

# FORT ROSS NEWS

September 2024 Newsletter | Fort Ross Conservancy



## Foreword

IAN TAYLOR, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



As we reflect on the departing days of summer, I am filled with excitement and optimism about the season ahead. Our team has been hard at work preparing programs and events designed to connect you with diverse cultures and stunning landscapes. This time of year brings a unique energy to the Sonoma coast. The longer days of summer allowed for more opportunities to explore the natural beauty that make Metini/Fort Ross and Salt Point so special. From immersive historical tours to guided nature walks and talks, there is something for everyone to enjoy. We are thrilled to see families, history enthusiasts, and nature lovers come together to experience these remarkable parks.

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OPEN DAILY 10:00 AM - 4:30 PM



In addition to our Autumnal activities and upcoming events, I am particularly excited to announce several new partnership opportunities that will enhance our educational efforts and expand our reach into the Sonoma/Mendocino communities. These collaborations will allow us to expand our outreach, bringing the stories and lessons of the coast to a broader audience. Some of these partnerships are covered in this newsletter with more to be announced as plans are solidified.

As we embark on this exciting journey, I invite you to join us in celebrating the coming season by joining us at Metini/Fort Ross and Salt Point State Park. Whether you're a longtime supporter or a first-time visitor, there are countless ways to get involved and make a difference.

Thank you for your continued support and enthusiasm! Together, we can ensure that this section of the Sonoma coast remains a treasured resource for generations to come.

With warm regards,

Ian Taylor  
Executive Director  
Fort Ross Conservancy





## Updates

### Harbor Seals

This year, our volunteers counted 10 pups along the shoreline in Fort Ross State Historic Park (FRSHP)! They grew up quickly! Just 4-6 weeks after pups are born, they are weaned and have to fend for themselves learning to hunt without help from mom. The usually very quiet young seals were heard complaining along the waters edge.

### The Visitor Center Bookshop

The Visitor Center is restocked! We have natural and cultural history books for children and adults, state park souvenirs, and beautiful handcrafted jewelry with pieces by Amano studios, a local artist in Sonoma, and Sosie Designs using seaglass.

**We also have some exciting news...**



# Updates and Upcoming Events

## Reef Campground is open!

We are ecstatic to announce that we reopened reef campground on August 28! It has been 5 years since reef closed due to storm damage and thanks to some help from California State Parks, we are able to welcome campers back to this beautiful redwood grove. At Reef campground, visitors can enjoy diving, fishing, hiking, tide pooling, picnicking, whale watching, bird watching, surfing at Mystos break, and just relaxing! There are trails that lead to the Fort and to the coast.

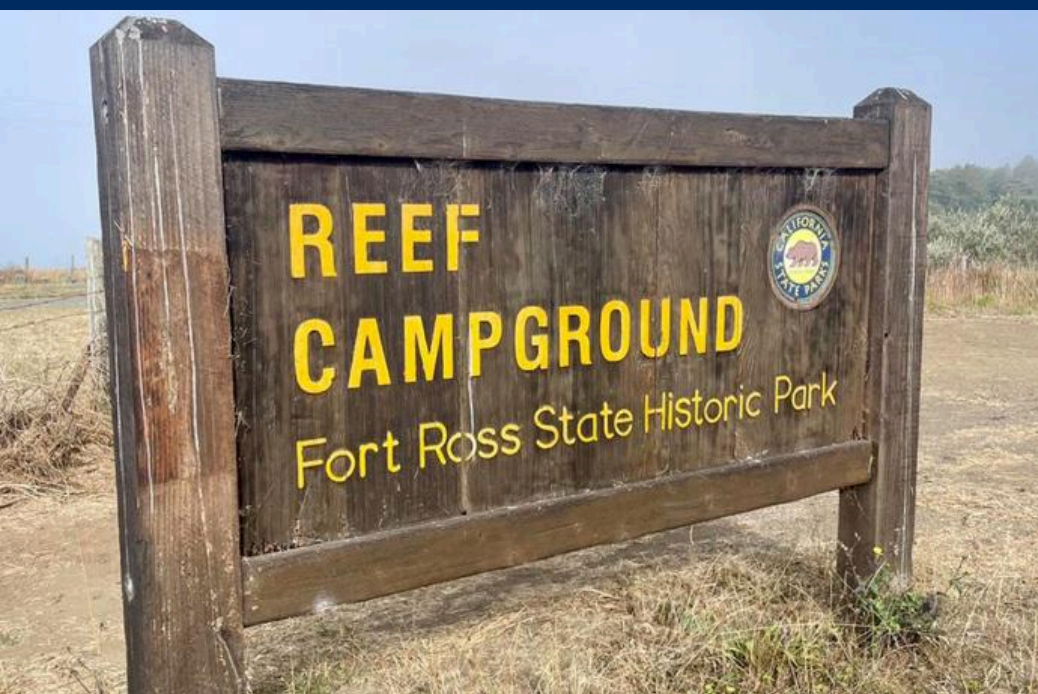
There are 20 campsites that can be booked on a first come-first serve basis. Each is \$40 per night and includes one vehicle. We are not currently accepting reservations. For more information, visit [FortRoss.org](http://FortRoss.org) and click on 'Reef' at the top of the page.

## Local Visitors Pass

For \$30, locals can have access to the day use area at Reef for one year from date of purchase.

## Award-winning Outdoor Piano Concert - September 10

On the 10th of September, there will be a special piano concert at Fort Ross by Pianist Hunter Noack for his award-winning Outdoor Concert Series: In a landscape, classical music in the wild. See next page for more details and ticket information...



# IN A LANDSCAPE

*Classical Music in the Wild™*



Photo: Arthur Hitchcock for IN A LANDSCAPE

Hunter Noack, pianist, at Shore Acres State Park on Oregon's Southern Coast

WATCH US  
ON CBS THIS  
MORNING



## FORT ROSS STATE HISTORIC PARK

JENNER, CALIFORNIA

Join pianist Hunter Noack for the outdoor concert series where America's most stunning landscapes replace the traditional concert hall. A 9-foot Steinway grand piano travels on a flatbed trailer to national & state parks, urban greenspaces, working ranches, farms, and historical sites for classical music concerts that connect people with each landscape.

Fort Ross, the ancestral home of the Kashaya Pomo Tribe, encompasses over 3,400 acres on the rugged Sonoma Coast and includes the site of Settlement Ross, occupied from 1812 to 1841 by the Russian-American Company. Today, these lands are cared for by California State Parks, the Kashaya Pomo, and our partners at the Fort Ross Conservancy.

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 4:00<sup>PM</sup> • \$40**

### GOOD NEIGHBOR TICKETS - FREE!

IN A LANDSCAPE's Good Neighbor Program provides access to those who might not otherwise be able to afford a ticket to this outdoor classical music experience.

- Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cardholders may register at no cost by using promo code: "inalandscape" on the Eventbrite ticket page. (Please show EBT card at concert check in.)
- To request a Good Neighbor Program ticket for another reason, send an email to [gnp@inalandscape.org](mailto:gnp@inalandscape.org)



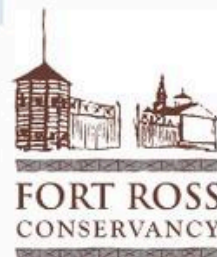
SCAN HERE  
FOR TICKETS  
& THE FULL  
55-CONCERT  
SCHEDULE

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[WWW.INALANDSCAPE.ORG](http://WWW.INALANDSCAPE.ORG)

[TICKETS@INALANDSCAPE.ORG](mailto:TICKETS@INALANDSCAPE.ORG)

# Upcoming Events

## Harvest Festival

**SATURDAY OCTOBER 19**

**11 AM - 3 PM**



The harvest festival is an annual celebration at Fort Ross. Bring your friends and family on the last Saturday of October for apple and pear picking in our historic orchard and enjoy activities in the Visitor Center and Fort!



Our historic orchard started with a single peach tree in 1812 during the Russian Era. Apples, cherries, pear, quince and grapes were planted by 1820.

Everyone is welcome! Bring a picnic and enjoy autumn's fresh air. There will be pumpkin carving for kids, apple pressing, and tours about the cultural and natural history of Fort Ross State Historic Park.

For apple and pear picking, please park at the main parking lot and walk up to the orchard (~20 minutes)

\$10 per car park entrance fee applies.

## Happenings in FRSHP

### Russian Orthodox Service

On July 4th, the Orthodox Church of America parishioners returned to Fort Ross for their annual service in the Chapel. Russian Orthodox Christian parishioners have been making this annual pilgrimage to Fort Ross for nearly 100 years, since 1925.

The Fort Ross Chapel was built in the mid-1820's and is the first Russian Orthodox chapel in North America outside of Alaska. It has been rebuilt twice following its destruction by an accidental fire in 1970 and from the magnitude 7.9 earthquake that struck the Bay Area in 1906 that remains to be one of the worst natural disasters in California.

Following Divine Liturgy in the Holy Trinity-St. Nicholas Fort Ross Chapel and procession to the cemetery for Panikhida (prayers for the departed) memorial service, parishioners enjoy a picnic and fellowship.

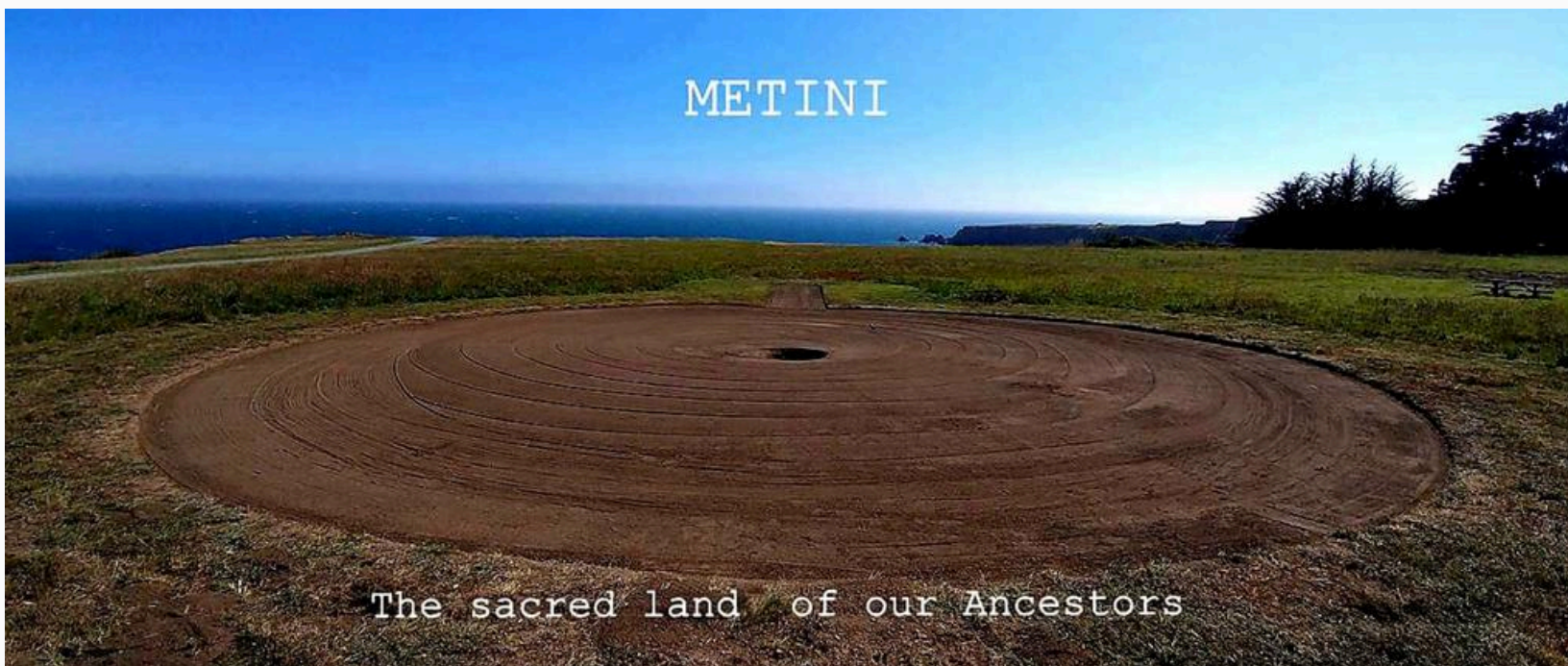


## Happenings in FRSHP

### Metini Day

Fort Ross State Historic Park is built on Metini, part of the ancestral homeland of the Kashia Band of Pomo Indians. Hundreds of years ago, Kashia territory encompassed all the lands between the Coast and Healdsburg and from Gualala river in the North to Duncan's Point near Jenner in the south.

On August 3rd, the Kashia Pomo, Hopland Pomo, Maidu Tribe, and other local indigenous tribes gathered for the annual Metini Day event. The day included traditional dances from different tribes including the SuNuNu Shinal Pomo Dance Group and local indigenous artists had stalls with beautiful crafts and jewelry. Dancers and singers have been taught by their elders how to perform ancient songs and dances in accordance with traditional practices.







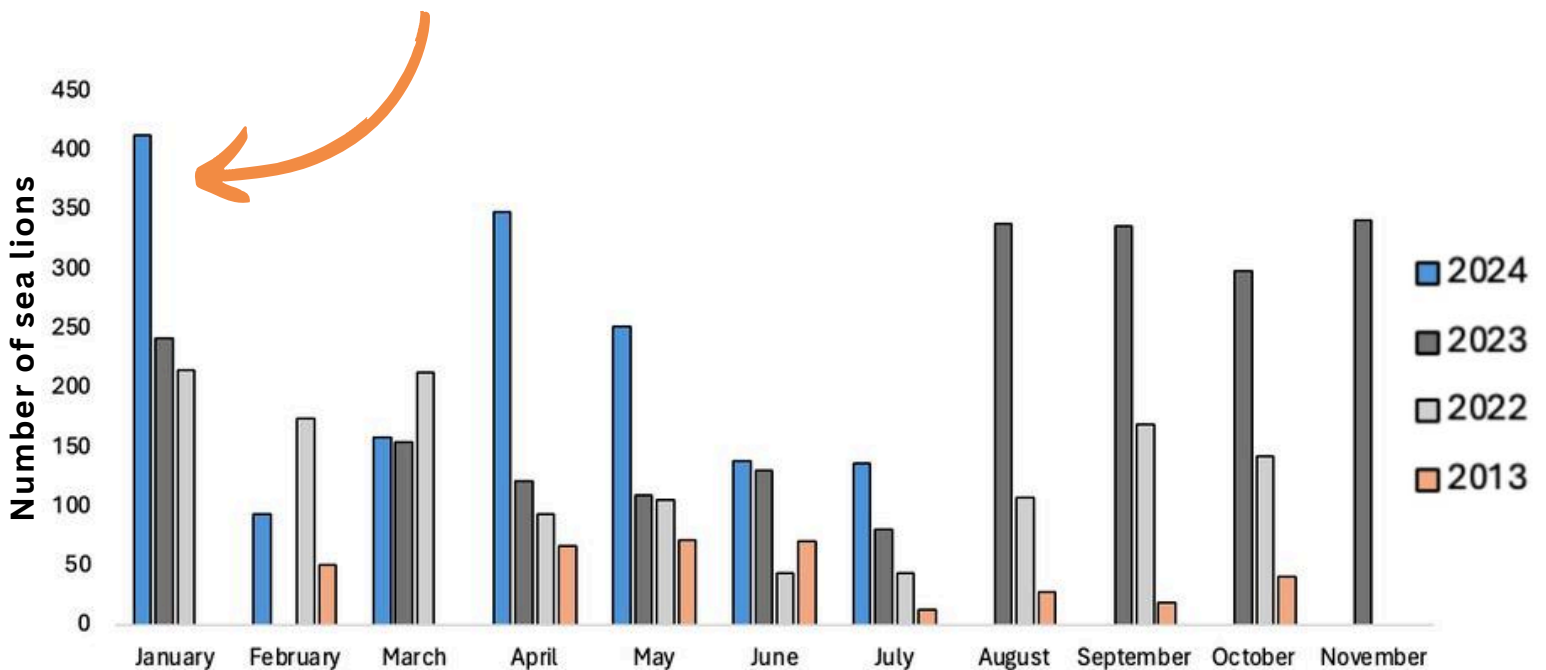
## Sea Lion Surveyors still at it!

It is the 11th year since the sea lion survey started at Fort Ross. For those hearing about our monthly survey for the first time, it was originally started by Jamie Hall and Joe Mortenson in the late 1990s and restarted again in 2013. It is an incredible citizen science effort that has been led by volunteers from the coast, inland towards Santa Rosa and those who venture up from the city to join us. There are over 15 volunteers who help us count throughout the year and we welcomed three new volunteers this year. A huge thank you to everyone who has helped!



From left to right: Merryll, Jane , Sandee, Susan, Stan, and Mary Pat

We are half way through this year - but how are we comparing to years past? Here is a sneak peak of the total number we have counted so far, including both of our resident species: Steller and California sea lions. So far this year, we had a record sea lion count in January of **413**. It is the most sea lions we have ever counted at Fort Ross!



We also saw a lot of sea lions in late spring/early summer. At this time, over 2000 sea lions were counted at Pier 39 in San Francisco. It was an all-time record there too and possibly due to large schools of fish near the coast. In June and July, the sea lions usually depart Fort Ross for the summer breeding season and return in fall.

Out on the bluffs we are spoiled with the spectacular coastline although sometimes we count through howling winds, glare from the sun on the water and, of course, fog. Difficult weather matters little with good company, both human and marine mammal. Sometimes we see whales swim close to the shore as we watch the sea lions play, scale rock faces, and jump off cliffs. I am eager to see how the numbers look later this year. Will we have as many sea lions as the end of 2023?

– Dione, Coastal Naturalist

## Who are we counting?

Steller and California sea lions are the two sea lion species that live in California. Their numbers have been increasing since the Marine Mammal Protection Act in 1972 that prohibited hunting and harm.

From a distance they are hard to tell apart but both female and male Stellers are slightly larger than their California counterpart. California males weigh up to 600 lbs and are darker colored with a sagittal crest, a bump on their head that starts developing from when they are 4 years old. Stellers are lighter in color and males are enormous weighing up to 2,500 lbs. Despite these differences, distinguishing them through a telescope (especially in the wind!) can be a challenge.

**Steller sea lion**



**California sea lion**



Images sourced from Getty images

# Be a Coast Guardian!

## SUPPORT COASTAL EDUCATION

**At Fort Ross, we are doing everything we can to support local families and schools from near and far. To achieve this, we heavily rely on you, our community, to support what we do.**

We provide discounted programs to low-income schools whenever we can. Our goal is for every school to have the opportunity to experience and learn about the spectacular California coast. On average, we waive \$800 for one Title 1 to participate in an MEP and each program has anywhere from 10 to 120 students. This year we partnered with Point Arena's Action Network to provide a summer camp day program free of charge for local children from low-income families.

In the Marine Ecology Program, we strive to help children create a deep and meaningful connection to their coast and foster the next generation of environmental stewards and ocean protectors. This experience is truly invaluable. Many people I have met say visiting Fort Ross was one of the most memorable experiences during school.

***Outdoor education is increasingly important to bring textbooks to life and get students exploring the outdoors to have a break from their screens. Many students in our programs have never been to the beach before!***



[Click here or scan to help us reach our goal of \\$6,000!](#)



[Click here to purchase items off our amazon wishlist](#)



*Our wonderful instructor Hank teaching students about the 1800s fur trade in the Magasin*



# Be a Coast Guardian!

As we expand our education programs, we are welcoming more low-income schools and are in need of additional teaching materials and instructors. Donating to our education fund will bring more students to the coast and enhances their experience. Your support will have a lasting impact on nearly one thousand school children every year.

**Our goal is to raise at least \$6000 for our education fund to support programs for Title 1 schools. All donations are tax deductible. If you would prefer to purchase educational materials directly, you can buy equipment for our programs from our Amazon wishlist and they will be automatically sent to us!**

As MEP lead, I appreciate your support so much. Even just \$5 or \$10, the cost of your morning coffee, goes a long way.

Dr. Dione Deaker  
Coastal Naturalist, MEP lead



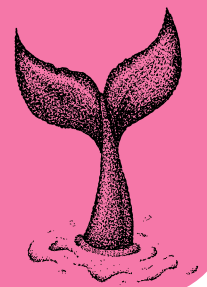
**Donate  
Equipment  
from our**



## ***Be a program sponser***

Invest in the next generation of environmental stewards  
As sponser, you will be credited on our program materials with additional perks at Fort Ross

Reach out to us anytime!



*An MEP student holding a brittle star and red abalone found in Sandy Cove*



## Tours

Explore the natural and cultural history both inside and outside the fort compound walls under the guidance of a knowledgeable tour guide.

### Public Tours

#### Fort Tours

Tours start at the visitor center  
Cost = \$15/person  
Children 10 and under are free.

Call or email us ahead of time to verify availability and timing.

### Private Tours

#### Book a tour to suit your schedule

Available in Fort Ross State Historic Park (FRSHP) or at Salt Point State Park (SPSP).  
Tell us what you're most interested to see and we'll customize your tour.


Cost: \$25/person per hour (\$100 minimum)  
Children 10 and under are free.


### Call House Tours

#### Free to the public. Donations appreciated!

The first Saturday and Sunday of every month from 1 pm-4 pm.

#### Contact us to book:

 707-847-3437

 [info@fortross.org](mailto:info@fortross.org)

#### Visitor Center:

19005 Coast Highway One,  
Jenner, CA 95450

Open 10 am – 4:30 pm daily



# Volunteer Opportunities

## Fort Ross State Historic Park

Volunteering is a great excuse to get outdoors and come down to the coast. If you are a bird nerd, love hiking the coast, interested in marine mammals, or enjoy tidepooling and gardening, we have a number of opportunities to get involved with.

**The perks** | Log your hours as a California State Parks Volunteer  
 40 hours = a district day use pass for the next year.  
 200+ hours = a statewide day use pass for the next year.

### DOCENTS

Help with hands-on activities in our education programs, lead tours, or to interact with visitors inside the Fort or within the park. Volunteers help inspire our visitors and students to appreciate the cultural and natural history of the spectacular Sonoma Coast.



Source: Getty images

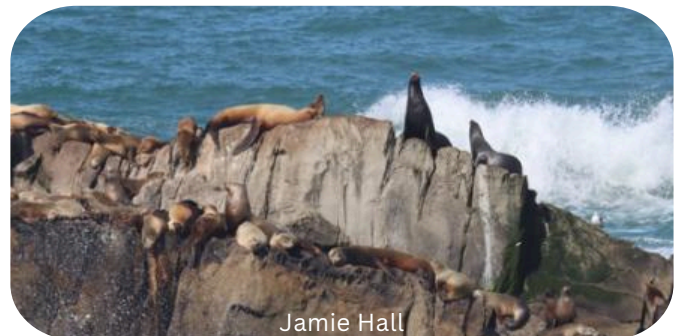
### VISITOR CENTER GARDEN

Help us create a Pollinator Education Garden in front of the Visitor Center! The garden is the first thing visitors see when they arrive at Fort Ross. Our goal is to promote native plant and pollinator conservation.



### SEA LION SURVEYS

Sea lions are endlessly entertaining to watch! Every month, our volunteers meet to count the Steller and California sea lions in FRSHP in a 1.5 h survey (adding to a 10 year dataset) followed by lunch together at the Visitor Center. This is a great way to learn about sea lions and be a citizen scientist,



Jamie Hall

Email [dioned@fortross.org](mailto:dioned@fortross.org) for more information and to sign up!



# Pictured in FRSHP

## WILDLIFE SIGHTINGS ON THE COAST

Coastal naturalist, Dr. Dione Deaker

### ➤➤➤ WESTERN SHEEP MOTH

June 25

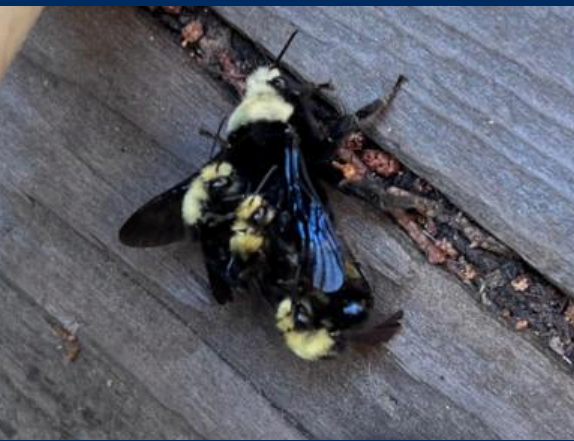
This beautiful moth was spotted by iNaturalist user Todd Ramsden. It is native to western North America and received its name from being seen in sheep pastures.



### ➤➤➤ GOLDENROD CRAB SPIDER

July 12

This spider was spotted having a snack by iNaturalist user Brian Ahern



### ➤➤➤ YELLOWFACED BUMBLEBEES

June 16

These bees were getting busy at the Fort! Mating lasted for hours and when one male finished, the next started. It was a long day for the female!



### ➤➤➤ NORTH AMERICAN RACER

June 29

This fast and agile snake was spotted by iNaturalist user Alexandria Weishaar. They are a non-venomous snake but they do have a hard bite to be wary of!

## YOUR PHOTO IN THE NEXT NEWSLETTER?

Send in a photo of wildlife (plant, animal, fungi etc) or a nice photo you took in FRSHP, Salt Point, or nearby. We will select a few of the submitted photos or photos posted to iNaturalist from the area to be in the next newsletter

**Send to [mep@fortross.org](mailto:mep@fortross.org) with the subject "photo submission for newsletter"**