



Coyote
© DAVID PROBYN



American kestrel
© PETER CURTIS

Discover
a resilient land
with a powerful past

MAJESTIC LANDSCAPE

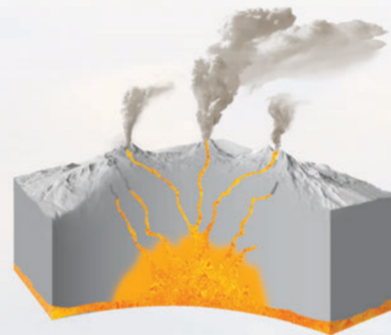
Vast, wild, and stunning.

Lush montane grasslands, scenic vistas, old-growth ponderosa pine, and diverse habitats help make Valles Caldera a land of volcanic enchantment.

This dynamic landscape is recovering from overgrazing, aggressive logging, and road-building. Unnatural wildfires and changing climate have also disturbed the land.

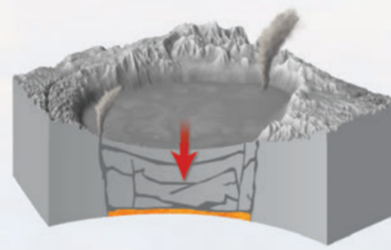
Valles Caldera National Preserve is working to restore these ecosystems and protect the caldera's nature, scenery, and cultural stories for generations to come.

THE POWER OF MAGMA



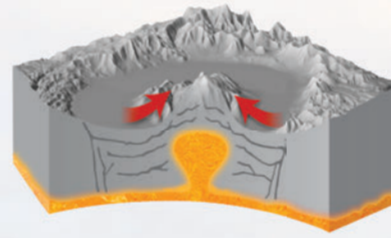
ERUPTION

You are standing in a sunken volcano. Its eruption 1.25 million years ago was 300 times larger than Mount Saint Helens' in 1980. Ejected ash fell as far as Kansas, Utah, and Wyoming. The science of large-scale explosive volcanism began with studies here.



COLLAPSE

A bowl-like depression formed when a vast amount of magma erupted rapidly, the huge magma chamber emptied, and the land above sank into the vacant chamber. Valles Caldera is one of the world's best examples of an intact volcanic caldera.



RESURGENCE

After the collapse, new magma filled the chamber and caused the caldera floor to heave upward. A central dome (Redondo Peak) surged. Valles Caldera is a defining example of the caldera resurgence phenomenon, which researchers first identified here.

DID YOU KNOW? VALLES CALDERA HELPED PROVE THE THEORY OF PLATE TECTONICS!

A classic example of Earth's explosive forces, Valles Caldera features in many scientific discoveries. Scientists, researchers, and visitors continue to come here to learn about geology, volcanology, and ecology.

CULTURAL CROSSROADS

For millennia people were drawn to the caldera for ample natural resources to make tools, projectile points, medicines, and more. Past people prized the caldera's obsidian for making knives, arrowheads, and spear points. Obsidian (volcanic glass) often occurs with calderas and forms from high-silica magma that rapidly cools. Obsidian from the Jemez Mountains has been found at prehistoric sites in Nebraska, North Dakota, Texas, northern Mexico, and Mississippi. Since we can trace obsidian to its volcanic origin, we know Valles Caldera was one of North America's most culturally significant obsidian sources.



These obsidian points can be traced to Valles Caldera and the Archaic Period.
NPS

People have used red elderberry for medicine and food.
© JAMES GATHER



REKINDLED ECOSYSTEMS

Thriving forests and grasslands depend on cycles of wildland fire. A century of logging, overgrazing, and fire suppression interfered with normal fire regimes. Wildfires in 2011 and 2013 burned two-thirds of the preserve. Large areas lost all living trees and understory vegetation; erosion from monsoons stripped away the soil and created large debris flows. But returning low-intensity fire can restore these fire-adapted ecosystems. Prescribed fires imitate healthy natural fires and can help reduce forest fuels, recycle nutrients, and increase habitat diversity.

Fire managers perform a prescribed burn at the preserve.
NPS



VIEW FROM THE PRESERVE ENTRANCE
Freezing air and dense lake-sediment soils prevent tree saplings from establishing in the grasslands, creating a distinctive inverted tree line.
NPS



CONNECTING CULTURES

Paleoindians (10,000 years ago) first regularly visit the caldera and use its obsidian. They are the earliest known of many peoples to use the caldera.

Archaic Period hunter-gatherers (8,000–1,000 years ago) rely on the caldera's plentiful water-fowl, game, fish, berries, roots, seeds, and nuts.

Ancestral Puebloans (800 years ago) first settle in the Jemez Mountains. They grow crops and build masonry field-houses and pueblos in lower elevations that suit agriculture.

Spanish settlers (1500s) bring sheep and other livestock to these grasslands. Herding is the land's primary use into the Mexican period (1821–48).

Hispanic shepherds in the 1900s left carvings in aspen trees.
NPS



The US government grants the land to private owners (1860). Known since as Baca Location No. 1. Successive owners of **Hispanic and Anglo heritage** (1900s)

use Valles Caldera for sheep grazing under the *partido* system, cattle ranching, logging, geothermal energy exploration, and more.

Valles Caldera National Preserve is established (2000). Management of the preserve is transferred from the Valles Caldera Trust to the National Park Service (2014).

American Indians' connections to this land and cultural values have continued throughout these eras of ownership to the present day.

Today, **you** can visit Valles Caldera National Preserve to explore diverse cultural history, serene beauty, and wild natural wonders in a variety of ways.