

The Redwood Log

Volunteer Newsletter



Muir Woods National Monument | Winter 2007

In This Issue

- Muirly Mia's Musings
- Jim's Jabberings
- When a Tree Falls in a Forest...
- Saudi Military Returns to Muir Woods
- Cosco Busan Oil Spill
- Hillside Trail Restoration
- Banducci Restoration: Phase 2
- Into the Redwood Forest
- Fish Notes from the Field
- Intern Introduction
- Volunteer Thanks!

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7

Muirly Mia's Musings

by Mia Monroe



One hundred years ago the fate of Redwood Canyon was in jeopardy. On December 2, 1907 William Kent's property on the southern slopes of Mount Tamalpais was condemned for a local water supply: a dam proposed at the confluence of Fern and Redwood Creeks. The redwoods would be logged as well, needed to help rebuild earthquake-leveled San Francisco. The Kents returned promptly from a Hawaiian influenza "cure" to get to work on saving the heart of the redwood forest...and the rest is history!

As the contemporary manifestation of this outpouring of personal and generous commitment, please join us to celebrate this story of vision, action and the foundation of a legacy of personal stewardship during the Muir Woods Centennial Year.

Today, the dark clouds over the redwood canyon could be thought of as the endangered salmon in our creek, the browning of the forest understory (and surrounding woodlands) due to a SOD epidemic, the elbowing out of spotted owls from their preferred nesting habitat in the old-growth by the invasive barred owl, the noisy air tours overhead, the uncertain threat of global climate change, the insidious changes that over a century of fire suppression has wrought, the subtle impacts of the park's very popularity, the inability to implement improvements due to lack of government funds and stalls in long-term planning.

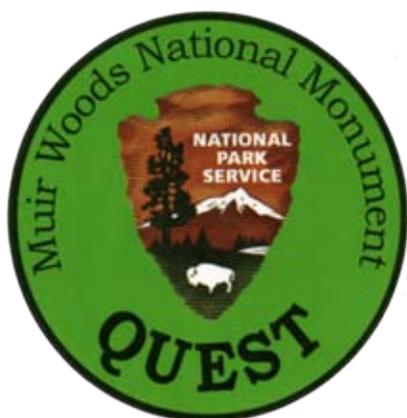
Yet, just like 100 years ago, the light of the Winter Solstice is a symbol of the hope we feel for this forest. Many all over the world have a very soft spot for Muir Woods and think of this place when their soul needs refuge, when they wish to remember the special peace that comes over one when walk-

ing the park trails among these ancient trees. Countless young people have first learned the wonders of nature here. We are an example studied by parks all over the world for how volunteers make a difference, effective crowd control, innovative inclusion of partners. Muir Woods is now part of a progressively managed Redwood Creek Watershed so that the plants and animals can live in a more naturally-bounded ecosystem...and restoration of many parts of this bigger unit is a reality (keep your fingers crossed for Big Lagoon!). Critical initiatives such as education, I&M, soundscape protection, sustainable guiding principles are our by-word. We are part of the GGNRA's General Management Planning. And, of course, there is the committed staff that wears four uniforms: NPS, Conservancy, Concession and Volunteer...the precious resources are the reason we're here but many think that we are what help make the meaning clear!

Thank you for all you each offer the park, the public, other members of the woods team. I hope you find the Centennial activities, from behind-the-scenes prep to the joy of celebration, a special part of your next year in the park. There is much to do but what a great place and an inspiring story to put your invaluable energies toward...it is a unique opportunity, thank you for being part of it!

Jim's Jabberings

by Jim MacDonald



You may have noticed families counting fence post, skipping through the woods, making a fish face at the second bridge. No, there is not some strange malady affecting the visiting public, they were more than likely doing the Muir Woods Quest.

Save-the-Redwood League provided a generous grant for us to develop a family program that was interactive and gave families or groups the opportunity to learn about the redwood forest. I had just been to a great training on something called Quest. A Quest is a program that leads participants through the woods in order to find clues. The clues then accumulate to give a final clue that leads them to a treasure box that contains the treasure.

We successfully piloted the program through out the busy summer months. In fact we had a hard time keeping up with the demand. Participants completed an evaluation at the end of the Quest. We received great feedback. Many families appreciated a fun interactive tool to help them during their visit. One parent wrote: "It was a godsend. Our 7 and 9 year old kids loved it. It kept them interested, excited, and walking. It could have been longer."

We just received the final booklet from the printer. I must say, it looks fantastic. So, the next time you are at the Woods, grab a booklet and go on the Quest. You should become familiar with the program to inform our visiting public.

When a Tree Falls in a Forest...

by Sarah Koenen



On October 7, 2007, a large redwood fell near curly bark classroom. A better description would be “on the classroom”. The tree took to heart that old saying “go west young man.” West it went, but then the question becomes why did the large redwood tree fall? Some say, “to get to the other side of the creek.” It accomplished this task easily with its 182 foot reach.

When it fell it took a variety of trees with it. It also managed to take out several rails and posts, many of which had just been installed by the Marin Conservation Corps weeks earlier. The tree also left its mark (large divot) on the main trail to the west of Redwood Creek, which has since been filled in. Only a small portion of the redwood was cleared to open the main trail again. The classroom remains closed. The tree will not be removed but plans are being considered to redesign a new classroom around the fallen tree. What better teaching tool than nature at work.

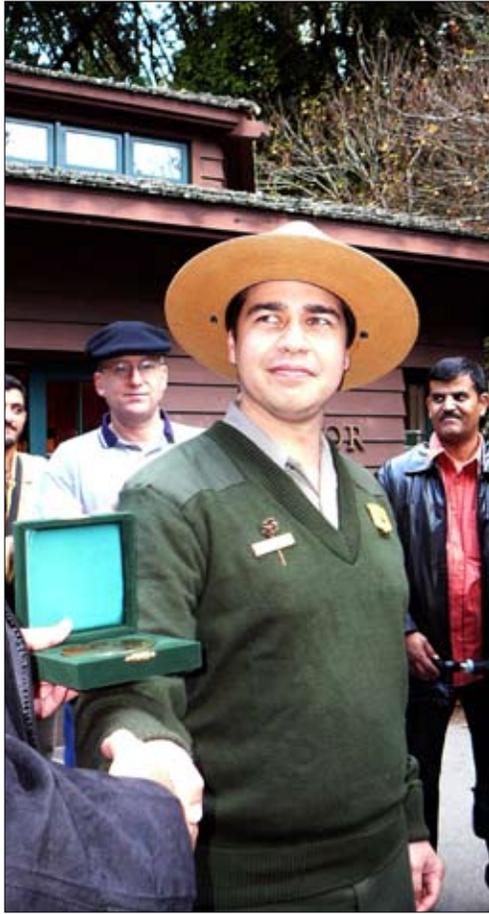
As people file by the downed tree they fist ask when it fell and then excitedly ask “did anyone hear it?” The answer is no, as it luckily fell when the park was closed. One can only imagine the cacophony of sound that must have reverberated through the canyon while it crashed through the trees, benches, railings, and creek, falling to its final resting place.

However, in its death, life abounds. Birds were seen everywhere flittering in the downed branches that littered the forest floor. Trees and plants once living in the shadow of this giant redwood now find themselves in the spotlight of sun rays giving them new found energy to grow fast and tall—a race to the canopy to ensure another tree won’t once again dominate the scene and leave it behind in the shadows.

Looking more closely at the scene of the crime, the fallen tree trunk showed evidence of old fire scars, and slight rot. However, as there was no storm or strong winds, the ultimate answer as to why the tree fell may forever remain a mystery. When a redwood falls in a forest it is important to remember that it will be here long after several generations to come have passed. The tree that once provided life’s oxygen, and a sense of awe as we stood in its shadow, will continue to provide a home and much needed nutrients for its forest community as it slowly decomposes and fades away in an ever changing old-growth forest.

Saudi Military Returns to Muir Woods

by Sarah Koenen & Tim Jordan



Rangers Ken Lavin and Sarah Koenen must have done something right last year as the Saudi Military returned for a second visit to Muir Woods. We were contacted in September to see if we would once again showcase Muir Woods to the visiting Saudi Military as part of their training that they take part in with the U.S. Government. So we gladly said yes and brought in our own reinforcements. Rangers Sarah and Tim, and volunteers Marvin Prager and Don Bixby all joined the ranks and gave them a tour through the forest.

In the early afternoon on Thursday, November 15th the group arrived and consisted of approximately sixty individuals, who were accompanied by American soldiers leading a tour of the bay area scenic wonders. The group was divided into three separate groups and given a tour of the woods by Muir Volunteers Marvin Prager and Don Bixby.

Before embarking on the tour some men wanted to conduct their afternoon prayer. Approximately 20-30 men conducted a daily prayer in front of the visitor center. For several minutes the men kneeled and bowed their heads in unison to the east. The highlight for one of the small groups led by Ranger Tim Jordan was visiting Cathedral Grove. It was impressive to some of the men to know a Saudi representative had attended the U.N. conference in 1945.

The tour concluded and the three groups returned to the visitor center. One of the men began to dance. Suddenly, another began to sing. Within a few minutes there was a group of men dancing and singing with joined hands. The mood was quite festive and Marvin Prager and Tim Jordan both danced with the group momentarily. Later we were told that the dance was done at celebrations and was intended as an expression of gratitude to Muir Woods and staff for hosting them.

The unit then presented two gifts to the park. The first was a bronze disc engraved with the military unit's seal and name in Arabic. The second gift was a glass plaque with the Saudi and American flags, which was to commemorate the diplomatic relations between the two nations that were reinforced through the visit. The Saudi group's visit to Muir Woods also reinforced this park's connection with the international community and the United Nations.

Cosco Busan Oil Spill

by Sarah Koenen



As we are all painfully aware, an 810-foot-long container ship crashed into the western span of the Bay Bridge on November 7, spilling 58,000 gallons of Bunker oil into San Francisco Bay. This affected areas as far south as Mori Point and as far north as Point Reyes National Seashore. Many National, County and State Park beaches were closed for days if not weeks. No one is sure how long the affects of this disaster will be felt by the bay area.

The Oiled Wildlife Care Network reported just 20 days later 1,060 oiled birds have been collected alive but 2,255 birds were either collected dead or died as a result of the oil spill. Only 231 birds had been released back into the wild. One mammal was collected alive but died soon after and three mammals were collected dead. Clean-

up crews are still hard at work as oil continues to wash up onto shorelines.

The Bay Area National Parks continue to coordinate response and cleanup efforts with the unified command, consisting of the US Coast Guard, California State Fish and Game, and a contract incident management team retained by the responsible party. Please visit www.nps.gov/goga to learn more up-to-date information.

Hillside Trail Restoration

by Jeff Obirek

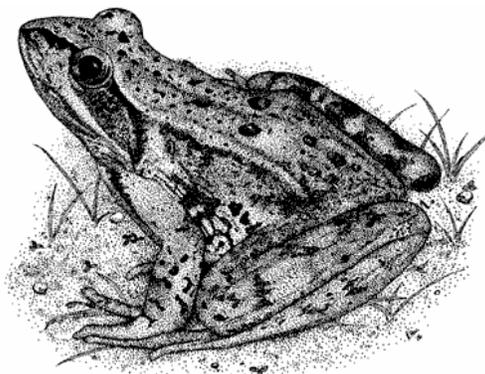
In your walks through the woods this season, you may encounter exciting work improvements to our trail system. There are four NPS trail crews with hard working Student Conservation Association (SCA) interns working in and around Muir Woods this winter. Two of these crews are combining expertise and labor on the Hillside Trail. For the next few winter months, workers will install a lengthy series of retaining walls, a technique using timbers and rock

to provide a stable treadway and ensure for adequate draining of the coming rains. Trail crew members are working quickly to be completed with the heavy work before the Spotted Owls return. The Hillside Trail will be closed to the public while work is being performed. Ask questions whenever you may run into crew members on the Main Trail as they haul materials up the hill, and look for weekends when the trail might be opened to get a peek at their work. The third and fourth

crews are trail maintenance teams that will clear brush, install drains, fix steps and rails in need of repair, and respond to safety concerns such as downed trees. The maintenance crews have a lot of terrain to cover, but will be working on every NPS trail in the Muir Woods area. If you run into any of these crews this season, be sure to say hello. Questions and compliments are always welcomed!

Banducci Restoration: Phase 2

by Chris Freidel



When William Kent donated his parcel of redwoods to the federal government in January of 1908, his conservation goals were not limited to these groves of ancient giants at the bottom of the valley. He and his associates envisioned a Mt. Tamalpais National Park, stretching from the top of the beloved mountain all the way to the ocean. Because of his efforts, and those of many others, much of that land is today protected, though not in quite the way he planned. The Redwood Creek watershed, which at nine square miles would have made up a sizable portion of the proposed park, is today about 95% public land, spread between the Marin Municipal Watershed District at the top of the watershed, the National Park Service (NPS) at Muir Woods and near Muir Beach, and Mt. Tamalpais State Park filling the spaces in between.

Even though the Redwood Creek valley is not unified under a single management structure, the high proportion of public land allows for some level of watershed-level planning, which is relatively rare in the Bay Area. For instance, both the NPS and Marin County undertook projects along Redwood Creek in September and October of this year which will likely benefit our local runs of Coho salmon and steelhead trout. The County installed a new culvert where Kent Creek flows underneath Muir Woods Road and joins Redwood Creek. This new “arched” culvert is larger and has an open, flat bottom that will provide easier passage into the Kent Canyon tributary for spawning fish.

At the same time the new culvert was being built, contractors working for the NPS were improving fish habitat

downstream at the former Banducci flower farm. As the continuation of a floodplain enhancement and instream habitat restoration project that began in 2003, about 600 linear feet of streambank were excavated and six log structures were built in the creek channel, using trees from an adjacent farm-era windrow of exotic Monterey cypress. In time, these changes will likely result in a more sinuous, meandering flow for the creek through this reach, with deeper pools and complex wood structures providing summer fish habitat and refuge from heavy winter floods. In addition, the excavation of a wider channel for high flows will likely decrease flooding downstream. A 0.4 acre pond was also excavated towards the southern end of the site, to create habitat for threatened California red-legged frogs.

For the next two winters, volunteers from the Redwood Creek Native Plant Nursery will be planting more than 17,000 native plants into the newly excavated areas along Redwood Creek at the Banducci site, working to expand habitat and enhance habitat for endangered salmonids, migratory songbirds, and amphibians. As we celebrate Muir Woods’ 100th birthday, and a century of William Kent’s conservation legacy, we can feel certain he would have smiled upon the joint efforts of many groups and agencies to protect and restore this precious place.

To help restore Redwood Creek this winter, join the Redwood Creek Nursery volunteers every Wednesday and Saturday, from 10 am to 1 pm. For more information, and for this week’s meeting location, call (415) 383-4390, or email Alexis Jones at ajones@parks-conservancy.org.

Into the Redwood Forest

by Mike Vernon



The anticipation can be agonizing. What critters will we come across? How big are the trees? Will it be cold? When is lunchtime? These questions plague the minds of young school children eagerly awaiting their arrival to Muir Woods for their Into the Redwood forest experience.

Providing an opportunity to study community ecology in the field, the program combines science, visual and language arts to educate students about the beauty and complexity of life in a coastal redwood forest. As nature detectives, participants are encouraged to use their five senses to draw conclusions about the sights, sounds, and smells of Muir Woods. Over the course of their visit, students document their observations in a field journal through fact recording, illustrations, and poetry.

Thanks to the generous contributions of the non-profit Save the Redwoods League and the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, teachers from low-income urban schools in the Bay Area can bring their students to the monument at no cost. This allows children who have often never left the city a rare chance to explore and appreciate the wonders of a wilderness area.

With five programs already under the belt and more than 30 scheduled for the coming months, 2008 promises to be a productive and mutually enriching year for students and rangers alike. If you would like to find out more information or contribute ideas toward the improvement of the program please contact Jim Macdonald or Mike Vernon.

Co Ho Ho! Fish Notes from the Field

Fish biologist, Michael Reichmuth reports from his field visit to lower Redwood Creek: "yesterday (11/28/07) we performed a survey/training on Redwood Creek yesterday and didn't see any adults in the system yet. I wasn't really expecting to see anything yet since the water levels are still low. Based on the smolt production estimate and the coho marine survival reported from Oregon this should be a good year for coho. We may not see as many fish as we did three years ago which was the biggest year in our monitoring history with an estimated 171 spawners. Based on the numbers I expect to see approximately 120 spawners in Redwood Creek. Reports from up North on the Klamath/Trinity system reported a late fall chinook run and the coho run is also expected to be a little later than normal. I will receive a report from up North by next week to see how the start of the coho run is going for the Trinity River. Usually the escapement (number of fish returning to spawn) up North is a good indicator for what we will see down in Redwood Creek. So in summary, based on ocean conditions (which were average to below average) and the number of smolts that left Redwood Creek in 2006, I expect to see a strong run returning this year that will be a little smaller than what we observed three years ago."



Intern Introduction

Who is Mike Vernon?

I am a curious and deeply mystified student of life. A recent graduate of the UCSC environmental studies department and low-impact Santa Cruz lifestyle, I am looking to branch out and discover what environmental stewardship means in practice. Eating well-balanced, locally produced, and organically grown food whenever possible (or as the wallet permits) is of the utmost importance to me. In addition, I much prefer a bicycle (or feet) to a four wheeled, dino-fueled, eco-crisis mobile. My scholastic interests include: general and deep ecology, environmental justice, agro-ecology, national policy, conservation biology and practical sustainability. At present, however, I am unsure as to what professional approach

I will take to address the ecological issues of the modern world. Insofar as education is concerned, I believe that connecting children to the planet, and its myriad inhabitants, at a young age is instrumental in the development of a society that is conscience of its impact. For leisure I enjoy reading, writing, biking, hiking/camping, snowboarding, cooking, and drinking tea. I look forward to an amazing experience in the Headlands/Muir Woods and hope to gain a better understanding of where exactly I fit into the solution.



Alexis Jones

My name is Alexis Jones, and I'm excited to be the new Redwood Creek nursery intern. I just finished a B.A. in Botany at the University of Montana. While in school I worked a wide range of research positions focusing on understanding and managing invasive plant species. These jobs let me travel all around the state and see places most people never see, which intensified my interest in restoration. This led me to do an honors thesis on the affect of salvage logging on the invasive weed *Hieracium aurantiacum*. I have always loved plants (I had a garden when I was ten), and am looking forward to getting hands-on experience in all aspects of restoration work, since I plan to study restoration ecology in graduate school.

Thanks to Our Muir Volunteers

by Tim Jordan

Muir Woods depends on the support of volunteers to ensure for the public an enriching visit to the park. This year docents and interns impressively contributed over 6,500 volunteer service hours! To see how much work has been put in refer to the left. Listed are the names and total hours of docents and interns that provided volunteer service between October

2006 and October 2007. Muir Woods is grateful to have such a dedicated group of individuals, especially for the momentous year to come. Everyone's efforts are of TREEmendous value, so volunteers, please give yourselves and each other a pat on the back for all of your hard work and commitment to Muir Woods.



If you have comments, suggestions, or would like to submit an article for the next edition of the Redwood Log, Please contact the editor, Ranger Tim Jordan at: Timothy_Jordan@nps.gov



Docent Hours

Don Bixby	348
Jenie Chang	30
Joyce Crews	56
Joe Delaney	222
Rory Flay	64
Larry Glazier	6
Roger Goldberg	117.5
Ben Harwood	16
Larissa Ivanova	24
Ellen Loring	120
Donna Lyons	8
Jim MacDonald	8
Robert Mackler	58
Stephen Meyer	8
Howard Miller	222
John McNamara	224
Jeff Obirek	6
Eileen Ong	48
Gaelyn Ong	48
Norman Ong	48
Marvin Prager	434
Evelyn Rose	124
Catherine Ramberg	46.5
Parry Sadoff	110
Nancy Valente	73
Max Vecchitto	92

Intern Hours

Dustin Bills	432
Chris Enders	1288
Megan Fitzharris	560
Doug Sides	440
Josh Van Walleghem	1148
Mike Vernon	80

Cover art for this quarter's Redwood Log was provided by Robert Tupper, a watercolor painter of National Park sites. Muir Woods National Monument is the fifteenth National Park Land painted by Mr. Tupper in 2007.