

## FRAGILE BROOKS ISLAND

A 360-degree panoramic view awaits you atop the 159-foot pyramidal rocky peak of Brooks Island. Trails around the island, over the ridge from north to south and along the shoreline of the low-level sand spit, provide 2.5 miles of good walking over approximately 75 acres of land. A mere half-mile from the Richmond Marina, the 373 acres of land and water that comprise Brooks Island are relatively unknown. This seclusion is due in part to surrounding mudflats that make the island difficult to reach at low tide.

This environmentally sensitive area is a marvelous bird sanctuary. One hundred bird species are known to visit and at least 18, including caspian terns and Canada geese, nest here. Cormorants are seen on old pilings and occasional sightings of ospreys and golden eagles delight viewers. Pheasants remind us of the island's recent past as a private hunting club.

Other animal species are few in number. Rodents are the only natural mammals that inhabit the island. Experiments to establish a deer population failed, as the animals persistently swam back to the mainland. There are occasional offshore sightings of marine mammals. Western garter snakes, northern alligator lizards, arboreal salamanders, and slender salamanders are known to inhabit the island.

At least two habitats that have diminished elsewhere along the Bay are present at Brooks Island: salt marsh, noted by abundant pickleweed and salt grass; and coastal strand, occurring behind beaches in small areas. Both habitats can be severely degraded by hikers. Rare native California bunch grasses punctuate the ecological importance of the island, reminding us of a time gone by when Ohlone Indians were its sole human inhabitants. Wildflowers color the landscape in early spring.

## GEOLOGY OF BROOKS ISLAND

The scenic rock formations of Brooks Island consist of Franciscan chert, which originated from an ancient mountain range just west of San Francisco. These are the same formations found at Albany Hill, and Coyote Hills Regional Park in Fremont. The geology is a mix of sheared and crushed material, which have different degrees of permeability. This factor determines where freshwater springs can surface to provide drinking water for wildlife.

The Park District's goal is to retain as much as possible of this primitive undisturbed island experience for resource appreciation, education, and your enjoyment.

## PEEK INTO THE PAST

Southwesterly winds embrace and heighten the imaginations of Brooks Island visitors. For thousands of years island inhabitants have been buffeted by the winds of change; the rocks, plants, animals, tides, and storms are all champions of fortitude. Notwithstanding the political winds, the most significant history of Brooks Island is that it exists at all in its present state. There were several plans to level the island for industrial or military purposes. Rusting quarry equipment, old rock and concrete foundations, exotic-looking wind-sculptured trees, offshore rotting hulls of sunken ships, deteriorating pier pilings surrounded by water—all transport us from our busy daily lives to an authentic historic storybook setting of mystery, speculation, and intrigue.

With your mind freed by the wind and the sounds of civilization no longer audible, listen to the lapping waves on the shoreline and the calling of birds. Perhaps you can imagine the sounds of the Ohlone Indians who occupied the island for 2,000-3,000 years. It is thought that through time as many as 15,000 people may have lived their entire lives on this island.

In 1775 the first nautical survey of the Bay was completed by Spanish soldiers. Jose de Canizares, under commander Manuel de Ayala, named the rocky spot *Isla del Carmen*. By the 1840s occupation by native peoples had ceased. The 1860s brought American pioneers. Little evidence remains of grazing, fruit production, or offshore oyster cultivation, all of which took place on the island.

Brooks Island was used as a quarry intermittently from 1892-1938. The rock is said to have been used by San Quentin prisoners in constructing Treasure Island as well as the south cell block of San Quentin penitentiary. The Army Corps of Engineers built harbors and a breakwater to protect the Richmond Marina. The quarrying left extremely steep slopes along the top of the island. **FOR YOUR SAFETY, PLEASE STAY ON ESTABLISHED TRAILS.**



*Brooks Island visitors pause to enjoy the view and study the interpretive panel on the island's spit.*



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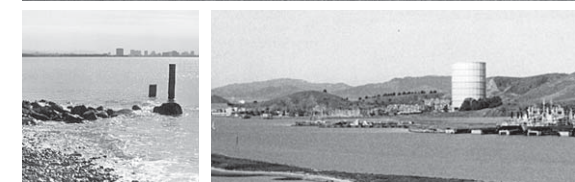
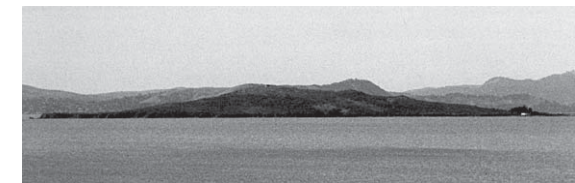
Alameda Creek Quarries Regional Recreation Area  
Alameda Creek Regional Trail  
Anthony Chabot Regional Park  
Antioch Regional Shoreline  
Ardenwood Regional Preserve  
Bishop Ranch Regional Open Space  
Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve  
Black Diamond-to-Mt. Diablo Trail  
Briones Regional Park  
Briones-to-Las Trampas Regional Trail  
Briones-to-Mt. Diablo Regional Trail  
Brooks Island Regional Shoreline  
Browns Island Regional Shoreline  
California Hiking and Riding Trail  
Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline  
Claremont Canyon Regional Preserve  
Contra Costa Canal Regional Trail  
Contra Loma Regional Park  
Coyote Hills Regional Park  
Crown Memorial State Beach  
Cull Canyon Regional Recreation Area  
Del Valle Regional Park  
Delta de Anza Regional Trail  
Diablo Foothills Regional Park/Castle Rock Regional Recreation Area  
Don Castro Regional Recreation Area  
Dry Creek Pioneer Regional Park  
East Bay Skyline National Recreation Trail  
Garin Regional Park  
Hayward Regional Shoreline  
Huckleberry Botanic Regional Preserve  
Kennedy Grove Regional Recreation Area  
Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail  
Lake Chabot Regional Park  
Las Trampas Regional Wilderness/Little Hills Regional Recreation Area  
Las Trampas-to-Mt. Diablo Regional Trail  
Leona Heights Regional Open Space  
Marsh Creek Regional Trail  
Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline  
Martinez Regional Shoreline  
Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline  
Mission Peak Regional Preserve  
Morgan Territory Regional Preserve  
Ohlone Wilderness Regional Trail  
Ohlone Regional Wilderness  
Old Moraga Ranch Regional Trail  
Oyster Bay Regional Shoreline  
Pleasanton Ridge Regional Park  
Point Isabel Regional Shoreline  
Point Pinole Regional Shoreline  
Redwood-to-Las Trampas Regional Trail  
Redwood Regional Park/Roberts Regional Recreation Area  
Round Valley Regional Preserve  
San Pablo Bay Regional Shoreline  
San Ramon Valley Iron Horse Regional Trail  
Shadow Cliffs Regional Recreation Area  
Sibley Volcanic Regional Preserve  
Sobrante Ridge Regional Preserve  
Sunol Regional Wilderness  
Tassajara Creek Regional Park  
Temescal Regional Recreation Area  
Tilden Regional Park  
Tilden-to-Briones Regional Trail  
Wildcat Canyon Regional Park

Printed on recycled paper Rev. 6/98 Cost: 50 cents

# BROOKS ISLAND

## REGIONAL SHORELINE

Access available by reservation permit only. Call (510) 636-1684 for reservations and information.



EAST BAY REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT