



DUNESBERRY

NEWSLETTER OF FRIENDS OF THE DUNES

FALL/WINTER 2021 | VOLUME 40 | ISSUE 2

MONUMENTAL MOVES

By Mike Cipra, Executive Director



A scenic view of Samoa Dunes and Wetlands Conservation Area. Photo by Suzie Fortner

Humboldt Bay is home to a remarkable variety of biologically rich habitats, including the most intact, native coastal dunes on the U.S. west coast. These connected habitats are all ancestral lands of the Wiyot People, who call this special place the *Wigi*.

Many of you have worked with us to protect the lands and waters of the *Wigi* over the last 40 years. Thank you. You are part of a profound conservation story, with inspiring lands, committed partnerships, a shared heritage of Wiyot land stewardship, and successes like last year's landmark protection of the Samoa Dunes and Wetlands Conservation Area.

Now, it's time to take the next step.

At Friends of the Dunes, we've begun talking with partners about what it would look like to bring many of the protected lands around Humboldt Bay into one inspiring, nationally-recognized designation: this is the vision of the *Wigi*-Humboldt Bay and Dunes National Monument.

(Continued on page 2)

The unique, culturally significant, and profoundly beautiful patchwork of protected lands around Humboldt Bay has different conservation landowners, and each of these landowners has different access to the resources needed to manage their lands. And yet, these lands are often contiguous or connected by the waters of the bay, and thus they share the same wildlife, the same rare plants, the same trails, the same Wiyot stewardship heritage and cultural significance, and the same challenges. Exotic invasive species threaten native plant and animal diversity, while climate change and sea level rise pose multiple risks to our conserved lands and coastal communities. To address these challenges, we will need a coordinated response; the shared expertise of multiple people, agencies, Tribes, and cultures; and additional financial resources.

A National Monument is both a way to recognize the national significance of the conservation lands that ring Humboldt Bay and a land management roadmap for protecting this truly special place for our children and grandchildren. No partners would lose any ownership of their land or their management autonomy under this proposal. The National Monument would instead be a unifying land management structure for working cooperatively across boundaries, pooling and attracting new resources to address common challenges, honoring traditional ecological knowledge, and managing for shared conservation goals.



Great egret (Ardea alba) with a small fish in its mouth at Humboldt Bay. Photo by Melissa Fawcett-Routh.

You have worked with us to get this far. Now we're asking for your help to bring this new vision of a Wigi-Humboldt Bay and Dunes National Monument to reality. Whether you're a seasoned advocate like Lisa Hoover (whose contributions we recognize in this Dunesberry) or a newly-minted Coastal Naturalist (whom we also highlight on the following pages) we will need your voice, your passion, and your support.

We're inviting you to come with us, on the next great conservation journey.

WELCOME TO THE TEAM



Taylor Kibrick

Non-Profit Intern

Taylor is a student at Humboldt State University, completing his degree Environmental Science and Management with a focus in Ecological Restoration and a minor in Natural Resources. To continue advocating for conservation and environmental protection, he joined Friends of the Dunes as the Non-Profit Intern in Fall of 2021. Before working at the Humboldt Coastal Nature Center, Taylor worked for Forest Service as a Student Trainee in Biological Sciences and for several environmental restoration and education nonprofits in the Bay Area where he grew up. In his spare time, you can find him climbing at Moonstone beach or block printing in one of HSU's art studios.

VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT

Lisa Hoover

By Mike Cipra, Executive Director

Lisa Hoover's volunteer story with Friends of the Dunes is one of passionate advocacy, scientific inquiry, a joyful sharing of nature, and a long-term vision for conserving, connecting, and restoring our native coastal ecosystems.

Also, there's been some dancing along the way.

Lisa Hoover was introduced to Friends of the Dunes in 1985. With a Master's degree from Humboldt State with an emphasis in forest ecology and a youth spent on the Outer Banks of North Carolina, Lisa fell in love with the ecosystems of Lanphere Dunes. Her first volunteer work with Friends was removing invasive European beachgrass and yellow bush lupine. Soon after, Lisa lent her biological expertise to assist with endangered Menzies wallflower and rare salt marsh plant monitoring.

It wasn't long before she was helping organize the legendary Friends of the Dunes barn dance fundraiser! (Lisa is an accomplished Irish step dancer herself.) And by 1986, Lisa Hoover had already become President of Friends of the Dunes.

"I've always been drawn to marine ecosystems, and Friends was a grass-roots organization that was working hard to protect these places," said Lisa. "There are a lot of people who are responsible for the success of dune conservation in Humboldt County, and what connects us all is that we really put our hearts into it."



Lisa Hoover and John St. Marie, from the early days of the Friends.



In addition to her heart, Lisa also invested her intelligence and strategic vision in dune protection. She was a key member of the Humboldt Beach and Dunes Management Committee in the early 1990s, which shaped the off-road vehicle prohibitions we appreciate today in our conserved dune ecosystems that stretch from Lanphere Dunes all the way to the newly protected Samoa Dunes and Wetlands.

"This didn't happen overnight," said Lisa, looking out at the dunes. "So don't take it for granted. From the Wiyot People's stewardship to our work today, it takes people speaking up for the land."

Lisa was also critical in establishing Friends of the Dunes as a land trust that could acquire and manage conservation land. She served as chair of the Land Trust Committee, setting up criteria and structures that have guided our landmark acquisitions of the Humboldt Coastal Nature Center property and the Samoa Dunes and Wetlands.

Lisa Hoover's journey with us is a story of evolution, of visionary and science-based conservation, and of passionate advocacy. And all along, she has generously shared her passion for the dunes as a volunteer docent and naturalist, introducing new people to the wonders of coastal ecosystems. Lisa still volunteers to lead walks to this day. If you are lucky, you will go on a tour that she leads, and you'll understand the ever-evolving story of these dunes through Lisa Hoover's inspiring perspective.



Birds of Humboldt Bay Bird Observatory

By Ximena Gil, Naturalist and Wildlife Biologist

Mist nets open a few minutes after sunrise. I drive through the blue-black morning across the Arcata Bottoms toward the dune forest, where the Humboldt Bay Bird Observatory (HBBO) is housed. As I wind through the narrow roads I make out the silhouettes of lichen-draped Sitka spruces, and beach pines. I arrive at HBBO and shut my car door. I immediately feel it. The nip in the air. The signal that autumn is upon us and with it, the birds.

I'm new to HBBO, and the dune system itself. Having recently been accepted to graduate school this fall at Humboldt State University, I didn't want to miss the opportunity to learn from HBBO's team. The Humboldt Bay Bird Observatory is a fascinating place! It is a long-term study site where we monitor bird populations on the edge of the dune forest and the Mad River slough. It was established in 1982 and is one of the nation's longest-running monitoring stations. Throughout the decades, this station has served an important role in mentoring and teaching wildlife students and biologists, such as myself, the intricacies of bird research: mist netting, recording birds' morphometrics, and the art of banding.



Dark-eyed, Oregon junco (*Junco hyemalis*). Photo by Steph Ann Flora Cardenas.

I will admit I was a little apprehensive about learning bird banding during migration season, but my anxieties were calmed once I spent time among returning old friends, such as ruby-crowned kinglets (*Regulus calendula*) and fox sparrows (*Passerella iliaca*). Migration is a response to environmental cycles and food availability. In the fall and winter, the weather gets cooler and the days grow shorter, prompting plants to drop leaves and enter dormancy to conserve energy. These changes affect the availability of insects and other prey items for birds, encouraging birds to find their resources elsewhere (ideally someplace warm with abundant food sources).

The autumn and migration season has been an exciting time at HBBO, filled with straggling migrants (Ovenbird! Nashville Warbler!) and speedy net extractions as we catch whole foraging flocks of yellow-rumped warblers. But with the onset of winter months approaching, migration traffic will steadily wind down, leaving wintering birds and local residents to keep us company.

I look forward to spending more time here at HBBO during my time in Humboldt, where the birds are plenty and the sounds of waves crashing, and coyote yips among the reeds, fill the air.

(Continued on page 5)



Ruby-crowned kinglet (*Regulus calendula*). Photo by Erik Shoenborn, previous bander at HBBO.

Below is a short list of some of the bird capture highlights!
Birds caught September – present (not an exhaustive list).

- Hermit thrush
- Steller's jay
- Golden-crowned sparrow
- Oregon junco
- Ruby-crowned kinglet
- Coastal sooty fox sparrow
- Anna's hummingbird
- Northern flicker
- Yellow-rumped warbler (both myrtle and Audubon's)
- Golden-crowned kinglets
- Wrentit
- Spotted towhee
- Common yellowthroat
- Lincoln's sparrow

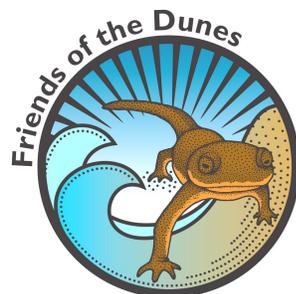


Yellow-rumped, Audubon's warbler (*Setophaga auduboni auduboni*). Photo by Steph Ann Flora Cardenas.

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Connecting with Nature (and each other): Coastal Naturalist Training 2021

By Suzie Fortner, Programs and Operations Director

Photo by Suzie Fortner

After an extended break from hosting in-person education programs, our 2021 Coastal Naturalist Training felt like the perfect comeback. From September 9 to October 28, a cohort of 16 curious and enthusiastic naturalists safely gathered on Thursday evenings and Sunday mornings to learn about the wonders of Humboldt's coastal ecosystems from an impressive line-up of local content experts.

We were well into planning this 8-week California Naturalist certification course when the Coronavirus Delta variant hit hard. After a brief respite from social distancing for vaccinated individuals, we suddenly went back to masking indoors and holding meetings over Zoom. Jen Ortega (Course Instructor) and I weighed our options carefully and sought feedback from participants, presenters, and Education Committee members. We wanted to make sure this course was safe, but we also did not want to go back to Zoom! Part of what makes this course so special is the connections people build over shared interests and shared experiences. Nature nerds - people who will ooh and aah over centipedes feeding on scat or a 10-lined June Beetle larva with cordyceps fungi growing out of its head - that's our audience for this course. I hear from participants all the time, in so many words, "these are my people." I couldn't agree more. This is not just an education program, it's community-building, and it's just not the same over Zoom. Plus let's face it, we are all experiencing a bit of Zoom-fatigue. Ultimately, we decided that we could host the training safely in person with some strict COVID-19 safety guidelines in place, such as masking and vaccination requirements. We also adjusted the schedule to spend less time indoors and more outdoors.

I'm very pleased to announce that it worked! We were able to safely offer the full course in person without a single COVID scare. Participants, staff, and guest speakers were all very respectful of the COVID guidelines and of each other. They were also very grateful that the program was happening in person. Everyone has been missing interaction with other three dimensional human beings in real life, and we were all very ready to safely gather together and bond over a shared love of Humboldt's coastal environments.

Upon completion of course requirements, participants not only get to impress their friends and family with their newfound nature knowledge, but they also become certified California Naturalists through the University of California's Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, joining a statewide community of naturalists. Those interested are also eligible for academic credits through UC Davis Continuing and Professional Education. Even more importantly, from my perspective, newly graduated naturalists leave the course as coastal stewards. They have new insight into the unique biodiversity of environments surrounding Wigi (Humboldt Bay), plus the desire and knowledge to protect these special places.

The Coastal Naturalist Training is community-supported education at its best. We could not offer this course without all of the amazing local experts who share their knowledge and enthusiasm as guest speakers and field guides.

A huge thank you to all of these content experts: Marnie Atkins, Janet Eidsness, Peter Haggard, William Weaver, Tony LaBanca, Susan Marshall, Michael Kauffmann, Adam Canter, Frank Shaughnessy, Captain Zippo, Michael van Hattem, Karen Reiss, Kim Cabrerra, Ken Burton, Richard Engel, Andrea Pickart, John St. Marie, Dante Ryman, Mike Cipra, Jennifer Kalt, Jennifer Savage, and Tom Wheeler.



Congratulations to our 2021 Coastal Naturalist Graduates! From left to right, top to bottom: Thomas Hedt, Gary Adair, Aiko Michot, John “Griff” Griffith, Caroline Gagne, Holly Couling, José Cabello, Lori Hendrick, Geniva Hayden, Cleo Domingo, Gina Rogers, Daisy Ambriz-Peres, Suzie Fortner (Programs Director), Teresa Mondragon, Erika Gonzales Granadino, Jen Ortega (Course Instructor), Gwilym Walker, and Emily Baxter (Teaching Assistant).

CULTIVATING COASTAL CONNECTIONS



Children playing at the beach at Samoa Dunes and Wetlands Conservation Area. Photo by Daisy Ambriz-Peres.

We are elated to announce that Friends of the Dunes was awarded a grant that will fund a plethora of programs and activities for the next two years! Thanks to the State Coastal Conservancy, we will be better able to serve diverse communities in Humboldt County and connect people with the wonders of coastal environments. Next year we will work together with a variety of partners including the Wiyot Tribe and Latino Outdoors to offer:

- *Explorando Juntos*: Monthly Spanish Bilingual Outings
- Family Nature Connection Events
- Nature Newbies Outings
- Get Outside Workshops
- Traditional Ecological Knowledge Explorations for Wiyot Youth
- Coastal Naturalist Training scholarships

Keep an eye for these programs and more in the following months on our website and social media!



Education Rejuvenation

By Emily Baxter, Education Coordinator

Rejuvenation: the action or process of giving new energy or vigor to something.

Bay to Dunes, our classic school education program that has been running since 1997, is back on its feet! From mid-September, and through most of November, kids once again have the opportunity to spend the day exploring the dunes and local fresh- and salt-water marshes.

When we found out that kids would be back in school this fall, we knew that education programs needed to be rejuvenated. We've all had a rough go of it this last year and a half, lacking social time with friends and stuck on Zoom calls for most of the day, and kids have had a really rough go of it too - facing these issues ten-fold, and missing out on time outdoors.

Bay to Dunes has been the first field trip of the past two years for many students. Children are eager to step outside and explore with their friends. As soon as they hop out of the bus you can instantly see the sparkle in their eyes and their energy levels increase by orders of magnitude! They turn into jumping jack rabbits, hopping from activity to activity with glee. It always brings a smile to my face and reinvigorates my passion for environmental education.



Kindergarteners exploring the Humboldt Bay mud flats during a salt marsh activity. Photo by Daisy Ambriz-Peres.



Children hiking through the dunes during their Bay to Dunes field trip. Photo by Michelle Kunst.

This celebratory move doesn't come without its own challenges. With bus drivers in short supply, accompanied by the increased risk of piling a bunch of children on a bus, so far Bay to Dunes has seen fewer visits than in past seasons. We have also faced a conundrum recruiting volunteers, the lifeblood of our education programs at Friends of the Dunes. Staff are hard at work to remedy these issues and figure out how we can best support our local schools and volunteers.

We are incredibly grateful to all of our supporters, funders, donors, and volunteers for allowing us the opportunity to offer these programs for students across the region during these unprecedented times. Providing students with a positive experience in nature is our main goal, and thankfully, we are achieving it!

If you are interested in volunteering for school education programs, call Emily at (707) 444-1397 or email education@friendsofthedunes.org.



YOU'RE INVITED

Holiday Party



Sunday, December 5 from 2 to 5 pm

Join us as we celebrate community supported conservation and honor you, our volunteers and members, outside of the Humboldt Coastal Nature Center! In order to protect the well-being of our staff and supporters, we will be signing groups of 15 people up for 30 minute "socializing shifts" from 2-5 pm to stop by and say hello! We will have a nice toasty fire, hot chocolate, mulled wine, and tamales to share.

RSVP required. Visit friendsofthedunes.org/calendar to learn how to RSVP.



Help reduce waste by bringing your own mug!

JOIN THE DUNE ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION TEAM

Every 2nd Saturday from 10 am to 1 pm at Humboldt Coastal Nature Center
Every 3rd Sunday from 10 am to 1 pm at BLM's Ma-le'l Dunes South

Visit friendsofthedunes.org/dert for more information



Friends of the Dunes is dedicated to conserving the natural diversity of coastal environments in Humboldt County, California, through community supported education and stewardship programs.

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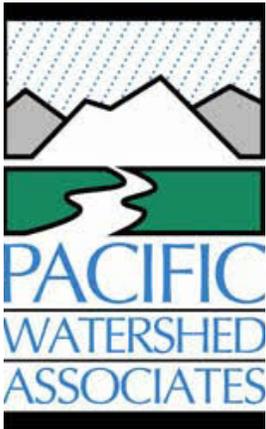
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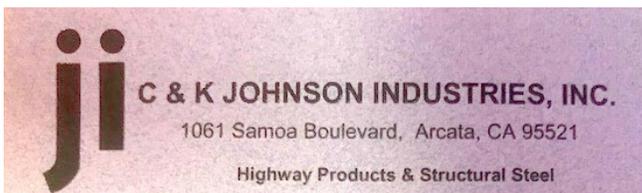
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Sunday, December 5 from 2 to 5 pm

More information on page 9

Visit friendsofthedunes.org/calendar for a complete list of upcoming programs.

Join our email list for updates about guided walks, restoration days, and school programs.

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