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NEWSLETTER

Spring 2019

## Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association

President's Report: Alan Aitken

Humboldt Redwood State Park welcomes summer, those from near and far headed our way, and of course you. Our volunteers are waiting to serve the public and our executive staff has everything in order to assure that visitors have an exceptional visit.

The work of saving the old growth redwoods started decades ago with acquisition of the remaining groves and establishing state and federal parks to protect them. Of course, that was only the beginning. HRIA, through its mission of interpretation, contributes to the conservation efforts by educating the public to the unique qualities and environment of these ancient trees.



Photo by HRIA Volunteer Annemarie Minke

Last year the Save the Redwoods League celebrated its 100th anniversary. The focus of this organization, while still involved with acquisitions and preservation of the redwoods, has now transitioned to preservation through scientific research. The SRL, in partnership with UC Davis and John Hopkins University, completed a five year effort to sequence the genomes of the coast and giant redwoods in April. You can read more in the San Francisco Chronicle article of April 23, 2019. Truly exiting news.

*Alan Aitken*

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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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, Sinkyone Wilderness State Park, Standish Hickey State Park, 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.

## **New Chief of Interpretation Hired within North Coast Redwoods District (NCRD)**



In April, NCRD hired its first ever Interpretation and Education Program Manager, Marnin Robbins. Marnin began working as an interpreter at Muir Woods National Monument in 1994. He has also worked as an interpreter with many agencies and non-profit organizations. He completed an MS in Natural Resources Planning and Interpretation from Humboldt State University in 2005. Post-graduation he worked for six years within the NCRD as a seasonal interpreter, Interpreter I, and Interpreter II, where he helped coordinate interpretation/education throughout the district.

In 2013, Marnin was hired by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to serve as statewide outreach coordinator for the California Network of Marine Protected Areas ([www.wildlife.ca.gov/MPAs](http://www.wildlife.ca.gov/MPAs)). With his return to the NCRD as Interpretation and Education Program Manager, his work as a “redwood interpreter” has come full circle. He is excited about the opportunity to work with HRIA to help educate and inspire NCRD visitors to protect our shared resources for future generations. Welcome back, Marnin!

## Managers Report

By Debbie Gardner, Manager

Happy Day to all! Well, here we are with summer just around the corner. The rains have quit and everything is growing very beautifully here at the park. Wild flowers are popping open for all to see!

I had the opportunity to go to my grandson's senior class for a career day presentation on the ins and outs of getting and keeping a job. We also had a great time dissecting owl pellets. By the time I left, the class knew the names of the three types of redwoods, all about the redwood canopy, and most importantly, how to fill out a job application. A big thank you to East High School for giving me the opportunity to share my knowledge of the Redwood Forest.

As our winter volunteers are getting ready to leave, a BIG thank you for all the hours you have put in and all the rain you had to put up with. To the summer volunteers arriving, this is going to be a great summer!

The annual Avenue of the Giants marathon was on May 5th and had a great turn out. Grizzly Creek State Park opened on the 6th of May. Richardson Grove Visitor Center will be opened 7 days a week through the summer, be sure to stop by and grab an ice cream or snack and take a stroll, or enjoy the river.

Until next time have a great day and slow down a little to stop and enjoy the great outdoors!



HRIA Volunteer Gary Hawley greeting park visitors

## Night Skies at Humboldt Redwoods State Park

By Mary Kaufman, Humboldt Redwoods Park Interpreter

This is my third year at Humboldt Redwoods State Park. As the season begins, I find myself reflecting on my good fortune. "You have the best job in the world!" are words I hear daily from park visitors. I pretty much have to agree. After the prima ballerina and deep-sea diver thing did not pan out (bad knees and claustrophobia), there cannot be anything better. Familiarity has not dulled my appreciation of the redwoods; it has only deepened with time. In fact, I am beginning to feel quite fierce concerning their protection and the current threats to their well-being. In my guided nature walks, I explain to park visitors that the redwood forest is a community, stronger together. I am feeling part of that community. That is a feeling I hope to nurture in others.



Here in our parks is another precious resource not to be taken for granted, the natural night sky. Increasing light pollution has made the ability to walk outside at night and see a star-studded sky an experience that is becoming unknown to the newest generations. That a child in this country has not walked in a grove of towering, majestic redwoods is sad but understandable. Their population is limited these days. However, for a person, because of light pollution, to have never seen the Milky Way is tragic. We know that human beings must experience the natural world occasionally to maintain good health. A sky brimming with stars



must be included in that experience. “Experiencing the night sky provides perspective, inspiration, and leads us to reflect on our humanity and our place in the universe. The history of scientific discovery and even human curiosity itself is indebted to the natural night sky.” Our parks are some of the few places where the natural sky is still visible in all its glory. A redwood forest, where the trees themselves reach up to touch the stars seems especially suited for this communion.

This 2019 summer season HRSP is celebrating our dark skies. Through collaborating with the Astronomers of Humboldt, the park will be providing opportunities for visitors to observe celestial objects in the night sky. The AOH will provide telescopes, knowledge and expertise. These will be once a month at Albee Creek Campground.

A special all-day event to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Apollo moon landing will be at the Burlington picnic area and campfire center. Check with the Humboldt Redwoods State Park visitor center and the HRIA website for dates and times as they become available.

## **Mounted Assistance Unit**

By Cathy Mathena, HRIA Board Member & Cindy Giacomini, MAU Member

Camping season has officially started and Cuneo Creek Horse Campground is open!

The Mounted Assistance Unit Volunteers had their spring campout and work weekend a few weeks ago. The volunteers put on their work gloves and got down to business cleaning water troughs in camp, uncovering the horse sand rolling pit, cleaning out the fire rings and gathering up downed limbs. Out on the Homestead Trail a large tree was removed (pictured right) that had fallen during winter and completely blocked the path. On other trails horse throughs were checked, water lines repaired and spring boxes cleaned. If you come across a trough on a trail and the water spigot is on, please leave it on. All the troughs are



filled by springs and keeping the water running helps the troughs stay clean and filled. They all have an overflow that runs back in to the spring.

This year four new prospective volunteers started their process of joining the MAU. They and their horses underwent various trail, skills testing and will be riding with seasoned MAU volunteers this summer to learn more about Humboldt Redwoods State Park and the trails. The Mounted Assistance Unit also had existing volunteers pass 5 new horses and 3 mules on their trail skills test.

It's time to dust off that saddle, load up your equine and head out to Cuneo Creek Horse Camp for some beautiful trail riding and camping.

## **The Importance of Environmental Literacy in the United States**

By Caitlin Ehnou, Standish Hickey Park Interpreter

This season, Standish-Hickey State Recreation Area will be providing visitors with a variety of interpretive programs, including junior rangers, interpretive hikes, and campfire talks. Many of these programs will have an emphasis on biodiversity, ecology, and State Parks role in conservation and management. As the new interpreter at Standish Hickey, I'm eager to do my part to spread environmental awareness to parks visitors.

Unfortunately, the United States ranks very low in regards to environmental literacy. Much of the information that Americans receive about the environment is inaccurate, coming from snippets of tabloids, entertainment sources, and general opinions. This is especially troubling when we consider the increasing ecological degradation that we are facing. Children are spending more time indoors, which is preventing them from having a personal connection with the environment. Now more than ever, it is vital that we do our best to help Americans become enthusiastic and knowledgeable about ecology and the planet.

Luckily, with the help of HRIA, California State Parks is able to provide the public with memorable and interesting interpretive programs that allow visitors to gain accurate information in regards to the environment. I am thankful that State Parks has given me the opportunity to participate in educating the public, particularly youth. Special thanks to HRIA for providing some of the resources necessary to implement the upcoming programs. Together, we will have a positive impact on our visitors environmental literacy throughout the season!





## Two Roads Converged in a Wood

By Jordan Lager, Richardson Grove Park Interpreter

The history of Richardson Grove State Park and Highway 101 are literally intertwined. In 1922 the construction of Highway 101 was completed through southern Humboldt County. The new highway was routed directly through an ancient grove of Coast Redwood trees that would soon be known as Richardson Grove. That same year the newly founded Save the Redwoods League successfully persuaded the State to set aside the grove as a State Park. Richardson Grove contains the narrowest stretch of Highway 101, at only 11 feet wide per lane, and is now the focus of a controversial plan to widen the road. Widening the road will allow larger big rig trucks to take the more direct route through Richardson Grove on their way to Eureka. Proponents of this plan argue that it will reduce the cost of living for residents of Humboldt County. Opponents of the plan argue that it will irreparably damage the trees growing near the road. This debate evokes the original dilemma of environmental conservation; protecting the natural resources of the area while providing the greatest good for greatest number of people.

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 “NEPA” requires that any “major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment” must prepare an Environmental Assessment, which determines the need for a more thorough “Environmental Impact Statement” or a “Finding of no Significant Impact”.

However, NEPA allows an agency to move forward with a project even if it is determined that the project will have an adverse effect on the environment. The conclusion of Caltrans’ environmental assessments were a “Finding of no Significant Impact” on the old-growth redwoods. When the plans were released publicly in 2010 environmental groups filed a lawsuit against Caltrans. The lawsuit alleges that Caltrans did not follow NEPA guidelines and failed to take an adequate “hard look” at the environmental impacts. On several occasions the courts halted the progress of the plan, most recently in the Federal District Court on May 3, 2019. The recent court order gives both parties until May 23, 2019 to file briefings exploring whether Caltrans should prepare a more comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement.

The 26 page order released by the District Court identifies several important factors that were overlooked or misrepresented by the Environmental Assessment. Most notably the order explores the effects of widening the road on the health of the root systems of the trees. The environmental assessment acknowledges that several trees will have 50% or more of their roots



covered by pavement. However, the assessment is overly optimistic about the resilience of redwood root systems. If the roots of a redwood are 100% covered the lack of oxygen exchange in the roots can suffocate and kill the tree within a year. The roots of redwoods can extend 100 feet or more from the base of the tree and provide necessary support for the impossibly tall and heavy trees. In a stand like Richardson Grove the roots of the trees wrap around the roots of other trees to provide extra stability. If the root system of one tree is damaged it can affect the root system and stability of its neighboring trees.

Other impacts referenced in the order include the effects of road noise and possible damage to trees as a result of traffic collisions. The court order makes reference to how increased traffic noise will affect the visitor experience at the park, but does not mention the impact of traffic noise on wildlife. Many trees along the road bear scars from traffic collisions. The Caltrans assessment suggests that widening the road will not increase the chances of collisions with trees. However, it does not address the possible damage to trees from collisions with the larger, heavier trucks that will be permitted to drive through the grove.

This most recent court order is definitely not the end in the saga of Highway 101 and Richardson Grove but rather a turn to the newest chapter.

## **Late Spring Storms Create Challenges for Sinkyone Roads**

By Carla Thomas, HRIA Usal Beach Project Manager

The Needle Rock Road has been closed since February, a new record in duration of closure. Help is hopefully on its way. HRIA grant writing team is working with Mendocino County Department of Transportation, Department of Parks and Recreations, and Mendocino County Resource Conservation District to get funding to repair and improve the Sinkyone Wilderness State Park Road Network. In the meantime, our camp hosts are able to keep the



HRIA Usal Project Coordinator Bruce Hilbach-Barger, CA State Parks Maintenance Assistant Dave Murray, and school children with Usal Beach Environmental Outdoor Education Program

Needle Rock Visitor Center open without access by their cars. However, visitors planning to visit Needle Rock should park at the BLM campgrounds or at Usal Beach because there is no available parking space at Four Corners until the road opens. Usal Beach Road is open and the Usal Beach campground provides an alternative access to the Lost Coast Trail. Our grant writing team also applied for Coastal Conservancy Explore the Coast Funds to continue the Usal Beach Environmental Outdoor Education Program. Thank you to all of you who have contributed your resources and time to the Sinkyone Wilderness State Park.



Return Service Requested

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Spring 2019

**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, publish interpretive literature, and 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
Individual	\$25	Endowment	\$1,000
Supporting	\$50	Redwood Crown	\$2,500
Sponsoring	\$100	Donation	\$_____
Life	\$250		

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