THE “DOOM LOOP” reactions can cause drastic budget shortfalls and could force governments to make tough decisions about what does and doesn’t get funding which could very well mean less revenue for infrastructure, schools, and social services. It will actually impact the entire community but, as with everything else, the people who can least afford it will be hit the hardest first.

Policymakers will face tough financial decisions, and governments shouldn’t forget about the economic benefits of investing in long-term sustainability and conservation. During tough budget negotiations, it wouldn’t be hard to imagine that officials decide to cut funding from climate programs that would actually help their cities reduce emissions and avoid even worse floods and wildfires in the future.

It’s up to us to keep our eyes on the future, both the near future and far, and continue to work towards pre-emptive transformational change, just like those visionaries of the past who took to the streets on the first Earth Day. Some call this a “hope spiral,” a pattern in which positive climate actions trigger other positive actions. We’re at a point where things could go either way, so please join us in pushing for the climate actions locally that could be the starting point of something good, the beginning of the hope spiral.

Let’s Not Fall Into The DOOM LOOP

As the climate continues to spin further out of control at an accelerating pace, governments may become overwhelmed by the consequences to the point that their efforts to address the root causes of the climate collapse will have to be diverted in order to deal with the catastrophe at hand. According to a recent report by the Institute for Public Policy Research, this has the potential to create a self-perpetuating cycle that is referred to as a “Doom Loop,” in which one negative action triggers another, which triggers another, and so on.

It’s obvious that the climate crisis is already imposing mounting, unsustainable costs to countries and states as they are forced to deal with increasingly destructive storms, wildfires, floods, famines, armed conflicts, and forced human migration. As the cost of addressing all this is snowballing, it has the possibility of forcing governments to dial back, or possibly even abandon, efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address other root causes of climate change, which then will create even larger economic burdens for the future.

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No Salmon Season This Year

It was announced in mid-March that the Pacific Fishery Management Council was planning to cancel this year’s salmon season in California due to crashing Chinook salmon population. Last year, fall-run Chinook returns on the Klamath River were only 22,000, the fourth lowest in the last 40 years. The Chinook are in trouble due to a variety of factors – dams and water diversions being high among them. This is another testament to the need to take down the dams on the Klamath and the Eel Rivers as soon as possible, and to stop the water diversions that result in low water levels and high water temperatures downstream, a deadly combination for habitat and ecosystem health.

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT ART CONTEST

This year’s Endangered Species Act Art Contest was a big hit. We received a record number of entries, and the NEC was overwhelmed with the talent and creativity of the artists who entered. It was a wonderful way to celebrate the beauty of the natural world and to raise awareness about the need to protect endangered species.

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DEAR NORTHCOAST ENV. CENTER,

Green Diamond logging company has decided to push and plow through the beautiful forest right behind the neighborhood nestled between Jacoby and Washington Creeks in Bayside. These forests are rich in wildlife, and Green Diamond’s logging will destroy the habitat for countless animals.

Since last summer, residents have engaged in talks with Green Diamond about conserving the forest surrounding their neighborhood because of its endangered Coho Salmon and hundreds of wild animals who need this ecosystem. Residents have met and communicated in good faith with Green Diamond representatives responsible for managing the tracts above Jacoby Creek and Washington Creek about the possibility of an easement before their proposed clearcutting began.

Green Diamond told residents they would wait until summer 2023 to do any logging, as they continued talks with the Jacoby Creek Land Trust about the possibility for an easement. Then, only a few months after meeting with the neighborhood, Green Diamond charged ahead and clearcut vast tracts of forest surrounding the Washington Creek area. This area is one of many recent clearcuts on the ridge lines above the Jacoby Creek Watershed. It has devastated the local habitat and displaced countless forest creatures.

Green Diamond has continued its practice of leaving huge 10 foot tall by 50 foot long piles of woody debris, a dangerous fire hazard to the community. They have left roads with no base rock, and in the rain those roads continue to deposit silt and sand into Jacoby Creek, contributing to the constant flooding that plagues the Jacoby Creek Valley neighborhoods since they started clearcutting a hundred years ago. Local resident, Ben Goulart, said, “I can’t believe after all these years, they continue with the same devastating logging practices.”

Now Green Diamond has the opportunity to support the local community, to preserve ecosystems, and give back a wildlife migratory path by supporting a wildlife easement. This would allow animals to roam from upper Jacoby Creek and Kneeland, down through the many easements, all the way to the valley floor at the Jacoby Creek Land Trust’s Kokte Ranch. This proposed easement is the last piece to that wildlife corridor, and would benefit at least 50 species of local animals photographed by residents in the Washington Creek area, such as: fishers, nesting osprey, hummingbirds, alligator lizards, breeding bald eagles, band-tailed pigeons, black bears, chipmunks, owls, crows, ravens, dragonflies, golden crowned kinglet, golden eagles, blue herons, grey jays, woodpeckers, thrush, northern flicker, pacific giant salamander, pacific wren, red legged frog, red shouldered hawk, quail, newts, ducks, fox, possum, raccoon, rabbit, and deer.

Residents have requested Green Diamond grant a conservation easement to the Jacoby Creek Land Trust, to provide nature a nomadic path.

To raise public awareness about the long-lasting destruction of wildlife habitat caused by Green Diamond’s clearcuts, a protest is being organized in May at the entrance to the Green Diamond Logging road on South Quarry Road. Residents and North Coast environmentalists want Green Diamond to make good on its pledge to be great “Forest Stewards” by granting this wildlife easement to protect the fragile ecosystem that is the Jacoby Creek watershed.

To learn more and get involved, contact Ben Goulart at 707-298-1770.
Dear EcoNews,

I have some friends who recently bought a house with a wood-burning stove. They mentioned that the regulations around fireplaces in California have changed so that only gas-burning fireplaces can be built into new homes. After listening to the recent EcoNews Report about the dangers associated with gas stoves in the kitchen, I was hoping to gain some more information about why these regulations are in place, how these heating sources affect our health and the environment, and what other possibilities exist for those of us who love having a fire indoors.

- Fire Desirer

Dear Fire Desirer,

Thank you for those wonderful questions! As winter wreaks havoc throughout Humboldt County, it’s admittedly unsatisfying to argue against the coziness of a night spent around the fireplace with family and friends. Depending on state and local ordinances, however, restrictions limit the use of these wood-fired heating sources, particularly in new homes. While this may seem inconvenient for those who prefer the traditional ambiance of a crackling fire, it is essential to understand the health and environmental reasoning that underlies these regulations.

From a public health perspective, wood smoke contains fine particulate matter and other pollutants that can harm human health, particularly for vulnerable populations such as children and the elderly. Specifically, wood-burning stoves and fireplaces can exacerbate pre-existing health issues, including asthma and heart disease. It can be so harmful that the collective consequences of lingering wood-stove pollution (indoors and outdoors) are, in some cases, more damaging than second-hand smoke from cigarettes. For example, the EPA notes that the lifetime cancer risks from wood smoke are “twelve times greater than that from an equal volume of second-hand tobacco smoke.”

From an environmental perspective, traditional wood-burning fireplaces are also not the most energy-efficient ways to heat homes and can contribute to climate change by releasing harmful pollutants, such as black carbon, into the atmosphere. While the degrees of impact vary, depending on where and how one sources their wood (i.e., cutting live carbon sequestering stands vs. dead snags, etc.), it’s fair to say that there are cleaner, healthier, and more environmentally sound ways to heat your home.

The recent EcoNews report highlighted the public health dangers associated with gas stoves in the kitchen, particularly their potential to release harmful chemicals into the air. However, it is important to note that gas fireplaces are generally designed with better ventilation systems and are less likely to cause indoor air pollution than the gas stoves mentioned in the report. While gas-burning fireplaces are cleaner, more efficient alternatives to traditional wood-burning stoves, they are also far from perfect. Gas-burning fireplaces still release carbon, reduce air quality, and the various steps associated with supply-side sourcing are also emission-heavy (think leakage, transportation, refinement, etc.).

Ideally, we will look to all-electric fireplaces, heat pumps, hot cocoas, and good company to provide a similar fireside ambiance while protecting ourselves and others. Luckily for us, various incentives are in place to encourage this transition. If that’s still a hard no for you, consider primarily relying on electric heat throughout the year and reserving those cozy, fireside nights for a special occasion.

- Luis Neuner, EPIC
Earth Day: The Fight Isn't Over

Oden Taylor, EcoNews Intern

April 22 marks 53 years of the celebration of Earth Day. As children many of us likely celebrated by planting trees and flowers, or making arts and crafts at our schools, to honor the beauty of our planet. But this year let's remember the way the celebration of Earth Day really began—as a protest.

Though a peaceful protest, Earth Day was born from student activism, much like movements we see today with the Sunrise Movement and other, mostly Gen Z, climate justice organizations. Conceptualized by Gaylord Nelson, a junior senator from Wisconsin, and Dennis Hayes, a young activist, Earth Day took off with a bang.

It is estimated that approximately 20 million people participated on this monumental day at tens of thousands of primary and secondary schools, universities, and community sites across the United States. Much of the driving passion for those involved came from shedding light on environmental racism and the harmful effects of industry on low-income communities of color.

This was fueled by an already emerging concern for the well-being of the environment after a massive oil spill in Santa Barbara, as well as the Cuyahoga River in Ohio catching fire due to water pollution in 1969.

Societal tensions were also already rising due to the anti-war movement which sprang up in response to the atrocities of the Vietnam War. Senator Nelson took this as an opportunity to blend the energy of anti-war protests with a broader concern about air and water pollution caused by capitalism as a whole.

The influence of the first Earth Day was so powerful that by the end of 1970, just one year after the planning of the event, the Nixon administration had both formed the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and through it passed the Clean Air Act. Thanks to this change alone there has been a 66.9 percent decrease in air pollution, adding an average of 1.3 years to the American life expectancy according to the Air Quality Life Index, a tool used to measure the effects of pollution concentration on life expectancy across the globe.

Since the creation of the EPA we have celebrated many important legislative successes towards the protection of our planet. In the years following its creation, the EPA banned the carcinogenic pesticide DDT and other cancer causing pesticides, as well as passed the Clean Water Act and Ocean Dumping Act. These protections and more have made huge differences in the safety of our world.

Today, the effects of climate change are being seen right in front of our eyes like never before. We must be realistic about the limitations of our planet and our role in these changes. Just like in 1970, we must be looking out for those who are the most vulnerable to these changes.

The effects of environmental racism are only exacerbating across the globe. As harmful chemicals from fossil fuel factories and others are seeping into groundwater systems, climate change driven tropical storms and earthquakes caused by fracking have further devastated communities of color.

In our own country, the Flint, Michigan water crisis continues to this day. The crisis began in 2014 when in an attempt to save money officials chose to switch Flint’s drinking water supply from the Detroit city system to the Flint River. The highly corrosive polluted river water caused lead to leech from the pipes it flowed through into the homes of thousands of Flint residents.

After millions of dollars spent and eight years of trying to clean up this disaster the city has yet to fully fix the effects of this damage to the land and its people.

Unfortunately this is only one example of the ways that capitalism has failed to create incentives to protect public health and the health of our planet. Because of this reality it is up to us to push for more environmental protections and policy changes to safeguard the future of humanity.

The Northcoast Environmental Center was founded in 1971, shortly after the original Earth Day, and has been pushing for change ever since. There are many things you can do now to honor our planet and all its inhabitants this Earth Day and every day.

Demand climate action and justice from your local, state, and national representatives. Commit to making sustainable changes in your own life that benefit the lives of everyone on this planet, such as reducing your use of plastics and other fossil fuel products, and by eliminating food and textile waste in your home by not over-purchasing. And finally, be sure to spread this wisdom everywhere you go.

Fifty years from now, we hope that this message has been well received. As our grandchildren play in clear water, breathing clean air, we will harvest the fruits of our labor. Until this is a reality we must all keep fighting.
What do you want the world to be like in 50 years? If you could change one environmental thing, what would it be?

Caroline Griffith, NEC Executive Director

As we celebrate Earth Day and the accomplishments of the visionaries of the past, EcoNews decided to visit the visionaries of today to ask what changes they think are necessary to bring about a better future. The students of the Eureka High Student Environmental Awareness Club were asked, “What do you want the world to be like in 50 years? If you could change one environmental thing, what would it be?” Below are excerpts from the conversation with Isaac, Ashton, Anna, Zach, Angel, Megan, Sequoia, Miram, Daniel, Elena and Rina.

• Megan: “Scientific Sentimentality for the Sponge and Sea Star. In 50 years, I think that it would be really exciting if scientific terminology and ideas surrounding marine organisms and their biology slowly became common knowledge. Maybe information could be spread through more TV shows, books, video games, music, drawings, posters, and other outlets. I feel that this could prove to be a crucial step for helping to protect the marine environment, because the public being exposed to and learning about marine organisms and their many unique and endearing personalities may help to naturally guide more people to care about the ocean and its incredible inhabitants.”

• Isaac: “I think a good idea is to get some Native American tribes into government to learn from their ideas of how they did it before the Europeans came. I think public transport would also reduce carbon emissions and just be better for people who are car-centric.”

• Sequoia: “In our AP Environmental Science class we’ve been talking about quotas for pollution, and I think that would be really helpful to change how companies operate. So they make their emissions lower and so they can make more money by selling those quotas to other companies, like using incentives to lower emissions. And the same thing with fishing and overfishing and stuff like that. And hunting.”

• Ashton: “So, oftentimes in the news, we see, I feel like every week we see a new natural disaster, destroying something. And I think a lot of that is due to our effect on the earth, obviously. So in 50 years, I would like to see the news not be flooded with natural disasters. I would hope not because the news companies are just prioritizing something else but more so because it’s not happening as much. So I’d like to emphasize how we have to focus on better energy sources. Because as the world becomes more modernized, we’re starting to rely on technology for most everything, and that’s going to use a lot more electricity, and so we can optimize how we use our electricity or how we get our electricity. I mean, then, I think we’ll see a lot less natural disasters. Maybe.”

• Zach: “I’d like to see a lot more using ecology to kind of like reduce Styrofoam. I think if they can find a better alternative to use, like plant based stuff. In Japan, they had a type of slime mold to figure out a better way to use their train stations to get around. It was like 300 times more effective.”

• Anna: “Things could be improved by not letting private businesses just choose their own policies. They get to choose how much money they make. What they do. And so it’s not always regulated.”

• Rina: “Balancing out the economy.”

Endangered Species Act 50th Anniversary

Dan Sealy, NEC Board Member

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) was signed by President Nixon on Dec. 28th, 1973. This year we celebrate the Endangered Species Act’s 50th Anniversary through December 2023.

ENDANGERED SPECIES ART SUBMISSIONS
To celebrate the anniversary of the Endangered Species Act, we invite students K-12 to submit their artwork showcasing an endangered species. All media is welcome, including poems! We will highlight a few of the submissions in EcoNews and we will also have an online Art Gallery showcasing all of the submissions at www.yournec.org/endangeredspecies. We hope to begin including art in our EcoNews May Issue and will continue through the end of 2023.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE
• Drop off your artwork at the NEC Office at 415 I Street, Arcata, CA 95521.
• Or mail your art to PO Box 4259, Arcata, CA 95518.
• Or email your art to nec@yournec.org. In the subject line please write “Endangered Species Art”.
• With your submission please include your name, age, school, and why you chose this species to feature in your art.
• Submission deadlines are the first week of each month through December 2023.

LOCAL RARE AND ENDANGERED SPECIES
• Gray Wolf
• California Condor
• Chinook salmon
• Scott Bar salamander
• Western snowy plover
• Marbled murrelet
• Northern spotted plover
• Humboldt Marten
• Blue Whale
• Lassics lupine
• Kneeland Prairie penny-cress
• Visit wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/CESA for a full list of California rare and endangered species.
WAYS TO CELEBRATE EARTH DAY/WEEK/MONTH

ALT. TRANSPORTATION ADVENTURE

According to the California Energy Commission, 50 percent of California’s greenhouse gas emissions come from transportation. Changing our transportation habits can be hard, but starting small and making it an adventure can be helpful. You can start out by declaring one day a week Alternative Transportation Day to test out what works best for you, whether it’s taking the bus, walking, biking, or hopping on one of those electric scooters that are randomly stationed around town. One key for a successful Alternative Transportation Day is planning; don’t schedule your first bus or bike adventure on a day when you have to rush from work to school and then to the grocery store. Set yourself up for success and enjoyment by keeping it simple at first and doing this on days when you have fewer obligations or more flexibility. Once you have a few Alternative Transportation Days under your belt and you know the bus schedule better, or how long it takes to walk to work, then it is less of a challenge to throw some errands into the mix or bring a kid along.

The Transit app is a great way to get to know local bus routes and schedules and see real-time arrival information. For those who are less inclined to download another app, bus routes and schedules can also be found on the Humboldt Transit Authority website at hta.org. One of the challenges of getting around by public transit in rural areas is that buses often don’t run late or very frequently, so be sure to check when the last bus runs so you don’t find yourself stranded.

For biking around Humboldt Bay, check out the Humboldt County Association of Government’s (HCAOG) online bike map at hcaog.net/map. You can also find a pdf of the more-detailed Humboldt Bay Area Bike Map on the HCAOG website. In general, a good route-finding method for new cyclists is to take the side streets adjacent to the main roads that you would use if driving. That way you can avoid riding on high-traffic roads until you are more comfortable. An added bonus is that you can then explore areas of town that you might not normally see while going slow enough to enjoy the birds and flowers along the way.

CELEBRATE “BUY NOTHING DAY”

Buy Nothing Day is a reaction to the shopping frenzy of Black Friday, but just like Earth Day it can be celebrated every day. The retail industry, both brick and mortar stores and online outlets, creates an astronomical amount of waste, from vehicle emissions (the shopper’s or the delivery driver’s) to plastic packaging, not to mention all of the products that are bought on a whim and then discarded. According to the EPA, 82.2 million tons of packaging is discarded in the US every year. The Ellen McArthur Foundation reports that the fashion industry is responsible for up to 10 percent of global carbon emissions, and that worldwide, one truck-load of clothes is burned or ends up in the landfill every second.

Much like driving, shopping has come to be associated with the American way of life, but this destructive habit can be broken. Taking a day (or week or even a month) off from shopping for anything but the essentials is good for the climate, good for the wallet, and can also be fun. Reuse parties, clothing exchanges and trading with friends are all ways to get the goods you need, and build community, without buying new products. Hosting a clothing exchange or repair party is a great way to celebrate Earth Day with friends. Or you can visit your local reuse art store and make something beautiful for your home rather than shopping online.

WATCH THE BIRDS

Here on the North Coast, we are blessed to live along the Pacific Flyway, the major north/south path that migratory birds take. This means that in the spring and fall, hundreds of bird species visit our area. Studies have shown that everyday encounters with birdlife are associated with long-term improvements to mental wellbeing. Simply by sitting in your backyard or visiting the local park (bonus points if you go by bus!) you can enjoy the health benefits of birdwatching and be reminded of why we celebrate this day in the first place.

CAROLINE GRIFFITH, NEC Executive Director

EARTH MONTH EVENTS

For more events and details check out the Events Calendar at www.yournec.org.

Bike Justice Humboldt Kick-Off Ride
- Hosted by: NEC, CRTP and Moon Cycles
- Date: Saturday, April 22, 2023
- Time: 12pm - 2pm
- Location: Moon Cycles, 1905 Alliance Rd, Arcata

About: We will learn a basic bike safety routine, talk about route-finding and bike to the Mad River bridge for snacks and nature. There will be an option for a longer ride to McKinleyville along the Hammond Trail for those who are interested.

Zero Waste Market Fundraiser
- Hosted by: Zero Waste Humboldt and Co-op
- Date: Saturday, April 22, 2023
- Time: 11am - 3pm
- Location: Arcata Co-op parking lot

Decolonizing Economics Summit: The 4th Annual Post-Capitalism Conference
- Hosted by: A growing network of partners. See page 18 for more information.
- Date: April 20 - 22, 2023
- Time: multiple sessions
- Location: virtual and in-person

Earth Day Celebration
- Hosted by: WRRAP
- Date: Saturday, April 22, 2023
- Time: TBD
- Location: Moonstone Beach

Eureka Natural Foods Earth Day Extravaganza
- Hosted by: Eureka Natural Foods
- Date: Saturday, April 22, 2023 in Eureka
- Date: Sunday, April 23, 2023 in McKinleyville
- Time: 11am-3p

Restoration of Body, Mind and Dunes
- Hosted by: Friends of the Dunes
- Date: Saturday, April 22, 2023
- Time: 9am-12pm
- Location: Humboldt Coastal Nature Center

Decolonizing Sustainability Speaker Series
- Hosted by: Cal Poly Native American Studies
- Dates: Wednesdays, April 5, 12, 19, 26, 2023
- Time: 11:30am-1pm
- Location: Zoom. Visit Native American Studies (humboldt.edu) for more information
IR EN UNA AVENTURA DE TRANSPORTE ALTERNATIVO

Según la Comisión de Energía de California, el 50 por ciento de las emisiones de gases de efecto invernadero de California provienen del transporte. Cambiar nuestros hábitos de transporte puede ser difícil, pero puede ser útil comenzar poco a poco y convertirlo en una aventura. Puede comenzar declarando un día a la semana el Día del Transporte Alternativo para probar qué funciona mejor para usted, ya sea tomar el autobús, caminar, andar en bicicleta o subirse a uno de esos scooters eléctricos que están estacionados al azar en la ciudad. Una clave para un Día de Transporte Alternativo exitoso es la planificación: no programe su primera aventura en autobús o bicicleta en un día en el que tenga que correr del trabajo a la escuela y luego al supermercado. Prepárate para el éxito y el gozo manteniéndolo simple al principio y haciéndolo en los días en que tengan menos obligaciones o más flexibilidad. Una vez que tenga algunos Días de Transporte Alternativo en su haber y conozca mejor el horario del autobús, o cuánto tiempo lleva caminar al trabajo, entonces es menos desafiante hacer algunos mandados en la mezcla o traer a un niño.

La aplicación Transit es una excelente manera de conocer las rutas y los horarios de los autobuses locales y ver la información de llegada en tiempo real. Para aquellos que están menos inclinados a descargar otra aplicación, las rutas y los horarios de los autobuses también se pueden encontrar en el sitio web de la Autoridad de Tránsito de Humboldt en hta.org. Uno de los desafíos de moverse en transporte público en áreas rurales es que los autobuses no suelen llegar tarde o con mucha frecuencia, así que asegúrese de verificar cuándo pasa el último autobús para no quedarse varado.

Para andar en bicicleta por la Bahía de Humboldt, consulte el mapa de bicicletas en línea de la Asociación de Gobierno del Condado de Humboldt (HCAOG) en hcaog.net/map. También puede encontrar un pdf del mapa de bicicletas del área de la bahía de Humboldt más detallado en el sitio web de HCAOG. En general, un buen método de búsqueda de ruta para los nuevos ciclistas es tomar las calles laterales adyacentes a las carreteras principales que usaría si estuviera conduciendo. De esa manera, puede evitar andar en carreteras con mucho tráfico hasta que se sienta más cómodo. Una ventaja adicional es que luego puede explorar áreas de la ciudad que normalmente no vería mientras va lo suficientemente lento como para disfrutar de las aves y las flores en el camino.

CELEBRA EL “DÍA DE NO COMPRAR NADA”

Buy Nothing Day o el Día de No Comprar Nada, es una reacción al frenesí de compras del Black Friday, pero al igual que el Día de la Tierra, se puede celebrar todos los días. La industria minorista, tanto las tiendas físicas como los puntos de venta en línea, genera una cantidad astronómica de desechos, desde las emisiones de los vehículos (del comprador o del repartidor) hasta los envases de plástico, sin mencionar todos los productos que se compran por capricho y luego descartado. Según la EPA, cada año se desechan 82,2 millones de toneladas de envases en los EE. UU. La Fundación Ellen McArthur informa que la industria de la moda es responsable de hasta el 10 por ciento de las emisiones globales de carbono y que, en todo el mundo, cada segundo se quema un camión cargado de ropa o termina en el vertedero.

Al igual que conducir, ir de compras se ha asociado con el estilo de vida estadounidense, pero este hábito destructivo se puede romper. Tomarse un día (o una semana o incluso un mes) libre de comprar cualquier cosa que no sea lo esencial es bueno para el clima, bueno para la billetera y también puede ser divertido. Las fiestas de reutilización, los intercambios de ropa y el comercio con amigos son formas de obtener los productos que necesita y construir una comunidad sin comprar nuevos productos. Organizar una fiesta de intercambio o reparación de ropa es una excelente manera de celebrar el Día de la Tierra con amigos. O puede visitar su tienda de arte de reutilización y hacer algo hermoso para su hogar en lugar de comprar en línea.

CELEBRA EL DÍA/SEMANA/MES DE LA TIERRA

Caroline Griffith, NEC Executive Director

Para disfrutar de las aves y las flores en el camino.

Más de la Tierra

Ir en una aventura de transporte alternativo

¿Cómo enfrentar la emergencia climática? La elección de cómo moverse por la Bahía de Humboldt, o en cualquier otro lugar, puede tener un gran impacto. Ir en un transporte alternativo puede ayudar a reducir las emisiones de gases de efecto invernadero y tener un efecto positivo en el medio ambiente. Además, al elegir este tipo de transporte, se está contribuyendo a la conservación de los biocentros, lo que beneficia a las especies locales y las aves migratorias. Este tipo de transporte también proporciona una mayor flexibilidad. Una vez que tenga algunos Días de Transporte Alternativo en su haber, puede explorar áreas de la ciudad que normalmente no vería mientras va lo suficientemente lento como para disfrutar de las aves y las flores en el camino.

Los aves migratorias. Esto significa que en primavera y otoño, cientos de especies de aves visitan nuestra zona. Los estudios han demostrado que los encuentros cotidianos con las aves están asociados con mejoras a largo plazo en el bienestar mental. Simplemente sentándose en su patio trasero o visitando el parque local (puntos de bonificación si va en autobús) puede disfrutar de todos los beneficios para la salud de la observación de aves y recordar por qué celebramos este día en primer lugar.

Traducción por Carley Arroyo

The EcoNews Report

Recent EcoNews Reports:

Solving The Climate Crisis Requires More Than Just Electrifying Your Pick-up Truck

March 18, 2023 – Colin Fiske of CRTP and Matt Simmons of EPIC join the show to talk about why the race to electrify cars and trucks isn’t a one-size-fits-all solution to our climate woes. More electric vehicles mean more mining lithium batteries, which comes with social and environmental costs. The more vehicles on our streets, the more dangerous those streets are for people walking and biking. One solution is building more housing close to where people work, shop and study, so that we can free ourselves from auto dependency.

Tribal Marine Stewards Network

March 4, 2023 - Guests, Jaytuk Steinruck of Tolowa Dee-ni’ Nation and Megan Rocha of Resighini Rancheria, join the show to talk about the Tribal Marine Stewards Network, an alliance of Tribal Nations working together to steward, protect, and restore the ocean and coastal resources along the California coast. The network’s initiatives include monitoring important marine species like surf smelt, mussels, salmon, and kelp, as well as toxic algae, erosion, and other climate related impacts on coastal environments.

Save Money While Saving the Planet

February 25, 2023 - So you have decided to do your part to fight climate change (or maybe you just don’t want a gas stove to slowly kill you). Great! There are a bunch of incentives now available to help insulate and electrify your house. Aisha Cisna and Stephen Kullman of the Redwood Coast Energy Authority walk through the incentives available to homeowners who want to make climate-smart improvements to their homes. For more, check out the Redwood Coast Energy Authority and Rewiring America.

Jared Huffman, Man and Congressman, Returns to the Show to Spill all the DC Tea

February 18, 2023 - Congressman Jared Huffman joins the EcoNews Report again for more discussion on what’s going on in Washington D.C. Who does he want to replace Feinstein? What’s it like to work with George Santos? How is D.C. going to help fund offshore wind infrastructure improvements? (For the answers, you have to listen.)
Continuing along the journey of exploring energy, bioenergy, or biomass energy, is another power source that is oftentimes framed as a bridge to a world powered solely by renewables. Although biomass is sometimes considered renewable because it utilizes waste products, or sources that can be replanted, concerns about the carbon accounting system, community health, and air quality make it a controversial energy source for many people. Biomass is an important topic in Humboldt, as it currently provides a significant amount of energy for the county.

A BRIEF PRIMER OF HOW BIOMASS ENERGY WORKS

Biomass refers to a range of organic fuels and matter that can be used to generate electricity. Unlike fossil fuels, which come from long dead life forms, biomass comes from recently living organisms. It can include wood and wood processing wastes, agricultural crops, organic waste from industry and households, human sewage, and animal manure.

This organic matter can be converted to energy through various processes, including burning, bacterial decomposition, or conversion to a gas or liquid fuel. Burning and the direct combustion of woody biomass is the most common form of releasing this energy, and thus the focus of this article. Through the process of photosynthesis, plants convert radiant energy from the sun in combination with water and carbon dioxide to form glucose — a form of chemical energy. This energy is then released when the plant is burned or transformed. In order to achieve this, matter is burned in a boiler to produce a steam that rotates turbine blades and ultimately drives a generator to produce electricity. Wood pellets, made up of compacted lumber and wood waste, are the matter frequently utilized in this process. According to the Partnership for Policy Integrity, burning woody biomass releases stored carbon into the atmosphere, emitting more greenhouse gas emissions than coal.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WOODY BIOMASS

Up until around 1870, wood was the dominant source of energy and heat for people in the United States. However, issues related to deforestation and the widespread introduction of coal led to its replacement of biofuels as the dominant source of energy. By the 1950s, electricity and natural gas replaced the role that wood had previously played in American homes. Before the Clean Air Act — which introduced more stringent air pollution control regulations — open burning of mill waste was prevalent.

In the United States, biomass has had a resurgence in recent years, due to concerns about the negative impact of fossil fuels on the environment. It is becoming increasingly popular in Europe, because of its label as a green and renewable energy source. The burning of wood pellets is now replacing coal in many European countries, with the United States serving as a net exporter of biomass energy, meaning that it exports more of this material than it imports. In 2021, biomass provided around 5 percent of the total primary energy consumption in the United States. The global biomass power market is projected to exhibit a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6 percent from 2022 to 2030.

HISTORY OF WOODY BIOMASS IN HUMBOLDT

There is only one currently running biomass power plant in Humboldt, located in Scotia and run by the Humboldt Sawmill Company. Under a Redwood Coast Energy Authority (RCEA) Power Purchase Agreement, the power generated from the plant is sold to Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E). The project was commissioned in 1988, and has been running continuously since then. The biomass fuel used comes from the waste produced by the local lumber manufacturing economy that has been operating for more than 100 years.

According to a summary entitled “Biomass Power in Humboldt County” prepared by Michael J. Furniss as part of the bioenergy strategies included in RCEA’s 2019 RePower Humboldt strategic plan update, “The local electric power provided by biomass plants would otherwise come from the PG&E natural gas plant in King Salmon until additional local renewable generation is built and brought online.” The RePower Humboldt plan was originally prepared by Cal Poly Humboldt’s Schatz Energy Center for RCEA in 2013. This plan and its 2019 update have since guided the Community Choice Energy (CCE) board’s decisions about Humboldt County’s energy mix. The original plan was created to develop local energy resources, with biomass factoring heavily into this agenda due to its abundance and ability to generate electricity on demand. Whether or not this is the right course of action has been a matter of significant debate for the community.

WHY IT’S CHAMPIONED

Like nuclear power, proponents argue that biomass power can be a bridge solution for climate change, helping in the intermittent period before solar and wind power are more developed. It is often considered a net-zero transaction regardless of source, as woody waste would release carbon during its natural decomposition anyway, and live trees that are cut and burned can be replaced by new vegetation that would theoretically be able to absorb the same quantity of carbon dioxide released during the process. Proponents also assert that with increasing wildfires, woody waste that is left in the forest can act as fuel. For this reason, proponents believe burning the waste for energy is a more helpful and safe option. Additionally, because biomass matter can be continuously replanted, it is considered reliable and renewable by some entities.

WHY IT’S CONTROVERSIAL

Although sometimes framed as carbon neutral, concerns about deforestation and the carbon accounting system developed under the 1997 Kyoto Protocol and the UA 2015 Paris Agreement have many environmentalists questioning the sustainability and cleanliness of woody biomass energy. In a research paper by the Chatham House looking at the impacts of...
WOODY BIOMASS

Continued from prior page

of this source on the global climate, author Duncan Brack wrote, "In order to ensure consistency and avoid double-counting, the IPCC determined that countries should report emissions from biomass combustion only in their land-use sectors. It is this categorization of emissions that has led many policymakers to perceive biomass as a carbon-neutral energy source (although this was not the IPCC’s intention)."

Although proponents claim that most lumber waste and residue is unusable and would decompose and release carbon regardless of whether or not it was used to generate energy, critics say that the timeline of these processes is not taken into account. While these materials would release carbon dioxide by decomposing naturally, this process would normally occur over a much longer period of time, with a portion of the released carbon becoming incorporated into the soil. Reforestation also takes a significant amount of time, as young trees take decades to potentially offset the carbon that was released by their predecessors.

Additionally, biomass energy has been criticized for the harmful pollutants that can be released by the power plants. EcoNews contributor Wendy Ring wrote about the negative health effects of the Scotia plant in the February issue, expressing concern about the health costs and the lack of enforcement of regulations that are supposed to protect the community. Although respiratory issues are an obvious concern associated with breathing in harmful pollutants, heart attacks, birth defects, and neurodegenerative diseases can also be associated risks. Humboldt Sawmill Company has since published a response to Rings’ article, making alternative claims about their compliance and the effects of the emissions on the community.

There are also concerns that the RePower plan developed in 2013 is outdated, as energy technologies and markets have advanced, making bioenergy less necessary to fill any gap. RCEA released an updated RePower plan in 2019, reaffirming their goal to procure local biomass energy. However, they also included their desire to investigate the impacts of biomass emissions.

Composting mill waste has been proposed as an alternative to burning it, because proponents assert that it is cheaper and the net emissions are significantly less. In 2021, 500 scientists wrote a letter to global leaders that urged them "...not to undermine both climate goals and the world’s biodiversity by shifting from burning fossil fuels to burning trees to generate energy."

These scientists suggest solar and wind as alternatives to truly decrease warming, both of which will be explored in future articles in this series.

RESOURCES:
- eia.gov/energyexplained/biomass/
- guides.loc.gov/renewable-energy/biomass
The Environmental Protection Information Center

Making Good Use of the Inflation Reduction Act by Taking Climate Action

Luis Neuner, Tom Wheeler
& Matt Simmons (EPIC staff)

The 2022 Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) is the nation's largest-ever investment in climate action. While the IRA certainly has some fundamental climate-related shortcomings, it does provide individuals, organizations, companies, state, local, and tribal governments a range of financial incentives to shrink their carbon footprint and overall greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Many of the incentives of the IRA are just starting to apply.

On a macro scale, we need grid-connected renewable energy to decarbonize our communities. The passage of the IRA marked a significant shift towards a more climate-friendly nation with heavy investment in renewable energy infrastructure, of which the North Coast may be a significant beneficiary. Among the many provisions of the IRA are production and investment tax credits for solar and offshore wind energy development. The growth of locally-produced renewable energy, such as solar and wind, will help us wean off the methane-powered Humboldt Bay Generating Station. These renewable energy investments also look to be a potent stimulant of economic growth and, as President Biden has often flouted, will create "Jobs Jobs Jobs." Those jobs will likely be good-paying, middle-class jobs that the North Coast desperately needs.

To decarbonize locally, however, our community will need to stop using fossil fuels and shift toward electrification, including for our home appliances. Gas appliances—from dryers to furnaces to stoves—are "mini fossil fuel plants," to borrow from Dr. Leah Stokes, associate professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara. The next time a gas appliance breaks down in your household, it might be a good idea to opt for an electric replacement, and the IRA is here to help. The law creates significant rebates and tax credits for electrified appliances and home solarization. For example, purchasing non-gas burning appliances, such as induction stovetops, can result in a tax credit of up to $840, depending on income. Similarly, replacing old gas-powered heating systems with electric heat pumps can provide credits of up to 30 percent of purchasing price with a cap of $2,000; other substantial rebates are available to low-income households. The IRA also extended federal tax incentive programs for solar energy by lengthening the Residential Clean Energy Credit, which shaves off around 30 percent of the price of new photovoltaic (PV) systems installed up through 2034.

In the transportation sector, which makes up roughly 53 percent of Humboldt’s overall GHG emissions, the IRA does little to change America’s driving culture. Instead, it primarily incentivizes the adoption of personal electric vehicles (EVs) by providing tax credits of up to $7,500 per new vehicle and $4,000 for pre-owned cars, depending on make, model, and battery capacity. This could lower the overall sticker price, making EVs far more cost competitive with new gasoline-powered vehicles, even without factoring in long-term savings derived from the low operating cost of electric engines. It’s also worth noting that incentivization measures throughout the supply chain will further drive down the price of EVs for consumers in the long term.

It’s not just individuals that should consider taking advantage of provisions within the IRA. We are past due on solarizing our local schools, government offices, and public administration buildings. Especially in rural areas where the power goes out frequently, solar improvements are critical for building energy resiliency. Complementary to this solar buildout, we should electrify our government car fleets. Just last December, it was revealed that the City of Eureka’s municipal police car order consisted entirely of gas hogs—with a baffling price tag of roughly $69,000 per vehicle. Although making these modifications would only address a marginal fraction of our overall transportation-related GHG emissions, electrifying government fleets would not only have the potential to reduce long-term costs associated with maintenance (there are only around 20 moving parts in an electric engine, compared to the 2,000+ in an internal combustion engine), but would also provide a strong foundation for further resilience-building efforts. If police officers can accomplish their jobs in EVs that are better for the environment than gas-powered cars while saving the department thousands of dollars in maintenance, that’s a win-win. It’s also more than just a financially wise decision or climate action—it’s a matter of public entities being good community role models.

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Please join Redwood Region Audubon Society on Wednesday, April 19, at 7:30 p.m. for a program by Gary Friedrichsen entitled

**Wallacea or Just Kicking Around in Indonesia**

Gary will first discuss Alfred Russel Wallace, “The Father of Biogeography,” including his early thoughts on evolution, and his travels in the Malaysian archipelago. The talk will also feature Gary’s recent trip to the islands of Sulawesi, Halmahera, and West Papua with photos of the avifauna and other aspects of Indonesian life.

Gary has lived in Humboldt County since attending Humboldt State College in 1964. From 1970 to 2000 he resided in the famous duck hunting shack at the mouth of Jacoby Creek and served as the duck club’s caretaker. He graduated HSU in 1974 and began working for the National Marine Fisheries Service out of La Jolla, California, first as a biologist aboard tuna seiners working in the Eastern Tropical Pacific, and then as a researcher on National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration vessels surveying dolphins in the same area. He also commercial-fished for salmon and crab in the off-season. He has been a member of the Redwood Region Audubon Society for forty years and has served on the Board for seven years.

The live program will be held at the Six Rivers Masonic Lodge, 251 Bayside Road, Arcata. It will be simultaneously zoomed – please see RRAS.org for the Zoom link. Hot drinks and goodies will be served at 7 p.m., so bring a mug to enjoy shade-grown coffee. Please come fragrance-free.

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**RRAS FIELD TRIPS IN APRIL**

**Sat. April 1 – 8:30-11am.** Free guided field trip at the Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary. Bring binoculars and scope if you have them, and meet trip leader Kathryn Wendel at the end of South I Street (Klopp Lake) for the opportunity to hear and see a diverse range of shorebirds, migratory birds, and resident birds likely engaging in breeding activities. Reservations not required.

**Sat. April 8 – 8:30-11am.** Free guided field trip at Arcata Marsh with trip leader Gary Friedrichsen. Meet at the end of South I Street (Klopp Lake).

**Sun. April 9 – 9-11am.** Join trip leader Ralph Bucher for a walk at the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge. This two-mile walk is on a wide, flat, gravel trail offering access to tidally influenced habitats including mudflats, riparian vegetation, conifers, and bay, which host a variety of geese, raptors, shorebirds, and waders. Email Ralph at thebook[at]reninet.com to sign up.

**Sun. April 9 – 8:30-11am. Women and Girls’ Bird Walk** at Freshwater Farms Reserve. Trip leader Kathryn Wendel is an experienced guide with strong knowledge of local birdlife, and this location offers access to raptors as well as wetland bird species like blackbirds, wrens, and herons. Meet at the Reserve parking lot near the corner of Myrtle Ave. and Freshwater Rd. Time permitting, the group may also drive over to Fay Slough.

**Sat. April 15 – 8:30-11am.** Free guided field trip at Arcata Marsh with trip leader Bill Rodstrom. Meet at the end of South I Street (Klopp Lake).

**Sun. April 16 – 9-11am.** For a **wheelchair accessible** walk along the Eureka shoreline, join trip leader Ralph Bucher at the foot of Del Norte St. An active Osprey nest, along with waterbirds, can be viewed from the pier. Email Ralph at thebook[at]reninet.com to sign up.

**Sat. April 22 – 8:30-11am.** Free guided field trip at Arcata Marsh with trip leader Michael Morris. Meet at the end of South I Street (Klopp Lake).

**Sat. April 22 – 8:30-10:30am.** Join RRAS in **Southern Humboldt** on the fourth Saturday of every month at Tooby Park, one mile west of Garberville on Sprowl Creek Rd. These easy walks last 2-3 hours each. Start time varies, so please text or call Ann at 707-296-8720 for start time each month. Heavy rain cancels.

**Sun. April 23 – 9-11am.** Cal Poly Humboldt Wildlife Graduate Student Lila Bowen will lead a field trip focused on gulls and seabirds nesting on the rocks off Trinidad Head. Lila’s studies focus on gull breeding behavior and nest fate, and she has been surveying these nesting colonies since early 2022. Meet at the Trinidad State Beach parking lot and bring a scope if you have one.

**Thursday, April 27 – 6-7 pm.** With the days getting longer, trip leader Janelle Chojnacki offers a midweek evening “bird sit” at Vista Point overlooking the mouth of the Mad River. This bird sit will be highly accessible to folks with limited mobility and offers views of birds and harbor seals. Bundle up, and bring a chair, binoculars, and scope if you have them. Email janelle.choj[at]gmail.com.

**Sat. April 29 – 8:30-11am.** Free guided field trip at Arcata Marsh with trip leader Larry Karsteadt. Meet at the end of South I Street (Klopp Lake).

**Sun. April 30 – 7:30-9am. Central Arcata Marsh.** Ken Burton will lead an early morning walk focusing on Allen Marsh and adjacent areas in search of spring migrants and lingering waterfowl. Meet Ken (707-499-1146; shrikethree[at]gmail.com) in the parking lot just north of the gate on South I St.

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**Godwit Days Coming Soon!**

Join the North Coast’s annual bird festival **April 13 to 16**. Drop in the Arcata Community Center for many happenings, including:

- Join field trips for beginners and experts alike.
- Visit the informative tables of conservation organizations.
- See bird art from local artists and students.
- Hear about the California Condors in Humboldt County from the leaders of the effort.
- Learn the fascinating stories of the birds of an uninhabited Pacific desert island.

Visit the website at godwitdays.org for events and more information.

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**Common Paradise Kingfisher**

Photo by Bob Lockett.
The Annual Godwit Days Bird Festival Is at Hand

Come celebrate the Marbled Godwit and explore the lush Redwood Coast during our annual bird festival, Godwit Days. Headquarters are the Arcata Community Center, where you can see informative displays about birds and their habitats and enjoy talks about condors and an uninhabited desert island in the Pacific. Join experienced local guides and observe many bird species and other wildlife through our wide selection of field trips, wonderful talks, and workshops, many of them at no charge.

Highlights include two talks: On Friday evening, April 14, “California Condor Recovery in Northern California: Prey-go-neesh Flies Free,” is the story of the 14-year journey of the Yurok Tribe—in partnership with many others—that successfully brought Prey-go-neesh home to the Pacific Northwest. Tiana Williams-Claussen, director of the Yurok Tribe Wildlife Department, and Chris West, the condor Restoration Program Manager, will discuss how the Tribe is reintegrating condors into the region, and provide an update on how the newly released population is doing.

On Saturday, April 15, keynote speakers and renowned marine biologists Dr. Lisa Ballance and Robert Pitman will entertain us about perhaps the most isolated island in the world: “Clipperton Island: Booby Research on a Tropical Desert Isle.” Tens of thousands of Masked and Brown Boobies crowd the barren shores of this tiny (400 acres) uninhabited desert atoll. Its teeming seabird population has been whip-sawed by human activity over the past 100+ years, and its future remains uncertain. The speakers will introduce us to its cast of feathered and other characters, and summarize some of their fascinating research results, as well as exploring some ongoing conservation efforts on this remarkable piece of land.
Adventures in Bird Photography –
Stories behind the shots

By Leslie Scopes Anderson, with Mike Anderson

A Pastime becomes a Passion
What began as a lark has become an avocation! Soon after Leslie, a long-time film photographer, moved to Northern California from Utah, she and Mike got into digital photography and began taking advantage of the wealth of wildlife found in this area. Our new interest started at the Arcata Marsh, with shots of egrets, and soon escalated to exotic trips to locations around the world. However, we still value the diversity and abundance of bird species in our own backyard. Here are some of our stories about getting the photographs that appear in exhibits and publications. I’m sure many of you can relate to these experiences!

Patience Is a Virtue
While discussing bird behavior at a Humboldt Botanical Gardens lecture, an audience member said “I don’t want to learn about the birds, I just want to photograph them!” Of course, knowledge of the subject increases the odds of finding the bird. What I love about this hobby is the hours spent getting intimate with these creatures – observing their habits and behaviors.

One summer, Mike noticed that a White-tailed Kite frequently came to roost in a particular tree at the Marsh. Knowing how wary these small raptors are, he decided to wait it out. Early in the morning, he brought a stool and camouflage covering, set up his tripod nearby, and settled in. He sat for more than 2 hours until the bird finally landed on its perch. Mike quickly took the shot, just as the kite looked down and spotted the intruder. It instantly flew off again, but its image had been captured in that split second!

On Assignment
Mike and I are usually opportunists – taking advantage of whatever bird appears before us. If called upon to photograph a specific bird, things get more difficult! When I was working with Ken Burton on the Birds of Northern California guidebook, he requested a “dorsal view of a flying Pelagic Cormorant in breeding plumage”! Yikes! Most of my photos in the book had come from my stock, collected over the years. However, this shot was not in my files. Luckily the time of year was right for the specified plumage, so I researched sites that might produce the desired bird. After a few misses, I went out to the North Jetty. Sure enough, a few PECOs were visible on the water in the harbor mouth. After a long wait, they took to the air and I was able to click the correct view!

A Fleeting Opportunity
Always on the lookout for possibilities, we noticed an Osprey nest in a dead tree near King Salmon. A nest is a wonderful location for photography, as the birds must return often and are somewhat less wary of humans. Most Osprey nest are on platforms or utility poles that interfere with the natural look of the shot. This one was perfect, and on a trail that allowed for a respectfully close approach. We visited the site several times during the nesting season and were delighted to document the feeding of the chicks and their fledging. Our many hours spent at the site were very enjoyable! We were anxious to return the next year when nesting season rolled around – but, alas, the dead tree had fallen into the swamp!

Instant Gratification
Every once in a while, fortune smiles on the nature photographer and provides a magical moment! Mike and I were scouring the underbrush around our campsite for small birds, and I was coming up with nothing. Mike, however, had better luck. After a short pursuit, this fast, elusive kinglet landed right in front of him, with a clean background, and with its fiery crown showing! He was ready for it and got the shot!

Sandhill Cranes dancing
by Leslie Scopes Anderson

Leslie is a career graphic designer who co-owned an agency in Salt Lake City for 25 years. She has served on several environmental organization boards. Mike is an emeritus professor of Environmental Resources Engineering with 40+ years of teaching at Cal Poly Humboldt. Both have a life-long love of the wonders of Nature. They offer pro bono use of their photos to further conservation efforts. Their photographs have appeared in Audubon, Nature Conservancy, and National Wildlife publications, etc., and in local guidebooks. They currently have an exhibit at the AMIC during March and April, 2023.

Majestic Waders
On a photo excursion to Cosumnes River Preserve near Lodi, CA, we had been scouting all day for the spectacular Sandhill Cranes that migrate through the area in winter. There were a few in the far distant fields, but none within camera range. Our 500-600mm lenses are good, but not magic! Subjects need to be fairly close to create acceptable images. As the afternoon wore on we were still stumped, until we finally spotted a group just landing along a field pond within reach of the road. Using my best, stealthy creep technique I slowly inched up behind the grasses edging the pond. For a while, the birds simply stood around, but gradually they began interacting and I was able to acquire this shot. It was thrilling to watch their antics as they spread their huge six foot wings! And with the bonus of a reflection in the still pond!
Richard Haberman is a former chairman of the Yurok Interim Council, and he was instrumental in setting up the governing documents of the Yurok Constitution to receive formal federal recognition of the Yurok tribe in 1992. Amos Albers is a member of the Karuk and Yurok tribes and an avid fisherman.

**Kathryn:** Hello, and thank you both for speaking with me today about birds. Would you please tell me your thoughts on local wildlife conservation?

**Richard:** I’m certainly FOR conservation, but I definitely think that the use of resources should not be confused with the abuse or overuse of resources. For instance, I’m a waterfowl and deer hunter, but I don’t take more than I need, and concerning the Klamath River in particular, I’d like to see Humboldt more in alignment with Yurok tribe values. I’m very against the overharvesting of fish in the Klamath River, and I feel that any fishing in the Klamath River should be subsistence, not commercial.

**Amos:** I agree. Managing the fish in the Klamath River along Yurok values will also keep the river healthy for elk, and that will help other wildlife to thrive, especially birds like the condors. The Yurok tribe is the only tribe in the U.S. to have released California Condors back into the wild, and a healthy river will greatly benefit condors.

**Kathryn:** Many people are very happy to have California Condors back in Northern California, and as apex scavengers they are vital to ecosystem health. As I understand, it’s been over a fourteen year collaboration of the Yurok tribe, with state and federal agencies as well as with both private and public landowners. Are they your favorite bird as well?

**Amos:** We are very glad to have the condors. But no, my favorite bird is the Canada Goose. They are a main staple in subsistence living, just like elk, clams, mussels and salmon.

**Richard:** My favorite birds are actually crows. Crows are black because of their jealousy of Pileated Woodpeckers.

**Amos:** No, crows are black because they tried to take medicine up to the sun and got burned for their arrogance. The only bird worthy enough to make it to the sun was the eagle, for he is the strongest bird.

**Kathryn:** I expected one of you to say the California Condor was your favorite bird. You both surprised me by choosing ones I never would have guessed, but both those birds highlight the value of our common everyday species which are just as important as the rarer ones. Thank you Richard and Amos for sharing the Yurok story of the crow, and for taking the time to speak with me on birds and your thoughts on local conservation issues.

A Small, Pale Sparrow of the Grasslands

By Jude Power

A friend once said to me, “When you said you were into sparrows, I knew you had it bad.” Yes, I have a bad case of birding lust, and sparrows are one of my favorite tribes. I’m watching sparrows through the window behind my monitor at this very moment. Did you know that towhees and juncos are sparrows?

For anyone curious about sparrows, it’s a good idea to begin by learning the species seen most frequently in the place you live -- your yard, your street, the trails you walk. Some of them can be complicated to identify with all those streaks in shades of brown, but there are tricks that can make it much easier.

If you enjoy open, grassy landscapes or saltmarshes, then Savannah is your sparrows. Its plumage does a fine job mimicking the grasses in which it hides, but luckily these timid sparrows will often hop into plain view on a grass stem, barbwire strand or other low perch to sing or check out a disturbance (you). I often see them darting out from roadside vegetation to peck at seeds or other food on the road, or scurrying around cordgrass in saltmarshes.

So, how to identify them? For starters, if there are other sparrows around, Savannahs will be smaller than most of them. Regarding its gray-brown plumage, the most obvious feature is that it looks streaky all over, including the head, back, breast, and down the sides. Our local Song Sparrow looks streaky, too, but in addition to being larger it’s a darker, redder brown color and its coarser streaking forms a bold dark spot in the center of the breast (Savannah’s spot is not as obvious).

But there are two simpler secrets for sussing-out the Savannah Sparrow around Humboldt Bay. First, its face is unique among local sparrows in that the area between the beak and eye is yellow. This yellow area can be subtle in some individuals, but it’s there. Look for it this spring as brighter breeding plumage develops. Second, it has snazzy pink legs!

A third secret to finding this bottomland denizen is its distinctive song. Roger Tory Peterson described it as a lisping sit-sit-sit SEE say, much like a buzzing insect.

Savannah Sparrow is abundant year-round along the Humboldt coastline and is not endangered overall. However, there are as many as 28 subspecies, and some of these require active management to ensure population stability, mainly in Nova Scotia and Mexico. And, we have our own subspecies – alaudinus – which is resident from Humboldt Bay to San Luis Obispo County!

These curious, streaky grassland birds will become enjoyable companions on your walks when you get to know them. Good birding!

Photo courtesy of Audubon.org

DID YOU KNOW? From the Cat & Bird Safety Committee

Did you know that the mere presence of cats can induce fear and alter behavior of native birds? For example, in one study the fear instilled by cats reduced fecundity by one offspring per nest, which can result in up to a 95 percent reduction in bird abundance over time. When fearful parents take food to nestlings less frequently, young birds don’t gain enough weight. A free-roaming cat doesn’t need to kill or injure birds in order to impact survival. Best to keep cats indoors, on a leash or in a cat backpack!
West Coast Gray Whale
“Unusual Mortality Event” Continues

Jen Kalt, Humboldt Baykeeper Director

Since January 1, 2019, elevated numbers of gray whale strandings have occurred along the west coast of North America between Puerto Vallarta, Mexico and the Chukchi Sea in northern Alaska. As of February 8, 613 stranded gray whales have been found. Eight were found along the coast between South Humboldt Bay and the Oregon border. This has been declared an Unusual Mortality Event (UME) by NOAA Fisheries, which studies marine mammal population trends and mortality. The cause has yet to be determined, but several of the dead whales have shown evidence of emaciation, suggesting that changes in ocean conditions may be a contributing factor.

A similar UME event happened in 1999-2000, when 650 gray whales stranded along the West Coast. The population eventually recovered, peaking at around 27,000 in 2016. However, after this recent UME, the NOAA Fisheries reported a 38 percent decline to 16,650 Eastern Pacific gray whales in October 2022. The cause for these population fluctuations remains unknown, but gray whale populations have shown long-term resilience in rebounding from near extinction during whaling to these recent UME events.

There are currently four other active UMEs in North America, all in the Atlantic Ocean, where humpback whales have died in unusual numbers since 2016 due in large part to vessel strikes. Although some news reports have attributed these deaths to offshore wind energy research vessels, most of these whale deaths were reported before offshore wind activities began, pointing to shipping traffic as the main culprit. Because slower vessel speeds can prevent marine mammal injuries, Humboldt Baykeeper and other environmental groups successfully advocated for a speed limit. In April 2022, the Coastal Commission adopted a 10-knot speed limit for offshore wind activities.

If You See A Stranded Whale

Cal Poly Humboldt Professor Dawn Goley has been studying marine mammal biology in northern California and southern Oregon since 1996. As the Director of Humboldt’s Marine Mammal Stranding Program, she said that “it is most helpful when people reporting stranded marine mammals include their names and contact info along with an exact location of the stranding, a detailed description - including general size, type (seal/sea lion or a whale/dolphin), and information about any unusual markings, tags, or entanglements. Photos or videos of the body and head are incredibly helpful and always help us plan an effective response.”

To report a stranded whale, dead or alive, contact the Cal Poly Humboldt Marine Mammal Stranding Program at 707-826-3650 or send an email to marinemammals@humboldt.edu. Mariners can report it to the U.S. Coast Guard on VHF Channel 16.

Do not approach or touch injured or dead marine mammals. All marine mammals are federally protected by the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Only local and state officials and people authorized by NOAA Fisheries may legally handle live and dead marine mammals.

GRAY WHALES

Once common throughout the Northern Hemisphere, gray whales are now only regularly found in the North Pacific Ocean. Nearly hunted to extinction in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, gray whales were removed from the endangered species list in 1994 but are still protected by the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972. Gray whales make one of the longest annual migrations of any mammal, traveling 10,000-12,000 miles round-trip from their northern summer feeding grounds in the Arctic Ocean to their winter breeding grounds in Mexican lagoons. There is a small population of gray whales - members of the Pacific Coast Feeding Group (PCFG) - that feed during the summertime between southeast Alaska and northern California. Aside from the PCFG, gray whales are most commonly seen along our coast heading north from March to May as they leave their breeding grounds on route to their northern feeding area.

Primarily bottom feeders, gray whales eat a variety of invertebrates by sucking sediment from the seafloor and filtering it through baleen plates on the sides of their upper jaws. Threats to the species include climate change, disturbance from whale watching activities, entanglement in fishing gear, habitat impacts, ocean noise, and vessel strikes.

A gray whale mother calf pair migrating along the central California coast from the wintering grounds in Mexico to the summer feeding grounds in Alaska. Credit: NOAA Fisheries
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Evening Program
April 12, Wednesday. “Sagebrush to Sea: A Journey Across the Siskiyou Crest.” Luke Ruediger and Suzie Savoie will share their film Sagebrush to Sea: A Journey Across the Siskiyou Crest, documenting their 10-day, 200-mile backpacking trip through the wildlands of the Siskiyou Mountains along the Oregon-California border. They will highlight the unique, endemic, and rare plant species they encountered in the old-growth forests, lush mountain meadows, and colorful rock gardens. Their long and deep knowledge of the area – gained through their explorations, a native seed business, an ecological consulting firm, authorship, and conservation leadership – promises an exciting evening. Gather in person at Six Rivers Masonic Lodge, 251 Bayside Rd., Arcata. Refreshments at 7 pm, program at 7:30 pm. A Zoom option is available through our website www.northcoastcnps.org.

Rohner Park Forest Restoration
Help volunteers restore the Redwood forest at Rohner Park by removing invasive English Ivy and French Broom on Saturday April 15 from 9 am - 11 am. Meet at Fireman’s Pavilion at 9 am. Tools and gloves available but you are encouraged to bring your own. Sponsored by the North Coast Chapter of the Native Plant Society and the Fortuna Parks and Recreation Department. Contact Steve at unde1942@gmail.com. High winds or heavy rain cancels. Light snack provided.

Field Trips
April 8, Saturday. Early Spring Along the Van Duzen. On short walks at Pamplin Grove, Cheatham Grove, and/or Grizzly Creek we will find favorite Redwood forest flowers blooming. After lunch, we will proceed to a private oak woodland and riparian zone in Bridgeville for a different set of flowers. Meet at 8:30 am at Pacific Union School (3001 Janes Rd., Arcata). Tell Carol you are coming: 707-822-2015 or theralphs@humboldt1.com.

April 15, Saturday. 12:30 - 3:30 pm. Godwit Days Arcata Native Plant Walk. Join CNPS members for a 3 mile walk from the Arcata Community Center to Arcata Community Forest and back to see native plants in public and private landscapes and in a redwood forest. We will identify a range of native plants and invasive plants, see wildlife in a native plant garden, and think about how to mimic wild habitats in our gardens. Hopefully, trillium will be blooming in the forest. Call 707-826-7050 to register for this free trip sponsored by California Native Plant Society at Godwit Days, or register for Godwit Days at www.godwitdays.org.

April 29, Saturday. 10 am - 12 pm. Ferns in the Dunes. At the Lanphere Dunes Unit of the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Carol Ralph will introduce eight species of common ferns and discuss some of the amazing aspects of fern life. This is an easy walk of about 1/4 mile along the riparian edge of the dunes. Meet at Pacific Union School, 3001 Janes Road in Arcata and carpool to the protected site. Co-sponsored by the California Native Plant Society and Friends of the Dunes. Please reserve your space by contacting Friends of the Dunes at 707-444-1397 or info@friendsofthedunes.org.

Spring Native Plant Sale
Sat. May 6, by appointment
Sun. May 7, 10 am - 3 pm
Freshwater Farms Reserve
5851 Myrtle Ave., Eureka, CA
Visit www.northcoastcnps.org to sign up

2023 Wildflower Art Share
By Sydney Larson
April 1 - May 7
• Little Free Wildflower Art Galleries open
• Share 3”x3” wildflower art
  • in neighborhood boxes
  • on Facebook
  • on Instagram
Locations Listed at:
northcoastcnps.org > Art Share 2023

The Annual North Coast Celebration of Wild California Plants

Lupinus latifolius
By Sydney Larson

Native Iris, Carol Ralph.
Gardening for Caterpillars

Donna Wildearth

Here's some good news for gardeners who are concerned about the environment: We can make an important, positive impact by the plant choices we make in our gardens.

PLANTING FOR POLLINATORS

How do you choose plants? I remember that when I started gardening, I wanted flowers, flowers and more flowers, lots of color and fragrance. I think for many of us our plant choices were primarily based on aesthetics and functionality. We chose plants that could provide screening and privacy and curb appeal. We often wanted plants that were familiar to us—as well as the newest garden varieties.

Then we started hearing about bird populations declining, about colony collapse disorder in honeybees, about monarch butterflies in trouble. And so, we began to add plants to our gardens that could support the birds and the bees and the butterflies.

PLANTING FOR CATERPILLARS

In addition to planting for pollinators, we need to plant for caterpillars. This is the message of Douglas Tallamy, a professor of entomology and wildlife ecology at the University of Delaware, who has pioneered research into the importance of native plants to our Plummeting insect and bird populations. He has written several books (three are available at the library) and he has a number of videos that can be found on YouTube. According to him, caterpillars are crucial to healthy ecosystem food webs because they transfer more energy from plants to other animals than any other type of plant eater. As he remarks in an article in the December 2022 issue of *Fine Gardening*, "You can look at the health of an ecosystem by knowing how healthy your caterpillar populations are."

Furthermore, 96 percent of terrestrial birds in this country raise their young on insects, and caterpillars are considered the optimum food for baby birds. Compared to other insects, caterpillars are large and soft, which makes them easy for nestlings to digest.

If insects, including caterpillars, are vital components of the food web, the next question is what plants are best at supporting them? Tallamy’s research clearly demonstrates that the plants that are most useful are native plants. A small percentage of leaf-eating insects are generalists that can eat a wide variety of plants. But the vast majority of leaf-eating insects are specialists in terms of which plants they can eat, often restricted to just one plant genus or family.

Plants produce chemical and physical defenses to avoid being eaten; specialist insects must have co-evolved with a particular plant lineage for thousands of years in order to overcome these defenses. And that’s why native plants host more insects than non-natives. A good example of this is the monarch butterfly, which has a long evolutionary history with milkweeds that has enabled monarch caterpillars to eat the plant without being poisoned by its toxic chemicals.

NON-NATIVE PLANTS

Non-native plants are not evil in themselves (though non-native invasive plants should definitely be avoided). Non-natives are simply plants that have not been here long enough to evolve a relationship with insects that can live on them. This is true even for plants like ginkgo trees that have been grown in the U.S. for 400 years. Non-native plants are problematic because they support little insect activity and therefore have a negative ripple effect throughout food webs.

NATIVE PLANTS

We need to grow native plants but not just any native plants. One of the most significant results of Tallamy’s research is the “keystone plant” concept — the discovery that some native plants have much more impact than others in terms of supporting caterpillars. He emphasizes, “You can have a landscape comprised of 100 percent native plants and still support little because you’ve chosen natives that don’t make a lot of food.” His research has revealed that, across the country, only 5 percent of native plant genera (plural of genus) support 75 percent of caterpillars, and just 14 percent of native plant genera support 90 percent of caterpillars. These plants, primarily trees and shrubs, are what Tallamy calls “keystone” plants.

LOCAL KEYSTONE PLANTS

If you’re wondering what your local keystone plants are, visit the National Wildlife Federation website at nwf.org/NativePlantFinder. (It is important to type this entire address exactly as given.) Set your location by entering your zip code, and you will see trees, shrubs, flowers and grasses native to your area ranked by the number of butterfly and moth species that use them as host plants for their caterpillars.

EUREKA TOP 10 NATIVE PLANTS

(Parentheses indicate the number of species of caterpillars supported by these native plants. These numbers apply only to native plant species. Japanese maples, for instance, most likely support roughly half the number of caterpillar species listed.)

- willows (328)
- oaks (275)
- bitter cherry/choke cherry (262)
- aspen/cottonwood/poplar (230)
- beach pine (220)
- red alder/white alder (202)
- Oregon crabapple (155)
- bigleaf maple/vine maple/mountain maple (120)
- ceanothus (120)
- grand fir/white fir (117).

THE SURVIVAL OF BIRDS, BEES, BUTTERFLIES

Tallamy is not suggesting people plant only native plants, but he is urging us to focus on planting keystone trees and shrubs. If we gardeners follow this advice, we can still retain many smaller, non-native flowering plants in our gardens. And if you’re asking, “Why would I want caterpillars on my plants?” Tallamy points out that birds eat most of the caterpillars before they get very large, usually before they damage the foliage to any noticeable extent. Growing these keystone plants gives us the opportunity to actively promote the survival of birds, bees, butterflies and other insects so crucial for the health of our planet.

(This article first appeared in the North Coast Journal. It has been reprinted with permission.)
Eco-Friendly Easter

For many, especially younger audiences, candies and chocolates are a pivotal part of Easter. Unfortunately, a lot of Easter candy is wrapped in single-use packaging and produced by large corporations that don’t prioritize sustainability. In terms of chocolate, I would recommend the local brand Cacao Cocoon. They sweeten their chocolate with honey, are fair trade and vegan, and use compostable packaging. In terms of candy and chocolates that are bunny and chick-related, you can always try making them from scratch at home. This way there is less energy spent on transportation and less single-use packaging.

Easter baskets are a pivotal part of the holiday, so why not use ones that are reusable? At second hand stores there are many reusable baskets that are cute and affordable. If you don’t want to buy anything, you can make your own basket by using recycled paper, cardboard, or natural fibers. This way you have something to put goodie in for your Easter egg hunts that are compostable and more sustainable than plastic eggs.

Another way to prevent waste from Easter egg hunts is by using hard boiled eggs. This way the eggs won’t go to waste, since they can be used in dishes, and the egg scraps can be composted. Making sure that these eggs are organic, from small farms and free range, is a great way to ensure the chickens were treated ethically and that the eggs came from farms that practiced sustainable farming. The locally-based farm Foggy Bottom Boys sells high quality eggs and prioritizes sustainability, so I would recommend them. When it comes to dying eggs, instead of using synthetic dyes that have harmful chemicals, opt for natural alternatives. By boiling purple onions, beets, or other colorful vegetables, you can use these extracted liquids to dye your hard boiled Easter eggs. If you are vegan or don’t eat eggs, don’t worry—there are so many alternatives to using real eggs. If you have children, you can set up a scavenger hunt by hiding reusable items that would make unique gifts for younger children.

When most people think of Easter, eggs frequently come to mind. The plastic eggs that are used for Easter egg hunts are produced with fossil fuels, but can easily be replaced with compostable eggs. There are many types of compostable eggs that you can buy, but you can also make them yourself by using recycled paper, cardboard, or natural fibers. This way you have something to put goodie in for your Easter egg hunts that are compostable and more sustainable than plastic eggs.

Another way to prevent waste from Easter egg hunts is by using hard boiled eggs. This way the eggs won’t go to waste, since they can be used in dishes, and the egg scraps can be composted. Making sure that these eggs are organic, from small farms and free range, is a great way to ensure the chickens were treated ethically and that the eggs came from farms that practiced sustainable farming. The locally-based farm Foggy Bottom Boys sells high quality eggs and prioritizes sustainability, so I would recommend them. When it comes to dying eggs, instead of using synthetic dyes that have harmful chemicals, opt for natural alternatives. By boiling purple onions, beets, or other colorful vegetables, you can use these extracted liquids to dye your hard boiled Easter eggs. If you are vegan or don’t eat eggs, don’t worry—there are so many alternatives to using real eggs. If you have children, you can set up a scavenger hunt by hiding reusable items that would make unique gifts for younger children.

STAY CONNECTED
zerowastehumboldt.org
Facebook/ Instagram

Parking Math

1. An average parking lot requires about 320 square feet of land per car. (That figure includes both the space itself and the room required to get vehicles in and out of the lot.) A dorm room housing three students at Cal Poly Humboldt requires as little as 50 square feet per student, plus another 10 square feet or so to account for shared hallways. Here’s the math: the university could house as many as 5 times the number of students in the space it takes to store one car in a parking lot or garage.

2. The public lot at 8th and G Streets in Eureka has 40 parking spaces. A recent analysis showed that this lot never reached more than 50 percent occupancy, even at peak hours. The non-profit Linc Housing proposed a 40-unit apartment building with an even mix of two and three-bedroom units on the same site—plus nine parking spaces! Here’s the math: at least 100 people can live in Eureka in the same space that currently stores fewer than 20 cars at the busiest times.

3. The Humboldt County zoning code requires anyone wanting to build a new two-bedroom home to provide two off-street parking spaces, plus another two if the street isn’t wide enough for on-street parking. That’s 1,280 square feet of parking—more space than an additional modestly sized house. Here’s the math: Humboldt County could as much as double the space available for housing under current zoning rules if it eliminated its costly parking mandates.

4. The Humboldt County zoning code also requires a minimum of one off-street parking space for every 200 square feet of floor area. Here’s the math: Humboldt County’s code guarantees that every restaurant has at least 60 percent more land devoted to parking than to cooking and eating.

5. The Arcata Plaza has 63 angled parking spaces immediately surrounding it (not counting the spaces in front of buildings across the street), which collectively occupy more than 72,000 square feet. The remaining part of the Plaza occupies about 50,000 square feet. Here’s the math: Arcata could increase the size of its premier public gathering place by almost 50 percent simply by removing parking on one side of the street.

There are a lot more calculations we could do, but you get the idea. There’s a lot of land devoted to private vehicle storage. That might not seem like a problem when you’re driving to work or the store, but you may think differently next time you’re looking to rent or buy a home, start a business, or gather with your friends—if you’ve done the math.
Community Coastal Column

Sable Odry, NEC Coastal Programs Coordinator

CRAFT FOR THE COAST

This year we’ll be hosting Craft for the Coast Trash Art Contest in early June. Submissions will be accepted from May 1-31. Visit www.yournec.org/craft4coast to learn more.

TRASH CRAFT NIGHT

Join us April 25, 6-8 pm for a Trash Craft Night. We’ll be in the NEC office getting creative with all the garbage we’ve collected.

Grab a taco from Richard’s Goat next door and come help us make bribes or sculpture art for the Kinetic Grand Championship team, Trashlantis. Are you planning to submit a piece for this year’s Craft for the Coast? Come get supplies or just get into the crafting zone at our table.

No goal? No problem! Come get some inspiration and see what wild art comes out of the garbage we’ve found. Hot glue guns, table space and an assortment of found objects will be provided.

Feel free to bring colorful garbage and found objects to share or for your own creative endeavors. We’ll gladly take donations during office hours and are excited to hear your ideas for making straw beads, headphone cable necklaces, and bread bag clasp collages!

Trashlantis assembled bribes should be:
- Wearable or functional in some way
- Small enough to easily carry
- Free of any insulting or hateful speech
- Flashy & Fun!

Trashlantis assembled art should be:
- Ocean creature themed
- Less than 10 lb and small enough to lift individually
- Free of any insulting or hateful speech
- Flashy & Fun!

ART INSPIRATION

During our Trash Craft Night we’ll be featuring videos and music from the artist Lonnie Holley for inspiration on our repurposing projects.

“Since 1979, Holley has devoted his life to the practice of improvisational creativity. His art and music, born out of struggle, hardship, but perhaps more importantly, out of furious curiosity and biological necessity, has manifested itself in drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, performance, and sound. Holley's sculptures are constructed from found materials in the oldest tradition of African American sculpture. Objects, already imbued with cultural and artistic metaphor, are combined into narrative sculptures that commemorate places, people, and events. His work is now in collections of major museums throughout the country, on permanent display in the United Nations, and has been displayed in the White House Rose Garden. In January of 2014, Holley completed a one-month artist-in-residence with the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation in Captiva Island, Florida, site of the acclaimed artist’s studio.” Learn more at www.lonnieholley.com.

NEC OPEN HOUSE & CLEANUP

We’re starting off our open house with some action! Come help gather trash around the neighborhood, then stay for the mixer. Supplies for the trash pickup will be provided.

- Date: April 30
- Time: Cleanup 4:30 - 6 PM, Mixer 6 - 8 PM
- Location: NEC Office, 415 I St. Arcata, CA
Local Join National Day of Action to Stop Dirty Banks

Caroline Griffith, NEC Executive Director

On March 21, protestors gathered at the Wells Fargo bank in Arcata demanding that big banks, including Wells Fargo, Chase, Bank of America and Citibank stop funding fossil fuel projects, or they would pull their money from those institutions. The action was organized by the Climate Action Campaign of the Humboldt Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship, and was part of a national day of action sponsored by the organization Th!rd Act which involved 102 demonstrations across 30 states. Th!rd Act is “a community of experienced Americans over the age of sixty determined to change the world for the better.”

In its call to action, Th!rd Act stated, “The fossil fuel industry polluting our atmosphere can’t exist without money from banks and investors. If we stop the Big Four Banks—Bank of America, Chase, Citibank, and Wells Fargo—from investing, we help shut down the industry. We don’t want our money and savings to be used to bankroll the climate crisis. Seventy percent of the country’s financial assets belong to Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation. Who can influence the banks? We can. Together with youth who are fighting for their future.” According to Th!rd Act founder, Bill McKibben, these four banks are the four biggest lenders to the fossil fuel industry.

One of the local demonstrators, Jamie Blatter, had proudly closed her Wells Fargo account that day. She said she had been thinking about it for a while, but was inspired by the call to action to finally make the move. She will be moving her money to a small bank called Atmos which seeks to shift money away from fossil fuel investments and towards renewable energy projects.

Inspired by the call to action, Jamie Blatter closed her Wells Fargo account.

Scissor sign reads: “Banks: cut it out or we’ll cut it up!”

Protestors in front of Wells Fargo. Signs: “Protect Our Future.”

Demonstrators in front of Chase Bank in Arcata.

Demonstrators in front of the Wells Fargo in Arcata.
You are invited to the Decolonizing Economics Summit: The Fourth Annual Post-Capitalism Conference, Thursday, April 20 – Saturday, April 22, 2023. The conference will be virtual, with an in-person closing ceremony on April 22 in McKinleyville, CA.

For the last three years, the Post-Capitalism Conference has brought together organizers, academics, leaders, students, workers, artists, and creators, to imagine a world beyond ecological, economic, social and political crisis. Each year we have committed ourselves to foster a space that challenges us, strengthens our work, and celebrates those who are committed to transformative change. With the explicit focus on decolonizing economics, we ask ourselves and each other: What does this path look like? Is it as Audre Lorde professed in 1979, “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house”? What are the ways in which “decolonizing” movements mobilize and rely upon these “master’s tools”? What are the consequences of relying upon these tools (financial/monetary instruments, laws, policies, institutions, technologies, materials, logics, etc.) for “decolonization,” and how do these ultimately reproduce colonial systems and conditions? With these questions in mind, we invite you to participate in a gathering where we lovingly and joyfully imagine the world where we want to live. Register at decolonizingeconomicssummit.org

HOSTS
Anchored by the Wiyot Tribe’s Dishgamu Community Land Trust, several Cal Poly Humboldt faculty and departments, Cooperation Jackson, Democracy at Work, Green Eco-Socialist Network, Native Roots Network, New Economy Coalition, the US Solidarity Economy Network, CA CLT Network, Solidarity Research Center, CA Public Banking Alliance, Full Spectrum Capital, Cal Trout, Transition US, and a growing network of additional partners, this three day virtual conference serves as a space to exchange experiences and information, strengthen alliances and networks, and devise strategies to decenter colonial systems and implement concrete solutions to heal the land and people. Over 1,000 people participated in the 2022 Summit, and we expect even more in 2023!

TOPICS
Panels and presentations include Making Land Back Real, Decolonizing Restoration and Using Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), Food Sovereignty, Labor Organizing, Racialized Capitalism, the Role of the Artist, and much more! A full schedule is coming soon.

COST
Attendance is on a sliding scale, which means you can pay what you can. If you are able to do so, we request a contribution of $25-100 so that we can pay a living wage to organizers, and provide a stipend to presenters. (We prioritize stipends to BIPOC presenters.) No one is turned away for lack of funds.

EARTH DAY EVENT
If you are able, join us in-person on Earth Day (April 22) at Pierson Park, located at 1608 Pickett Road in McKinleyville, CA. The Decolonizing Economics Summit will conclude with a family-friendly event with food, music, tabling, a bouncy house, face painting, jugglers, temporary tattoos, hula hoops, and more! We strive to make this a zero waste event.

CONFERENCE GOALS
• Educate about decolonizing economics in purpose and practice.
• Devise strategies to create an explicitly post-capitalist society using the “Solidarity Economy” framework: Solidarity, cooperation, and mutualism; Equity in all dimensions—race/ethnicity/nationality/class/gender/sexual orientation/(dis)ability; Participatory democracy; and Sustainability.
• Strengthen existing organizations, especially those doing solidarity economy work.
• Create a space for organizations to share best practices and collaborate across issues and constituencies toward collective liberation.
• Co-create concrete “next steps” for how we can implement cooperative economic practices in our community.
• Feature panels, presentations, performances, and skill-shops which address the various perspectives and approaches of grassroots organizations, community activists, educators, students, and others committed to social and environmental justice.
Elk River Restoration: Making Things Right

Jerry Martien

The difference between water and land has been especially muddy this winter, but for the Elk River Estuary Restoration Project that was part of the plan. Two City of Eureka parcels near the mouth of the river, more than 120 acres of “reclaimed” pasture and degraded salt marsh, will once again be a functioning intertidal ecosystem.

Throughout fall, travelers on 101 between Herrick Road and Humboldt Hill were entertained by a moto-cross of loaders and dump trucks taking out old dikes and dams, re-digging buried tide channels on the south side of the river. On the north side, along Pound Road and Hikshari’ Trail, crews with hand tools and weed whackers cut back invasive spartina grass while Swamp Masters crawled through newly uncovered channels.

At high tide, it looks like part of the bay. At low tide it looks like a big muddy mess—but we all know recovery can be ugly in its early stages.

Originally proposed by Aldaron Laird and funded by the state’s Coastal Conservancy, the project began as a way to accommodate sea level rise. But it also removes old tide gates and barriers to fish migration, opens up nearly three miles of water for non-motorized boating, and re-purposes thousands of cubic yards of sediment, the product of upstream logging, into a pedestrian and bike path that extends from Elk River to a new access point at Humboldt Hill.

The new trail is already popular. Elevated well above high tide, paved, two lanes wide, it even features a center line and traffic signs. A lot of trash was cleaned up. There are pull-outs for wildlife viewing. Walking and biking is almost like motoring.

Not everyone is pleased by these changes. Fishermen, beach strollers, and dog walkers used the old trail for many years. They complained about lack of public access during construction and called attention to the destruction of existing wildlife habitat. A big muddy mess.

Restoration also uncovers old mistakes. This place is still known to many locals as Stinky Beach. The pasture was once a place where they spread the solids of Eureka’s sewer plant. Across the river, Pound Road leads to the old concrete ruins where the City caged and disposed of its excess dogs and cats. They went next door to the rendering plant, along with dead livestock and leftovers of the slaughterhouse, to be cooked into a malodorous commercial product that mingled with the fog and sulfurous exhaust of two pulp mills.

Restoration has to ask what we hope to bring back to this place. Its older, Wiyot name is Hikshari’, a site of continuous settlement and “management activity” for many centuries. When Laird and engineer Steve Salzman drew up plans for reconstructing the estuary, they made sure it would be done in consultation with Wiyot representatives. Laird prefers to call what they’re doing enhancement. “We are not returning the area to what it was before white people came here.” After recovery, it’s important to accept the things that can’t be changed.

Restoration means education and change, as much as engineering and botany. The City of Eureka has demonstrated, when it returned Tulutwat / Indian Island to the Wiyot, that it can also mean acceptance, reparation, and land return. Making things right. Calling places by their Wiyot names. Hikshari’.

Restoration also applies to governance, changing the ways we make public decisions, being more inclusive and open. People in Elk River only learned of this project because it got attached to another murky issue we have followed for years. At a meeting of the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, in 2016, while Elk River residents waited to ask the board to take effective action to reduce sediment (they didn’t), Eureka officials were told that their sewer plant was in violation of state and federal water quality laws. Its effluent was illegally going into Humboldt Bay (and Elk River’s estuary). But the timber companies got their zero sediment logging plan, and the City was given five years to fix their waste system.

Seven years later, Eureka and regional water quality staff were claiming the Elk River Estuary Restoration Project would “mitigate” their problem—basically, make it go away. That claim hasn’t come up again since an environmental law firm sued the City for its criminal behavior—and won—but meanwhile, time and effluent move on.

Then another piece of the story came to the surface at a Humboldt Community Services District (HCSD) meeting. The old pound property, owned by Figas Construction, the low bidder on the project, would be the site of a $4.2 million Nature Center. Because HCSD is Eureka’s junior partner in the wastewater plant, serving ratepayers from Freshwater to Fields Landing (not Elk River), it would want to help pay for this additional “mitigation” of the plant’s pollution. HCSD strongly objected, and the Nature Center sank out of sight with the mitigation claims. Its status remains unclear.

Recovery from old habits requires time and constant vigilance. This project is a good beginning. Many people should be thanked for their contributions, but especially project manager Katie Marsolan, the drivers and equipment operators for their long hours, the tireless weed whackers and hand diggers of Redwood Community Action Agency, and Samara Restoration for its care in returning native plants to this damaged landscape.

A few mallards have been seen checking things out. A hopeful egret. A small flock of sanderlings that came over from the beach. Nature will heal before we do.
Get on Board for the Climate

Cows On The Road

Martha Walden

California wields an elaborate system of sticks and carrots to move all businesses within its borders towards a carbon-neutral future. Its tactics sometimes seem frustratingly slow because it is fearful of its industries migrating to less regulated states.

The Low Carbon Fuel Standard (LCFS) program is a good example. It aims to reduce the carbon intensity of transportation fuels. Producers of renewable fuels are rewarded for their lower emissions with credits that fossil fuel producers are required to buy in order to pay for their higher emissions. This holds true even for Renewable Natural Gas (RNG) and other biofuels that do not directly substitute for transportation fuels.

RNG is methane. Much methane comes from Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). CAFOs produce meat, eggs, milk, and manure. That last product is stored in huge lagoons that emit hundreds of thousands of tons of methane (plus nitrous oxide and ammonia, among other pollutants) every year, and that’s just in California. Lagoons can be covered to deal with this problem, and anaerobic digesters capture most of the methane. The high Global Warming Potential (GWP) of these prevented emissions are deducted from the GWP of the resulting natural gas. Chemically identical to fossil natural gas, it uses the same distribution infrastructure.

Small dairies are increasingly installing digesters. In exchange for installing this expensive equipment, subsidies from LCFS and other grant programs create multiple streams of revenue for the same basic diversion of methane. Needless to say, the extra revenue helps them compete against giant dairy CAFOs.

A handful of Humboldt dairies—Western Organic Family—want to sign up. The seven member dairies plan to increase their herd size, pool their manure, and transport it to the digester. Will animals still be allowed to graze during half of the year on pastures where their manure is inaccessible to the digester? Not likely. Their manure management will change to the lagoon method, further increasing methane emissions.

Climate activists have three major reservations about the cow-to-RNG strategy. Does adding RNG to the fuel mix to lower its overall carbon intensity actually decrease the total amount of transportation emissions? So far it’s not evident. Fossil fuels must be curtailed to decrease the total amount of emissions.

Does California efficiently use its resources when it creates multiple, overlapping incentives for methane diversion? When the LCFS and other programs take credit for reducing the same methane, it’s impossible to know how much total methane is actually reduced and how much it costs.

The last question is if it’s wise to treat methane as a sought-out fuel instead of a problematic consequence of different activities. When livestock industries cash in by increasing their production of methane, other impacts to the environment increase as well. These include high water usage, air and water pollution, pathogens, inhumane treatment, flies and vermin infestations. People who live in the highly polluted vicinity of CAFOs are economically disadvantaged and pay a high price for our dairy and beef.

We need fewer cows on earth, not more. They should spend their lives ambling around on grass. Consequently, beef and dairy would be less plentiful and more expensive. Many people understandably wouldn’t welcome that new reality, but it would be one of the most effective changes we could make to protect civilization from the increasingly dire climate emergency.
California-based company Natel Energy has deployed a water turbine that balances efficient green energy production with the safety needs of passing wildlife, especially the Endangered American eel. The American eel spends most of its life in the freshwater rivers and estuaries of the southern and eastern United States, from New Mexico to the Great Lakes in Florida to Maine. The breeding season, eels migrate to an area of the Atlantic Ocean roughly 900 miles (1,440 kilometers) off the east coast known as the Sargasso Sea. Although researchers have never witnessed wild eel reproduction, there is evidence that females lay their eggs and die in these waters. The hatchling eels then migrate back to the mainland waterways guided by an internal sense of direction. Whether journeying to the sea or back, hydroelectric power plants pose a serious navigation problem — as well as a risk to their lives. The American eel was listed as endangered in 2013, and surveys suggest wild populations have declined by around 50 percent in recent decades.

The huge amounts of zero-emissions energy produced by hydroelectric dams are a significant part of solving the issue of global warming. Hydropower in the U.S. accounts for less energy than wind, but more than all other renewable sources combined. It is a much more stable source than wind or solar, and may well be a vital component of our low-carbon future.

These dams are often very tall structures made largely of concrete and metal and have major impacts on their surrounding ecosystems, including a threat to wildlife posed by their spinning turbine blades. When water flows into a hydropower dam, it is directed through a turbine which spins to generate electricity. Conventional turbine blade design has sharp edges to cut through the water current and maximize efficiency, but these edges are deadly for fish and eels: on average, only about 78 percent of the fish that swim through them will survive, and in some places as low as 40 percent of the eels, whose long bodies are especially vulnerable.

Hydropower development company Natel Energy, based in Alameda, California, has devised a way to retrofit existing dams with rounded turbine blades that change these percentages completely. Gia Schneider, CEO of Natel, co-founded the company with her brother Abe. Their turbine redesign, called the Restoration Hydro Turbine (RHT), uses carefully slanted and curved blades to maintain efficient power generation while minimizing danger to wildlife.

In a 2022 study, 131 American eels swam through an RHT. All 131 eels survived, and even those that were struck by the blades had no serious injuries. RHT tests and evaluations conducted in 2021 and 2022 reported greater than 99 percent safe passage of fish: over 180 large rainbow trout in Oregon, and over 480 juvenile alewife (a species of herring) in Maine. The installation in Maine is a retrofit of a dam originally built in 1834, showing that even some of our oldest sites can be updated to modern sustainability standards. This is a huge step in making existing hydropower dams more ecologically friendly.

"The turbine can’t solve all of [hydro’s] problems, but it can play its part," said Abe Schneider. Natel Energy is continuing to retrofit American dams, as well as designing low-impact, beaver-like hydropower dams in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a country where some 90 percent of the population lives without access to electricity.

Source: Reasons to be Cheerful

LIVERPOOL'S RIVER MERSEY RECOVERY

Once considered biologically dead, the River Mersey in Liverpool, England, has shown ecological recovery at a stunning rate. The Mersey runs through 69 miles (111 kilometers) of northwestern England. It widens into a large estuary before narrowing and emptying into Liverpool Bay. The Liverpool Docks and surrounding industrialization have been responsible for a long history of pollution and degradation of the estuary.

In 1985, the Mersey Basin Campaign was established to improve water quality and encourage ecological regeneration. In 2002 (17 years later), water testing found oxygen levels suitable for sustaining fish life along the entire course of the river, a fact that had not been recorded since the region first became industrialized. Then in 2009, it was announced that the river was "cleaner than at any time since the industrial revolution" and is "now considered one of the cleanest [rivers] in the UK."

A recent survey found more than two-and-a-half times the number of fish species than the previous survey 20 years prior. There were also sightings of five different types of sharks, plus large eels and sea scorpions. One local fisherman remarked on the "Holiday species" they were catching: turbot, smelt, and cod. There were reports of otters, seals, octopus, salmon, and porpoises in the river. And to top it all off, Humpback whales were spotted in Liverpool Bay for the first time since 1938.

"Over the last 30 years, there’s been this tremendous regeneration, this renewal of the River Mersey that started slowly but is now picking up pace," said Mike Duddy of the Mersey Rivers Trust. "It’s the best environmental good news story in Europe..."

Sources: Good News Network, Wikipedia

For the first time since their reinstallation into the wild, the Mexican wolf population in Arizona and New Mexico has increased to 241 individuals

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Elena Bilheimer, EcoNews Journalist

Green Spiral Farm started as a small 1/4 acre micro farm in McKinleyville, focused on growing baby greens, radishes, and strawberries. In 2019, a year after the micro farm began, they expanded to a 20 acre farm located in the Arcata Bottoms. Run by couple Graham and Chelsey Gagne, the farm seasonally supplies local grocery stores with organic produce while offering an even more diverse range of crops for their CSA and market booth.

Graham and Chelsey met and fell in love while working together on Wild Rose Farm in 2013. After the birth of their first daughter, their passion for organic farming and working with nature became coupled with a desire to create a sustainable livelihood for their new family. In the beginning of Green Spiral Farm, Graham continued working for the farm at Mad River Community Hospital, giving them the perfect trial run for farming in the Arcata Bottoms and an opportunity to envision what a farm of their own might look like.

Their dream has now become a reality, and with the help of a few crucial farm hands, they have been able to broaden what they are able to provide for the community. Since moving to a bigger parcel of land, they are able to provide the local grocery stores with kales, cauliflower, salad mix, celery, carrots, parsley, fennel, cucumbers and snap peas. The name of their farm has become illustrative of their farm culture, as community and resources spiral in, while their produce and sustainability impact spirals out into the wider world.

“Building community has been the foundation of Green Spiral Farm,” said the Gagnes. “We bring this to life by offering a CSA (community supported agriculture) where people come to the farm and pick up their weekly food box. This gives people the opportunity to see where and how their food is grown, while also giving them access to beautiful, fresh produce all season.” Rather than just supporting farms by purchasing produce at random intervals (which is great in its own right), CSAs allow customers to become “members” of the farm, establishing a different relationship and helping support the farm through the off-season. Green Spiral Farm’s 25 week CSA goes from June 23 through Dec. 15, with shares for 2023 currently open.

At a time when there is little diversity in the fresh produce that is available at the markets, the Gagnes’ favorite seasonal vegetable is the nutritious purple sprouting broccoli. This plant thrives in Humboldt, as it is perfectly suited to growing in regions that have mild winters. “Purple sprouting broccoli explodes with vibrance in the deep winter, while most other crops from the prior season are done,” said the Gagnes.

“The beautiful purple color attracts a lot of joy at our market stand. Our favorite way to enjoy it is to simply stir fry it with a bit of olive oil, salt/pepper and garlic powder. Our carrots are a community favorite that people typically enjoy right out of the bag!”

In addition to supplying their weekly CSA, the Gagnes host a bi-annual festival called Mad River Market. The event happens every April and October and includes live music, 30+ art and craft vendors, food and drink, a kid’s zone, and raffle baskets full of local goodies. For the fall market, there is also a pumpkin patch. The market has gained traction and popularity, and the Gagnes invite community members to become involved and volunteer their skills in order to co-create an artistic and collaborative gathering. “This event has really caught on as the communal energy is palpable here!” said the Gagnes.

For the Gagnes, farming is both a privilege and opportunity to provide people with nourishing, fresh food while creating lasting connections between friends, family, and the land. “We are both inspired by how growing food brings together community, fosters lifelong learning, and promotes health and wellness,” they said.

Look for Green Spiral Farm’s produce in Eureka Natural Foods, the North Coast Coop, Wildberries, or the Arcata Farmers Market. To learn more and sign up for a CSA share, visit greenspiralfarm.com or email them at greenspiralfarm@gmail.com. They are also on Instagram @greenspiralfarm or @madriver_market.
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