



HUMBOLDT REDWOODS INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION

Spring/Summer 2026 Newsletter

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: SUSAN O'HARA

Spring and Summer in the redwoods: a phrase that evokes many memories and plans to enjoy the giant trees this year. Redwoods in the summer brings to mind the sunlight filtering through the forest canopy, the smell of the forest as it heats up, and conversely, the cool under the trees. I grew up in Weott, my father was the Ranger 1 for the Department of Forestry (equivalent of a Battalion Chief today). My mother was a teacher at Agnes Johnson Elementary. Which meant that my sister and my mom spent a lot of time along the banks of the Eel, swimming and enjoying the joys of summer. Meanwhile, my father was busy with fires. Many evenings when he came home, he would take us to the forestry lookout on Grasshopper to check in the people watching for fires. I became familiar with the backcountry of Humboldt



Forestry Lookout, Susan Pritchard O'Hara on neck of Harry Pritchard, Karen talking to Marty Berglund and Cathy Berglund Jones. c 1964, Susan O'Hara collection

Redwoods in that manner. My mother further taught me about the wildflowers of the forest, teaching me both the common and scientific names. This knowledge was helpful when I began to work for Humboldt Redwoods as a park aide and later as an Interpretive Specialist. My sister and I also hiked many of the trails in the park, a tradition that continues as a favorite activity for me.

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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 Recreation Area, 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.

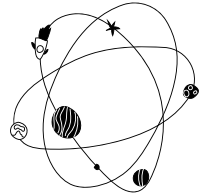
Annual HRIA

Events:

Star Party with the
Astronomers of Humboldt at
Albee Creek Campground

Saturday, July 18

Saturday, August 15



Smokey Bear 82nd Birthday
Bash at Humboldt Redwoods
State Park Visitor Center

Saturday, August 8th



Haunted Halloween Candlelit
Walk at Humboldt Redwoods
State Park Visitor Center

Saturday, October 24th



Annual Holiday Party and
Silent Auction at Humboldt
Redwoods State Park Visitor
Center

**Wednesday,
December 2nd**



For more details, check
www.humboldtredwoods.org/upcoming-events

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Pioneer Grove, Margaret Pritchard walking in river, Karen Pritchard (Nichols) sitting on blanket, c. 1961

This summer some activities to look forward to include three star parties, where local astronomers share about the night sky at Albee Creek Campground, and Smokey the Bear's Birthday party in August. I hope to see you at some of these events!

Helping the public enjoy the redwoods and understand the unique ecosystem that supports them as I do is the purpose of the Visitor Centers operated by Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association. This important work of guiding visitors to

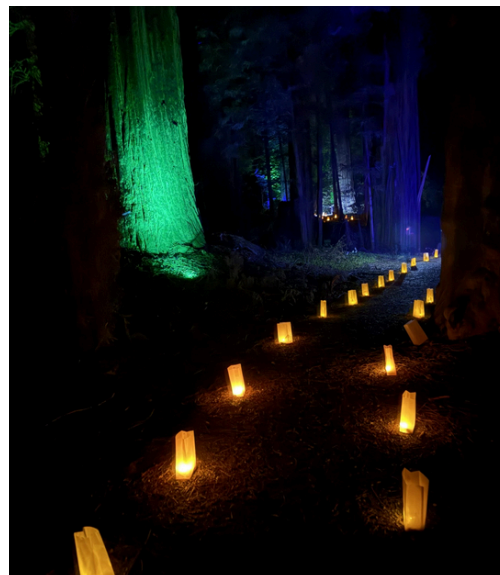
unique areas and to teach about the redwoods would not be possible without the hard work of our Director Sophia Eckert and Manager Mary Kaufman, as well as the many amazing volunteers that come and spend the summer to share about the redwoods. Camphosts from around the country stay for a month or longer to work in the Visitor Centers, and inform about the unique trees. Their hard work is truly appreciated and enhances the summer visits for the thousands who stop and ask for directions and information. I feel very privileged to work with so many dedicated people who value the redwoods.

*Sincerely,
Susan O'Hara*

EARTH DAY CANDLELIT WALK

BY SOPHIA ECKERT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In April, Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association held an Earth Day Candlelit Walk to celebrate this beautiful place we call home. The 480 attendees began their experience at the Humboldt Redwoods State Park Visitor Center, where they picked up their free walk pass, as well as a complimentary commemorative canvas tote bag. Next, excited community members and park visitors strolled along the half mile loop trail across from the visitor center, Gould Nature Loop. The trail was lined with 1,075 luminaries to guide you through the forest, with strategically placed lighting used to accent the size of the majestic redwoods along the way. In this increasingly fast paced world, we work towards creating a space to slow down and experience mindful moments where one can engage with nature.



SPRING IS BACK AT SINKYONE WILDERNESS STATE PARK

BY CARLA THOMAS, HRIA BOARD MEMBER

Spring started early this year. Some of our visitors carry a lot of weight around here. Thus, it is time to redo our front porch at the Needle Rock Visitor Center. The Entrance to the Needle Rock Visitor Center will be closed for two weeks while Richardson Grove Parks Maintenance Personnel replace the front porch. The Park will be open and our camp hosts will be there and available for questions and help registering throughout the porch replacement. Camp sites and trails will be open as well.



Last winter, storms between the 25th and New Years produced very heavy rain and high winds. The trail to Bear Harbor has a major culvert blow out between high tip and orchard going south. Footing may be challenging for some people. The north end of the Usal Bridge moved 3 feet to the west. It is repaired now.

Welcome to Sondra, our newest camp host. Thank you to HRIA for our mower!

SPRINGTIME IS WORK TIME FOR THE MAU

BY PAT FARMER, MAU & HRIA BOARD MEMBER

The Humboldt Redwoods State Park Mounted Assistance Unit had a busy work weekend at Cuneo Creek horse camp. Members met on a Saturday morning to coordinate chores for the upcoming public opening of the campground and equestrian trails.

President Mary Moore provided a demonstration of the weed puller and encouraged its use on invasives such as scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*). She reviewed the planned campground open and closing dates and the current status of roads and trails open to equines. We discussed recent bold visits into the campground by a local coyote. MAU members expressed hopes he would provide some natural control of troublesome ground squirrels. Meantime, campers were reminded to keep pet dogs secure.

Members split into groups to better address the many needed tasks. David Pritchard and Jim Biteman set to scrubbing and refilling troughs, only slightly hindered by Pat Farmer's tadpole rescue efforts. Donna Biteman brought her organizational skills to the tool shed. Ruth Hoke led efforts to uncover and tidy the rolling pit. Dennis Sousa manned the pole saw in removing dead branches and those blocking entry into campsites, with heavy lifting and other assistance provided by Jon Niehaus. Susan Reid, Lisa Jeffers and others checked each campsite for debris or trash, and cleaned fire pits and bear boxes. A small contingent hijacked Maryanne Riley's truck to make the rounds picking up after these projects. Ann-Sofie Andrews, Elly Roversi and Cecelia Rivera provided key assistance in joyfully flattening branches and leaves in the truck bed.



Jennifer Niehaus and Dan Chapman head out for testing their horses for MAU membership.

In past years, plastic surrounds were created to protect young trees which have now reached maturity. Bill Weigle coordinated removal of that fencing and plastic netting. One wooden tree "corral" had rotted into a dangerous condition and was surrounding a long dead sapling, so it was also removed.

Many other MAU members were in attendance and contributing to these and other projects.

One of the most important activities of the work weekends is evaluating new applicants for membership into the Mounted Assistance Unit. The application process occurs over one year and culminates with a final check of both rider and equine. Cindy Giacomini, Mary Moore, Billie Mohr, and

Rochelle Vernon participated in evaluating applicants. This year two applicants completed the process and we congratulate Karen Brooks and Dan Chapman as new members. Once accepted into the MAU, members must retest any new equines. Jennifer Niehaus and Donna Biteman tested new horses and both did well.

A few concerns were noted and forwarded to HRSP staff: the campground needs mowing as in previous years. Tall grass increases the tick load and obscures squirrel holes increasing risk of injury. Several water troughs need new floats, and one faucet needs repair to eliminate a leak.



Jim Biteman and David Pritchard clean troughs, with assistance of canine Ante Up.

\$500 donation request. Plans for a tree or trees to commemorate Ranger Emily Peterson were discussed and questions will be forwarded to HRSP staff.

As always, MAU members expressed gratitude for the camaraderie and for the opportunity to support our park!

INTRODUCING INTERPRETERS ERIKA AND MAE BY KARLA JOVEL, INTERPRETER III & CAL

The North Coast Redwoods District is excited to shine the spotlight on two exceptional interpreters who just joined the core Interpretation and Education team in the North Coast Redwoods District – Mae Dinsmore and Erika Granadino! In December of 2025, Erika was promoted to the State Park Interpreter I position at Humboldt Redwoods State Parks, and only a month later in January of 2026, Mae was promoted to the State Park Interpreter I position at Richardson Grove State Park. Together, Erika and Mae will work to support the interpretive functions of the Eel River parks, and we are so excited to witness their development and growth as leaders as they work to build meaningful connections between visitors and the State Parks. Learn more about Erika and Mae in their own words!

After the day's work, MAU members enjoyed a potluck dinner with tri-tip provided by Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association. Supervising Ranger Alyssa Barry provided updates on some important projects. The campground will be closed a few days in September for revisions of the water system. Our request to consider re-routing the trail exiting camp to avoid the roadway was reviewed with staff from HRSP Roads and Trails Restoration. They are supportive and are considering an option to create an exit between individual campsites 3 and 4. The plan to repair / replace corrals signs is progressing.

Organizations requesting a new corral dedication will be advised of a



Hello! My name is Mae Dinsmore. I moved to Humboldt County in 2019 to study Environmental Education and Interpretation at Humboldt State University. In May 2023, I began working at Humboldt Redwoods State Park as a summer seasonal interpreter, before moving into the year-round Senior Park Aide interpreter role. I have had the opportunity to work at several parks throughout the district, and I am ecstatic to continue to serve my community as an Interpreter I in the Southern Eel River Parks! Outside of work, I enjoy exploring the river bar, listening to music, cuddling with my pets, biking, and making

delicious sandwiches. I look forward to meeting new faces and please say hello if you see me around!

Hi there! My name is Erika Granadino, and I have been working with the North Coast Redwoods District since 2020, after first coming to Humboldt in 2012 to attend Humboldt State University, where I earned a degree in Environmental Management and Protection in 2017. I later served as Interpreter I for Richardson Grove State Park and Standish-Hickey State Recreation Area before becoming the district's Community Engagement Coordinator. Throughout my work, I have focused on expanding access and inclusivity through interpretive programs, bilingual programming, and partnerships with local groups and communities. My journey with California State Parks began as a seasonal employee at Humboldt Redwoods State Park, so I am thrilled to return to the park where my State Parks career began and to continue connecting visitors and community members with the wonders of the world's largest continuous old-growth redwood forest. In my free time, I enjoy cooking and skating in my neighborhood, and I look forward to seeing you on the trails!



If you see Erika and Mae in the State Parks, please say hello! These interpreters will be hard at work, training seasonal staff, engaging with the public, and delivering interpretive programs. They are a wealth of knowledge and are always happy to help!

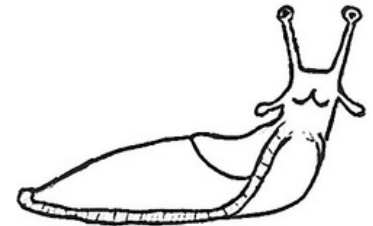


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**GIVE A GIFT OF MEMBERSHIP TO THE HUMBOLDT
REDWOODS INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION**

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 our 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. Call 707-946-2263 to find out more or become a member over the phone. You can also visit our website www.humboldtrewoods.org/become-member to use a card. Or attach this section and mail along with a check to the address above. **Please enroll me in the Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association at the membership level circled below:**

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