





Donner Memorial State Park

A LANDSCAPE FORGED BY ANCIENT FORCES

This region was once a flat, green expanse before tectonic uplift raised the Sierra Nevada millions of years ago. As tectonic plates collided, immense pressure pushed a massive block of granite skyward, creating the steep eastern slope and more gradual western side we see today. Later, volcanic activity and glaciers sculpted the valleys.

When the most recent glaciers retreated more than 10,000 years ago, a recessional moraine formed at the east end of the valley, creating Donner Lake. These features show how time, ice and stone shaped a landscape that has challenged and inspired humans for countless generations.

CHANGING SEASONS

This composite photo background shows the stark difference between a Sierra winter and summer.

Myotis lucifugus, or little brown bats, can be spotted as summer days wind down. One bat can eat 1,000 mosquitoes in an hour.

LIFE AROUND THE LAKE

The park, just east of the Sierra Nevada crest, is surrounded by magnificent alpine scenery. Tall, straight stands of Jeffrey pines, with their gentle-to-the-touch pine cones, surround the lake and are interspersed with quaking aspen groves.

This landscape is home to mule deer, black bears, ospreys, garter snakes, Sierra mountain beavers and more. All of these plants and animals inhabit a landscape that undergoes dramatic seasonal shifts.



The Sierra marten — a rare, weasel-like carnivore — rests in cavities of mature trees or snags.