

ORTEGA, 14TH TO BEACH

SPECIES: COASTAL PRAIRIE



ROUTE HIGHLIGHTS

- » Ocean Beach, Sunset Reservoir, A.P. Giannini Middle School, Rocky Outcrop Park, 16th Street Tiled Steps



Credit: Wikimedia Commons

COASTAL PRAIRIE

Make yourself at home! (There's no place like home!) California's Coastal Prairie is a combination of deep rooted, soil-stabilizing, perennial bunch grasses and wildflowers. Coastal Prairie is among the most diverse and most endangered ecosystems in the world. The grass thatch houses overwintering insects, composite flowers which provide for a variety of pollinators, and insect larvae that feed on herbaceous plants. It also is a haven for all birds – ground-nesters, insect-eaters, and seed foragers! A matrix of grasses is also necessary to support many rare and endangered wildflowers. Coastal Prairie can be considered the 'old growth at our feet', having accumulated organic matter from centuries to produce rich, dark soil (*molliso*). Coastal Prairie ecosystems are naturally kept in balance by wind and salt spray. However, due to the absence of grazing and regular fire, which once kept trees and shrubs to a minimum, neighboring coastal scrub is enveloping our Coastal Prairies. The former coastal prairie in this part of San Francisco was displaced by the housing boom in the 1920s.

ASSOCIATED PLANTS & ANIMALS

Yellow Sand Verbena – *Abronia latifolia*, *American Dune Grass* - *Elymus mollis ssp. mollis*, *Idaho Fescue* – *Festuca idahoensis*, *Purple Needlegrass* – *Stipa pulchra*

NESTING INFORMATION

Dodd listed original dominant species of the North Coast Bunchgrass Prairie as California oatgrass, tufted hairgrass, western fescue (*Festuca occidentalis*), Idaho fescue, and Pacific reedgrass (*Calamagrostis nutkaensis*). Heady et al. in Barbour and Major (1995, ps. 733-745) listed dominants of the Coastal California Prairie as Idaho fescue, red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), and California oatgrass with tufted hairgrass, Pacific reedgrass, and Junegrass among associated species.