

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods

Preservation through Education and Stewardship

Russian River District State Parks

Volume XXVIII, Number 3, Fall 2013



Austin Creek: One Year Later

Michele Luna, Executive Director

Austin Creek State Recreation Area under the operation of Stewards is thriving and providing more exciting activities for park visitors. Prior to Stewards taking over, Austin Creek's Bullfrog Pond campground and the backcountry campsites had been closed due to State Park budget cuts. On August 17th, 2012 Stewards reopened the campground and by summer 2013, the backcountry campsites were open as well.

In the past year we've had one wedding, three stargazing parties, a Sunset Dinner, ten junior ranger programs and made reservations for 22 groups who camped at Bullfrog Pond Campground. We've also conducted a number of naturalist-led hikes with groups and 7 stewardship days, as well as hosted a group from the Sonoma County Youth Ecology Corps. Upcoming we have a Boy Scout "Leave No Trace Behind" workshop, and we are very excited about plans

for a new 2-5 day overnight "Exploring Nature through Science" youth program.

The successful partnership with State Parks, the California State Parks Foundation and the National Trust for Historic Preservation has made possible the beginnings of an effort to rehabilitate Pond Farm Pottery with a \$443,245 Prop. 84 grant.

I want to thank State Parks for their support as we took on this challenging endeavor. Park maintenance staff shared their experience and helped to ease the transition, State Park management supported and helped us secure AB 1478 funding in the amount of \$250,000 in matching funds. Also, a special thank you to the California State Parks Foundation for their grant support in the amount of \$96,000 in the past two years as well as support from their technical assistance center. We were selected to receive personalized fundraising assistance through the firm of Klein and Roth Consulting. A special thank you to all of our members and donors who also supported our efforts. We are most grateful!



Mission

Stewards Promotes, Restores, and Protects Your State Parks.

Vision

Stewards is the link between people and their parks.

State Parks

Armstrong Redwoods State Nat. Reserve
Austin Creek State Recreation Area
Sonoma Coast State Park

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods
P.O. Box 2, Duncans Mills, CA 95430
707.869.9177, 707.869.8252 Fax

stewards@mcn.org

www.stewardsofthecoastandredwoods.org



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E-News

It's easy to sign up for our
E-Newsletter on our website.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Michele Luna, Stewards Executive Director

Besides our wonderful accomplishments in Austin Creek, Stewards is very proud of the fact that our decade of restoration work in the Willow Creek watershed has netted spawning coho! This project included many partners and many sub-projects that started with a watershed management plan that eventually led to the construction of a new fish passage bridge on Willow Creek Road. Currently, Gold Ridge RCD has been contracted by State Parks to install large woody debris into some areas of the watershed to enhance fish habitat.

Check out the YouTube video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ka5dSWiH2po>.



ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING AND POTLUCK PICNIC

Stewards' Annual Membership Picnic will take place this year on October 19th at Armstrong Redwoods in the group picnic area. Beginning at 10:00 am, David Berman will lead an interpretive walk from the picnic area. David is an excellent naturalist and I know you will enjoy an opportunity to get to know him and the park from his perspective.

At noon we will convene for a potluck lunch, followed by a report on what Stewards has been up to in the past year. We will also provide a presentation about our citizen science programs: Pinniped Monitoring and our newest Seabird Monitoring program. Both programs provide wonderful examples of how citizens provide data collection that is utilized by professionals to guide decision making and potentially policy changes.

WELCOME DAVID BERMAN

We are thrilled to welcome David Berman as our new Programs Director at Stewards. He brings over thirty years of experience as an environmental educator, naturalist, and wilderness guide. He began his career with the LA County outdoor residential school program and spent the last 16 years directing the Westminster Woods Environmental Education program. David co-founded the Dutch Bill Creek Watershed group and is passionate about watershed education. His Lower Russian River Watershed Map Project reached out to over 900 classrooms in Sonoma County. He has been a First/Aid and CPR instructor for the American Red Cross for over 28 years. He is an instructor for the U.C. California Naturalist certification program. David lives at the Occidental Arts and Ecology Center.



PARKS FORWARD INITIATIVE

The Parks Forward Initiative and the California State Park and Recreation Commission will begin a series of public workshops statewide in September to gather new ideas on how to improve efficiency, create financial sustainability, and better leverage partnerships within California State Parks.

The workshops will undertake a top-to-bottom evaluation to improve and sustain California's underfunded State Parks System. In August the members of the Commission were announced.

The public is encouraged to participate so the Commission can hear directly from every community. The workshop closest to Sonoma County will be in San Rafael (place to be announced) on October 2nd from 1 to 5 pm. For more information go to <http://parksforward.com>.



SEAL WATCH

A day in the life of a Seal Watch Docent

Sukey Robb-Wilder, Volunteer Manager

A very big Thank You to all Seal Watch volunteers, for standing watch at the mouth of the Russian River from March through Labor Day. For those of you who don't know, Seal Watchers educate park visitors about viewing seals responsibly and giving these protected animals the space they need. They also safeguard the habitat of the harbor seal, especially during pupping season. The goal is to make the beach safe for all seals to haul out, like the mother and her pup in this picture that Mary Follis took.



These excerpts from Seal Watch logs from this season will give you a flavor of what it can be like out at Goat Rock beach:

4/13/13: I arrived early and enjoyed the seals from the overlook. I counted about 165. Looks like some little ones have arrived but hard to tell for sure. It was very windy and cold. When Gary and I got out to the beach the sand was blowing in our face and we decided to walk back in with Jim following his morning shift and call it a day. I look forward to next month :-) --Teri Wichert

4/27/13: Well, it was overcast until 3:30, and by the time I left at almost 6 [it did get cold], the marine layer was history. This next week will need extra help because there are groups of moms and pups well up-river beyond the rope. Photographers obviously are illiterate; ditto dog owners. The parking lot should be plastered with huge signs: NURSING SEAL PUPS ON THE BEACH. STAY BACK 300 FT. DO NOT DISTURB THEM. Also: NO DOGS ON THIS BEACH. -- Amy Southwick

5/1/13: The new signs at the start of the path at the end of the parking lot are great! especially at the end of the day people bring their dogs onto the beach. From the overlook I counted 329 seals, of which at least 20 were pups, 5 or 6 quite small. Fog started to come in at 5pm. 1 pup tried to nurse but was pushed away by 2 adults. It tried for an hour, both in and out of the water. It was so sad to watch. 9 turkey vultures landed nearby. I've never seen them do that before. I hope the little one makes it somehow. 1 pup had a visible umbilicus, and another had loose, folded belly skin. Both of them had attentive moms. There were whales, a sailboat that disturbed the seals, and surfers as well as lots of people at the river mouth. --Amy Southwick

5/8/13: It was a cool day, the haze just lifted off and comfortable with a lite breeze... There was a Whale with a calf at the River spit! Beautiful! -- Jim Fleming

5/12/13: Great Mothers day! ... 110 visitors! --Elizabeth Christie

5/28/13: Gary and I had to bail the 2-6 shift: 30mph winds and few people. --Mary Follis

6/2/13: Lovely day -- warm, not much wind, incoming tide this afternoon, no fog. Only about 60 seals present, probably because people have been getting too close. Lots of them come down on the north side. The river is VERY high, so the water agency may have to breach soon. It would be really interesting to watch that process from the overlook. --Amy Southwick

7/4/13: We need some more seal signs. The seals and the mouth of the river are shifting around. --Barbara Gegan

7/13/13: What a shift! ... 4 men in 2 kayaks with no life vests or wet suits launched into the ocean from the north beach... The radio did not connect to the JVC, waving my vest to get the lifeguard's attention only tired me out... How about a bright light to get the life guard's attention? ... The men made it out to the biggest offshore island and only capsized when surfing in -- flushing 6 harbor seals in the process. --Julie Cross

8/3/13: One young elephant seal came ashore at 12:20 and was joined by a second younger one with a fresh cut on its back. --Mary Follis, Andy Brunner, John Brundage

8/4/13 All seals were flushed twice, first by a sailboat in the estuary with a flapping sail that was at least 100 yards away, then by a helicopter zooming overhead. --Elizabeth Christie & Julie Cross

9/1/13: Over 250 people visiting from right here in Bodega to as far away as Italy and Germany and Long Island New York. Everyone was very respectful and very interested in observing the harbor seals through the scope or binoculars. So much fun to share stories, history, biology and pictures about the seals and their habitat. --Joyce and Bill Carlson

Continued on page 5

PROGRAM UPDATES

WHALE WATCH

Bea Brunn, Whale Mother

This is the quiet time for whale watch. It seems we again have a few juvenile gray whales hanging around Bodega Head. Out in deeper water there have been many humpbacks and blue whales as there has been an abundance of food in the water not only for our whales but also for salmon this year.

We are already gearing up for our 2014 whale watch season, and our orientation is scheduled for November 16. We hope to see all of our “old timers” as well as many new volunteers, with everybody ready to sign up for Saturdays and Sundays from January through May (actually our last weekend is the first weekend of June). Hope everybody had a great summer and are ready to greet our beautiful whales again during their migration.



U.C. CALIFORNIA NATURALIST PROGRAM

Elizabeth Haze Vega, Environmental Educator



In cooperation with the University of California, Occidental Arts and Ecology Center recently hosted and completed the first UC Naturalist Course offered along the Sonoma Coast. The course was designed and collaboratively led by Steward's newest staff member David Berman, and Environmental Consultant and Master Tracker, Meghan Walla-Murphy.

Participants came from all over California, from San Luis Obispo in the South, to the Northern reaches of the Lost Coast and inland to Napa. Ranging in ages from 16 to 60 +, we all hoped to glean some knowledge from our highly regarded presenters and from the amazing diversity of life that we call Northern California. We were honored to include amongst our ranks, representatives from the Graton branch of the Pomo Tribe. Old friends with shared values were reunited, unaware that either would be present. It was a beautiful gathering of gurus, geeks and friends of the earth. (No offense intended..... it just rolled so nicely off the tongue.)

As a budding Naturalist and participant in attendance, I was impressed and inspired by the variety, caliber and dedication of the many specialists and presenters who took us ... literally and figuratively into their fields of expertise. It felt like we hit the Mother Load, as we explored each discipline, each crevice of knowledge, delving deeper and deeper into the subject matter. Starting with an earth shaking Geology lecture, presented by Scott Lawyer, and a timely discussion on Climate and Weather by David Anderson, we flowed into deeper matters of Water Consciousness with resident specialist and Water Wizard, Brock Dolman. As we journeyed through the material, a wonderful culture began to emerge. The paradigm and language of tracking was superimposed upon our thinking and experience by the powerful ideas and imagery presented by Meghan Walla-Murphy who continually brought us back to the idea of “Tracking the Landscape”. Her respectful and reverent approach to observing and interacting with the natural world of plants and animals, tempered with a delightfully playful spirit, created in this participant a strong desire to know more deeply and understand more fully the beauty and the abundance of California wildlife. My wild dreams came true as we ventured forth into the unexplored realms of the beautiful Bohemian Nature Reserve. Finding rare and unusual plant life abounding in surprisingly serpentine settings, we came upon a recent and unmistakable set of bear tracks, nestled into the muddy memory of a creek bed.



Meghan Walla-Murphy

Pushing our minds and bodies to the limit, in the hopes of retaining much more than just water, we were soon to experience the ultimate challenge... reality. A hard hitting discussion of Energy and Environmental issues was presented by OAEC's Executive Director Dave Henson. With a background in environmental studies, sociology and law, Dave was able to broach painful subjects with a disarming sense of humor and great clarity. He painted a clear and daunting big picture of what lies ahead. His straight forward approach to the realities faced by all life on the planet brought us down to earth with a resounding bump. It was at this time that I was most grateful for the strong and constant presence provided by our own David Berman, whose quiet vigilance was always close at hand. After three days of intensive input, when Sunday morning rolled around, he had the wisdom and the grace to pick us up, dust us off and tell us that we were going to be alright. David seemed to know that our strength and resilience had been challenged.

Continued on page 5

U. C. CALIFORNIA NATURALIST PROGRAM *Continued from page 4*

Intuitively, he chose the right words to share. The poem he shared by Mary Oliver spoke to my heart and I am sure, touched many others...reviving our sense of purpose. Once again, the world offered itself to our imaginations ... and three days of field trips ensued. We visited Bodega Marine Lab enjoyed wonderful presentations from Jackie Sone, and David Dan, another Marine Lab. David spoke of the technology and studies that were being implemented at the facility. Rising before the sun, we visited the Tide Pools at Shell Beach, and as if we were being rewarded for persevering, we discovered fresh tracks of a mother bob cat and her baby. The full moon shone upon us as we studied, strolled, and hiked, discovering the treasures of garden, pond, and grassland. Resident entomologist and bright light Jim Coleman attracted much interest with his collection of creepy crawlers and buggy stories. Native American educator Edward Willie shared with us the ancient practice and wisdom of tending the earth. Each day held new delights and pleasures, and finally on the very last day, we were blessed by a presentation from Joanne Campbell, a native elder of the Coastal Miwok and Southern Pomo tribe. Following a poignant and memorable graduation ceremony, 20 new California Naturalists were unleashed upon the world... full of POW! Passion, Obsession and the Willingness to share them!

SEAL WATCH *Continued from page 3*

9/2/13 AM: When we arrived, the seals were flushed into the water. A family had ignored the signs and the ropes and had their dog off leash and were sitting on the north side right at the tip of the peninsula. They finally moved back behind the ropes, but the damage was done. It took the seals over two hours to slowly move back onto shore. Fog rolled in and it was very difficult to see the seals. Really the only thing you could do was listen and hear their snorting and playing in the water. *—Joyce and Bill Carlson*

9/2/13 PM: Four foolhardy kayakers, without life jackets, attempted to enter the estuary at the mouth of the river against the current. We tried to wave them off, unsuccessfully, but we did flag the lifeguards down. Two of the kayakers capsized – their kayaks landed on the north side of the river mouth, while the men swam to the south. The seals flushed. Lifeguards made the 2 kayakers who were still offshore paddle against the wind all the way to Blind Beach to take out. And they made the capsizers walk to Blind Beach to meet them. Then they took them all to the overlook and made the kayakers climb down to the beach to retrieve their kayaks. Punishment enough for disregarding Seal Watchers and Lifeguards and flushing the seals. *—Elizabeth Christie & Julie Cross*

Again, a big Thank You to all Seal Watch volunteers! Seal Watch is over for 2013, but if you'd like to become a Seal Watcher, sign up on our website for next year's orientation, which will be on February 8, 2014.

THE HISTORY CORNER

DISHONORABLE DISCHARGE!

Doris Dickenson, Docent and Author

In May 1864, in the midst of the ongoing Civil War, James Armstrong rejoined the war effort as a full colonel and commanding officer of the 2nd Brigade, 134th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. It was organized for one hundred days of service.

The Muster roll gave the only physical description of James that appears to be available, listing him as 5 ft. 5 ½ inches tall, with blue eyes, dark hair, and light complexion.

The 2nd Brigade built roads and bridges and did picket duty, under conditions which Colonel Armstrong perceived as detrimental and unusual to his unseasoned men. He felt his men were being subjected to excessive action and inadequate medical care. In July 1862, Colonel Armstrong wrote directly to President Lincoln complaining at length of conditions near the front. This did not sit well with the president, resulting in a dishonorable discharge for James the following month.

It was not until the following July, after President Lincoln was assassinated and Andrew Johnson had assumed the presidency, that a special order from the President revoked the dishonorable dismissal order, and Colonel James Armstrong was declared honorably discharged.



Camp Chase, Columbus, OH

Volunteer Opportunities

Call the Stewards office:
869-9177 x1# or email
volparks@mcn.org

Program Activities Armstrong Redwoods

Visitor Center Staffing
Friends of Armstrong
Redwoods
Docent Tour Guides
Trail Maintenance
Habitat Restoration Project
Pond Farm Interest Group

Sonoma Coast State Park

Visitor Center Staffing
Seal Watch
Whale Watch
Tidepool Programs
Watershed Programs
Environmental Living Prog.
Sonoma Coast Stewardship
Pinniped Monitoring
Seabird Monitoring

Other Projects

Office Help & Special
Events

Volunteer Program Coordinators

Joyce Bacci, ARVC
Doris Dickenson, FAR
Laura Parent, Pond Farm
Linda Fisher, Jenner VC
Bob Caricato, Seal Watch
Bea Brunn, Whale Watch
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Creek Education Program
Bill Bambrick, Sonoma Coast
Water Quality Monitoring
and Trail Crews
The Sorensens, Marine
Debris & Beach Cleanups
Hollis & Jerry Bewley,
Tidepool Programs
Hollis Bewley, Seabird
Monitoring
Louise Patterson, MAU
Mark Anderson, Foot Patrol

Special Events & Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities

VOLUNTEER ORIENTATIONS

We're offering docent training for two programs and an educational workshop this October. If you're interested, please register online (on the Stewards website, at http://www.stewardsofthecoastandredwoods.org/seminar_registrationpage.htm). David Berman, dberman@mcn.org

Willow Creek Watershed Education Training

Friday, October 4, 2013, 9 am – 3 pm, bring lunch, meet at Willow Creek, first bridge
Inspire students in an exciting watershed field study program where they learn about the life cycle of salmon and attributes of a healthy watershed, erosion and sedimentation control, water quality and macroinvertebrates.

Armstrong Tour Guides & Roving Docents Orientation

Tuesday, October 8, 2013, 10 am – 12:30 pm, Volunteer Office, Armstrong Redwoods
Learn to share fascinating redwood ecology tours and/or activities with adults and school children. Docents need to be available on weekdays for school groups. Roving docents greet visitors along the trails on the weekends. Mentoring and resource materials provided.

Redwood Ed: Activities for Teaching about Redwoods

Tuesday, October 8, 2013, 1:30 - 4:30 pm, Volunteer Office, Armstrong Redwoods
Instructor: Mike Roa, Environmental Ed educator and writer
This hands-on, interdisciplinary workshop will provide background knowledge, skills and resources to help teach about the coast redwoods. Participants will receive guides on CD. Good for docents, outdoor educators, teachers, parents and grandparents.

Whale Watch Orientation

Saturday, November 16, 2013, 9 am – 1:30 pm, bring lunch
Help the public view the annual gray whale migration. Docents are at Bodega Head on weekends January to early June.

California State Parks Presents
the Eighth Annual
Old Grove Festival
A Benefit for
Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods
Redwood Forest Theatre, Armstrong Redwoods State Natural Reserve
Saturday, Sept. 14, 2013
"Ramble in the Redwoods"
A cross generational musical happening featuring a cast of Bay Area talent.
**Houston Jones w/ Jason Crosby, Shana Morrison, Alex Nelson,
Teresa Tudury, David Luning and The Oceans**
Gates open 4:30 pm, Food and Beverages
Show starts at 6:00 pm
General - \$25, (one child free/adult),
Preferred - \$40 Redwood Circle - \$60
www.oldgrovefestival.org, 707-869-9177

SAVE THE DATES

Sophie's Cellars Happy Hour - Fri. September 27, 2013, 4 - 7pm
Annual Membership Picnic - Sat. October 19, 2013, 10:00 walk with David Berman, Noon potluck
Annual Volunteer Celebration & Auction - Fri. December 6, 2013, 6:00 - 9:00 pm, Guerneville Vets

In Appreciation of our Donors

Foundations/Agencies

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California State Parks Foundation
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Diane Gifford and Linda Price

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Barefoot Winery
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Jeff Yates

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Robert Proctor

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Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods

PO Box 2, Duncans Mills, CA 95430

(707) 869.9177, FAX (707) 869.8252

stewards@mcn.org, stewardsofthecoastandredwoods.org

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TO MAKE A
VEHICLE DONATION
IN THE NAME OF
STEWARDS.**

For information on contributing to Stewards' Endowments please contact Michele Luna at (707) 869-9177 X4# or mluna@mcn.org

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods

Membership Form

RENEWAL

YES, I'd like to become a member.

- Senior/Student \$25.00
Individual \$30.00
Family \$45.00
Contributing \$100.00
Sustaining \$150.00
Business \$150.00
Patron \$250.00 plus
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Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone _____

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I'd like to help with an additional donation of \$_____

Payment type: Check Charge Card Visa MC Total tax deductible donation \$_____

Make check payable to Stewards. Account # _____ Exp. Date _____

Annual Renewal Date: February 1 Signature: _____

Bequests

Your Gift to the Future of State Park Preservation

With your help, future generations will enjoy the State Parks in the Russian River District, including education and stewardship programs supported by Stewards. A gift to Stewards is a rewarding form of giving from your estate. There are several types of charitable bequests by will (or beneficiary designation).

Sample:

I hereby give and bequeath to Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods, a nonprofit organization incorporated under the laws of the State of California, with a principal address at P.O. Box 2, Duncans Mills, CA 95430, _____ percent of my estate, (or) the sum of _____ dollars, (or) the following assets _____, Tax ID # _____ provided upon request. Contact your legal advisor for further information. There are also other planned giving options for your consideration.