

Mountain Echo

THE NEWSLETTER OF SEMPERVIRENS FUND | SUMMER 2022



Redwoods Now, For All, Forever

The habitats, waterways, and resiliency of the Santa Cruz mountain region are at risk without healthy, connected coast redwoods. Few remain, and we must preserve forests to ensure they will never be developed, degraded, or destroyed.

As the climate changes, redwood habitats are critical for some plants and animals to thrive. No other tree species stores more carbon. And a redwood's endurance shows us how to care for our natural world. You can help now to permanently protect more than 1,000 acres of redwood forests and care for 11,000 acres of redwoods for generations to come.

Protect. You can help to permanently protect 928 acres of coast redwood and conifer forest from future development or timber harvest. Securing

a conservation easement for YMCA Camp Jones Gulch near La Honda now will safeguard the largest swath of intact habitat in the Santa Cruz mountains, connecting to Pescadero Creek and Sam McDonald County Parks. We already successfully completed the purchase and permanent protection of the Gateway to Big Basin in January.

For all. The camp's old-growth forest—the Valley of the Giants—is at the heart of the YMCA's vision for camps and outdoor education for thousands of kids and families. This once-in-a-generation opportunity preserves key ecosystems and provides an indispensable nature experience.

Forever. Development and timber harvesting are the biggest threats to our redwoods, including those at Camp Jones Gulch.

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Redwoods and Climate

Cut by deep valleys, cooled by the sea breeze, and draped in fog, the Santa Cruz mountains are a southern stronghold for California's coast redwoods. The range's oldest trees have withstood nearly two millennia of drought, floods, winds, fires, earthquakes, and changes made by the area's human residents. And your support is essential to ensuring that redwoods in the Santa Cruz mountains are resilient in the face of increasingly extreme climate events.

In a new web series by Julia Busiek, Sempervirens Fund explores how Earth's constantly changing climate shaped redwoods over millions of years, how human-caused climate change is affecting redwoods today, and what the future holds for the iconic forests of the Santa Cruz mountains.

Here are three takeaways from the first story in the series: *Clues About Climate's Future from Redwoods' Past*.

Redwoods were once everywhere:

Researchers have turned up fossils of *Sequoia*, the genus of which the coast redwood is the sole surviving member, from Texas to Pennsylvania, Colorado to Canada, and Greenland to Alaska.

Redwoods have their needs, too: "They need to have their roots wet; they can't grow in a desert," says Steve Sillett, Kenneth L. Fisher Chair in Redwood Forest Ecology at Cal Poly Humboldt. As the continent's interior dried out 23 million to 5 million years ago, the trees' range contracted coastward.

Redwoods face an uncertain future: Under the likeliest global climate scenarios for the middle of the century, models show that the range of suitable habitat for redwoods could contract by 50 percent at its southern end.

Read all of Part I and catch up on Part II in July: sempervirens.org/climate



continued

Protecting these iconic and resilient climate champions ensures our region's dynamic natural diversity can thrive for generations—and centuries—to come. You can protect redwoods now, for all, forever.

You can protect essential redwoods in the Santa Cruz mountains today. The goal for the REDWOODS NOW, FOR ALL, FOREVER campaign is to raise \$14 million by September 15, 2022, to protect the redwoods at YMCA's Camp Jones Gulch and ensure land management and stewardship for these and the 11,000 acres of land currently under Sempervirens Fund's care. To date, we have raised \$13.5 million. Now, the Midgley Foundation will match all gifts. Your gift to this campaign will



be matched up to \$250,000, doubling the impact of your generosity. Learn more: sempervirens.org/redwoods-now

The Magic and Wonder of Redwoods



Nancy Lund and her husband, Torstein, came to California in 1967 from Connecticut. She was coming to teach sixth grade in Las Lomitas School District. Nancy said, "I discovered that outdoor education was a huge thing here, but I had never experienced it."

The school had run a successful pilot program at Camp Jones Gulch the year before, and "I was panicked," said Nancy. "I had never seen a redwood, and I was going to teach the outdoor

education program. Staff were passionate about open space and the value of kids being in nature rather than just reading about it.

"In the first couple years we taught everything—about the trails, the trees, even physical education. And a few years later it became a countywide program with naturalists doing the teaching. It was a magical time."

Nancy is a longtime supporter of Sempervirens Fund. "I had no understanding before coming to California about the magic and wonder of being among the redwoods or forests," she said. "There is peace and amazement there, and we don't want to lose that. I joined Sempervirens Fund soon after my experience at Camp Jones Gulch, and I decided this was a cause I wanted to support."

Nancy recently added patches from the camp and Sempervirens Fund to a jacket to show her support for the cause. "Going to the camp was my annual business trip in hiking boots. But this is important: this is the way for kids to grow into adults that appreciate nature and want to protect and preserve nature. And it helped make me the person that I am."

The Valley of the Giants

Of the 10,000 acres of old-growth redwood forests in the Santa Cruz mountains, less than 1,000 acres remain unprotected in small, fragmented patches across the region. Protecting old-growth redwoods is our highest priority. Not only are they ancient and precious, but they form the heart of the healthiest, most resilient forests and habitats, especially in the face of climate change.

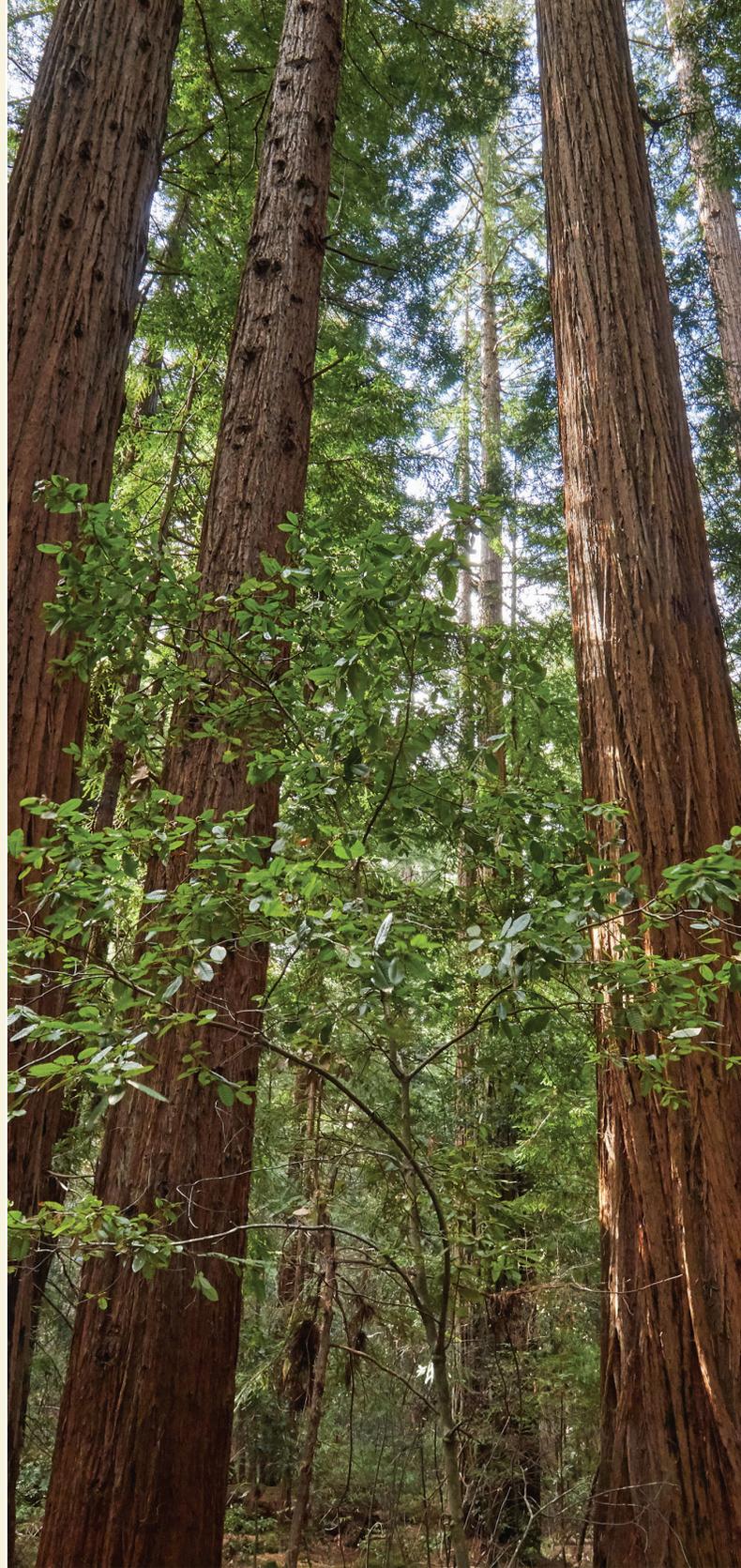
What is Old-Growth?

The term “old-growth” generally describes larger trees, usually at least 3.3 feet in diameter and over 200 feet tall, with certain features that only develop in older trees, such as plate-like bark, larger branches, broken tops, platforms, dead tops, basal hollows carved out by fire, and reiterated crowns—meaning trunks off of trunks. Features like these, which typically take a coast redwood 200 years or more to develop, support many species and contribute to the tree’s resilience to fire, drought, and climate change.

The Valley of the Giants

At YMCA’s Camp Jones Gulch, we are working to permanently protect one of the largest remaining stands of old-growth redwoods in the Santa Cruz mountains. More than a century ago the land was sparsely logged, leaving behind a rich legacy of redwoods believed to be up to 500 years old. Protecting the 39-acre Valley of the Giants ensures their ecological legacy will live on for generations to come. They are at the heart of the camp’s 987 acres and are contiguous with the largest intact swath of protected habitats in the Santa Cruz mountains.

Learn more about the Valley of the Giants:
sempervirens.org/camp-jones-gulch



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Under the Redwoods

Inspiring Webinars Each Month

Since 2020, Sempervirens Fund has hosted the free monthly webinar series *Under the Redwoods*, exploring the beauty, history, science, and benefits of our magnificent redwood forests. In this webinar series, we invite experts and thinkers to join us to explore forests, what makes redwoods so special, why they thrive here and nowhere else in the world, and what they mean to us in our lives.

We invite you to join us on the last Tuesday of most months, 1–2 p.m. Pacific time, for topics such as:



THE END OF RAIN: ART, EMOTION, AND LAND

July 26, 2022

Join composer and artist Scott Ordway to learn about his new symphonic work, *The End of Rain*. The text is based on more than 200 crowdsourced stories of wildfire and drought in California, accompanied by documentary photography by the composer.



ILLUSTRATING NATURE

August 30, 2022

Join visual artist and science illustrator Jane Kim to explore how she and her team bring the beauty and complexity of nature to life, merging science illustration with modern fine art.



THE HISTORICAL ECOLOGY OF INDIGENOUS STEWARDSHIP PRACTICES IN NORTHERN SANTA CRUZ

October 25, 2022

Join Alec Apodaca, Mike Grone, and Alexii Sigona to learn about documenting the deep history of Native American landscape stewardship and what the contemporary implications for these long-term legacies of land use are for us today.

The 2022 series is sponsored by Scharf Investments. Register for all the upcoming webinars and rewatch previous episodes: sempervirens.org/under-the-redwoods

Photos: Michael Altobello, Jane Kim, Resources Legacy Fund, YMCA Camp Campbell Outdoor Science School, Skycar Creative, Laura McLendon, Richard Jensen, Lillian Tsai.





Hug-a-Tree Challenge

Earth Day's Record-Setting Moment

What a way to celebrate Earth Day! We did it! Together we achieved a milestone on Earth Day: a GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS® title for the most photos of people hugging trees uploaded to Instagram in one hour.

In 2020, wildfire ravaged the redwood forests and communities of the Santa Cruz mountains. The outpouring of support from people around the world reminded us that we are one very large and connected community. We launched the Hug-a-Tree Challenge to recognize our common purpose, wherever we may be, and whichever trees we love the most.

We are grateful to you and our community for your support. Thank you to REI, which joined as the presenting sponsor for the Hug-a-Tree Challenge, and AllTrails, which also sponsored the event this year.

See the record-setting photos at sempervirens.org/hug-a-tree