



# HUMBOLDT REDWOODS INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION

---

Fall/Winter 2024 Newsletter



## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT: ALAN AITKEN**

There are 6,792 state parks in the United States. A recent study, using TripAdvisor ratings, determined that Humboldt Redwoods State Park is the top-rated state park in the United States. Most of the credit goes to the world's tallest trees that call our park home. However, HRIA's staff and volunteers are the ingredient that enhances the visitors time in the park. Being number one is satisfying and serves as the encouragement to continue our original mission to serve the public.



Recently HRIA held it's fourth annual Haunted Halloween Candlelit Walk. Attendance increases each year with this event's ticket sales topping over 800. Thanks to Sophia, Mary, and our large cast of volunteers that made this event such a success. And thank you to everyone that attended the candlelit walk, supporting HRIA and our local state parks.

*Alan Aitken*

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Alan Aitken - President  
Susan O'Hara - Vice President  
Justin Crellin - Secretary  
Carla Thomas  
Mary Moore

HRIA Executive Director  
Sophia Eckert

HRIA Manager  
Mary Kaufman

Cooperating Association Liaison  
Alyssa Barry

### Mission Statement

The HRIA is an educational non-profit group working in cooperation with the California State Parks at Humboldt Redwoods State Park, Richardson Grove State Park, Grizzly Creek Redwoods State Park, Benbow Lake Recreation Area, Sinkyone Wilderness State Park, Standish Hickey State Recreation Area, and within the North Coast Redwoods District, Eel River Sector. The mission of HRIA is to provide visitors with stimulating explanatory information on the natural and cultural history and to help visitors see these parks not only with their eyes, but also with their hearts. We lead others from mere observation to inspire in them a sense of awe in which the human spirit finds meaning, wisdom and a connection with all living things.

JOIN US

*60th*  
*Anniversary*  
*1964 Flood*

**Pictures and  
stories with  
local Historian,  
Susan O'Hara**

*Saturday*  
*December*  
*21st, 2pm*

**Humboldt Redwoods  
State Park Visitor Center**



# thank you



The Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association received over 50 donations towards our silent auction for our annual Holiday Party. We greatly appreciate the support of our community businesses and artists. Thank you to the following donors:

AVENUE CAFE  
REDWOOD PALACE  
DAILY GRIND  
BENBOW HISTORIC INN  
LEGEND OF BIGFOOT  
PEG HOUSE  
SCOTIA LODGE  
MY HUMBOLDT ABODE  
REDCREST RESORT & GIFTSHOP  
CHAPMAN'S GEM & MINERAL SHOP  
PAUL'S LIVE FROM NEW YORK  
REDWOOD CAPITAL BANK  
US BANK  
SPRINGVILLE QUILT BARN  
RAY'S FOOD PLACE  
COAST CENTRAL CREDIT UNION  
HOT BREW & BISTRO  
WILD CACTUS  
UMPQUA BANK  
WILDWOOD SAW & SPORTING GOODS  
FORTUNA ACE HARDWARE  
STARBUCKS  
EEL RIVER BREWERY  
EL PAISANO'S MEXICAN TAQUERIA  
HOPPY'S FROYO  
NILSON CO.  
BLACKSMITH SHOP  
FERNDALE EMPORIUM  
JEN AMIDI

DR. JENNIFER RIDGEWAY  
TUYAS MEXICAN RESTAURANT & CANTINA  
SUNSHINE & FOG  
GOLDEN GAIT MERCANTILE  
VICTORIAN INN  
FERNDALE ART GALLERY  
FERNDALE PIZZA CO.  
MAIN STREET COFFEE CO.  
HUMBOLDT BAY HARBOR CRUISES  
PIERSON BUILDING CENTER  
NORTH COAST CO-OP EUREKA  
PICKY PICKY PICKY  
BEV'S KIDS  
LOST COAST BREWERY  
HOLLY YASHI JEWELRY & ART  
ARCATA PLAYHOUSE ARTS  
BELL & HOOK OUTDOOR STORE  
ULTIMATE YOGURT  
LOS BAGELS  
TIN CAN MAILMAN  
NORTH COAST CO-OP ARCATA  
BUBBLES  
CARAVAN OF DREAMS  
ARCATA PIZZA & DELI  
ZEN  
HENSEL'S ACE HARDWARE  
FOUR MORI MARKET  
JILL CAMPBELL  
MILKHOUSE



# **SINKYONE WILDERNESS SAYS THANK YOU**

## **BY CARLA THOMAS, HRIA BOARD MEMBER**

The Needle Rock Visitor Center has reopened after the closing of Bryceland-Whitethorn Road into the Sinkyone Wilderness State Park for work conducted August - October. The Road project was overseen by Mendocino County Department of Transportation with funding from FEMA. The Department of Parks and Recreation staff worked with MDOT throughout the project planning and execution. Retaining wall and two guard rails were installed in Dark Gulch above the Jones Beach Camp gate. The project addressed damage during extreme storm events which impacted the stability of the road. We also greatly appreciate the multiple repairs done by MDOT Maintenance Department to problem spots along the road, which caused multiple road closures in recent years.



On behalf of all volunteers and visitors to the Sinkyone Wilderness State Park, we wish Supervising Ranger Greg Hall a well deserved and enjoyable retirement. Greg started with DPR as a trail crew supervisor in the Sinkyone portion of the Lost Coast Trail for many years, then returned as a State Park Ranger, becoming Supervising Ranger in 2016. During his service he was instrumental in gaining approval for multiple projects in the Sinkyone Wilderness State Park to address deferred maintenance and improve visitor experience, and increase DPR staff presence and volunteer services in our park.

We are looking for more camp hosts who can host in the rainy months. We are seeking person(s) who are able to hike 3 miles into Needle Rock Visitor Center if the road is closed during the winter. Camp hosts stay in the Needle Rock Visitor Center while camp hosting for 2-4 weeks at a time. If you are interested, please go to <https://www.parks.ca.gov/pages/1012/files/DPR208h.pdf> and send your completed application to [andrea.mapes@parks.ca.gov](mailto:andrea.mapes@parks.ca.gov).

# **GRIZZLY CREEK REDWOODS STATE PARK**

## **BY SHANNA ARCHIBOLD, SENIOR PARK AIDE**

Another Summer has come and gone, and with its passing Grizzly Creek Redwoods State Park grows quiet. But what a wonderful Summer we had at our little park, so let me share it with you.

Grizzly Creek, as it is often shortened to, is a small campground right off Highway 36 near Carlotta. It has only 28 camp sites, a large day use, a deep swimming hole on the Van Duzen River, and the cutest small visitor center operated by Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association. The visitor center and campground are open May to September.

Grizzly Creek's most unusual claim to fame is that part of Star Wars: Return of the Jedi was filmed in Cheatham Grove. In celebration of that Grizzly Creek staff led Star Wars themed walks as part of the Forest Moon Festival weekend in late May. Despite the limited parking at Cheatham Grove, we had many eager participants.

Grizzly Creek State Park is used by many different types of visitors. We had school field trips, plein air painters, First 5 playgroups, local girl scout campers, hiking enthusiasts, Cal Fire's fire fighters, family weddings, memorials, birthday parties, group picnics, local families, and travelers from around the world. Many visitors remarked on how wonderful the visitor center was; the wide selection of books, quality merchandise & educational displays were enjoyed by many.



The 2024 Crew (Left to right) Kevin (Interpreter), Rachel (Camp Host), Shanna (Senior Park Aide), Thomas (Supervising Ranger), Dana (Volunteer), Doranna (Park Aide) & Elizabeth (Park Aide). Not shown are the many maintenance workers who kept the bathrooms well stocked & clean all summer and Park Aide Jordan.

Grizzly Creek Campground reopens in the middle of May 2025. Cheatham Grove is open for free Day Use year around. If you want to come to visit this Autumn or Winter, it's right near mile marker 13 on Hwy 36.

## **FLOODS ALONG THE EEL RIVER**

**BY SUSAN O'HARA, HRIA VICE PRESIDENT**

Although it will be 60 years since the devastating 1964 flood in December, the impacts of the flood remain throughout the region. Towns that once flourished have been reclaimed by vegetation and the park itself expanded to protect the tall trees that line the Eel River and Bull Creek. However, the high waters of the Eel in 1964 were not the only floods to leave an impact on those who live along its banks.

The watershed of the Eel is the third largest in California, and has experienced many floods over the past millennia. The watershed can accommodate large amounts of rain, but when rain falls rapidly over a short period of time, floods are inevitable. During recorded times, the earliest known flood occurred in 1862. Rivers flooded throughout the state, a result of winter storms bringing rain and snow almost daily to the state for two months. At this time, the nascent Humboldt County had the smallest population in the state, with most American residents living in and around Humboldt Bay. Those living in Ferndale were farther from the flooding river, although lands throughout the region were inundated. Geologists have since determined that similar rain and flood events have occurred every two centuries and thus high water is a part of the natural world of the redwoods.

The flood of 1915 is notable in that communities had begun to be settled along the South Fork of the Eel, including McKee's Mill, now known as Weott, and more families had settled around Myer's Flat. Farms had also been founded at Holmes Flat and Pepperwood as well as Shively. The communities of Dyerville and Bull Creek were long established, and had been joined by the railroad community of South Fork and Youngs. Additionally, the Northwest Pacific Railroad had been completed the previous year, with many trestles crossing the tributaries to the Eel as well as the Eel itself at Dyerville and the Van Duzen near Alton. Work was also underway to build what is now the Avenue of the Giants. As a result, the 1915 flood was more destructive than earlier high waters. The Ferndale Enterprise observed on February 5th, "without exaggeration, from reports so far obtainable, it seems probable that this week's storm and flood was the most disastrous in the history of the valley or of the county as a whole."

The 1920s and the 1940s saw a respite from the floods and freshets experienced by earlier residents of the county. A flood in 1936 reminded county citizens of the destructive force of the Eel River. The Mendocino Beacon reported in January of that year that "Eel River Valley Road in Humboldt were (sic) submerged for several days and five low type bridges across the Eel River were under water. . . . At Shively flood conditions prevailed for several days and there was no method of getting across the river. The bridge was submerged and logs and drift prevented the use of a ferry."

Following WWII, logging experienced an upsurge to meet the demands of returning soldiers who were looking to for homes for themselves and their new families. Humboldt County experienced a swelling of its population as many moved to the county to work in the timber industry. Industrial changes such as the advances of the chainsaw and in trucks allowed for more trees to be harvested more rapidly. The results were often barren slopes that had once supported forests. These new residents had not long lived along the river, and with the last flood two decades in the past, few considered the consequences of settling in the small communities along the waterway. The flood in December of 1955 caught many residents of Humboldt off guard. The Humboldt Standard grimly observed "Humboldt County was virtually cut off from the rest of the world as far as railroad, highway and air routes." Further, "Highway 101 is covered by water and slides generally from Fortuna into Lake County." Damage at Pepperwood included "business

buildings and at least one motel seen drifting down the current.” At South Fork “Sheriff officers reported a man was clinging to an apple tree across the river.” In addition to power outages, water supplies were contaminated, and the silt left behind by the receding flood waters was polluted from the propane tanks, septic systems, and debris from the homes destroyed.

More alarming to state park officials and the Save the Redwoods League was the damage done to the redwood groves along Bull Creek in the Rockefeller Forest. Much of the bank was eroded, and work began to stabilize the sides of the creek. Riprap was placed along the creek, but proved ineffective. Campgrounds at Williams Grove and Stephen’s Grove were badly damaged, with Williams Grove never re-opening as a campground, except for large groups, and Stephens Grove never reopened. Hidden Springs Campground was built to replace these two campgrounds. Richardson’s Grove campground was also badly damaged as well as residences for park employees.

Nine years later the 1964 flood struck on the same day as the 1955 flood. Similarly to the great flood of 1862 heavy rains mixed with snow melt resulted in the river cresting 33 feet above the road in the small town of Weott. Residents quickly realized that they had to depend on themselves to help rescue those whose lives and belongings were endangered. The school in Weott housed the store, post office, and liquor store, with these items being carried out of the flood waters by town members. In Pepperwood community residents also worked together to retrieve belongings. Sadly, Pepperwood was also the site of lives lost to the flood waters as some believed the water could not get higher than it had in 1955. At Stafford, residents heard the booming noise as logs struck against the bridges crossing the Eel during the night, in the morning, only one bridge remained. As in the 1955 flood, Humboldt County was quickly isolated from the rest of the state as bridges were washed away and slides closed Highways 101, 36, and 299. The Northwestern Pacific Railroad lost miles of track and most trestles along its route. Helicopters were able to bring supplies to the isolated communities after the storm, but it was three months before needed materials could be brought by truck convoy to the stricken area.

With the destruction caused by the 1964 flood, new policies were put in place, limiting construction on the flood plains of the Eel River. This along with the devastation of both the 1955 and 1964 flood led to the end of Pepperwood as a town and the moving of Weott up to the side of the hill, away from the river. Much of the land of the former towns now preserved by the state park, and was replanted with redwoods. The state park also determined that in order to protect the redwoods in Rockefeller Forest, all of the Bull Creek watershed needed to become state park land.

As a result of decisions made following the 1964 flood when the Eel River overflows its banks, less damage is done, but the danger to roadways remains. The river while peaceful in the summer has the potential to rise and flood when the winter rains come. Automatic measuring of river heights makes predictions easier, but when the river starts rising at a foot an hour, it is time to seek high ground!

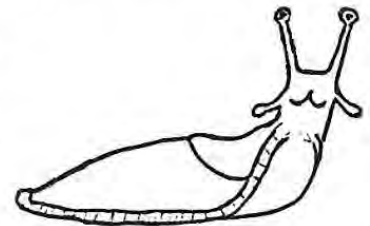


**Humboldt Redwoods  
Interpretive Association  
PO Box 276  
Weott, CA 95571  
vc@humboldtreduwoods.org**

**GIVE A GIFT OF MEMBERSHIP TO THE HUMBOLDT  
REDWOODS INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION**

You can help support the work of the HRIA by becoming a member. Funds raised through memberships, endowments, and donations enable HRIA to develop displays, purchase equipment, sponsor research, publish interpretive literature, and fund the expansion of our Visitor Center and its quality exhibits. A critical element in the success of the Association is its membership and endowment program. Individuals and families throughout the country have long supported the Association. Member benefits include a 20% discount on all books, maps, posters, calendars and publications stocked for sale by the Association (not available to Senior/Student members), the Association newsletter, and tax deductible membership dues. Members also have the benefit of knowing that they are participating in an organization dedicated to expanding the awareness of one of the most unique ancient forests left on Earth. **Please enroll me in the Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association at the membership level circled below:**

<b>Student/Senior</b>	<b>\$10</b>	<b>Life</b>	<b>\$250</b>
<b>Individual</b>	<b>\$25</b>	<b>Patron</b>	<b>\$500</b>
<b>Supporting</b>	<b>\$50</b>	<b>Endowment</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>
<b>Sponsoring</b>	<b>\$100</b>	<b>Redwood Crown</b>	<b>\$2,500</b>



Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_

How would you prefer to receive your quarterly newsletter:  
PRINT / ELECTRONIC / BOTH