Santa Cruz County, California

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Santa Cruz County, California, officially the **County of Santa Cruz**, is a county on the Pacific coast of the U.S. state of California. As of the 2010 United States Census, the population was 262,382.[1] The county seat is Santa Cruz.[2]

Santa Cruz County is part of the San Francisco–Oakland–Hayward, CA Metropolitan Statistical Area, which is included in the San Jose–San Francisco–Oakland, CA Combined Statistical Area. The county is in the California Central Coast[3] south of the San Francisco Bay Area region. The county forms the northern coast of the Monterey Bay, with Monterey County directly south.

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Santa Cruz County, California
County of Santa Cruz

Location in the state of California

Location in the state of California
Coordinates: 37°00'N 122°00'W

Seal / Logo

Country: United States
State: California
Region: Central Coast
Metro area: San Jose–San Francisco–Oakland
Incorporated: February 18, 1850[4]
County seat: Santa Cruz
ZIP codes: 94060 and all ZIPs that begin with the 95 prefix
Area code: 831
Interstate highways: I-5
State highways: SR 1, SR 9, SR 17, SR 129
Total area: 607 sq mi (1,573 km²)
Land area: 445 sq mi (1,152 km²)
Water: 162 sq mi (420 km²)
Highest point: 3,802 ft (1,159 m)
Population (2010): 262,382
Density: 589/sq mi (227/km²)
Time zone: UTC-8 (Pacific Time Zone)
Summer DST: UTC-7 (Pacific Daylight Time)
Website: www.scrcountyca.com

History [edit]

Santa Cruz County was one of the original counties of California, created in 1850 at the time of statehood. In the original act, the county was given the name of Santa Cruz. Before the Spanish arrival, the Ohlone Native American people had lived in the area for thousands of years. Branciforte Creek, still flows through the town of Santa Cruz, was named for Marquis Branciforte, who was the viceroy of New Spain in the early 1800s.[5] The name was changed to "Santa Cruz" in 1905.[6]

Mission Santa Cruz, established in 1791 and completed in 1794, was destroyed by the 1857 Fort Tejon earthquake. As a result of this, a new mission site was selected in 1931.

Geography [edit]

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the county has a total area of 607 square miles (1,573 km²), of which 445 square miles (1,152 km²) is land and 162 square miles (420 km²) is water. The county is bordered on three sides by water: the Pacific Ocean to the west and south and the San Francisco Bay to the north and east. The county's coastline, which is 74 miles (119 km) long, is the longest coastline of any county in California.

The county is situated in a wide coastal valley with the Santa Cruz Mountains to the northwest and the Gabilan Mountains to the southeast. The highest point in the county is Mount Madonna, at 3,802 feet (1,159 m), in the Gabilan Mountains. The Santa Cruz Mountains are part of the Coast Ranges, and the Gabilan Mountains are part of the Salinas Valley. The Santa Cruz Mountains include the Santa Cruz Mountains Range of Light, which is a biologically diverse area that is home to many species of plants and animals, including the Santa Cruz Kangaroo Rat, the Santa Cruz Gilia, and the Santa Cruz Tarplant, which are found only in Santa Cruz County.

Santa Cruz County from space

Flora and fauna [edit]

Santa Cruz County is home to the following **threatened or endangered species**:[7]

- California tiger salamander – endangered
- California red-legged frog – threatened (2006)[8]
- California tiger salamander – Central DPS – threatened (2004)[9]
- Coho salmon – Central California Coast ESU – endangered (2005)
- Steelhead – Central California Coast DPS – threatened (2006)
- Marsh hawksweed – endangered (1997)
- Chinese tiger beetle – endangered (2002)[10]
- Santa Cruz tarplant – endangered (1982)[11]
- Santa Cruz Kangaroo Rat – endangered (1998)
- Santa Cruz cinquefoil – threatened (2000)
- Smith's blue butterfly – endangered (1976)
- Southern sea otter – threatened (2005)[12]
- Western snowy plover – Pacific coast population DPS – threatened (2012)[13]
- Yellowish gilia – endangered (1998)
- Western snowy plover – threatened (1993)
- Santa Cruz Gilia – endangered (1998)
- Coastal marsh milkvetch – endangered (1997)[14]

Historically, sea otter (Enhydra lutris) populations were taken to the coastal grasslands of Santa Cruz County. Ecosystems confused with kelp, were initially described by Miguel Costansó in the diary of the 1769 Portola Expedition near the mouth of the Pajaro River (left on the map) north on Elizabeth St. and Lake Ave. Sea otters were also described by nineteenth century American hunters.[15] They were also described in Santa Cruz County by 19 British Assassins (Arrow people, who allocate along with Spanish Colonists) in the Santa Cruz Mountains, Aptos, Soquel, Capitola, Santa Cruz, Bonny Doon, Felton, Ben Lomond, Boulder Creek, Davenport, Swanton, Zayante, Mount Hermon, Pleasure Point, Rio del Mar, Seacliff, Live Oak, Twin Lakes, Pasatiempo, Pelton Corners, Pajaro Dunes, Pajaro Valley