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## Spring/Summer 2022 Newsletter

# Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association

President's Report: Alan Aitken

Welcome to summer in northern California. Based upon campground reservations, the Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association (HRIA) is expecting a very busy time this summer. A reminder, should you be intending to visit, HRIA is not involved in campground management. All campground reservations are made through Reserve California, via phone or website.

1988 was a landmark year in my U.S. Navy career. For the first time I was having to use a computer as part of my assignment. Thirty-four years later a day doesn't go by when I don't use my computer or cell phone. One might think with all the world's information a click away the need for HRIA to provide interpretive information to visitors would be less. Not true. Our mission remains the same and our services are more in demand than ever.

That being said, remember to check out our website or other online resources to plan your visit. And if you are like my mom, and don't have a computer, we will be in the visitor centers to help in any way we can.



Photo by HRIA volunteer Yvonne Stoose

*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, 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.

**THANK YOU** to our volunteers throughout the fall and winter. We couldn't have done it without you!

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Alan Aitken  
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*The spookiness* continues at Humboldt Redwoods State Park! HRIA's first *Haunted Halloween* in 2021 was such a success, that we are expanding this year. We will need *many volunteers* to cover all of the fun activities we have planned. Please contact HRIA's Manager Mary at [vc@humboldtredwoods.org](mailto:vc@humboldtredwoods.org) if you are interested in participating in any shape form or fashion. The loan of *Halloween props* would also be greatly appreciated.

# Whats In Store for Sinkyone Wilderness State Park

By Carla Thomas, HRIA Usal Project Staff

Sinkyone Wilderness State Park had an active winter and spring this 2022. The Visitor Center has remained open throughout COVID thanks to our dedicated State Park Volunteer Camp Hosts and State Park Staff. This summer the road to Needle Rock Visitor Center will be closed at Four Corners for a major road repair from slides in 2018. Between June and October 2022, a road repair project is planned by Mendocino County Department of Transportation on Briceland Road between the intersection with Usal Road and Needle Rock Visitor Center. This project will close vehicle and pedestrian access to Needle Rock Visitor Center, Day Use Area and Campground. The closure is expected to last approximately 2 1/2 months and the exact dates of the closure will be released and posted as soon as possible. The Lost Coast Trail and trail camps within Sinkyone Wilderness State Park will remain open during the project, however, hikers must park vehicles at the Usal Beach trailhead, or outside of Sinkyone Wilderness State Park. Roadside parking is not available in the vicinity of the project area.

The Visitor Center will be staffed for through hikers from the north and south on the Lost Coast Trail. Please respect the road closure, it is for your own safety.

The HRIA Outdoor Education Program conducts educational events for Laytonville Elementary and Middle School this Spring. Funding from the Save the Redwoods League Redwood Connect Grant Program provided transportation and instruction from HRIA Project

Staff. Activities occurred on campus at Laytonville and at Leggett and at Harwood Park in Laytonville as well as at Humboldt Redwoods State Park and Standish Hickey State Parks. Redwood Forest Foundation Inc. (RFFI) hosted an event at their McCoy Property. Thank you to Richard Gienger and Jeff Hedin, RFFI Board Members, for presenting to the students and parents from Laytonville. Children learned about redwood ecology, wildlife habitats in the top of the redwoods, redwood history, stream health, road repairs to reduce sediment, how to tie knots, cooperate together, and be leaders in a group. (Photograph right)



## A Day in the Life of an MAU Member

By Dennis & Joyce Sousa, MAU Members

Being a MAU Member and riding the park trails, has brought about many interesting encounters with park visitors.

A few of the interesting ones were when we met a middle aged gentleman in the Whiskey Flat area. He was an unkept individual, possessing among his possessions, pieces of pvc pipe and articles to set up a campsite where he said he was going to co-exist with nature. We spoke with this gentleman at length inquiring as to where he was from and his plans for the future. We were able to take a photograph of him and later send it to a Park Ranger with his agenda for future living arrangements. This person was not a threat to us and was preoccupied with living in a quiet existence.

We had another interesting encounter on the Bull Creek Trail. We met up with a couple and their large, overweight, elderly husky/malamute dog with dense hair. The dog had laid down on the trail on this warm day and refused to get up and was in obvious distress. The owners had no idea of what to do and were distraught. We knew that Albee Creek was nearby. I, Dennis dismounted my horse and picked up the dog and carried it to Albee Creek where I laid him in the water. We stayed with owners and dog for quite awhile until the dog revived by drinking water and cooling off. The owners and dog went back to their vehicle as it was to warm of a day for further hiking.



MAU Members can be helpful in other ways by finding lost items on the trail. Such was the day we were riding down Look Prairie after the control burns. A work crew apparently while working had lost one of their radios. We observed the radio lying off the trail and recognized it as a valuable piece of equipment. We notified the on duty Park Ranger of the finding and arranged for a meet on Mattole Road for the transfer of the property.

Because of the beauty of the park and it's great trail system, we ride a lot on all the equestrian trails within the park. While doing this, we will dismount our horses and walk, clearing the trail of

debris like limbs and large rocks. We also find water troughs that are not in working order and repair them if able to.

We have met visitors from literally, all over the world. We have provided maps of the park and given bottled water to hikers and bicyclists. This is a park for everyone. We have found that there is a true appreciation for the work that park personal has put in, maintaining the trail system. This is evidenced by all the comments we have received concerning the upkeep of the park. We say, that the Humboldt Redwoods State Park is one of the Wonders of the World and feel so privileged to represent the park by being a member of The Mounted Assistance Unit.

## **The Upside Down Garden**

By John Griffith, State Park Interpreter

My journey toward becoming an interpreter at Humboldt Redwoods State Park started on the days that my grandparents were born. Sounds strange, I know. Let me explain. My grandfather was a wilderness survival instructor for the army throughout WW2 and the Korean War. He was forced to retire after being shot twice, having a grenade go off near him, and then finally being bombed off a ship. He didn't want to leave the service, but the bombing left him with a head injury so bad that he had weekly grand mal seizures for the rest of his life. The benefit to him being mostly homebound meant that I got him all to myself. He taught me how to fish, hunt, make a fire in the rain, and gave me his secret recipe for a grotesque concoction of algae, insects, and small reptiles that he called wildlife mulligan. He swore it would keep me alive if I were ever starving behind enemy lines and then forced me to eat it—even though I would have rather starved. But catching all the ingredients (critters big and small) was one of my favorite things to do. He was the ultimate hunter. He kept boughs of Doug fir branches in his dresser so that his clothes smelled like the forest and would allow him to sneak up on animals. And after a few minutes of looking at their tracks, he could tell you what the animal was up to. My grandfather had one rule for hunting, if you kill it, you eat it. And I've stuck with that my whole life—except for the wasps I've killed. He didn't know it at the time, but he was teaching me how to be an interpreter.

My grandma claimed she got her sense of humor from her Irish culture and her knowledge of plants from being homeless with her own grandma during the depression. My grandma had an uncanny knowledge of edible and medicinal plants, and her gardens were the healthiest in spite of her never using store-bought fertilizers and poisons. It wasn't that she was anti-herbicide. She just wouldn't spend money on anything that wasn't absolutely necessary.

When I was seven years old, we moved into a new house and my father said that I could grow whatever I wanted and put all my "creepy crawlies" in one-quarter of our yard. At that point, it was just weeds, so I asked my grandmother for help. After I cleared the weeds away, my grandma handed me a bag of wildflower seeds and told me to break up all the dirt clods, rake the ground smooth, and then plant the seeds. "Come inside and get me when you're finished," she added as she closed the back door behind her.

After I finished raking in the seeds, I called my grandma to come outside and see the finished project. As she looked the area over, I braced myself for the “atta boys” I was sure would follow. Instead, she looked at me and asked, “Did you plant all the seeds right side up?”

I felt so embarrassed that I didn’t know that seeds had to be planted right side up that I lied, “Yep.” Then I quickly looked away and made a plan. “You better hope you did. Wouldn’t it be something if all your flowers bloomed upside down under the ground and all you had aboveground was a whole garden of roots reaching up to the sky?” She laughed. “It would look so silly!”

I was horrified. My plan was that every day I’d lay on the ground and scan the area I’d planted for roots sticking up. I wanted to flip the tiny plants over before anyone noticed how stupid I was. I spent a few weeks doing this and never found any roots protruding into the sky. I did discover other mysteries though. Many of the little leaves emerge from the soil with seed cases still attached. The leaves all looked similar at first but eventually, they started to distinguish themselves. Now I could see shared leaf patterns among some seedlings, and how some groups of plants grew faster and taller than others. I taught myself how to distinguish species even before they bloomed. I even saw that insects preferred some types of plants over others. When everything bloomed, I celebrated that all of them were right-side up.

That’s when I was sure I had been pranked, once again, by Grandma. In her last years, she forgot most things, but never the story of what she called my “upside-down garden.” And she laughed each time we talked about it.

Twenty years later, when I graduated with a degree in plant science, I told everyone at my graduation party that I chose my major due to my grandmother tricking me into observing plants very closely. Publicly, she denied everything with a giggle. But she admitted to me that she wanted me to be interested in plants and she knew her prank would work. She was right. I use similar, but slightly less prankish, tactics to this day. My grandmother taught me how to be an interpreter.

I wish everyone had the chance to have World War 2-era grandparents. They (and their daughter, my mom) are the reason why I’ve dedicated my life to natural resource stewardship. My grandfather taught me to respect everything in nature and to only kill what I was going to eat, and yes, that included spiders. He’d put them right in the wildlife mulligan with everything else. My grandma made me curious about plants. She grew almost all their own food, not



Edward & Patricia Seymour. They met 8 days before this photo was taken and a few days later he went back overseas. They were married for fifty years when he died.

because she was a back-to-lander, but because she grew up during the depression. As a result, she pinched pennies so tightly that you could hear them scream. She would never buy something that she could grow. By the time I was in sixth grade, I knew more about plants than most adults, and I already had a developed sense of humor. Thanks, Grandma.

If everyone had grandparents like mine, I don't think we would have half the environmental problems that we currently do. I do my best to give everyone who attends one of my programs a little bit of my grandparents. When you hear me talk about wildlife, you are also listening to my grandpa. When you hear me talk about plants, you are also listening to my grandma. They both taught me that my life depended on the health of nature and that the only way to conserve it was to respect it. As HRIA members, park lovers, and grandparents we need to teach this kind of stewardship to the next generations. It takes humor, respect, encouragement, and a whole lot of patience. Even when it seems the kids in your life are way more interested in video games than nature, don't give up. You are planting seeds. It may seem like those seeds are upside down because you're not seeing sprouts right away. Keep watering and weeding, loving and nurturing. I promise that one day they will grow up and bloom. I did, thanks to you, Grandpa and Grandma.

## Humboldt Rocks!

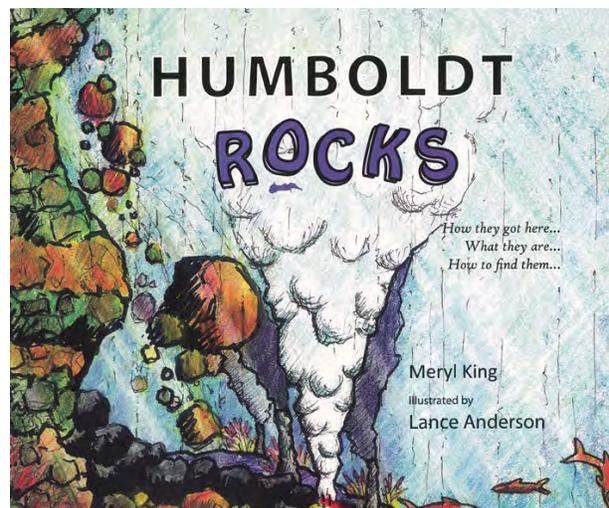
By Denise Stephens, Visitor Center Volunteer

Yes, we all know that Humboldt County is a wonderful place to live and to visit. While most of us think about the Coastal Redwoods, the book *Humboldt Rocks* by Meryl King explores another exciting aspect of the county. This book is one of the great offerings at the Humboldt Redwoods State Park Visitor Center.

Why would you be interested? Haven't you found a "special" rock along the Eel River or at the beach? Did you know that within Humboldt County we have many "special" rocks?! Agates, jade, jasper, milky quartz, fossils. *Humboldt Rocks* is written for children (probably 10+ years old) and is also a wonderful introduction to the geology of Humboldt County for any adult. You will learn to identify those special rocks you found. And you will be informed about good places to go rockhounding (the hunting of special rocks). This is an activity that can enthuse both the preschooler and the seniors among us.

If you're an adult with a deeper interest in the geology of Humboldt County and Northern California, the absolute best of the geology books is *Roadside Geology of Northern and Central California* by Alt and Hyndman, also available in the bookstore at the Visitor Center.

Happy rockhounding!





Return Service Requested

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Interpretive Association**  
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Spring/Summer 2022

**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		

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

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