



Mill Bend. Photo by Craig Tooley

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Redwood Coast News

November 2023

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Photo by Teresa Burns Gunther

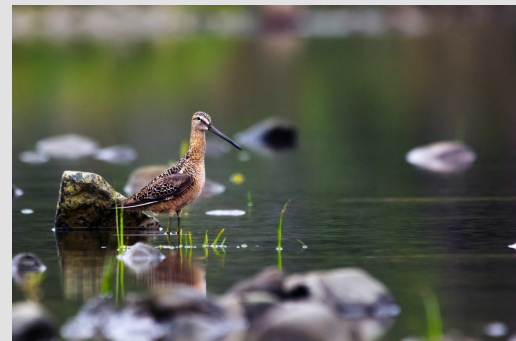


Photo by David Bradbrook

A Bench with a View

If you have walked through Mill Bend Preserve recently, beginning at the Old Stage Road gate, you may have noticed a gentle new trail that leaves the roadway and meanders through the forest, meeting up with the Toyon Trail near the cemetery. While not long, it serves up big views looking toward town and the Pacific. It invites contemplation.



Nowhere is that experience better savored than from the bench gracing the entrance to the forest, the ideal position to take in the view. And rather than detracting from the natural setting, the bench itself enhances the celebration of nature.

It should come as no surprise that both the trail and bench are the work of Eric Agnew. RCLC is blessed by having talented and committed volunteers, often offering their help after successful careers in wide-reaching fields. Eric is among them.

When asked how he typically selects and crafts his works of functional art, Eric shared, “When a rest bench is required, I start with a trip to various beaches, normally in The Sea Ranch, and look for two shapes of redwood logs: a 5-6 foot flat log about 12-18 inches wide, and a 5-6 foot round log about 8-12 inches in diameter. I plane the flat log and form the sitting surface. The underside of the flat log needs to be flattened to receive the legs. This I do that with a mallet and chisel; i.e., the old fashioned way.”

Eric went on to explain how he forms and installs the legs, and then prepares the sitting surface with marine varnish. He noted that digging ground holes for this bench was the real challenge, as it was “hard as rock,” though it ultimately succumbed to a “25 lb pry bar and plenty of elbow grease.”

Look for more on Eric’s background and what inspires his service, coming soon.



Photos by Chris Braley and Mark Escajeda

A Field Trip to Mill Bend Preserve



Remember the joy of a school field trip? Students from Pacific Community Charter School (PCCS) got to experience that joy (and learn a whole lot!) when they visited Mill Bend Preserve on October 25. Teacher Nathan Ramser and his second and third grade students, along with a few parents and siblings, spent three hours engaging in place-based learning. RCLC Volunteers Nicole and John Forte and Robin Cunningham taught the group about the past and present of Mill Bend and RCLC's mission to restore habitat at this special place. Students also explored connections between trees and fungi, used microscopes to explore what can be found in leaf litter, pulled invasive French broom plants and did art projects!





Everyone had such a good time PCCS is hoping to join RCLC volunteers for additional field trips later this school year. The students want to learn about redwood forests and volunteers are excited to teach students about the Gualala River watershed.

Photos courtesy of John Forte and Robin Cunningham

Why do kids get to have all the fun?! Don't worry, there is fun and learning in your future - RCLC volunteers are eager to share their knowledge with the "big kids" too. Watch this newsletter for opportunities to have your own field day as you join RCLC volunteers for bird watching, habitat restoration, history talks and more!

*Make sure you are subscribed to event emails. **Click here** to update your email preferences. Those on our event email list will be the first to know about about special events that don't make it into our newsletters!*

Holiday Open House and Wreath Making at Mill Bend Preserve

When:

Saturday, December 2

10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Where:

Mill Bend Preserve,
[46902 Old Stage Rd, Gualala](#)

Who:

RCLC and YOU!



As the holiday season approaches, we hope you will join the RCLC team at Mill Bend Preserve to share some holiday cheer. Stop by between 10 AM and 2 PM on Saturday, Dec.2 and learn about Mill Bend Preserve and RCLC projects while enjoying hot apple cider and cookies. Bring the whole family! We will provide conifer greens, holly and supplies for kids and adults to make holiday wreaths and nature craft items. RCLC volunteers will be happy to suggest good trails to walk or show you the recently restored cemetery. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please email us at rclc@rclc.org.

In Praise of Kay

By Andrea Lunsford



This month, the Mendonoma Coast is losing one of its most ardent environmentalists and preservationists, as widely admired cultural anthropologist and current vice president of the Redwood Coast Land Conservancy sets her sights on a new home near her daughter in Tennessee. To say she will be missed is ... well, a vast understatement.

A professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara and author of *Female of the Species* (1975), *Social DNA: Rethinking our Evolutionary Past* (2018), and *The Wrong Ape for Early Human*

Origins (2023), Kay has held executive positions in environmental research and resource conservation along with many board memberships. Kay's volunteerism is legendary—from her intensive work preparing and producing a 2014 proposal for creating a bike/pedestrian corridor spanning both sides of the Gualala River, to her leadership in the protection and restoration of native flora and fauna and the ongoing protection of Mill Bend, a site precious to all who live in this special place. Kay joined the RCLC Board in 2019, where her stalwart advocacy and quiet determination have been a beacon and an inspiration for others; she has served as RCLC Vice President since 2021.

Many may know Kay best, however, for her leadership in restoring the Gualala Cemetery. Kay has overseen this project, carrying out necessary research, getting in touch with descendants, recording family stories, identifying graves, and putting in countless hours of plain hard work. As fellow volunteer Marilyn Green puts it, *"We've managed to absolutely transform an overgrown, weedy jungle into a delightful place to visit. Benches have been built, a kiosk with brochures about the cemetery created, and borders for each plot carefully made and stained. All done with respect and love."*

Others know Kay for her commitment to social justice, freedom, and democracy. For over ten years, she was part of the leadership team of the Redwood Coast democrats, providing what Drew Fagan describes as consistently "sound and steady input" that was "of great value to the team." Indeed, "sound" and "steady" are



words often used to describe Kay’s quiet, always thoughtful approach to problems and to problem solving. Kay was a key member of the planning team for the “I Am Democracy” event held in September, an event that attracted several hundred local residents in dedication to and celebration of our great and diverse democracy. Organizer of the event Kenny Jowers refers to Kay as “the thinker” and “a doer,” adding that “the passion behind the ideas she comes up with is her greatest strength.”

A community like ours cannot prosper, or even exist, without the kind of leadership Kay has quietly provided for so many years. The many Mendonomans who will be missing her will surely agree with Jowers: Kay Martin is, simply, “an amazing, wise woman.” She cannot be replaced, but she will always be remembered, with love and gratitude.

Cemetery Photo by Marion Patterson

Much Needed TLC for Mill Bend's Cottage

A Note from RCLC's Executive Director, Jim Elias



Looking out from my scenic perch at Mill Bend Preserve, I see surfer-enticing waves under murky skies and a gentle breeze. Pelicans grace the skyline. There’s a hint of chill in the air. Classic fall conditions on the North Coast. But, as they say, change is coming. NOAA meteorologists tell us that we are on the cusp of an El Nino winter, signaled by warmer-than-average temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean near the equator. After last year’s full-bodied winter, we’re all wondering what the upcoming season will bring.

Mill Bend Preserve’s modest cottage—already calling for a strong dose of TLC—took it on the chin last winter, repeatedly. Wind and rain revealed multiple leaks. The aged wood stove was little match for unseasonably frigid temperatures. And, yet, Mill Bend’s cottage remains a graceful and understated symbol of the Preserve’s history. We’ll continue to rely on it for meetings, community gatherings, and natural and human

history interpretive displays. Volunteers will use it to escape the rain and warm themselves. It deserves a makeover.

Fortunately, our friends at O’Leary Construction agree. Ian and Gina O’Leary are a husband-and-wife team who have worked together for 24 years. They also just celebrated their 27th anniversary. While they appreciate natural beauty, their talent lies in building beautifully. And durably. Though newer to Mendonoma, they are seasoned pros with the goal of making Point Arena home.

When Ian first entered the cottage, his gaze went to the floor, then the ceiling, and he exclaimed, “I love old houses - they each have their own character!” He then walked around, his eyes jumping between competing features, free associating out loud. Gina reassured Board President Mark Escajeda and me, “Don’t worry, I take the notes. We’re a good team.”

The house is still a work in progress. However, if you’ve visited Mill Bend recently, you may have noticed recent cottage upgrades, including a new roof. Less obvious is a state-of-the-art heat pump, with its financial and environmental benefits, and an upgraded electrical system. Next up is a facelift to the cottage’s “rustic” floor; Ian plans to sand down the painted surface just enough to expose the beauty of underlying Doug fir planks.



As Gina said, she and Ian are a good team indeed, taking obvious pride in their work. What’s more, believing in RCLC’s our mission, and seeing the humble home’s potential, they are providing their services at a greatly discounted rate. RCLC is grateful. This initial project should be completed soon. We’ll look forward to showing it off!

O’Leary Construction can be reached by emailing ian@ianolearyconstruction.com.

**RCLC wishes all our friends a fabulous Thanksgiving.
We are thankful for YOU.**



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REDWOOD COAST LAND CONSERVANCY
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