



Summer/Fall 2020 Newsletter

Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association

President's Report: Alan Aitken

Covid, covid, covid. We know everyone has been affected by the virus and HRIA is no exception. On March 16th the visitor center was closed, as were all other State Park visitor centers, at the direction of the Governor. Yet the work of maintaining HRIA, as a viable organization, did not stop with the closing of the doors. Adjusting to the requirements of protecting volunteers, staff, and visitors from the virus when we reopened had to be addressed and completed, and administrative tasks associated with a nonprofit organization continued.

On July 10th, HRIA was ready and the visitor center was reopened to the public. The resurgence of the virus required the closing of our visitor centers only three days later, although the campgrounds remained open. HRIA staff, volunteers, and park staff responded by setting up tables with merchandise and interpretive information outside the visitor center to serve the public.

HRIA is maintained through sales in the visitor centers which have severely been impacted by closures due to the pandemic. Membership renewals or any donation, no matter how small, would be appreciated at this time. Thank you.



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 donors for our glass counter tops!

We asked and you listened! HRIA reached out to our members and our Facebook community asking for donations to get custom glass countertops. HRIA and California State Parks volunteer Wayne Ramsell spent over 300 hours redoing the counter where our volunteers are stationed at our Humboldt Redwoods State Park visitor center. With unstable shelves and drawers that were falling apart, the space really needed some attention. Not only did we want to showcase Wayne's beautiful work, but we needed to protect the counters, which Wayne made out of reclaimed old growth redwood from a 40 year old water tank in the park. For those who donated to our GoFundMe, a special thank you! Photos below are mid project and the final product.



HRIA's Most Dedicated Volunteer, June Patton

By Sophia Eckert, Executive Director & Allan Wiegman, Forestry Aide

June Patton was born in San Jose on July 19, 1920 to John and Lillian Woodward. She grew up in San Jose and married Ben Patton April 16, 1938. They had three daughters, Joan Gear, Ginger Anderson, and Linda Gustafson. In 1959 the family moved to Eureka to run a business called McBride Motors and June ran the office. She and Ben retired to Myers Flat but were flooded out of their property in 1964, and then moved to Weott.

June started volunteering at the Humboldt Redwoods State Park visitor center when Ben passed away in 1985. It quickly became her home away from home. She was here six days a week - only because she had to do her shopping and get her hair done on Fridays. She put in over 17,000 volunteer hours at the visitor center over the course of 32 years. She had many friends from that experience — visitors, other volunteers, and park staff. June was notorious for her little notebook, where she would jot down notes about not only park information, but also the people she worked with. You could always rely on June to remember to ask you about how an event went, how your family members were doing, and to send a Christmas card. To say she was thoughtful would be an understatement.

In 2017 June moved to Sequoia Springs in Fortuna and continued to thrive, making many new friends, with old friends coming to visit her regularly. She just turned 100 on July



19th, and because of the coronavirus was unable to have a typical birthday celebration. However, a drive by parade was planned by Ranger Alan. Firetrucks, friends, family, and even her favorite character Smokey Bear took part, which really made her day special. The Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association is dedicating the theater room at the Humboldt Redwoods State Park visitor center to June, and a beautiful sign is being made in her honor. She is truly a legend here at the visitor center and her memory always brings warmth to our hearts. June was a strong and kind woman with a great sense of humor, and will be missed by many.

Mounted Assistance Unit Volunteer Bio

By Cathy Mathena, HRIA Board Member/MAU Member
& Ruth Hoke, MAU Member

Ruth Hoke grew up in Eureka and attended Eureka City Schools, then earned a BA degree from Humboldt State with a major in history and two minors - English and Spanish. She also received a teaching credential and taught English and Social Studies in Eureka for twenty plus years. After living in Arcata and Blue Lake, she found her true home in Carlotta, where she bought a fixer-upper on acreage. That's when Prince Charming came into her life in the form of George, fresh from overseas adventures as a commercial diver. They moved her little house and proceeded to rebuild it, using wood they cut and milled from his property in Zenia.

Ruth Hoke has been a Mounted Assistance Unit volunteer since its inception in 2002. When asked what got her interested in MAU she said, "Horses have always been part of me, from as early as I remember. My first steady ride was an unruly pinto gelding that I rode bareback and in flip-flops. When I bought an unstarted four-year-old mare and pastured her across the road from where Carol Kamarad (Driscoll) had her horse, Carol showed me articles in The Western Horseman about the Tevis Cup. The Tevis Cup is a hundred mile one day endurance ride. We dreamed about that ride and spent the winter of 1971 conditioning rain and shine with a couple other friends, who later dropped out of the game. We rode the Castle Rock fifty mile ride in the spring of 1972, and both Carol and I were hooked."



Ruth explains, "We both rode many, many fifty mile rides until one day in 1978 I mentioned to my husband that I'd like to do the Tevis. Before I knew it I was entered. It seems he had more faith in me and my horse than I had. That mare took me through the race in 72nd place out of 250 starters and raced the last 20 miles. I bred her twice to Hall of Fame horse and 3-time Tevis winner Bezatal, and she gave me my two MAU horses. Incidentally, Carol went on to do the Tevis at least two times."

It was Carol also who got Ruth interested in the Mounted Assistance Unit that has been one of the highlights of her life. "After endurance was no longer rewarding for me, I turned to my other loves, helping my husband build our home, making custom saddles, spending time with friends, and riding the trails. Humboldt Redwoods State Park is in my heart and I consider it a huge privilege to volunteer in a way that helps visitors."

Ruth has a lot of trail experience and hours of dedication to the Humboldt Redwood State Parks and the Mounted Assistance Unit. Don't forget to say hello to Ruth or any of the other volunteers if you see them going down the trail!

Stay safe, and hope to see you, from a distance, enjoying our great park.

Many Improvements for Sinkyone Wilderness State Park Visitor Center at Needle Rock

By Carla Thomas, HRIA Usal Project Staff

Despite road closures due to mudslides for 7 months in 2019, followed by park closures from COVID 19 in 2020, our Park Maintenance Team was able to execute major renovations to the Historic Needle Rock Visitor Center and Barn Camp. Park staff David Murray, Maintenance Skilled Laborer and Justin McCarthy Maintenance Aid, along with Zeb Marjanovich Maintenance Worker 1 worked together to improve our solar electric system, repair our failing visitor center chimney and south wall, shingled the visitor center walls and roof, as well as the wood shed and outhouse. They also repaired our historic barn at barn camp. The photo below demonstrates the improvement mid project.

The chimney and south wall of the visitor center were seismically upgraded through a careful operation of removing failing components and reattaching or replacing them. The entire operation used the same mortar, stone and other components from the chimney's original construction by matching the exact sand mixture and stone slabs or bricks. Thank you to Genairo Gray for the stone from his yard. A much-needed woodstove was inserted to warm the visitor center for the first time in ten years. A fabricated steel support column in the center of the chimney anchored to buried supports giving the seismic stability. Mason Ryan McCutchan, Humboldt Hearthstones, worked closely with our team. The project started before the mudslides blocking the road had been cleared. Our intrepid team transported the materials by off road vehicle and started the work without delay, completing it in just 5 weeks during October!



The project was funded by a Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) grant obtained by Greg Collins, Supervisor of the Cultural Resource Program. Jason Islands, SHN Engineering in Willits did the engineering plans on an earlier grant funded to Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association, by California State Parks Foundation.

The roof and walls of the house was re-shingled by TNT roofing of Eureka, with clean up help from Justin, Zeb, Dave and Camp Host Dan Ash. During the shingling it was found that the south wall of the visitor center had serious rot and termite problems. The rot occurred due to years of water damage. Dave, Zeb and Justin repaired the damage, replacing subfloor, floor joists, and rotted girders and posts. Also, they replaced the skip sheet siding, window sills, blind stops, wall studs, and shingles.

A new solar electric system was installed by our team working with GreenWire Solar, Redway CA. The incoming power is six times greater than before and fully automated. No more manually operated inverters!

Zeb, Justin and Dave then moved their attention to the barn repair. They planned and repaired the barn replacing the posts, beams, floor joists, decking, bottom plates, blocking, and batten siding. They also rebuilt the doors. Its floors and walls were seriously rotted with big holes that allowed animals and wind to flow through the room. The barn serves as a sleeping shelter like a tiny cabin with lovely windows giving a 180-degree view of the coast from inside and lots more privacy. It was converted to make a camping cabin in 1995. The project is nearly done and yes, the porch swing will return.

After years of deferred maintenance, the Needle Rock Visitor Center and barn have finally received the love and care they have needed for a decade. Our greatest appreciation to California Department of Parks and Recreation for funding, to Maintenance Supervisor Mike Pogue and to our talented park maintenance staff and contractors who did an amazing job under remote and challenging conditions. Also, thank you to our tenacious camp hosts who maintained visitor services throughout the project amid road closures and sheltering from COVID, in case help was needed for passersby and park visitors even during emergencies. Dave Murry pictured right.



Interpretation in the Eel River Sector

By John Griffith, Eel River Sector Park Interpreter I

It was 2001, the landslides of the past four decades, including the huge one at Devil's Elbow, had buried the fish habitat in Cuneo Creek and a long reach of Bull Creek downstream from their confluence. It was hot during those summers in the early 2000's. The work was strenuous, made worse with sweat constantly in our eyes and yellow jackets mercilessly targeting us in their flyby stingings.

Using rock drills to bore holes in machine-placed boulders, my young crew of California Conservation Corps (CCC) members were kept going by the vision given to us by Ruth Goodfield from the Eel River Watershed Improvement Group. She promised our efforts would result in deep pools that would be cold enough to provide habitat for thousands of little swimming fish: salmon and steelhead. We shoved glue and cables into those holes to create flow-constricting weirs. Ruth encouraged us. She made us feel like we were part of a larger rewilding effort to save the previously forsaken inhabitants in the world's most amazing park.

At the time, that section of Bull Creek was little more than line of wet gravel coated in algae and punctuated by a few small pools. I wondered if she was idealistic. The water was too warm for salmonids. There was no tree cover. The few fish we did see were the invasive pike

minnow. Where did she get this hope? But we kept at it, motivated by the goal, for a few more hot summers. After each winter, we noticed shallow pools forming downstream of our rock structures. The trees we planted to provide shade for the hoped-for fish kept getting taller. Maybe Ruth would be right after all.

Yesterday, almost twenty years later, I snorkeled in a few of those pools that we had made. A school of young steelhead and coho followed me like my own private underwater entourage. I felt like a giant river god. I pretended that they understood that I was one of those who'd made their home, and that they were happy to see me. I'm pretty sure the fish weren't following me because they were my fans. They were after the aquatic insects I was stirring up. For that, they seemed pleased. If there was a fish word for "thank you" I bet I would have heard it. Or maybe they would tell me, "See, Ruth was right!"

Nothing makes me feel more grateful than to help nature heal, to rewild what was lost, to be part of ecological solutions. Many of you reading this are those people, too. You are solutionaries who help protect our biodiversity, our history, and our public lands. By supporting HRIA, you are doing all of this. Some of you may have been champions of this watershed for as long as Dave Stockton. Others of you are probably even more fresh than me. Thank you to all of you. I am happy to be part of your team.

I'm Griff. I'm the new Interpreter 1 for the Eel River Sector of the North Coast Redwoods District. As a CCC crew supervisor, I have worked on trails and conducted many restoration projects throughout the sector over the last two decades. My heart has long been bound to this place. In that career, as a former board member of Friends of the Eel River, in many seasonal jobs with the USFS, The Nature Conservancy, and Wildlife Conservation Society, and as a host for a ten-episode online series with Animal Planet called, "Wild Jobs," I have been an interpreter for wild things and places for three decades.

Ever since 2000 my goal was to be a fulltime interpreter in Humboldt Redwoods State Park. It took twenty years, but I feel blessed to have finally achieved my dream. I look forward to telling the many stories that are folded between the hills and embraced by the tall trees of this timeless place.

Thanks again to the board of HRIA for making me feel welcome and to Sophia and Debbie for helping me navigate aspects of this new and long-awaited experience. Thanks for making me feel welcome.





Return Service Requested

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Summer/Fall 2020

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:

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|----------------|-------|---------------|---------|------------------------|
| Student/Senior | \$10 | Patron | \$500 | Mail Check to: |
| Individual | \$25 | Endowment | \$1,000 | HRIA |
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