President’s Report: Alan Aitken

Winter has arrived at Humboldt Redwoods State Park, and while visitor numbers have slowed with the onset of the rainy season, the work of HRIA continues. Our Stated mission is to interpret the redwoods to the public. However, since the recession of 2008, HRIA has expanded its responsibilities to include Grizzly Creek Redwoods State Park, Richardson Grove State Park, and Sinkyone Wilderness State Park. I am proud to say that HRIA is recognized as one of the most successful interpretive associations in the state park system, returning a higher percentage of the funds we raise back to the park system than other interpretive associations on the north coast.

With success comes opportunity to give back even more. At the November board meeting HRIA agreed to partner with the State Park administration and a local cider company to enter into a project to identify and rehabilitate the long abandoned apple orchards within Humboldt Redwoods State Park. While the project is still in the application process for grant funding, we are very hopeful to get to be a part of this exciting project. We will keep our members informed on the status of this project in future newsletters.

I am sad to announce that Ranger Emily Becker will be leaving the State Parks. Emily has always been a stalwart supporter of HRIA. Emily created and mentored the Mounted Assistance Unit into one of the best in the State Park system. Her knowledge, energy, and dedication will be missed.

Alan Aitken
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Officers
Alan Aitken – President
Susan O’Hara – Vice President
Carla Thomas – Secretary
Maralyn Renner – Treasurer
Cathy Mathena – MAU

Board Members
Dana Johnston
Dave Stockton
Richard Leamon

Co-op. Assoc. Liaison
Greg Hall Supervising Ranger

Visitor Center Manager
Debbie Gardner

HRIA Executive Director
Sophia Eckert

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 and Sinkyone Wilderness State Park 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; 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.

It's that time of year again! The Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association's annual holiday party will be at **6:00pm on Thursday, December 14th at Humboldt Redwoods State Park.** Join us for carols with the Miranda High School Choir. There will also be cider, hot chocolate, the tree lighting, and if we are lucky, Santa! Please bring friends, family, neighbors, and non-perishable food items for the food drive.
Managers Report
By Debbie Gardner, Manager

Happy day to all! Its fall again… the leaves are changing colors, the morning air is crisp, and what a great time it is to come and visit the redwoods and of course, the Visitor Center. We have some new books. *A Voice for the Redwoods* written by Loretta Halter is a great one for all ages. *The Tall Trees* written by Craig Vroom, award winning author for adventure tales for children, would make another excellent addition to a children’s collection or a wonderful holiday present.

The volunteer luncheon was a great success this year. We held it at the River Lodge in Fortuna, and had over 40 volunteers in attendance including Visitor Center volunteers, camp hosts, Mounted Assistance Unit members, and HRIA board members. Once again, a big thank you to all the volunteers for their dedication to the Visitor Centers and to California State Parks.

As we go into the holiday season remember to have fun and be as good has you can to everyone you meet. With that, we hope everyone had a happy Thanksgiving. We hope to see you at the annual Christmas party on Thursday December the 14th. The party starts at 6:00 pm with the tree lighting and of course Santa! Please bring a nonperishable for the food drive.

Mounted Assistance Unit
By Cindy Giacomini

As the park closes and fall turns to winter, it’s always sad to see the riding and camping season come to an end. But what a great season it was! The wildlife put on an amazing display this year. Beautiful families of deer, bear, and turkey visited Cuneo campers regularly. The trails were great to explore and watching the trees turn from green to beautiful colors of fall was an amazing site.

The Mounted Assistant Unit (MAU, pictured right) had their final campout & work weekend of the season. New horses were tested into the unit and Cuneo Creek Campground was readied for winter. The volunteers also installed 3 new corrals to the group campsites. Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association purchased the corrals and along with help from Humboldt Redwood State Park staff, MAU worked for three days to get them put in. Campers will enjoy the new addition next season. MAU members also worked on the rolling pit, general camp clean up and removing brush. One person, David Pritchard, has
This fall a grant from the California Coastal Conservancy’s Explore the Coast Grant made it possible for three schools to bring their children to Usal Beach to hike and talk about care for the environment, human impacts and natural processes: 9 children, their teacher and 8 parents from Spy Rock school; 37 children from two Laytonville Elementary/Middle School classrooms, their teachers and 9 parents; and 12 children and 5 parents from Leggett Valley School (pictured right). Each school had a half day of in school presentation to preview the environmental lessons of a field trip, get introduced to the Usal Project Staff, and integrate lessons with class curriculum. A full day field trip to Usal Beach at the South End of the Sinkyone Wilderness State Park during September or October then brought ideas and physical experiences together for the children and their families.

Laytonville School (grades 4/5 and 7) focused on geologic processes (the Rock Cycle, and the position of the Usal coast near the Mendocino Triple Junction). Spy Rock School (K-3) focused on anadromous fishes, both in their home watersheds and in Usal Creek. Leggett Valley students (grades 4/5) focused on human impacts on watersheds—fishes, amphibians and insects. At Usal Beach students from each school explored the redwood forest, Usal Creek and the beach environments.

The project team and teachers began a conversation about creating an outdoor classroom relationship with Usal Beach and each school. Perhaps a community school-based “adopt a beach” program can also be developed. Since each field trip involved extremely dedicated and active parent chaperones, as well as enthusiastic and creative teaching staff, a foundation for community support has been laid.

Happy Trails!

Field Trip Fun at Usal Beach
By Bruce Hilbach-Barger

As the days shorten and the crisp air turns into winter rains, we can only dream of longer days and sunshine! Spend the winter planning your outdoor adventures and don’t forget to come checkout Cuneo Creek Campground’s new corrals. Until then, stay warm and dry!

Happy Trails!
What Gift Do You Want?
By Emily Becker, State Park Ranger

“What gift do you want?”, my supervisor asked me over the phone. A question prompted by the fact that I’ve been trying for months to get my supervisor and my sector superintendent to allow me to go part-time so I can take care of my kids, and have my career that I love. Two weeks earlier they made up their minds and told me they wouldn’t be approving my request for part-time. So now, what gift do I want?

The gift I want is to be allowed to find balance in my life and not be forced to choose between my children that mean everything to me and my career that I’ve dedicated twenty-two years of my life to. In 2017, should this really even be a question?

I began my career with State Parks in 1995 as a park aide at Gold Bluffs Beach in Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park. At that time, the MOU between Redwood National Park (RNP) and State Parks was brand new. I had the unique perspective of being able to work with both the State Park Rangers and the NPS (National Park Service) Rangers and I knew after one summer that all I wanted to be was a park ranger. The people I worked with back then were, in my eyes, awesome. And they seemed to respect me as well because I was basically put in charge of the NPS horses that lived in RNP. They didn’t get much use and seeing as I was a horse crazy girl and had ridden, cared for and trained horses all my life, I thought I’d died and gone to heaven. I rode the horses in parades, patrolled trails, gave lessons to members of the staff and was even allowed to ride ‘Chief’ in the Banana Slug Derby parade the year I was crowned ‘Banana Slug Queen’. Ah the memories. I loved everything else about being a park aide too; the uniform, working with the public, driving around in the cool ranger truck, doing interpretive programs, even picking up trash on the beautiful Gold Bluffs Beach. I loved being a part of parks, period.

After two life-changing summers at Gold Bluffs Beach, I began working as a seasonal at Patrick’s Point State Park and remained there for four summers, right up until I reported to my first day at the ranger academy at Asilomar.
The ranger academy was six months long and was, by far, the hardest six months of my life. I’d never lived anywhere outside of Humboldt County before and I’d certainly never had a roommate. Being away from my family and my horses, and having to share a room with a stranger was hard enough. But then add to it the stress of a police academy and I thought my dream was over. Looking back, I’m not sure how I made it through, but I wanted so badly to become a ranger that there was no way I was going to quit. And I didn’t. I graduated from the academy on March 9th, 2001. Two weeks later I showed up for my first day of work at Humboldt Redwoods State Park (H.R.S.P.) with Ranger John O’Rourke as my F.T.O. (field training officer).

I worked at HRSP for twelve and a half glorious years and have so many cherished memories. I will never forget the hours that I spent with Dave Stockton, out and about in the park, sitting in his office looking at hundreds and hundreds of photographs and just listening to his stories about the park and his upbringing in Holmes Flat. I will never forget the countless hours I spent setting up the M.A.U. (mounted assistance unit) and the countless hours that have followed working with the amazing M.A.U. volunteers in the fifteen years since it all began. I will never forget working with Rangers like Ken Wilbur who mentored me since my days up at Prairie Creek and is still a close friend today. Or Ranger Dan Ash who tried so hard to teach me how to run a chain saw, and more importantly, how to maintain it. And also the miles and miles I travelled with Dan in the backcountry of HRSP. He and Dave gave me an amazing education in the early days of my career, for which I am so grateful. There are so many other people I’ve worked with over the years; some I’ve loved and still count as friends, others, maybe not. But every one of them taught me something and made me a better person.

After my daughter was born in 2011, I needed to simplify, so I chose to transfer to Grizzly Creek Redwoods State Park. It was a difficult decision, but I never regretted it. Grizzly needed me and I needed a change. Grizzly Creek had been, well, neglected for quite some time. It needed a great deal of cleaning, upgrading, repairing, and basically just love. I worked very hard with very few resources to bring that little gem of a park, back to life. With the undying support of H.R.I.A. (Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association) and a handful of wonderful volunteers and seasonal employees, I think we did a pretty good job. I realize in the world of ‘State Park Professionals’, I am a strange creature. I’ve never lived outside of Humboldt County, I’ve never worked outside of Humboldt County and I never had any intention of promoting. My entire career has been spent within the parks of the North Coast Redwoods District. And it was my hope that I would have retired here as well. But, I
made the choice to have another child and after my son was born, I quickly realized that working full-time and raising two kids was not going to work. A friend of mine joked that I could just, ‘…neglect my children’ and work full-time. He obviously understood what I was going through and was trying to make a joke.

So, what gift do I want. The gift I wanted was to be allowed to have a career and at the same time, provide for my family. The gift I wanted was to be able to continue to care for the parks that I love. The gift I wanted was to have been treated fairly and to have been allowed to work part-time as, at the very least, an acknowledgement of my time and dedication to State Parks. The gift I wanted will not happen.

Now it is time for me to start the next chapter of my life, and it’s going to be a pretty great one. For those of you who care about me, do not distress. I will, with just a bit of tweeking, receive all of the benefits due to me. My family will thrive under my care and many happy memories will be made. But sadly, I will no longer be Ranger #1129. Just mom, and I’m ok with that.

Thank you everyone! It’s been an honor and a pleasure to have served you. That is the best gift I could have asked for.

**In Memory Of... Leon Abbott**  
By Dave Stockton, HRIA Board Member

Leon Abbott worked at the Visitor Center for many years. One of the most talented and versatile of the volunteers, Leon performed a variety of highly complex tasks. At home in the carpenter shop, Leon made many signs, panels, and other items including the bird nest exhibit. Wood was a special medium that Leon excelled in and was always quick to share his expertise with those around him. There was always a good amount of joy and pleasure in all these projects that reflected in the people around him.

In the center behind the counter or on the porch Leon was in his element sharing his knowledge of the park and must see features. Leon and Ollie came by way of the Motor Home Coach Association which gave the Interpretive Association many outstanding volunteers. Leon will be truly missed by the staff, volunteers, and employees of the park. His joy was contagious to all around him.
GIVE A GIFT 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, 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership Level</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Endowment Level</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student/Senior</td>
<td>$10</td>
<td>Patron</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>$25</td>
<td>Endowment</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td>Redwood Crown</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsoring</td>
<td>$100</td>
<td>Donation</td>
<td>$____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life</td>
<td>$250</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mail Check to:
HRIA
PO Box 276
Weott, CA 95571

Name______________________________________________________
Address__________________________________________________________________________
City, State, ZIP__________________________________________________________
Email_______________________________   Phone #____________________________________