

FORT ROSS NEWS

Newsletter | Fort Ross Conservancy



Happy Holidays from FRC

IAN TAYLOR, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



As 2024 comes to a close, I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude to our incredible community. This year has been nothing short of inspiring, and it's all thanks to your unwavering support, generosity, and passion for the work we do. Whether you volunteered your time, donated resources, or helped spread the word about our mission, you've made a significant difference for the public lands we steward.

Moving toward 2025, we wish you and your loved ones a joyful, safe, and peaceful time filled with warmth and love. We are excited to carry the momentum of this year into the next, continuing our work here on the Sonoma Coast. Thank you for being a part of our journey—we can't wait to see what we'll achieve together in the new year!



OPEN DAILY 10:00 AM - 4:30 PM
CLOSED CHRISTMAS DAY

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**BOOK NOW FOR
PROGRAMS IN 2025!**

MARINE ECOLOGY PROGRAM
EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

2024, WHAT A GREAT YEAR

Thanks to you and the Fort Ross Community!

70,000

Visited Fort Ross State Historic Park

50,000

Visited Salt Point State Park

3,500

Attended Special Events

956,536

Reached through our social media, website, visitor center etc.

Special events

- Metini Day
- Alaska Native Day
- "In a Landscape" piano concert
- Harvest Festival
- First Day hike
- Community Open House
- iNaturalist bioblitz events

68 **THANK YOU!**
Volunteers

290
Volunteer hours

Education Programs

42

School programs

1,411

Students

2

Free Programs

\$6000

From FRC to support nine Title 1 Schools doing the Marine Ecology Program

Improved infrastructure



Reef Campground and Day Use Area reopened!



Updated Visitor Center Bookstore.



Footbridge installed at Reef Campground.



Dehumidifier in the library and Call House.



Alaska Native Day



Harvest festival



Marine Ecology Program



Reef Campground

How can you help?

Help us promote the preservation of nature and cultural history on the Sonoma Coast!



OR

Send a check to: Fort Ross Conservancy 19005 Highway 1 Jenner, CA 95450	<input type="text" value="\$"/>
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Will you consider increasing your tax-deductible donation or making a first-time gift to help us reach our goal? Our goal is to raise \$100,000 by the end of the year to make 2025 conservancy programs the best they've ever been. Every gift made today will go directly toward creating a more inclusive, accessible, and thriving Fort Ross for everyone.

Your gift will help us to:

- Inspire the next generation of ocean stewards by enriching our Marine Science Program with cutting-edge equipment and scholarships for underserved schools.
- Expand accessibility across trails and facilities, so everyone can experience the beauty and history of Fort Ross.
- Foster partnerships with diverse communities to amplify the stories, cultures, and voices that make Fort Ross truly unique.

Thank you!

Your support on this special day of giving is more than a donation—it's an investment in the future of Fort Ross Conservancy and the diverse communities we serve. Together, we can ensure that our reach continues to grow as we inspire, and connect people to the natural and cultural wonders of this extraordinary place.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

With gratitude,

Ian C. Taylor

Ian Taylor

Executive Director, Fort Ross Conservancy



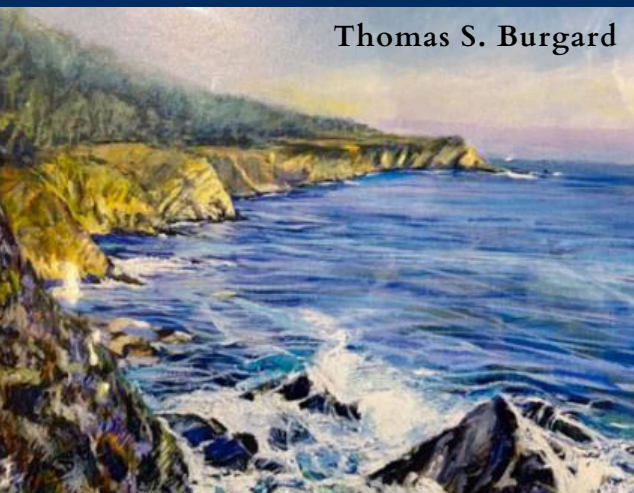
Updates and Happenings

A very happy holidays from all the staff at Fort Ross Conservancy!

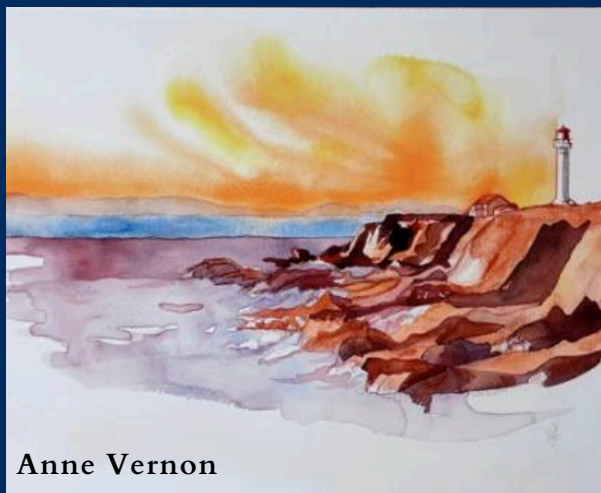
As we wrap up another year, the staff at FRC want to extend our deepest gratitude to you, our park visitors, volunteers, and supporters. There is so much passion for nature and history in the Fort Ross Community as well as a commitment to care for and protect the beautiful spaces in the State Historic Park that has made this year one to remember. We look forward to another year of adventure, conservation, and working together!



Psst...our visitor center bookshop is stocked with paintings by local artists, jewelry, books, hoodies, toys, and all sorts of goodies that make for great presents this holiday season!



Thomas S. Burgard



Anne Vernon



Reef Closed for Winter: Storms!

Opening hours and accessibility in Fort Ross State Historic Park may vary over the winter due to wild weather. The Day Use area at [Reef campground](#) is still open but the campground is currently closed and will reopen in the spring, most likely in April. The coast has been pummeled by strong winds, large swells and heavy rain. Please check our social media pages before visiting for updates when storms are forecast.



^Sandy Cove, November 22

Sea Urchin Collection

In December, an enthusiastic group who love the coast camped at Reef and collected ~190 gallons of purple sea urchins from the intertidal in Sandy Cove! What a great effort, thanks to Kathryn Sullivan and friends for caring about kelp forests! We hope to hold another collection event with them in the future!



Harvest Festival

Over 600 people visited for the annual harvest festival! We were joined by Greater Farallones Association, Fieldguides outdoor education, the [River Otter Ecology Project](#), and Russian House Kedry who came in traditional russian dress. We hope everyone had a great time painting pumpkins, visiting stalls, picking apples and pears and enjoying the coast to the tune of the local band, Rhythm Drive. See you next time!



In a Landscape Piano Conert

We were blessed with beautiful weather and a backdrop of spouting whales for a stunning, intimate, outdoor piano concert by classical pianist Hunter Noack. IN A LANDSCAPE: Classical Music in the Wild is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit outdoor concert series taking classical music to communities that do not have access to traditional concert halls. For the final piece composed by Chopin, Noack invited the audience to lie under the piano and feel the vibrations of the music. It was an incredible experience for all music lovers! We look forward to welcoming them back to Fort Ross next year!



Some Highlights of 2024

MARINE AND HISTORY PROGRAMS



Top Right: writing with squid ink in a dissection class at Fort Ross School

KELP RESTORATION



Photo by Abbey Dias

Hundreds of baby bull kelp growing on twine outplanted by the Greater Farallones Association and Greater Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries Kelp Restoration Team and the Sonoma State University Coastal Ecology and Conservation Lab.

NEW DISPLAY



New display in the visitor center with specimen, signs on marine mammals & coast redwoods - more to come in 2025!

FEATURING IN BAY NATURE



Interviewed by journalist Mary Ellen Hannibal for her article "Life in Hot Water" during our annual Snapshot Cal Coast tidepooling event in June!

Upcoming Events

First Day Hike!

Where: Grace Rock Loop Trail, Salt Point State Park

When: Wednesday, January 1st, 10:30 am, 2.5 h hike

Parking: Grace Rock Loop Trail Trailhead, Mile Marker 44, Salt Point State Park. There's additional parking to the south roadside and at Gerstle Cove and Stump Beach trailheads there are public restrooms.

Ages: 8+



Join us for a hike on the wild north side of Salt Point State Park. The Grace Rock Loop Trail features otherworldly landscapes of tafoni geology (at its best) and seascapes of pounding surf, deep water, and distant vistas.

This is an approximate 1.5 mile easy-moderate hike, starting roadside, proceeding through a stressed Bishop Pine forest down to the ocean terrace and the unique and unforgettable tafoni honeycomb geologic sandstone formations.

At lunch time, those ready for a tad more adventure can climb through a rocky passage and out onto Grace Rock to more fully embrace the elements... or simply pause and enjoy an easily accessible and sheltered spot of beauty and wonder nearby. After lunch, we'll loop around up the hill to the north, with a panoramic view of Horseshoe Cove, the Kashia Coastal Reserve, Richardson family ranchlands and Sea Ranch, then hike back through grasslands down to the trailhead.

Plan on an approximate 2 ½ hour hike. Please bring your own water, a bag lunch, layered clothing, sunscreen, headwear, hiking boots (be prepared for some possible brisk wind and seaside moisture) and if desired, optional hiking sticks, binoculars, and camera. Not recommended for kids under eight and - sorry - no dogs are permitted on Salt Point State Park trails.

Hike led by Fort Ross Conservancy's Hank Birnbaum plus knowledgeable and dedicated volunteers. Salt Point State Park brochure and map link.



For more information and to check for weather cancellations, please see [FRC Events](#), email hankb@fortross.org or call the visitor center at 707-847-3437

Exciting news!

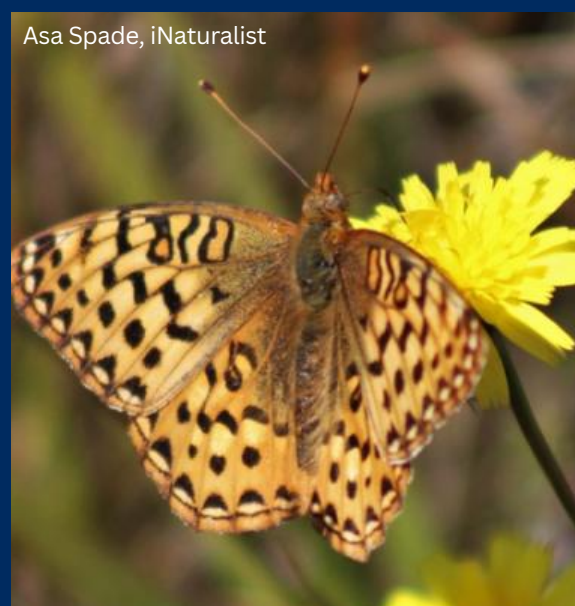
USFWS funding for Habitat Restoration

FRC has received funding from US Fish and Wildlife service to restore critical habitat for endangered Silverspot butterflies here in Fort Ross State Historic Park! The project will commence in 2025 and there a number of ways you can get involved (see below). We will be growing plants in a greenhouse including blue dog violets (*Viola adunca*), the only larval-host for Behren's and Myrtle's Silverspot butterflies. Restoration sites and a pollinator garden will be planted at Fort Ross. We will also be creating a pollinator curriculum to teach here in Fort Ross' Marine Ecology Program! Keep an eye out for pollinator talks in the auditorium.

FRC is passionate about improving the environment and ecosystems around us for the wildlife that lives here, the local community and all visitors to the State Historic Park. Join us at Fort Ross or by restoring native habitat in your local area!

Volunteer to help butterflies!

- Growing plants in our greenhouse!
- Searching the bluffs for violets in Spring
- Planting violets on the bluffs in Fall
- Butterfly surveys in Summer



FRC would like to give a huge shout out to all our new volunteers for marine mammal monitoring and for the garden after reading our newsletter and hearing about us in the community!

Thank you and welcome to the team!

Plant your own Pollinator Garden!

Where to start?

- ① Find which plants are native to your area.
- ② When selecting plants, consider the soil type, sun exposure, climate etc.
- ③ Plant in late fall, winter, or early spring to help plants establish before summer.



You will be amazed at the number of birds and butterflies visiting your home when you plant a pollinator garden of your own!

Why choose natives?



Save on water - Many natives require minimal watering in addition to normal rainfall



Save Time and effort - Natives often do best with little attention and no fertilizers



Pesticide-free - Natives have developed defenses against pests, diseases, and even deer.




Endangered Monarchs only lay eggs on milkweeds.
Is your garden in the right location to grow milkweed? Planting milkweed within 5 miles of the coast can confuse monarch migration.

Preserving California

California is one of 36 biodiversity hotspots in the world. Over 30% of species in the US are found here and many are endemic (only found here)!

Together we can remove invasive species and plant natives to protect our wilderness!



CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Calscape

Restore Nature One Garden at a Time



Click here

to create a custom native plant list for your garden!

Hummingbirds like nectar-rich natives and especially tubular red flowers



Spring is just around the corner!



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.

HARBOR SEAL SURVEYS

We are looking for more volunteers to help with the 2025 survey!! Bring a friend and walk along the Fort Ross coast on a mission: to count all the harbor seal adults and pups. There will be a training in February and surveys are fortnightly from March to July on the weekend. If you can only help with one survey- that's ok!



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.



VISITOR CENTER GARDEN

Spring will be here soon! 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.



Email mep@fortross.org for more information and to sign up!



WILDLIFE

SIGHTINGS ON THE COAST

>>> SONG SPARROW

October 11

This beautiful photo was taken by iNaturalist user Barbara Banfield in Salt Point State Park.



>>> ENSATINA SALAMANDER

November 24

This *Ensatina eschscholtzii* was spotted by iNaturalist user Chia/Ma'ayan. *Ensatina* subspecies colors vary widely depending on their geographic location in California from brown and orange to black and yellow.

PACIFIC CHORUS FROG <<<

September 5

This well-camouflaged frog was spotted by a marine ecology program student on a rocky outcrop.

– Dione Deaker, Coastal Naturalist



>>> HONEY MUSHROOMS

December 10

It is mushroom season! These mushrooms were photographed at Salt Point by Lexy Shoquist, iNat.

SEE YOUR PHOTO HERE

Post photos taken in Salt Point or Fort Ross on iNaturalist or email them to mep@fortross.org



>>> GOPHER ROCKFISH

November 29

These rockfish are more commonly found at depths of 30 – 120 ft. This beauty was photographed by iNat user Ted Judah in Gerstle Cove.

DONATE