

Codfish Falls Trail

TRAIL SNAPSHOT

This easy trail provides beautiful views of the North Fork of the American River and leads to an impressive 40' waterfall. An excellent brochure details the flora and fauna on this trail and is available online at www.parc-auburn.org. The pamphlet was written and illustrated by Heather Mehl and edited by PARC's Eric Peach for Heather's 2001 Colfax High School Senior Project.

Fee Trailhead Parking

(N38-59.995; W120-56.420)

Trailhead is on Ponderosa Way, 6 miles south of Weimar. From Auburn, take I-80 east to the second Weimar exit (Weimar Cross Road) and turn right at the bottom



Popular Codfish Falls in the spring

of the off-ramp at the stop sign onto Ponderosa Way and follow it down to the river. The road becomes dirt after about 1 mile. Park near the bridge. The trail begins across the sandy beach on river right. Caution: Ponderosa Way is recommended for sturdy vehicles with clearance. Winter rains can add to the driving adventure.

CODFISH FALLS TRAIL

Codfish Falls Trail provides an excellent opportunity to experience some beautiful river canyon scenery. In the spring, a stunning array of wildflower blooms cut loose along the trail and a profusion of pipevine and tiger swallowtail butterflies enjoying the cool, moist morning air. In the summer, the falls dry up considerably and the trail is hot in the afternoon, so morning hikes are recommended. Bring a picnic lunch to enjoy at the falls or by the river.

The trail starts at the parking area where Ponderosa

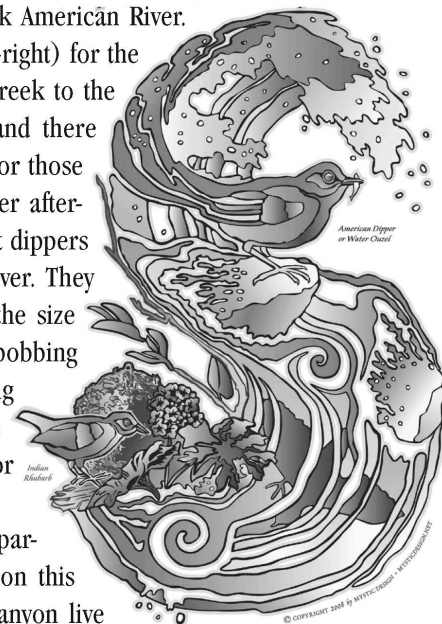
Way crosses the bridge over North Fork American River. It parallels the river downstream (river-right) for the first mile and then heads up Codfish Creek to the falls. The first mile is relatively flat, and there are many side trails down to the river for those interested in cooling off on hot summer afternoons. If you look closely, you may spot dippers (also known as water ouzels) in the river. They are small, brownish-gray birds about the size of a robin, and they can often be seen bobbing up and down, and then suddenly diving below the water. Merganser ducks are commonly seen in the river, diving for fish and insects.

Many species of plants native to a riparian woodland ecosystem can be seen on this trail. Look for three species of oak: canyon live oak, interior live oak, and black oak. Redbud blooms purplish red in the spring. The red berries of toyon are a sure sign of fall. Many fine examples of ponderosa pine, grey pine (also known as foothill, ghost or whispering pine), and Douglas fir grow along the trail.

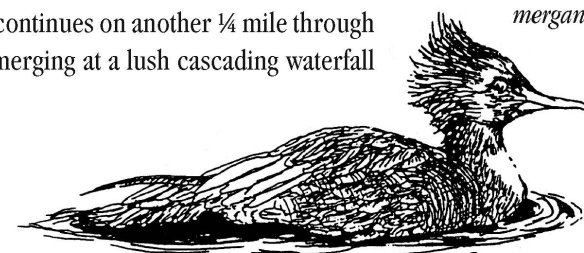
The North Fork was commercially dredged for gold well into the 20th century. Large mounds of dredged cobble tailings are on the opposite side of the river.

Shortly after the trail leaves the river to follow Codfish Creek there is a short side trail that leads out to a gravel bar where Codfish Creek meets the North Fork. This is a good year-round place to picnic or swim in the summer. Across the river, tucked in the bedrock by a deep swimming pool, there are Indian bedrock mortars.

The trail to the falls continues on another ¼ mile through the forest woodlands emerging at a lush cascading waterfall bordered by ferns.



American dipper birds nesting behind a waterfall.



Common merganser

Illustration by Heather Mehl

Illustration by Leetun Bigley and Laurel Madhe



WILDLIFE SNAPSHOT:

Pipevine and the Pipevine Butterfly

The Codfish Creek Trail pipevines are host to the Pipevine Swallowtail butterfly. The vine often climbs bay or other canyon shrubs. Its bloom resembles a pale green pipe. The adult butterfly lays its eggs on the vine leaves. The eggs hatch into orange and black caterpillars that eat the pipevine leaves. An iridescent blue adult pipevine swallowtail brings nature to our fingertips.



Pipevine bloom



*Pipevine caterpillar and
pipevine swallowtail*

