



Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association

President's Report: Being Thankful

As I write this, Thanksgiving is rapidly approaching, along with the rest of the holiday season. I have my students write about what they are thankful for, and so I also want to take the opportunity to say that I am thankful for many things around our Visitor's Center, and all the parks we now support.



First, and foremost, I am thankful for all the volunteers who have staffed the center at Burlington as well as the other centers. Our volunteers come every summer, or winter, to spend several months amongst the redwoods and to share with others about what to see and do in the area. Others are local residents who enjoy sharing their favorite places with the public. Each volunteer also gives a bit of their special skills, whether it be computer skills, making signs to help guide visitors, or even just a

willingness to weed and help manage the wildflower garden in the front of the center. I also appreciate our Board Members who so faithfully work to manage the center. So, once more let me say thank you!

I am also thankful for the great staff of Rangers and Maintenance employees that work at Humboldt Redwoods State Park. I have had the privilege to know many of these hardworking individuals who love the redwoods and the park and see themselves as caretakers of one of the greatest gems in the California State Park system. Starting as a park aide at Humboldt Redwoods in 1980, I know that these men and women have had a great influence on me. I worked with one retired maintenance worker, "Ranger Roy" Allen, who had come back to repair flood damaged trails. He worked as hard as the park aides, demonstrating the responsibility he felt for the park and its visitors, a value I try to carry on.

Of course I am extremely thankful for the many employees of the HRIA, since its inception, who have done the day-to-day work of operating our centers. Each Executive Director has given a part of their creativity and interests to the center.

However, most of all, I am thankful for the redwoods themselves. They are our *raison d'être*, for without them, our parks would not exist. I hope that you to can soon enjoy a trip to the redwoods!

Susan O'Hara; HRIA President



Fiftieth Anniversary of 1964 Flood By Susan O'Hara

Large natural disasters leave indelible impressions in the minds of the survivors. The 1964 Flood is no exception. Though too young to remember the flood, although I was living at Weott at the time, (My mother notes I was 2 ½!) many have shared with me their impressions and memories of "the flood." This event changed many lives, and had a lasting impact on local residents and the State Park.

Fifty years ago, during the last weeks of school before Christmas vacation, my mother, Margaret Pritchard, Kindergarten teacher at then Weott Elementary, now Agnes J. Johnson Elementary, commented to a fellow teacher that "perhaps they would have a white Christmas, because there was so much snow on nearby Grasshopper mountain," in the middle of Humboldt Redwoods State Park. (Continued on page 6)

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Mission Statement

The Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association is an educational non-profit group working in cooperation with the California State Parks at Humboldt Redwoods State Park, Richardson Grove State Park, Grizzle Creek Redwoods State Park, Benbow Lake State Recreation Area and the Sinkyone Wilderness State Park. The mission of HRIA is to provide visitors with stimulating explanatory information on the natural and cultural history; 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.

Upcoming Events at the Burlington Visitors Center:

The annual tree lighting of our outside tree at Burlington will take place on December 10.

The public is invited to come to the center and enjoy hot cider and hot

chocolate along with cookies

and to share in caroling with the Madrigal choir from South Fork

High starting at 6:00. Santa

will arrive at 7:00 with some

help from the Weott Fire

Department to actually light

the tree and to hear some children's wishes for Christmas.

Inside the center, you can help decorate the tree by making a donation for an ornament you can then dedicate and place on the tree.



1964 Flood Remembrances

On December 13th the public is invited to the center at 1:00 to share about their memories of the 1964 flood. Local historian, author, and board member, Dave Stockton will be there to share his memories. All are invited to talk about this event that changed the landscape and cultural shape of the communities along the Eel so drastically.



Giving Back To The Park, or What We do with our Money:

By David Pritchard, HRIA Executive Director

As a non-profit, and to fulfill our mission, we put our money back into supporting and helping the rangers and staff at Humboldt Redwoods, Richardson's Grove, Grizzly Creek and the Sinkyone Wilderness. The most recent donation was a forklift for unloading and loading firewood at the campgrounds. In the past HRIA has donated digital cameras, kayaks, wet suits, a laptop computer, a log splitter, night vision binoculars, prizes for the campfire programs at the three campground and supplies to the interpreters' Junior Ranger program, as well as paying the interpretive specialist salaries. All this has been made possible through donations, memberships and sales from the visitor center store. Thank you so much for your support, because of your help, we are able to help our park maintain its resources.



I would also like to thank all of our wonderful volunteers. Volunteers for Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association are the greatest. Besides working a 4-hour shift in the Visitors Center three to four days a week they also volunteer doing other tasks for HRIA and the state park. For example, Harry Sharp volunteered during July, and on his days off traveled to Founders Grove, serving as a DOCENT. He also put on campfire programs at the Burlington Campfire Center. Gary and Kathy Hawley and Wayne Hale, in their off hours, worked on the sound system and projection as well as cleaning the video screen at the Burlington Campfire Center. Virgil and Sharon George, after work, come and fold hundreds of the tee shirts that are for sale in the center. Patty Costello developed a map to hand out the visitors showing the top five hikes in Humboldt Redwoods State Park and the directions from the visitor center to each hike. When our flat screen TV went on the fritz, she went online, diagnosed what was wrong, and fixed it. This center could not run as smoothly as it does without the help of all of our volunteers.



Photo Contest

Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association Photo Contest was exciting. Submissions of images of photographer's favorite scenes of Humboldt Redwoods, Grizzly Creek Redwoods, Richardson Grove and Sinkyone Wilderness State Parks were judged in November, with the winning entry coming from Sanjay. Second and Third place images were taken by Ginny Dexter, winner of the 2013 contest.

Guests at Grizzly Creek, Summer 2014 by Ranger Emily Peterson

Since the summer of 2011, Grizzly Creek Redwoods State Park stopped conducting interpretive programs. There are various reasons for this; first and foremost was the fact that the State 'gave up' Grizzly to the County of Humboldt for a while and the ranger stationed at Grizzly was transferred over to Humboldt Redwoods. While under the care of the County, interpretive programs were not a priority. When I showed up right at the beginning of the summer of 2013, I was so overwhelmed with getting situated in a new park and cleaning up years of neglect, that I too allowed programs to go by the way side. Well, I'm happy to report that summer of 2014 saw a full complement of interpretive programs at Grizzly Creek once again; nature walks, Jr. Rangers and of course campfire programs.

Grizzly Creek also happens to be a favorite of the local schools for field trips and grant funded studies. During the spring, fall and winter we are often visited by school groups, mostly for day use but some stay overnight as well, utilizing our group camp.

This past spring I became involved with some of the school programs and realized we had some



great experts out there who did a really wonderful job of presenting their topic of expertise to both kids and adults. I decided to start asking them if they'd be willing to come back during the summer months and be our guest speakers at campfire programs. They did! Speakers included the folks from Butterfly Way who did a wonderful presentation with live butterflies and a girl in a butterfly costume; Dave Heaton a local geologist and favorite of the school programs talked about the fascinating and unique geology of the Van Duzen River area and performed demonstrations with different types of rocks; Charles Beck from the Ferndale Repertory Theatre did a very convincing 'impersonation' of Mark Twain, complete with the period costume; Dr. Domanchuk did a presentation on astronomy that kept even the little kids mesmerized; Anica Williams, District Interpreter came down and did her great slide

show on the wonderful world of bats, and last but certainly not least, former and beloved State Park employee (and H.R.I.A. board member) Dana Johnston did an encore presentation of 'Wonderful Wilderness.'

Of course not to be left out were my amazing park aides, Ryan Knight, Ashley Disney and Elaine Cunha who all participated in the programs throughout the summer and did an excellent job. Many, many visitors commented on how much they enjoyed all of the programs this summer and how glad they were to have them back.

With our dwindling numbers out here in the field and morale at what seems like an all-time low, it's more important than ever to stay involved with interpretation, not only for the benefit of the visitors, but for staff as well. Interp. is fun! It helps us to remember why we're here and keeps us connected to our parks.



Tomorrow I will be giving a presentation to a group of kids about 'What Rangers Do'. Lately I've been feeling pretty depressed about the current situation in State Parks so when I was asked to do this presentation, I wasn't too sure I was the right one for the job. I've taken quite a bit of time putting it together and have asked a lot of people for help with collecting photos, but the program has come together. And during this process I have been reminded once again that I have a really great job in a really great park, and I am so lucky to be here.

Thank you interpretation!

Boy Scout Troup #13 Teams Up with California State Parks and HRIA to Build Four Trail Bridges

By Carla Thomas, Sinkyone liaison and HRIA Board Member

Joseph Haas (age 14 years old) and Boy Scout Troop #13 from Newcastle, California have taken on the impressive task of replacing four trail bridges at the Sinkyone Wilderness State Park. This project will serve as Joseph Haas' Eagle Scout community service project. The bridges cross waterways between the Needle Rock Visitor Center and Jones Beach, one mile away. The Eel River Sector of the North Coast Redwoods District is providing the materials for the bridges; Boy Scout troop # 13 Newcastle is providing the planning and labor. HRIA and the Sinkyone Camp Hosts are also pitching in some funding and labor. In order to conduct this project Joseph developed a business plan to procure the materials, provide logistical and safety procedures, as well as conduct the operation. "I know it's ambitious, but I'm certain we can accomplish all 4 bridges before September 2015" said Joseph Haas. "I really appreciate the input and guidance I received from the Richardson Grove Maintenance Supervisor, the State Parks Roads and Trails management, the park rangers, my scout leaders and the HRIA and the park's camp hosts."

After creating his business plan, Joseph had to obtain approval from troop 13's leadership committee, as well as the BSA Gold Country District Eagle Advisor, before he could start the project with his team.



The first bridge was replaced October 18th and 19th at the Streamside Camp. More than three quarters of a ton of materials were carried one quarter of a mile to the bridge site. The old bridge, which was in very poor condition, was removed and transported one quarter mile back to the road on October 18th. The new supports and decking were in place by the end of the same day, then the railings were in place and the bridge was finished by 2:30 on October 19th. The volunteer work team included scouts, assistant scoutmasters and 4 camp hosts. The work team camped on site and practiced Boy Scout camp skills as well as wood working, leadership and construction skills.



“This is an excellent example of what can be accomplished when we team up with others to improve the visitor experience, while teaching our youth important organizational and technical skills that will benefit them throughout their adult life” said Mike Pogue, Maintenance Supervisor, Richardson Grove State Park, who was able to fund the materials for the first bridge from his operations budget.

“Joseph’s project showcases the California State Parks’ ability to leverage the resources of other organizations through partnership to supplement limited State Park resources” said Roger Goddard, Acting District Manager, North Coast Redwoods District, California State Parks. The next bridge building date is Dec. 26-January 2, weather permitting. Please contact Carla Thomas if you are interested in helping carlasthomas@earthlink.net.



Humboldt Redwoods State Park’s Mounted Assistance Unit

By Cathy Methana, MAU President and HRIA Board Member
The 2014 camping and riding season is drawing to a close for the Mounted Assistance Unit. The dedicated group of 30 volunteers has logged over one thousand hours of riding and maintaining the trails in the park this year. In addition to trail maintenance, the unit also helps to keep Cuneo Creek Horse Campground maintained. Twice a year the MAU has a spring and fall campout and work weekend.

This spring the unit had many projects in the in the campground and on the trails. One of the manure bins in camp was repaired by replacing boards that were rotting. New signs were attached to all the picnic tables warning campers of the issues with bears in the park. The water troughs were cleaned and filled in the campground and out on the trails. Non-native plants were removed from the campground and the trail. Unit members are out riding in the park helping to assist visitors with trail directions, park information, history and trail issues.

The Unit’s fall campout and work weekend was very successful with the completion of many projects to help the park close up the campground for the winter. The unit applied oil to help preserve



the redwood picnic tables in Cuneo Creek Campground, removed the bear signs that were put up in the spring, trimmed tree limbs that were encroaching into campsites and covered the sand pit that the unit donated for horses to roll in. At the fall campout three new members were accepted into the unit after completing their year-long apprentice program.

Since the start of the MAU in 2002, the unit has made many improvements to Cuneo Creek Campground.

MAU member Graham Hutt cleaning out the spring box for the trough on Look Prairie multi-use road

New corrals have been installed, water troughs have been added, a rolling area was built for horses to enjoy after a hard, sweaty ride and manure bins have been improved and repaired, just to name a few.

The Mounted Assistance Unit would not be possible if not for the funding from Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association and the assistance from the rangers and park staff.

Fiftieth Anniversary of 1964 Flood, (continued from page 1)



What mom didn't know or foresee was that a strong Pacific storm would make its way to the Pacific Northwest a few days later. Rain began to fall on December 17 and by the 19th, the river was rising rapidly, and was predicted to reach flood stage, near 30 feet at Dyerville on the South Fork. Quickly melting the snow, the warm rain became mostly runoff. Contributing to the amount of water ending in local rivers was logging practices of the era as well as the devastating wildfire season during the near drought like conditions of the summer and fall of 1964 that had seen thousands of acres burnt.

On the afternoon of the 21st, residents along the Eel River received their first flood warning. At the time, Weott was a thriving community with many residences and businesses lining the Avenue of the Giants. Though the town had been badly damaged during the 1955 flood, most had rebuilt, and were looking for increased prosperity. Businesses included J.E. Johnson store, Carl's Grocery, and Shorty's Bar. At 5 p.m. the fire whistle blew, and residents began to move those closest to the river to higher ground. Flood waters were beginning to lap at the sides of buildings, the river rising faster than a foot an hour, a guide many used to gauge if the river was indeed going to flood. Contents from stores, the post office, the liquor from the bars were all moved to the school. My mother's observation of this was that everyone had a drink at Shorty's Bar before moving the rest. As the floodwaters rose, it soon became evident that the waters were too high to move any more belongings, instead residents could only watch helplessly as the flood waters continued to rise. My father, then CDF Ranger I, Harry Pritchard, recalled standing with Herschel Wheeler watching the river rise and thinking that he knew what to do if there was a fire, there were fire breaks to be built, lines that could be held. With the river, there was nothing he could do, but wait for it to crest, which it did in the early morning hours of the 23. My mother noted "Harry was out all day and all night until the river crested."



Daylight revealed the rivers force. What had been a thriving main street was now covered with silt and debris. Don Archer's sawhorse was discovered resting on top of power lines, mute testimony to the river's height. Houses washed from their foundations were tumbled about. The J.E. Johnson residence floated on top of nearby Bonner's motel. This damage was repeated all along the small towns and communities lining the Eel River. During the clean up, the Army Corps of Engineers condemned most of the buildings, and hiring residents to burn their friends' homes and businesses.

To the south, at Myers Flat, the sawmill received tremendous damage and the church I was baptized in, The Presbyterian Church of the Redwoods, floated down the river. To the north, the railroad community of South Fork saw floodwaters push entire trains into the riverbed, and diesel spilt from tanks quarantined South Fork for weeks. Logs and houses formed temporary dams around bridges, which along with a high tide that did not allow the river to empty into the ocean,



caused the Eel to reach extreme levels. Forced from their homes as the river rose, Holmes Flat residents climbed the hill between them and Redcrest to save themselves. Severely damaged in 1955, Pepperwood was one of the few locations along the Eel where there were fatalities. Several families seeking refuge at Vance's motel, became trapped there when the waters rose higher than they had in 1955. Albert Potter rescued some of the families, but was unable to save his own wife who drowned in the floodwaters.

With the only form of long distance communication being radio, my dad became very involved with the Civil Defense, organizing rescues, assessing damage, and helping where he could. One place he was called was Dyerville Bridge where the freeway bridge was threatened by a large log jam. The Avenue Bridge had washed away, and if the freeway bridge succumbed, there was no hope of helping those to the north or getting help. To save the bridge, California Division of Highways employees William F. Wilson, James Chaille, and Pete Grover climbed down onto the floating mass to set dynamite



charges. Most other bridges fell to the force of the river; the freeway bridge at Stafford washed away, as well as the one connecting Rio Dell and Scotia. Residents at Stafford told reporters of the nerve-wracking night they had spent listening to the grinding and groaning of logs against the bridge piers. North of Rio Dell, the north and southbound bridges were swept away. The only bridge not ruined was the large concrete bridge, Fernbridge. Due to damage to bridges and roadways, air transportation was the solution to connect supplies to residents hard hit by floodwaters.

Navy helicopters landed on the freeway at Weott, arriving with supplies just as my mom was running out of bread and milk. But, for most Southern Humboldt residents, their remote, isolated conditions meant they rescued each other, and helped each other without other assistance. Families whose homes were destroyed moved in with others, the Peterson's from Myers Flat moved in with my parents. Mom remarked that Weott was isolated for weeks. She received a letter from her sister on December 31st, by "Air Mail."

Eventually, residents were able to rebuild or move on, but the impact of the flood of '64 can still be seen along the river. As a result of the damages of the 1955 and 1964 floods, the State Park system and the Save-the-Redwoods League worked to purchase the entire Bull Creek drainage to protect the tall redwoods in Rockefeller forest, doubling the size of Humboldt Redwoods State Park. Residents also sold their land to the park after new laws were passed limiting how close to the river homes could be built. Today, as you hike along the river, silt from the flood of 64 is still found far from the river, a silent reminder that where the river once was, it can be again.



Return Service Requested

**Humboldt Redwoods
Interpretive Association**
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Fall 2014

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**GIVE A GIFT MEMBERSHIP TO THE
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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, and publish interpretive literature and also to fund the expansion of the Humboldt Redwoods State Park 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:

Student/Senior	\$10	Patron	\$500
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