

MEDIA ALERT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Reward Offered to Help Save California's Redwoods from Destructive Poaching

SAN FRANCISCO (May 13, 2014) — In response to a disturbing spike in the poaching of old-growth redwood burls, **the Center for Biological Diversity, Redwood Parks Association and Save the Redwoods League** are offering a **\$5,000 reward for information leading to prosecution of poachers**. Redwood burls are large natural protrusions prized for their intricately patterned wood that can weigh hundreds of pounds and bring thousands of dollars. The burls are most prolific on the oldest trees, and they play a critical role in the regeneration of coast redwoods. Removing them exposes the vulnerable heart of the tree to further damage.

"California's ancient redwoods really are some of the world's greatest treasures," said Justin Augustine with the Center for Biological Diversity. "We hope this reward will encourage people to come forward and help us bring an end to this appalling destruction so we can protect these beautiful trees for generations to come." Due to commercial logging, less than 5 percent of California's original old-growth forest remains. Nearly all of these old-growth redwoods — and their highly valued burls — are located within the protected boundaries of national and state parks in northern California. The illegal burl poaching not only scars these prized redwood parks, but may have lasting impacts on wildlife, including threatened and endangered species such as the marbled murrelet.

"With less than 5 percent of the old-growth redwoods remaining on the planet we are all responsible for protecting these magnificent trees and magical places," said Sam Hodder, President and Chief Executive Officer of Save the Redwoods League. "We will continue to work with our partners to create programs and protocols to prevent future destruction of our redwood parks and wildlife habitat."

Coast redwoods regenerate one of two ways: from seedlings, which have a survival rate as low as 1 percent, and from burls, dormant bud material that develops in bumpy, bulbous knobs that can occur anywhere on the tree, most commonly near the ground. Redwood burls develop slowly as the tree grows, and can range from the size of a softball to several feet thick in diameter.

When burls are cut from coast redwoods, the tree is significantly injured in several ways:

1. Redwood bark provides a thick, insulating layer that protects the tree from insect infestation, fire and disease. By removing the bark and the cambium (the growing layer of the tree), the inner heartwood of the tree is exposed, increasing the risk of insect or fire damage and disease. The defacement of trees creates entry points for pathogens from which the tree may not recover.
2. Since the burl is a primary tool for coast redwood reproduction, removing the burl may deny the tree its primary method of regeneration. A burl from a 2000-year-old coast redwood can initiate growth of a new tree that can live for another 2000 years, thus the Latin name for coast redwoods, *Sequoia sempervirens*, which means "forever living".
3. If the cuts are extensive, as in a number of recent cases, the structural integrity of the tree can be weakened to a point where it is threatened by high winds, floods or saturated ground. In these situations, the canopy of the tree can also suffer extensive dieback and reduced vigor, further stressing the tree.

Burl poaching involves the cutting, often with chainsaws, of burls from both live and dead trees, including the felling of living old-growth redwood trees to access burls higher up the stem. There has been an increase in poaching incidents in recent years, including:

- The removal of a burl nearly 8 feet tall, 5 feet wide and 4 feet deep.
- The removal of at least 15 burls, some as large as 6 feet tall and 4 feet wide.
- The felling of a 150-foot-tall, 400-year-old tree 4 feet in diameter to reach a large burl about 50 feet above the ground.
- The removal of 24 burls from five old-growth trees next to a park road.

Editors, please note: For images or to schedule an interview please contact Jennifer Benito at (415) 820-5814 or jbenito@SaveTheRedwoods.org or Justin Augustine at (415) 436-9682 ext. 302 or jaugustine@biologicaldiversity.org.

About the [Center for Biological Diversity](#)

The Center for Biological Diversity is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with more than 775,000 members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places.

About [Redwood Parks Association](#)

Redwood Parks Association is a nonprofit cooperating association in partnership with the National Park Service, California Department of Parks and Recreation and the U.S. Forest Service, providing support for visitor services and education on the public lands along California's north coast. Become a member supporting education in our parks by visiting RedwoodParksAssociation.org

About [Save the Redwoods League](#)

Walk through a redwood forest—home of the tallest, largest, and some of the oldest living beings on Earth—and you can't help but feel an overwhelming sense of awe and peace among these magnificent giants. Since 1918, Save the Redwoods League has led the effort to protect the coast redwoods and giant sequoias for all to experience and enjoy. The League has completed the purchase of more than 190,000 acres of redwood forest and associated land. For more information, please visit SaveTheRedwoods.org.