President’s Report: Alan Aitken

After a busy and lovely fall, winter is upon us. If you don’t mind a chill in the air, and a little rain, this is the time visiting our State Parks in Humboldt County. The Burlington campground is open and reservations are easy to come by. Out on the trails you will have the park virtually to yourself. The Humboldt Redwoods State Park visitor center is open from 10am to 4pm daily. The Richardson Grove State Park visitor center is open 10am to 4pm Friday through Sunday. Drop in and enjoy the warmth, a cup of coffee and great conversation with our outstanding volunteers.

The visitor center is a great place to purchase that special gift for someone. Books, posters and other redwood related items are available at great prices, even redwood Christmas tree ornaments. All profits from sales go to HRIA and will be used to continue interpretive services for the public. Gifting a membership to HRIA not only supports our organization, but promotes the values of conservation, volunteering, and keeping in touch with the natural world.

Our executive staff coordinated several holiday events this year. There was a Halloween dance at the Richardson Grove State Park visitor center in October. HRIA hosted the Southern Humboldt Chamber of Commerce first annual holiday party at the Richardson Grove Visitor Center. While this was the first for both of these events, we intend to make them an annual tradition. On the 12th, HRIA held our annual holiday party and tree lighting at the Humboldt Redwoods State Park visitor center. In addition to photos with Santa, the silent auction is gaining popularity as a fun way to get holiday gift shopping done, and at bargain prices. Thank you to all of the local business who donated items to be auctioned. We hope everyone plans to attend again next year!

Alan Aitken
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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 Sinkysone 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.

A special thanks to the local business who donated items for the HRIA holiday party silent auction:

Art of the Burl
Avenue Cafe
Benbow Inn
Chapman's Gem & Mineral Shop
Chautauqua Natural Foods
Dias Artstries
Double D Steak & Seafood
Immortal Tree Gift Shop
Korby Wood Products
Las Cazuelas
Legend of Bigfoot
Redcrest Resort
Redwood Thrift
Riverbend Cellars
Shrine Drive Thru Tree
Swadeshi Leatherworks
Woodrose Cafe

Thank You
Managers Report
By Debbie Gardner, Manager

Happy day to all! What happened to summer? It went by fast this year. We had a great season, thanks to our wonderful volunteers. The fall volunteer appreciation lunch was held this year at Samoa Cookhouse, once again great food for all. To those who couldn't come, you were missed, but there is always next year. Before we knew it, it was Halloween, and our first Halloween party was held at Richardson Grove. The visitor center was festively decorated, there were snacks, dancing, and costumes.

Richardson Grove also hosted the Southern Humboldt Chamber of Commerce Christmas mixer. The historic lodge visitor center was beautiful in it's holiday attire. There were drinks, hors d'oeuvres, a DJ, and door prizes. Approximately 75 locals attended to represent their business and get to know other community members. Next years mixer is in the plans for the same location. Everyone is welcome to attend!

The annual HRIA Christmas party was a great hit this year. HRIA volunteer Tommy Sassone did a great job as Santa. Thank you to the Weott Fire Department for taking time out of their busy schedule to make Santa's entrance dramatic since the reindeer were all booked for the night. In addition to photos with Santa, cider, hot chocolate, and snacks the silent auction was a great success! We had many wonderful items donated by local businesses. Party attendees were able to get some holiday shopping done, and were able to get some great deals and unique items. We had gift certificates to restaurants, overnight stays at Benbow Inn and Redcrest Resort, beautiful wooden items, jewelry, leather goods, household goods, and many other items.

Come and check out our new exhibit of scat and tracks. We also have new hoodie sweatshirts, and many more new books. Happy holidays to all, hope to see you soon!
Local School Children Learn Outdoors at Usal
By Carla Thomas, HRIA Secretary & Usal Beach Project Manager

Community feedback is enthusiastic about HRIA’s Sinkyone Wilderness - Usal Beach outdoor environmental science classroom. Local school children took field trips to Usal Beach and Needle Rock at the Sinkyone Wilderness State Park along the pacific coast in Northern Mendocino County. These trips were funded by grants from the California Coastal Conservancy Explore the Coast Grant and the California Coastal Commission Whale Tail License Plate Grant. These two-year grant programs provide each class with a half day classroom lesson prior to the trip, then a full day at the park (in one case the program was part of an overnight campout). Children participated in experiential learning about watershed health, soil-forming processes and erosion, wave energy, cultural and natural history, controlled burn management of wildlands, animal, plant and fish identification, air quality, symbiotic relationships, life strategies and animal behavior. Usal Beach project staff emphasize how organisms adopt differing ecological strategies of interacting with the environment to meet life needs. Students are encouraged to examine their own and other human strategies including the methods of science and traditional knowledge. Over the past two years 177 students, 12 teachers and 42 parent/family chaperones shared in the experiential learning at Usal. Parents, teachers and students enthusiastically have requested that the program be continued. HRIA staff are working with school administrators and teachers as well as other organizations to continue and expand the program. The amount of partner support has been outstanding. We particularly thank Ranger Andrea Mapes for her thoughtful input and for serving as project liaison with DPR for HRIA.

Mounted Assistance Unit
By Cindy Giacomini, MAU Member

The Mounted Assistance Unit had another successful season at Humboldt Redwoods State Park. Fall is always bittersweet for the equestrian volunteers because it marks the end of the camping season & sunny weather.
This fall the MAU closed up Cuneo Creek Campground by covering the sand rolling pit that visitor's sweaty horses love to roll in after a ride, cleaned out debris from the fire rings, protected small shade trees from deer & bear with temporary fencing and enjoyed a delicious barbecue/potluck.

Three volunteers, Maralyn Renner, Susan Combes & Cathy Mathena cleared off dirt & leaves from a bridge on the Homestead trail that had built up over the years. Here is a before & after picture.

As the final apples & leaves fall from the trees and the wildlife prepares for the winter season, the mounted volunteers say goodbye to Cuneo Creek Campground till spring, but not to riding in the park.

Standish Hickey State Recreation Area
By Greg Hall, Supervising Ranger

On Thursday, November 1st 2018 Eel River Staff from North Coast Redwoods District began the process of operating Standish Hickey State Recreation Area once again. For the past 6 Years Standish Hickey has been run by the Mendocino Area Parks Association (MAPA) and Team Standish. In 2012, Standish Hickey was closed due to budget constraints. MAPA stepped forward and accepted the challenge of running a 161 site campground. MAPA faced many challenges including, learning to run a large campground, installing a large Bailey bridge to allow vehicles to access Redwood Campground on the opposite side of the South Fork of the Eel River and maintaining the parks facilities. MAPA continued to provide park visitors with interpretive programs and brought an internship program to the park. Standish Hickey continued to thrive thanks to MAPA and was given back to Eel River Staff in excellent condition. State Parks staff would like to thank MAPA, Team Standish, and the local community for all of their time, dedication and hard work.
The Hidden Life of Trees
By Bruce Riley, HRIA Volunteer

As children, we were taught that flowers and other plants follow the sun as it arcs across the heavens, from dawn to dusk. The constant reorienting of leaves and blossoms to the life giving sunlight was perhaps the earliest suggestion that some type of “plant consciousness” was at work in the world.

In the “Hidden Life of Trees” the author Peter Wohlleben, a German forester, expands on this consciousness idea by anthropo-morphizing forests as social systems and trees as Social Creatures. He relies on scientific facts when assessing that trees communicate with each other, share food, warn of danger, activate defense mechanisms, provide help to the weaker, unhealthy neighbors and actually migrate over the continents.

The reason the activities of trees are not readily perceived by humans is they occur so very slowly. Electrical impulses between root tips move at a rate of a third of an inch per second. Chemical compounds are also exchanged very slowly.

Trees are interconnected with their “neighbors” by a super organism known as the “woodwide web”. Composed of soil fungi, this web is known as mycelium and is capable of sharing huge amounts of sustenance and information. Take for example the African umbrella thorn acacia tree: When a giraffe begins to chew its leaves the below ground web activates both toxic chemicals into the leaves and chemical scents which become airborne early warning systems of imminent danger. The giraffe loses interest in the now bitter tasting leaves and knows to move over 100 yards to forage on unaware acacias.

Another expression of “communication” in forests is evidenced in redwood trees. When a tree falls or collides with other trees an electrical impulse is generated which activates dormant
buds in structures we call burls. These enlivened buds begin to grow new balances as a means of ensuring the longevity of the species.

During a recent walk in Lower Bull Creek Flat there was a fallen and shattered redwood. On the trunk was a long line of clusters, bright green “baby” branches issuing from the fully unearthed trunk. The formation was over 40 feet long—remarkable and beautiful. Apparently that tree had a lot to talk about!

The complexity of trees below ground web is just beginning to be understood. Since root tips are the communication centers of trees it is essential that the soil they grow through is loosely formed and full of space into which the fine root hairs can spread.

Compacted soil creates difficulty for microscopic filaments to move through and so that is why here at Humboldt Redwoods the location of the park’s tallest tree is not shared. The resulting foot traffic would damage the giant.

Stepping back from individual trees to the forest at large allows a wider perspective to understand more of these activities generated by the mychorrhizal web. The author asserts that forests know how to distribute resources for the overall health of the group. For example, undisturbed beech forests, which contain varying soil conditions share the nutrients from photosynthesis equally so all the individual trees grow at the same rate. An arboreal social security system, so to speak.

A final example of this newly discovered plant consciousness here at HRSP is the summertime microclimate created by the transpiration of up to 500 gallons of water per day per mature tree. The newly created fog banks act to protect the groves from the intense summer sunlight.

What readers take from Wohlleben’s work is a new appreciation for the forces which animate and sustain forests of all ages. The author is critical of human created tree plantations because the tree seedlings all have “injured roots” which leaves them disadvantaged from the start. What forester Wohlleben esteems are undisturbed old growth forests. These super organisms create, sustain and defend themselves thereby fostering trees with extended lifetimes.

Ultimately the Hidden Life of Trees educates the readers to become those people who, understanding trees, are thus best equipped to protect them. Copies of Hidden Life of Trees are available at the park visitor center. What a wonderful Holiday gift!!
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:

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