



Save the Redwoods League

Spring Bulletin 2006

Better from the Executive Director

On January 4, I received an e-mail from Ranger Dan Ash at Humboldt Redwoods State Park:

We've had 28 inches of rain in 14 days this December.

Tried to attach a photo of a 10 feet dbh [diameter at breast height] redwood that fell across the Avenue in Drexler Grove. The tree fell a few minutes after I drove by on the road. Missed me. Ironically another tree, 6' dbh about 100 feet from the first one, fell a few minutes before I arrived the next day.

There have been a number of significant tree losses with this storm. Bank damage at Kent Grove caused us to suffer the loss of about 5 big ones there. Federation Grove also had some difficulties.

Thanks for your support.

The impact of floods in the redwoods was suddenly very real. The League's strategy for effective conservation is based on protecting redwood forest land at a scale that is sufficient to support the natural processes like fire and flood, that characterize a forest in its natural state. These processes are the dynamic forces that change the forest, sustaining the vibrant system that is vital for long term health of a forest rather than an insulated, simplified tree zoo of beautiful monarch trees.

But losing any of the big old trees that have stood for hundred and hundreds of years, hits me very hard.

A week later I was in Humboldt Redwoods with Dan to look at the tree that had nearly hit Dan when it fell across the Avenue of the Giants, and to see the damage in the Women's Federation Grove. We kept returning to the question of whether these trees had fallen as a result of processes that were truly "natural", or whether the extent of human impacts on the forest had led to their failure.



In the depths of the redwoods in 1919. On the edge of a grape-stake cutting along the Highway in South Fork basin.

Reprinted from Zoological Society bulletin Sept. 1919 Vol. XXII No. 5

When we walked out through the Kent Grove to the bank of the South Fork of the Eel River, it took my breath away: the river had carved away a huge shelf sixty feet wide and more than a hundred yards long. Two of the five "big ones" that Dan had described were still snagged in the water below; the others long gone in the high waters that had receded. Across the river, we could see the confluence of Canoe Creek with the Eel. Was the bank failure within the "natural" range of disturbance? Or had the logging in the Canoe Creek watershed decades before, been the cause? And what had been the effect of the forest fire in Canoe Creek three years before? Is the intensity of rainfall linked to some broader pattern of climate change?

As the League works to implement appropriate strategies to protect the forest, the support of our members is critical. Your support continues the vision of the League's founders more than 85 years ago that led to the protection of Humboldt Redwoods State Parks: the world's largest contiguous stand of ancient redwoods. In 1919, Stephen Mather, then the first Director of the National Park Service, traveled up the new redwood highway and stopped in the midst of felled giant redwoods being split into grapestakes. On the spot, he pledged money from his own pocket to buy that grove and asked William Kent to do the same. Today the Mather and Kent groves, side by side, still stand because they acted. Their personal commitment made it possible for the League to halt the cutting and buy that land: one of the League's first acquisitions.

Thank you for your interest and commitment to saving the redwoods in the face of the uncertainty and challenges that lie ahead.

Recent League Acquisitions

MONTGOMERY WOODS ACQUISITION DOUBLES SIZE OF RESERVE.

This project adds 1250 acres to Montgomery Woods State Reserve, vastly increasing habitat diversity and protecting the majestic ancient redwoods in the park downstream (*see feature article*).



COMPLETION OF THE CORRIDOR FROM THE REDWOODS TO THE SEA PROJECT CONSOLIDATES RESOURCE PROTECTION AND CONNECTS MAJOR RESERVES.

After many years of work, the League has completed the Corridor project with an exchange of over 1000 acres of land between the

League and a local rancher and transfer of the League's lands to the Bureau of Land Management for permanent protection. The land exchange, coupled with a conservation easement on the 4000-acre ranch, provides the last link in the chain of protected habitat stretching from the ancient redwoods of Humboldt Redwoods State Park to the wild roadless coast of the King Range National Recreation Area.

PORTOLA REDWOODS STATE PARK PURCHASE BUFFERS THE PARK FROM RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT.

The League recently purchased an undeveloped 80-acre parcel that lies between the park and a developed residential area to the east. The forested property enhances protection of the Peters Creek grove of ancient redwoods, one of the most spectacular groves in the Bay Area, and provides new recreational opportunities within the Park.



photo by Ruskin Hartley

FOREST OF NISENE MARKS ACQUISITION REMOVES A CRITICAL INHOLDING.

State Parks has long sought to buy out the last few private holdings in the Hinkley Basin area of the park, where a handful of isolated residences have created



photo by Jeff Canepa



Map by GreenInfo Network Greeninfo.org

administrative headaches for years. With the assistance of the seller, the League arranged to remove the existing cabin on the property so that it could be delivered to State Parks clear of buildings, ready to be assimilated into the surrounding redwood forest.

Hope Springs from League Purchase Double

Deep currents connect the ancient to the contemporary in Montgomery Woods, where living stands of old redwood dwarf our human perceptions of time. One of the last and largest remaining stands in logged-over Mendocino County, this virgin first-growth forest 10 miles west of Ukiah first came to public attention in 1919, when the eminent botanist Ynes Mexia wrote a plea (enclosed with her \$2 League membership dues) that the magnificent specimens of Montgomery Grove should be spared the fate of “the axe and the shake.” Spurred to swift action, the League reported back the next year that cutting in the heart of the grove had been halted. The old-growth stand finally received state protection when Robert Orr donated a nine-acre parcel to create the Montgomery Woods State Reserve in 1945.

From this seed, subsequent purchases and donations from the League have grown Montgomery Woods to a magnificent 2,382 acres, boosted in major part by the League’s purchase this year of three properties from two sellers, Ian Ross and his wife Jody Edwards, and Jon Cook, effectively doubling the park’s total size. The land includes a wide range of habitats: stands of old-growth redwood and Douglas-fir, mixed riparian zones with spawning steelhead and coho salmon, a rare forest of pure Oregon white oak, valleys and swales punctuated by dramatic rock outcrops marked with cliffs and caves, and wide-open native perennial grasslands where hunting raptors circle.

With this year’s addition, the state reserve now abuts a large private ranch managed under a conservation easement which ensures that its old growth redwoods will never be cut. Together with four adjacent BLM properties, more than 5400 acres of protected lands are linked together. In securing such a generous slice of this steep drainage at the headwaters of the Big River’s south fork, the transaction links numerous habitats across the watershed, a landmark of creating viable public parks and a hallmark of the League’s Master Plan for the conservation of our few remaining coast redwood forests at the ecosystem level. “We consider this a very high-leverage asset,” says Mike Wells, superintendent for the Mendocino District of California State Parks. “By filling in gaps between existing public and preserved lands, this purchase truly multiplies our protected acreage.”

Ian Ross shares this vision. “All the water on this land, all the wildlife on this land – it’s all connected to the watershed,” says Ross, who first approached the League last year to discuss the terms of a deal. He and his wife, both retired electronics executives,

assembled their property from eight parcels purchased piecemeal from four sellers over the last decade.



Looking from the Ross property toward Montgomery Woods

*“All the water on this land
this land – it’s all connected.”*

The property bears archeological evidence of Native Americans using the land 5,000 years ago, and Ross anticipates that California State Parks will manage the land for the future with equal appreciation. He describes exploring a wonderland of winter waterfalls tumbling into fern-encrusted grottoes, groves of sculpted buckeyes haunted by rabbit, deer, fox, golden eagle, and black bear, and summer springs where the wildflowers riot and the water comes right out of the ground. “We wanted to see this never get developed” says Ross.

From the Headwaters to the Heart of Montgomery Woods



photo by Ruskin Hartley

“This land, all the wildlife on
connected to the watershed”

“Breaking it up would disrupt the wildlife patterns and the network of habitats. Seeing the wildlife up here and feeling myself a part of it — this has become one of my greatest joys, and it was a formative element in the growth of my children.”

Meanwhile, the Cook properties included easements over public lands in the old-growth redwoods, and when the threat arose of bulldozers clearing roads, a host of concerned citizens including Ross took voiced concern. The League’s ability to move quickly to buy these

lands turned that potential threat into a conservation success. Such bold initiative has distinguished the League since it first responded to Ynes Mexia’s cry for help 87 years ago, and it remains possible through the generous support of donations to the League’s Redwood Land Program.

The newly expanded reserve now includes dramatic ridgetops painted with 300 acres of California oatgrass, the beautiful long-lived *Danthonia californica*. Such meadows have largely been eliminated from most of the California Coast Ranges by overgrazing and invasion of weeds like medusahead, Italian thistle, barbed goatgrass, and other exotic annuals inadvertently introduced by Europeans with their livestock and their feedbags. These annual grasses live fast and die young, leaving our hillsides in summer that characteristic shade of golden brown; but perennial native grasses stay green throughout the year, especially in the moist meadows where *Danthonia* thrives.

Field ecologists surveying the Ross property discovered a pure three-acre stand of Oregon oak (*Quercus garryana*), a gorgeous deciduous tree with pale white bark and gnarled limbs. *Q. garryana* can live 500 years, and is a common element of mixed evergreen and conifer woodlands from California to British Columbia, but only rarely occurs at this latitude as its own forest type. Here the understory is

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THE LEGACY OF YNES MEXIA

Ynes Mexia, the recently widowed granddaughter of a Mexican general, traveled to San Francisco in 1909, where she discovered her love for the natural world, especially the holy silence of an old-growth redwood grove.

In 1919, one year after the League’s founding, she sent a check for \$2.00 to join the League: “I am heartily in sympathy with any effort to save these trees”, mentioning Montgomery Grove. Her letters sparked the beginning of the League’s actions to protect Montgomery Woods.

She never missed a year’s membership contribution except in 1931 when she was on a three year solo botany expedition in the Amazon. In her lifetime, she collected more than 150,000 specimens including 500 new species.

Ynes Mexia left half of her estate to the League. Honoring her love for Montgomery Woods, the League dedicated a grove there in her memory.



Mexia grove
Photo by Evan Johnson

Go there yourself. Be inspired by Ynes Mexia, whose membership and “interest in the movement for which the League stands” led her to “give it a great deal of thought, and ...wonder if there is anything I can do, as an individual, to help the work along.”



Montgomery Woods

Photo by Ruskin Hartley

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blue wild rye mixed with other native grasses, and the feeling changes with the seasons: the dappled leafy shade of June, the blustery falling foliage of October, the spooky white slashes of trunk and branch in January, and the thrilling whisper of green in early April.

A one-day field survey last May reported 200 species of vascular plants on the Ross property, most of them native; Save-the-Redwoods League forest ecologist Dan Porter believes that if he had returned in June, he could have uncovered 100 more. Such diversity underscores the biological value of this enchanted region. Among the many interesting discoveries was an extremely rare lily, *Dichelostemma venustum* (botanical Greek and Latin for “the toothed crown of Venus”), a spring-blooming bulb with flowers shaped like rose-colored firecrackers; it is the only member of its genus to be pollinated by birds, and (according to the Calflora database) has never before been observed south of Humboldt County.

Such data builds a compelling scientific picture, but the true conservationist measures the land at more meaningful scale — neither by the acre nor by the state or county line, but rather by the watershed. These contours of mountain and valley are the basic units of earth, and each sustains its own system of water, like a bowl where rainfall gathers itself together for the long run home to the sea. Such elemental intersections carry high stakes: ecological, spiritual, and financial. Intact forests in the headwaters anchor the slopes, while the profit-driven practices of clear-cutting and reckless development can fill the

rivers with sediment and threaten the health of the entire biome.

The League takes pride in the work we have accomplished in the Big River watershed. The estuary of the Big River, the longest and most undeveloped estuary in Northern California that stretches up to 8 miles inland, was purchased from timber interests by the Mendocino Land Trust with significant financial support from the League, and transferred to California State Parks in 2002. Big River State Park and Montgomery Woods State Reserve now bookend the watershed, the majority of which is owned by the Mendocino Redwood Company, certified by the independent Forest Stewardship Council for its commitment to moving toward a future of environmentally friendly harvests.

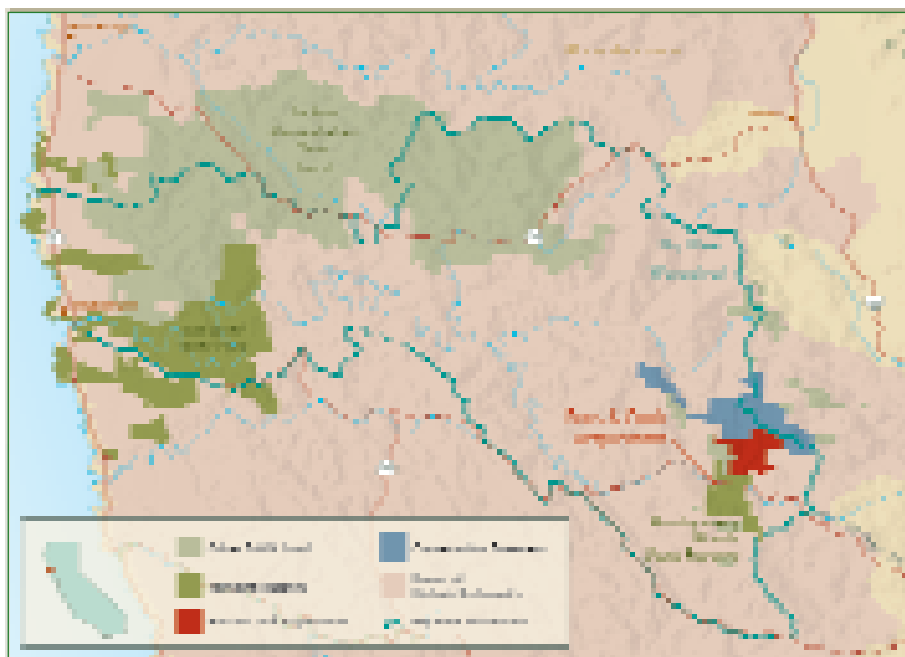
One man’s life feels small in the context of an old-growth redwood or the wider watershed it helps support. Yet conscious steps we take today will preserve these portals to the past for our grandchildren. Such success stories — like the flourishing of Montgomery Woods — prove that a series of small human acts can generate tremendous returns.

By Geoffrey Coffey©

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Map by GreenInfo Network www.greeninfo.org

A Brief Interview With Maria Mudd Ruth



Illustration by Paul Harris Jones

AUTHOR OF *RARE BIRD: PURSUING THE MYSTERY OF THE MARBLED MURRELET*

Rare Bird follows Maria Mudd Ruth's love affair with the marbled murrelet, a seabird that nests high in the trees of the Pacific coast's old-growth forests. The murrelet's story is particularly compelling because the radical decline in its population keeps pace with the decrease in the amount of old-growth redwoods.

What is the marbled murrelet's relationship with the redwood forest?

Redwood forests grow close to the coast, and offer the height, branch width, and multi-layered canopy these birds require. In the spring, the adult murrelets fly inland to the old-growth forests in search of a nesting site. Most marbled murrelet nests are found within 37 miles of the coast.

Does the bird build a nest in the redwood tree?

Marbled murrelets do not build nests but take advantage of naturally growing moss or natural depressions in the branch. The female murrelet lays a single egg. The male and female share incubation duties equally, each taking 24-hour-long shifts, which begin and end at dawn. The "off-duty" adult returns to the sea to forage. After about a month, a downy chick hatches and is brooded a few days until it can regulate its own body temperature. Both adults return to the sea to forage. The chick remains alone, still, and motionless for 85% of its time on the nest. Adults return to the nest briefly, from one to eight times a day, to deliver small fish which the chick swallows headfirst and whole. After a period of between 28 and 40 days, the chick has grown its juvenile plumage and is ready to fledge. It waits until just after dusk, spreads its wings, and departs from its nest (for the first time), flies through the forest (without stopping) on a route not necessarily taken by either of its parents (to an unknown distance to which it has never seen) to swim, dive, and catch fish (which it has never done) on its own.

How do scientists study it?

With patience, stamina, and pots of coffee! At sea, the marbled murrelet is shy and quick to dive below the water and disappear—only to reappear moments later in an unexpected place. In the forest, the situation is even more challenging. Adult birds fly into and out of the forest in the low light of dawn so biologists surveying the birds have to be in place well before dawn. If a survey site is remote (they most often are) and in steep terrain, a biologist's day may begin at 3 a.m. to allow time to hike to the site. If the biologist is lucky, the site will feature a window of open sky in the dense forest—a window that affords a silhouetted view of a marbled murrelet in flight. Against the backdrop of the dark forest, marbled murrelets are well camouflaged in their brown summer plumage. Biologists have to be very alert to detect a bird. Marbled murrelets fly fast—routinely around 40 mph, but they have been clocked on radar at 103 mph. Most detections of marbled murrelets in the forest are auditory; scientists had to develop a special protocol for estimating numbers of birds based on the number and timing of their "keer" calls.

What makes this bird so strange and marvelous?

In very unscientific language, this bird is almost like a dream—existing at the very edge of human consciousness. Flying over the forest, a marbled murrelet is an apparition, a shadow, a fleeting shape in the periphery. At sea, it's a distant form, an eyestrain, a ruffle of feathers, a splash, and then a trail of bubbles.



Illustration by Paul Harris Jones



Take a closer look and read *RARE BIRD: Pursuing the Mystery of the Marbled Murrelet* (Rodale Books, June 2005, \$23.95)

CYNTHIA GRUBB:

A Life Devoted to Conservation

Photo provided by Cynthia Grubb



As a child, Cynthia Grubb loved the 20 dogwood trees planted by her father in their yard, and she has maintained a deep love of trees ever since. Within the first month of her arrival in California in 1955, Cynthia went hiking in Big Basin Redwoods State Park and travelled to Sequoia National Park – her introduction to redwoods. She has never forgotten these first encounters with the coastal redwood and the giant sequoia, and her lifelong commitment to conservation was born.

Together she and husband Ted Grubb hiked many of California's redwood forests. Ted's father, D. Hanson Grubb, had been a Councillor for many years, and Ted took his place upon his father's illness. After Ted passed, Cynthia joined the Council, and her decade of work on the Board of Directors greatly enriched the organization. She remains an active Councillor and is a member of the Development Committee.

Cynthia's favorite redwood park is Montgomery Woods State Reserve, and she was delighted to contribute in 2005 towards the successful purchase of land that will double the size of the reserve. "My real love of trees and the opportunity to help pass on such a fantastic redwood conservation legacy for posterity are the reasons why I am involved with the League," she says. Other favorite League projects include the restoration of 25,000 acres of previously harvested redwood lands at Mill Creek and furthering the scientific understanding of the Dawn Redwood indigenous to China.

Two of the family's treasures are the memorial groves named for the wonderful men of the Grubb family. A spectacular grove at Montgomery Woods State Reserve is named for Ted and his father, and another beautiful grove at Calaveras Big Trees State Park is dedicated to Ted. Cynthia is very pleased that these groves serve as living classrooms and family memories for her daughter and grandchildren.

*Cover photo: Montgomery Woods State Reserve
Photo by Evan Johnson*

A GIFT FOR GENERATIONS TO COME: REDWOOD GROVE DEDICATION

Dedicating a redwood grove through a gift to Save-the-Redwoods League ensures that the beauty and grandeur of the redwoods will continue to inspire future generations, while setting aside a very special place where you and your family may savor the trees, rivers and wildlife of the forest. Redwood groves are available for dedication all along the redwood ecosystem, from Jedidiah Smith Redwoods State Park in the north to Limekiln State Park in Big Sur to the south. Some are easily accessible; others require sturdy shoes and a walking stick to reach.

Donation levels for a naming opportunity start at \$25,000. The donation may be made in a lump sum, spread over a three-year period, or by bequest or other form of planned gift. In many parks, a sign bearing the name of the honoree will be placed in the grove.

Gifts to the League to dedicate a redwood grove can support land acquisition, environmental education, redwood research, restoration, and other programmatic work at the donor's request, and are fully deductible to the extent of the law.

For more information, please contact Jennifer Gabriel, Major Gifts Officer, by calling toll free: (888) 836-0005 or by e-mail at groves@savetheredwoods.org



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