Opal Cliffs) encompass about six miles of that coast as the seagull flies, and maybe a mile farther as the Prius drives. They are six or seven miraculous miles of fractal coastline, thoroughly exposed to every burp and billow coming from the south, southwest, west, northwest, and even north.

The northwest winds which rake the rest of Central California much of the year hit south-facing Santa Cruz at a benign angle. That means most Santa Cruz spots are often offshore or glassy when the coast north and south is chopped to pieces. Just add swell—from any direction—and Santa Cruz will make good sense of it.

Santa Cruz is California's own Seven Mile Miracle, with fat waves, sissy waves, scary reefs, beckoning right points, wedges, bowls, sand bottoms, a pier break, a rivermouth, a harbor break, dredge-spoil breaks, more beachbreaks, coves, bommies, mini-slabs, high-performance slingshots, longboard-perfect



peelers, kelp, otters and more right points. It sits with its feet in the cool of the Pacific Ocean and its face in the sun that arcs from Salinas to the green flash.

And almost exactly in the middle of the Santa Cruz World Surfing Reserve, at the mouth of the San Lorenzo River, is where a big piece of California surf history went down. On July 19, 1885, in the waves that broke at the east end of what is now called Main Beach, three Hawaiian princes were the first people in mainland America to be seen “surfboard swimming” on planks of wood.

The three princes—Jonah, David, and Edward—were the adopted sons of the Hawaiian monarchs, King David Kalakaua and his wife, Queen Consort Esther Julia Kapi'olani. They'd come to California to study at Saint Matthews Hall, a military school in San Mateo. Apparently homesick, they shaped redwood planks from a local lumber mill into rideable boards, and their groundbreaking session at the San Lorenzo Rivermouth made print in local newspapers.

Fast forward from the 19th Century to the first two decades of the 20th. Were people surfing in Santa Cruz? Probably. Back then, people who surfed were the

lucky few who had been all the way to Hawaii: whalers, merchant seamen, solo sailors, naval personnel and the One Percenters who could afford passage to Polynesia. Sam Reid—who was a fixture on the Santa Cruz cliffs in the 1970s, calling out the sets—went to Waikiki in 1909 and was one of the top watermen there in the 1920s and 1930s. Reid was “one of only six people surfing on the West Coast when he started at age 17 in 1926,” according to local historian Tom Hickenbottom, and the old-timer once described the area from Cowell's to Steamer Lane as “the perfect surfing spot.”

The Santa Cruz Surfing Club began in 1936 when David Steward invited the growing group of local surfers to store their boards in the basement of his parents' house at Gharkey Street and Lighthouse Avenue. That location changed to a house on Bay Street, where members stashed their boards in a barn and sometimes slept in a loft. The club evolved from loose to official when the Santa Cruz Jaycees built a board shack at Cowell's Beach. Six years later, they transformed an abandoned hamburger stand into its official clubhouse. It stood until 1952.

World War II tore a lot of young men and women away from their idyllic lives on the beach in Santa Cruz, but it also introduced many of them to the South Pacific and its many allures. Those who survived the war in the Pacific came home with a lust for life and new ideas on how to live—and that included aloha shirts, playing ukulele, beach parties and surfing.

Down in Southern California, the '50s were, as Miki Dora called them, “The Golden Years”—the best time to be a surfer. Jobs were plentiful and the living was easy. All the classic breaks that are elbow-to-elbow on solid swells today—Rincon, Malibu, Trestles, Swami's—were just as good then, but without the crowds.

In Santa Cruz, the '50s were a colder shade of golden. The big, heavy hardwoods that went so well at Cowell's were phased out by the balsa chips coming up from Southern California, and then by foam. Boards were down to 9 feet and 30 pounds—enough to support a man but light enough to allow women and kids to pick up the sport. The shorter, more maneuverable boards opened up new spots and new possibilities, from Mitchell's Cove to the Wild Hook: long, peeling, high-performance waves that were perfect for the surfing and surfboards of the time.

Santa Cruz surfing is all about variety, and during the 1950s, local surfers like the Van Dyke brothers, Mike Winterburn, George Olson, Rich Novak and a happy few others were joined by southerners like Ricky Grigg and Peter Cole—who were in school at Stanford—and Pat Curren, Buzzy Trent and other future big-wave legends from down south who loved the muscular walls of Santa Cruz. Big days at Steamer Lane were considered a master's degree before going to Hawaii for a PhD in the "heavies."

In 1959, Jack O'Neill laid one of the cornerstones of the surf industrial complex when he moved his family and his small but growing wetsuit business

from San Francisco to Santa Cruz, where the weather was better and the surf friendlier. O'Neill's original product was neoprene-lined bathing trunks he made to keep from freezing his balls off while bodysurfing Ocean Beach. Now in Santa Cruz, O'Neill moved into long johns, short johns and jackets. "I was just trying to support my family," he would later say. O'Neill had good timing, because 1959 was the year Columbia Pictures' *Gidget* looked back on the Golden Years around Malibu and effectively ended them, lighting the fuse of surf culture that would explode in the 1960s.

While most of the surf culture boom of the '60s was focused on Southern California—the Beach Boys, Jan and Dean, Malibu and even Huntington Beach—the surfing population also grew in Santa Cruz, and with it came shops, manufacturers, clubs and contests. Santa Cruz and competitive surfing had a shaky relationship out of the '60s and into the '70s. In 1969, vandals pushed the scaffolding for an amateur contest over a cliff and then refused to clear the water when competitors for the first heat paddled out, calling them "goose-stepping pigs." During the '70s John Scott was a constant presence at Steamer Lane surf contests, with his car and placards decorated with

anti-contest messages.

But not everyone in Santa Cruz was adverse to competition or media coverage. In 1969, Roger Adams became the first Santa Cruz surfer to make the cover of *Surfer* magazine and a leading competitor on the Western Surfing Association AAAA circuit. In 1971 he finished second to Dru Harrison at the Santa Cruz 4A Invitational—now known as the "Cold Water Classic."

It is said that those who really experienced the '70s in Santa Cruz shouldn't be able to remember them. That may or may not be true, but of all the surfers, surfboards, ideas and trends coming out of Santa Cruz from 1970 to 1979, the one with the most lasting impact was the surf leash. Beginning in the late '60s, a loose affiliation of Santa Cruz surfers that included Steve Russ, Pat O'Neill, Roger Adams and Michel Junod began experimenting with a variety of techniques to keep their boards from getting slaughtered by the rocks. "I broke three boards in a day surfing the Santa Cruz harbor," Pat O'Neill would later say. "Back then the ding repair factories were busier than the surfboard factories."

The first surf leashes were made of surgical tubing attached to suction cups on the nose of the board



SANTA CRUZ SURFING CLUB, ESTABLISHED 1936. PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE HARRY MAYO COLLECTION.



HARRY MAYO. PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE HARRY MAYO COLLECTION.



(ABOVE LEFT AND RIGHT, AND BELOW LEFT) **TEAM O'NEILL THROUGH THE '60S, '70S AND '80S.** PHOTOS: COURTESY OF O'NEILL. (BELOW RIGHT) **JESEE COLOMBO.** PHOTO: COURTESY OF RYAN CRAIG.



then the wrist. Then leashes went through fins and around the ankle, and finally they were attached to the deck of the board under a bridge made of fiberglass rope. Once the right combination was figured out, surf leashes gained gradual acceptance and a major sea change happened in Santa Cruz and throughout the surfing world: Surf spots were no longer segregated by ability. Anyone could surf anywhere, and before long, an ugly localism reared its head as some old-timers began to resent the growing hordes of surfers and the newfound courage that came with being tethered to their boards. But the leash benefited experienced surfers as well, allowing them to charge harder on bigger days and get more creative on smaller days.

Through the '70s, for the first time, Santa Cruz surfers began to make names for themselves outside of town. The most innovative among them was Kevin Reed. Thin, fast and creative, Reed rode paper-thin boards and was doing things that were many years and even a few decades ahead of his time – including early versions of the modern aerial. Surfers like Richard and Dave Schmidt, Vince Collier, Greg Bonner, the Van Dyke brothers and Karl Gallagher blazed paths in small and large surf that were followed by the next crew of surfers: Peter Mel, Darryl Virostko, Ken Collins, Anthony Ruffo, Shawn Barron, Jason Collins, Chris Gallagher and Adam Replogle.

These guys all received a solid kindergarten-to-college education in small- and big-wave surfing, from Cowell's to the Lane and up and down the coast. They also had funny nicknames: Condor, Flea, Skindog, Ruff, Barney, Ratboy, Gally and Rodent.

Collectively, the Santa Cruz crew was known as “the Vermin,” but if they were rascals on land, in school, in the parking lot and at parties, in the water

they emerged as arguably the best all-around crew of surfers in California—using the natural skatepark of the town's many points to work on their aerial surfing and eventually conquering the heavies at Steamer Lane and, later, at Maverick's, the now-legendary big-wave spot an hour north in Half Moon Bay.

Maverick's pioneer Jeff Clark invited Dave Schmidt and Tom Powers to have a go at Clark's home break. Schmidt and Powers paddled out cautiously and got their minds blown by the giant, evil perfection. Into the 1990s, the Vermin led the charge at Mavericks, pushing the limits deeper and bigger. They were joined by a smiling young waterman who couldn't have been more uncool: Jay Moriarity was a longboarder, an Eastsider, and he didn't even have a funny nickname. On a giant day at Maverick's in 1994, Jay paddled straight into the bowl, took off on the first wave that came his way, and launched himself into history, enduring a horrendous wipeout that landed him on the cover of *Surfer*.

Sarah Gerhardt also made history by being the first female surfer to ride Maverick's and is now part of a hard-charging crew of local women—including Jamilah Star, Jenny Useldinger and Savannah Shaughnessy—who are now riding a path blazed by the likes of Brenda Scott Rogers, Jane McKenzie and Karen Gallagher.

Going all the way back to those Hawaiian princes handcrafting boards from local redwood, Santa Cruz also has a long tradition of innovation and quality in surfboard design and construction. The Mower's Row of Santa Cruz surfboard shapers includes: The Mitchell brothers, Bill Grace, Johnny Rice, George Olson, Gary and Jerry Benson, Jack O'Neill, Rich Novak, Doug Haut, Joey Thomas, Mark Angell, Rick Noe, Mike Croteau, Bob Pearson, Steve Colletta, John Mel,

William “Stretch” Riedel, Ward Coffey, Geoff Rashe, Mark Goin, Doug Schroedel, Ashley Lloyd, David Vernor, Nick Palandrini, Marc Andreini, Buck Noe and many others.

If you had to pick the town's most influential surfboard maker, however, it would probably have to be longtime shaper Randy French, who in 1992 began applying to surfboards the same construction techniques (such as injection molding and vacuum-bag glassing) used to make sailboards. Today, his Surftex label has revolutionized the surfboard market and established a new surf-industry powerhouse based in Santa Cruz.

Almost exactly 100 years after those three Hawaiian princes first rode hand-carved redwood planks in front of well-dressed beachgoers, the Santa Cruz Surf Museum opened—the first of its kind on the U.S. Mainland. That opening is symbolic, because today Santa Cruz stands as a world leader in several crucial facets of surf culture: big-wave bravery, small-wave trickery, surfboard innovation, and cold-water protection.

Unlike Huntington Beach, which has officially trademarked the term “Surf City,” Santa Cruz has never tried that hard to sell itself as a surf mecca. But if you're a visiting surfer and aren't yet sold on the place, here's what you should do: On a solid west swell day with offshore winds and clear skies all the way to the Salinas Valley, ride your bicycle from one side of town to the other—from Natural Bridges to Privates—by way of the Rivermouth and Harbor. You will leave with no doubt as to the true, natural greatness of Santa Cruz.

It's a greatness that Santa Cruz surfers have been upholding for more than a century now, and one that they—and the world—have now dedicated themselves to forever preserving by declaring its shores a World Surfing Reserve.

SAVE THESE WAVES

The Santa Cruz World Surfing Reserve encompasses more than 20 surf spots, from soft user-friendly rollers to heaving black-diamond peaks. Here's a look at five of the most legendary.

NATURAL BRIDGES

Natural Bridges, or “NB’s” as it’s sometimes called, is as picturesque as a surf spot gets. Long fingers of flat, rocky reef bend northwest swells into well-shaped walls that range from playful to intimidating. On shore, birdwatchers compete with UC Santa Cruz Banana Slugs for towel space on the pristine white-sand beach. At higher tides, the inside section of the wave can produce a slurpy barrel that breaks over a shallow section of reef called the Tabletop, where faltering surfers often end up on dry rock faster than you can say “Westside pride.”

Type of wave: Righthand reef-point.

Bottom type: Rock reef with sand mixed in on the inside.

Best tide: Medium to full.

Wave conditions: From W to NW swells.

Wind conditions: Prefers little to no wind, stronger NW winds blow it out.

Wave height: 3 to 15 feet.

Surf type: Semi-challenging to reef grinder.

Surfing ability: Advanced.

SAVE THESE WAVES



STEAMER LANE

Steamer Lane was named for the steamships that would thread their way through its offshore reefs during the 1930s. It has been Santa Cruz's central surf spot for more than 70 years now, and is one of California's most consistent spots, comprised of four different breaks. **The Point** is directly under the Lighthouse and is best on a summer south or southwest swell. Lost boards almost invariably bash into the rocks at the Lane, which is why the surf leash was invented here. **The Slot** is a right section on the inside of the Point, and is an excellent performance wave. **Middle Peak** is a two-way peak that breaks farther out on big swells, with a meaty left and softer right. It's a shifty, powerful, challenging wave that many have used as a preparation for Hawaii and Maverick's. All of the big, disorganized energy washing in from Middle Peak rolls forward and re-forms into a long performance wall at Indicators. A perfect wave for modern, high-performance surfing, **Indicators** will also throw out a round barrel when it's in the mood.

Type of wave: Right reef and point, with a left at Middle Peak.

Bottom type: Kelpy rock reef, with occasional sandbars as the seasons and tides ebb and flow.

Best tide: In general, a lower tide coming up is best, although usually surfable on most tides.

Wave conditions: From S to SW to W/NW/N swells; extremely consistent.

Wind conditions: Prevailing northwest wind blows offshore; east and south winds blow onshore.

Wave height: 1 to 15 feet plus.

Surf type: Gentle to thunderous.

Surfing ability: Intermediate to advanced.

SAVE THESE WAVES

COWELL'S

On the inside of Lighthouse Point sits **Cowell's**—one of the best beginner breaks in the world, possibly second only to Waikiki. It's not uncommon to find as many as 200 people in the water on a nice day: locals, visitors, Banana Slugs, Vermin, Vals, surf schools, rippers, trippers, SUPers, grommets and surfagenarians. Cowell's has been the incubator for Santa Cruz surfing since the 1920s. Its long, easy rollers were perfect for the unwieldy hardwood boards of the early 20th Century, and in the intervening decades many generations of Santa Cruz surfers have taken their first steps here before branching out to Steamer Lane, Pleasure Point, the Hook and beyond.

Type of wave: Soft, user-friendly rights.

Bottom type: Sand with some rock reef.

Best tide: In general, the lower the tide the better.

Wave conditions: From SW to W/NW/N swells; normally needs larger swells to break.

Wind conditions: Mostly protected from prevailing northwest wind; east and south winds blow onshore.

Wave height: 1 to 6 feet.

Surf type: Gentle.

Surfing ability: Beginner heaven.

SAVE THESE WAVES



PLEASURE POINT

Pleasure Point concentrates a variety of breaks over a third of a mile of kelpy rock reef. A consistent wave that is open to swell from just about any direction, the point offers something for everyone. At the top, **Rockview/Suicides** is a right breaking off rocks into a sandy cove. **Sewer Peak** is the Black Diamond spot—a fast bowly right and a gnarly left off the main, powerful peak. Sewer Peak isn't the longest wave along Pleasure Point, but it's the most challenging and also the most competitive. **First Peak** is a longer, high-performance wave with a tight takeoff area and a mix of aggressive shortboarders and performance longboarders. **Second Peak** is a longboarder's paradise and also a good place for intermediate surfers to work on their skills without getting in everyone's way. On big days there is a **Third Peak**, and on the biggest days it is possible to ride a wave from outside First Peak all the way through to the wave known as **Insidies** or **38th Avenue**. On small days, 38th Avenue is a gentle beginner wave, but on bigger days, it transforms into a high-performance shortboard haven.

Type of wave: Right point and reef breaks.

Bottom type: Kelpy rock reef, with sandbars that come and go.

Best tide: Medium tides are generally best, although usually surfable at most tides.

Wave conditions: From SW to W/NW/N swells; consistent.

Wind conditions: The northwest winds blow side-offshore, although strong NW winds can blow out the top of the point. Thick kelp outside the breaks provide significant wind protection.

Wave height: 1 to 15 feet.

Surf Type: Easy to semi-gnarly and everything between.

Surfing ability: Beginners to superstars.

SAVE THESE WAVES

THE HOOK

Back in the '50s, or maybe it was the '60s, this spot at the end of 41st Avenue became known as the Wild Hook. Some say that name came from the fast, curling waves that were a challenge to the longboards of the day. Others say the name came from the thick kelp that would “hook” the deep skegs of the time. Regardless, what modern surfers now know as **the Hook** is the top of a point that runs all the way down to Capitola. That entire point is divided into the Hook, Shark's Cove, Privates and Trees. The Hook itself has three breaks: First Peak, Second Peak and Third Peak. What was a beloved longboard wave in the 1960s is now a beloved performance wave for 21st Century shortboarders, but longboarders like it, too. *Alaia* flyers crave the place, because without fins, they don't have to worry about all the kelp.

Type of wave: Right reef and point.

Bottom type: Kelpy rock reef, with sandbars that come and go.

Best tide: In general medium tides are best; low tides cause skegs to catch kelp, and high tides swamp it out.

Wave conditions: From SW to W/NW/N swells.

Wind conditions: The Hook is more protected from the wind than Pleasure Point. The northeast winds coming out of the Santa Cruz Mountains blow offshore. South winds wreck the place.

Wave height: 0.5 to 12 feet.

Surf Type: Playful to challenging.

Surfing ability: Intermediate to advanced.

SAVE THESE WAVES



STARFISH. PHOTO: COURTESY OF KELLY VANDER KAAY.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SANTA CRUZ

BY KELLY VANDER KAAY

Situated along the northern edge of Monterey Bay, a little more than an hour's drive south of San Francisco, the Santa Cruz World Surfing Reserve lies within the coastal waters of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Covering 276 miles of shoreline and 6,094 square miles of ocean (larger than Yellowstone National Park), this federally protected area extends, on average, 30 miles from shore. At its deepest point, the sanctuary reaches down 12,713 feet, or more than two miles. It is our nation's biggest marine sanctuary.

The Surfing Reserve encompasses about seven of the sanctuary's 276 miles of coastline, including world-renowned right-hand point breaks Steamer Lane and Pleasure Point. In all, some two dozen surf spots—point, reef, and beachbreaks, both famous and lesser known—fall within the reserve's boundaries. South-facing, Santa Cruz is well-protected from Central California's prevailing northwest winds while also open to any swell direction except extreme north. Most of its beaches are overseen by California State Parks, the City of Santa Cruz, and Santa Cruz County.

At Steamer Lane, surfers run past barking sea

lions as they hustle toward the gladiator-like proving grounds where wave energy converges with abruptly sloping bedrock reefs. Here, world-class peaks are born. Often compared to those of the North Shore, these waves owe their existence to a fortuitous confluence of geology and oceanographic processes.

At its deepest point, the sanctuary reaches down 12,713 feet, or more than two miles. It is our nation's biggest marine sanctuary.

The inner continental shelf near the reserve consists of flat sandy areas, faults, boulder fields, and complex bedrock ridges, the amalgamation of which provides the foundation for prolific marine ecosystems. Each spring when the northwest winds blow, cold, nutrient-rich waters rise up out of submarine canyons, nourishing lush growths of marine algae and surface plankton blooms. These provide sustenance for many invertebrates and fish, a key food source for

cetaceans (whales, dolphins, porpoises), pinnipeds (seals and sea lions), and sea otters. Numerous species of sharks also inhabit the region, including blue, mako, and whites reaching more than 20 feet in length.

Santa Cruz is also home to the nation's largest kelp forest, 33 marine mammal species, 94 seabird species, 345 species of fishes, 4 species of turtles, 31 phyla of invertebrates, and more than 450 algae species. An estimated 20,000 gray whales pass by Santa Cruz each December during their annual migration from Arctic feeding grounds to their calving grounds off the Baja

peninsula. Blue, humpback, and killer whales are also frequently spotted off the coast. A total of seven species of whales are found in local coastal waters, including the less frequently seen minke, beaked, and fin whales.

Within the city limits, 39 miles of watercourses, creeks, and wetlands support diverse natural habitats, transport storm water, and protect water quality. Local flora and wildlife depend on no less than twelve habitat types for their subsistence. These range from aquatic to salt



(BELOW) PELICAN, (ABOVE LEFT) CALIFORNIA SEA OTTER. PHOTOS: COURTESY OF RICK PUCKETT.

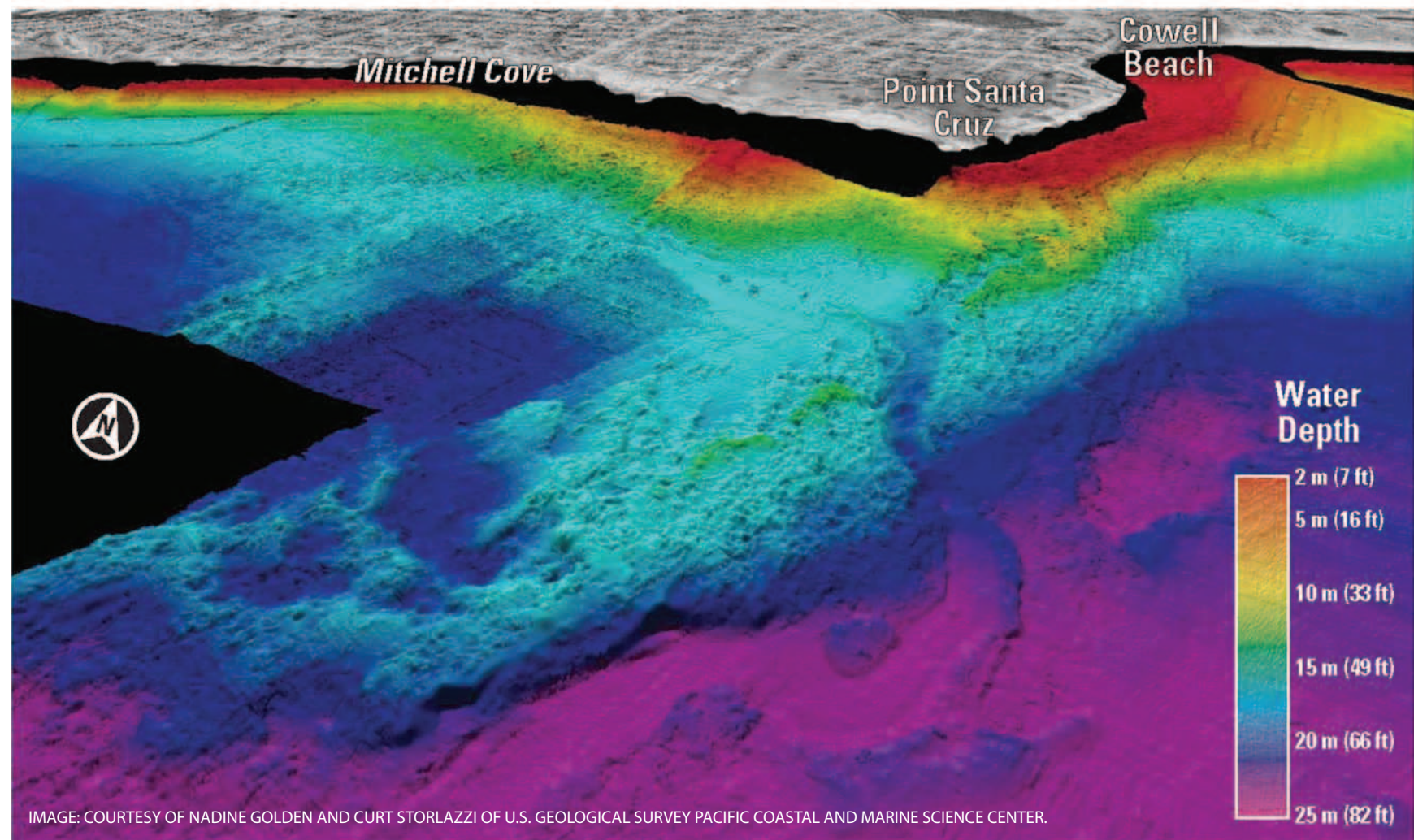


IMAGE: COURTESY OF NADINE GOLDEN AND CURT STORLAZZI OF U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY PACIFIC COASTAL AND MARINE SCIENCE CENTER.

Oblique view to the northwest toward Point Santa Cruz. The southwest-trending bedrock ridge is composed of sandstone of the Purisima Formation, which crops out in Point Santa Cruz. The ridge runs more than 4 km (2.4 mi) offshore and forms reefs that focus the waves that break southeast of Point Santa Cruz at Steamer Lane. The irregular pattern of the shallow sea floor to the west of the bedrock ridge is a field of boulders hypothesized to be resistant bedrock concretions eroded from the Santa Cruz Mudstone that crops out west of Mitchell Cove. The sinuous channel that cuts across the bedrock ridge appears to have formed by erosion, possibly during a period of lower sea level; the abrupt change in water depth over this channel causes the gaps between Steamer Lane’s second and third peaks. The vertical exaggeration is 5x. Approximate distance across the bottom of the image is 1.0 km [0.6 mi].

SANTA CRUZ WORLD SURFING RESERVE

marsh to freshwater wetland, and from grassland to woodland to forest. Santa Cruz’s mild Mediterranean climate and geography support such diverse vegetation as pickleweed, willow, eucalyptus, pine, black cottonwood, coastal oak, big leaf maple, redwood, and Douglas fir. Maintaining this vegetation not only has a significant positive effect on reducing the potential for landslides and floods, but also is crucial to the survival of local wildlife. Examples include gray foxes, mallard ducks, snowy egrets, coho salmon, steelhead, and monarch butterflies in the lower watershed, and brush rabbits, salamanders, squirrels, hawks, and deer in the upper watershed.

Spanish for “Holy Cross,” Santa Cruz is flanked by mountains bearing its name. Well known for the raw beauty of its windswept beaches, sandstone cliffs, and chaparral-covered slopes, Santa Cruz is just as breathtaking above water as it is below. But that beauty is in a perpetual state of flux—the coastline’s spectacular arches, bridges and rock formations are under eternal siege from winter storms and strong surf. Natural Bridges State Beach, along the western end of the reserve, was named for three bridges that once stood along the promontory at the beach’s southern edge. Today, only a single bridge remains.

Resource-protection issues within the reserve stem from the ocean’s vulnerability to pollution via the urbanized watersheds that drain into it, delivering

sediment, fecal bacteria, pesticides, industrial discharge, oil, grease, plastics, metals, and detergents. Fragile habitats and species are under constant assault from beachfront development, recreational activity, and seaborne commerce. The Santa Cruz chapter of the Surfrider Foundation has led the fight against several proposed coastal construction projects, such as seawalls and large-scale housing development. Surfrider activists have also been involved in local bans on Styrofoam takeout containers and plastic bags and helped push regulations for monitoring of toxic emissions from the harbor’s ongoing dredge disposal.

Despite these successes, local marine wildlife remains under threat from urban encroachment. For instance, the Monterey Bay sea otter population has decreased annually for the past three years, based on a running average. Nearly driven to extinction by fur trading in the early 1900s, they were designated as threatened by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service in 1977. They now number approximately 2,700.

The smallest marine mammal in North America, the sea otters are considered an indicator of the health of nearshore marine ecosystems, because they are relatively sedentary and thus susceptible to contaminants. Kelp canopies serve as a primary foraging area for many sea otters, which consume kelp grazers like the sea urchin. This, in turn, enhances kelp production. If otter populations decline, urchins and

Well known for the raw beauty of its windswept beaches, sandstone cliffs, and chaparral-covered slopes, Santa Cruz is just as breathtaking above water as it is below.

other invertebrates can destroy kelp forests. This results in both increased potential for erosion on shore (kelp absorbs some of the energy of waves and storm surges) and loss of habitat for gray whales, sea lions, harbor seals, birds, and numerous invertebrates and fishes.



WHITE HERON. PHOTO: COURTESY OF RICK PUCKETT.

The greatest threat to sea otters continues to be urban runoff, which contains pathogens considered “unnatural” to the species, along with other contaminants such as PCB, DDT, and tributyltin (an antifouling agent found in boat paint). Addressing the flow of harmful substances into the ocean remains central to sea otter recovery. If left unregulated, urban development and industrial activity present serious threats to the very natural resources that sustain humans and wildlife.

Now that Santa Cruz has been named the fourth World Surfing Reserve, the reserve’s Local Stewardship Council will monitor water quality and other potential risks to this region of incredible beauty and biological diversity.

COWELL BEACH WATER QUALITY EFFORTS

BY NICK MUCHA

Cowell's Beach is a cherished natural resource that lies at the heart of the Santa Cruz World Surfing Reserve. In recent years, however, Cowell's Beach water quality has been compromised by high bacteria counts (fecal coliform and enterococcus), consistently landing it on Heal the Bay's "Beach Bummer" list in recent years.

Stemming from a 2014 World Surfing Reserve planning summit, the Cowell Beach Working Group (CWG) was created to improve the scientific understanding of the issue, recommend actions to improve water quality, and improve public understanding of the issue.

This group is supported by the City of Santa Cruz and led by Save The Waves Coalition and is comprised of City of Santa Cruz staff, County Environmental Health Department staff, Surfrider Foundation and Sierra Club. CWG meets regularly to review water quality data and make recommendations for further improvements.

In 2016, CWG recommended the installation of bird screening to prevent the roosting of pigeons and gulls under the wharf, which the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf completed in the August 2016. Subsequent monitoring has shown a 50% reduction in high bacteria postings since that intervention, which represents a notable

improvement in water quality conditions. CWG continues to meet regularly and seeks outside input from a Technical Advisory Committee to achieve further bacteria reductions at Cowell Beach.

The Cowell's water quality issue was a top priority for the Santa Cruz WSR and we are proud of the bacteria reductions achieved by the Cowell's Working Group.

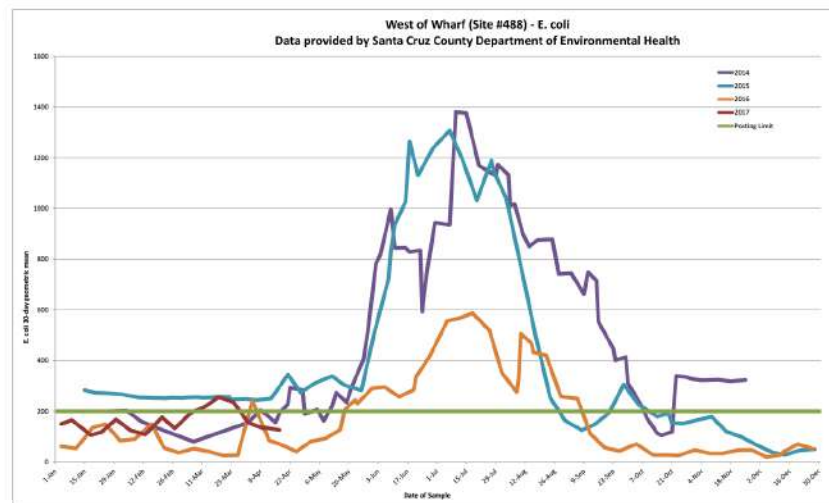


PHOTO: COURTESY OF NIKKI BROOKS



World Surfing Reserves

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Green Wave Supporters: Dream Inn, Clif Bar.

Grassroots Supporters: Ocean Champions, Vernor Surfboards.

Santa Cruz World Surfing Reserve Partners: City of Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, Santa Cruz City Council, U.S. Congressman Sam Farr, California Senator Joe Simitian, California Assemblyman Bill Monning, California Coastal Commission, Big Stick Surfing Association, Santa Cruz Surfing Club Preservation Society.

Santa Cruz World Surfing Reserve Coastal Group: Surfers' Environmental Alliance (SEA), Santa Cruz Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation, Save Our Shores, Sierra Club, Ocean Revolution, Santa Cruz Surfing Museum.

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For more information on World Surfing Reserves and to support the WSR initiative, please visit worldsurfingreserves.org or contact Save the Waves Coalition at info@savethewaves.org.

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