

FORT ROSS NEWS

October Newsletter | Fort Ross Conservancy



Foreword

IAN TAYLOR, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Fall is always a season of reflection. It is a chance to pause and take stock of the journeys we've walked together.

This year at Fort Ross Conservancy, that reflection brings with it a profound sense of gratitude. Our organization has continued to grow in ways both visible and behind the scenes: welcoming more visitors to Fort Ross and Salt Point, opening doors to new educational opportunities through the Coastal Academy, and strengthening the partnerships that make our work possible.

None of this would happen without you. Each volunteer hour, each donation, each visit to our events and programs helps breathe life into our mission. Together, we are caring for historic...



OPEN DAILY 10:00 AM - 4:30 PM



This issue

Updates and Events
PAGE 3 - 7

Upcoming classes and
workshops
PAGE 8-9

Homeschool programs
PAGE 10

Call for Board
Members and Job
Opportunities
PAGE 11

Job and Volunteer
Opportunities
PAGE 12-13

Wildlife Sightings
PAGE 14

places, restoring fragile ecosystems, and striving to connect people across cultures and generations.

As the orchard ripens and the coast shifts into its autumn colors, I'm reminded how seasons of change bring new beginnings. Thank you for walking with us in this season. Your support makes this work not only possible, but deeply rewarding.

Here's to continuing our growth, together, into the seasons ahead.

With gratitude,

Ian Taylor
Executive Director,
Fort Ross Conservancy

Support FRC while grocery shopping at Oliver's!

Ask for a FREE community card at [Oliver's Market](#) in Santa Rosa, Windsor, and Cotati and Oliver's will donate 3% of your purchase to FRC! During registration, select Fort Ross Conservancy as your chosen non-profit.

- Support conservation initiatives and help us 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.

Tours at FRC

Book a private tour of the Fort or Salt Point State Park!

- \$25/person/hour (\$100 minimum). Children 10 & under, free.
- Please call (707) 847-3437 to book a tour in advance

The historic Call House is open to the public on the first full weekend of every month with free docent-led tours (1-4 pm).

DONATE

Updates and Events

Fall: Whales everywhere!

Humpback whales have been frolicking and feeding close to the shore all along the Sonoma Coast this September. Breaching, tails and spouts have been around Fort Ross State Historic Park almost every day!



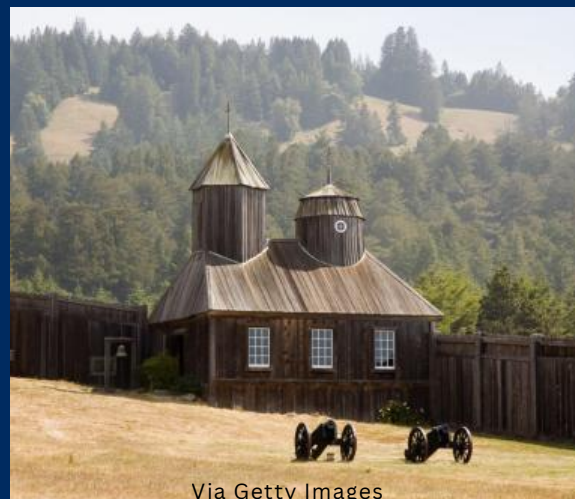
Jeremiah Psiropoulos Getty images

Kelp Restoration Webpages

New information is now available on the FRC website about kelp forest loss on the Sonoma Coast and how it is being restored by Greater Farallones Association, Greater Farallones National and Cordell Banks Marine Sanctuaries, Cordell and NOAA!

The Ocean and Art Festival

The Ocean and Art Festival was an incredible day attended by over 600 people with 11 environmental conservation groups, and 21 local artists. Performances by Sonoma County Pomo Dancers, local band Aint' Pank, and dancing by Russian House Kedry were highlights! See the next page for photos...



Via Getty Images

Fort Ross Chapel Centenary

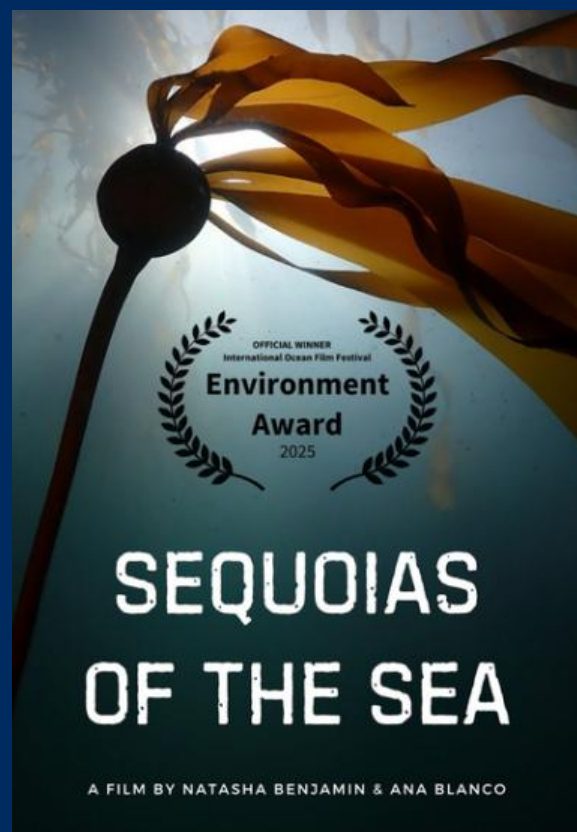
The Russian Orthodox Community are gathering on October 4th to celebrate 100 years of Russian Orthodox services at the Fort Ross Chapel!

The Harvest Festival, October 18!

With local produce, book signing, a film screening: "Sequoias of the Sea", and more!

Job Openings

With the growing Marine Ecology Program, we are looking for a part-time coastal naturalist and two marine science instructors. See pg 12 for more...





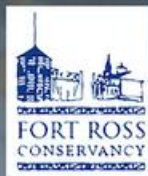
**JOE SALINAS AND THE
SONOMA COUNTY POMO DANCERS**



**AIN'T' PANK
GAYLE AND WANDA**

**RUSSIAN
HOUSE
KEDRY**

**GREATER FARALLONES ASSOCIATION
KELP RESTORATION RESEARCHERS**



SEASONS OF CHANGE: STORIES OF THE LAND — STORIES OF THE SEA



FORT ROSS

HARVEST FESTIVAL

Virtual Tour
& (real) Book Signing
w **Josie Iselin** of *The
Curious World of
Seaweed*

Saturday, October 18
10am - 4pm



Fort Ross Conservancy
presents

"Sequoias of the Sea"



A Film on Kelp Forests by **Natasha Benjamin** and **Ana Blanco** with **Mendonoma Sea Urchin Divers**

A project of Blue Frontier | International Ocean Film Foundation



KEDRY 10:30 Orchard
GRADINA 11:30 Fort
BARN WRECKERS 1:30 & 3:00 Fort



Performances by



FILM SCREENING
11:00 & 1:30

Metini/Fort Ross State Historic Park, 19005 Hwy 1, Jenner CA 95450
fortross.org/events 707-847-3437 efortrossconservancy | sequoiasofthesea.org bluefront.org



The Harvest Festival

Seasons of Change: Stories of the Land, Stories of the Sea

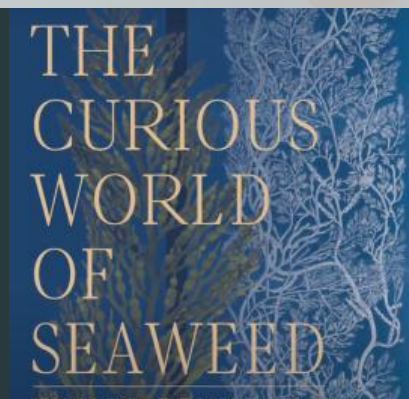
Join us for the enchanting Harvest Festival
at Fort Ross on October 18, 10 am - 4 pm.

Events

While honoring the traditional apple harvest at the orchard with Russian House Kedry, we are excited to be screening Sequoias of the Sea, a film by Natasha Benjamin and Ana Blanco, highlighting the impact of the vanishing bull kelp forest on one Northern CA community.



Speaking of bull kelp, we have to talk about purple sea urchin - thanks to volunteers from The Purple Urchin Removal Project, we will crack one open for you to taste uni. If uni is not your kind of thing, other delicious food prepared on site (ceviche, tacos, quiches, and more) will be available as well as cold drinks.



Book Signing by Seaweed and Kelp Artist, Josie Iselin

Follow Josie Iselin on a virtual tour into the kelp forest and stock up on gifts (books, cards, scarves) for the coming festive season. She will be signing her book *The Curious World of Seaweed* that day.

The Harvest Festival

Seasons of Change: Stories of the Land, Stories of the Sea

Bring the family to watch the apple press in action and a master pumpkin carver Marlene Hild turning jack-o-lanterns into art as you listen to Gradina (Balkan music ensemble) and The Barn Wreckers (Americana).



Bring a bag, you won't leave empty-handed

Local food producers will be selling high-quality fare for your kitchen.

The festive season is upon us!

Bid on prized Fort Ross-Seaview AVA and Sonoma Coast wines, whale tours, stays at the finest hotels along our coast, dinners, lunches, champagne tastings - Your winning bids support the interpretive and educational programs of Fort Ross Conservancy, and especially the newly launched Coastal Academy.



Celebrate the season with us!

This is a free event with a \$10 parking fee per vehicle

Upcoming classes and workshops

Naturalist Wildlife Seminar

OCTOBER 23, 2025, 1 PM - 4 PM

Meet and listen to talks by three local naturalists: Steve Hammerich, FRC's Dr. Dione Deaker and Matt Greene, at the Fort Ross Visitor Center thanks to Coast Ridge Community Forest! See the following page for more details

Wildlife Conservation Expo

Fort Ross Conservancy will be an exhibitor at the 2025 Wildlife Conservation Expo in San Francisco on October 4th! This expo by the



wildlife conservation Network is an amazing opportunity to meet and listen to talks by inspirational wildlife conservationists from across the globe.

Upcoming sea urchin foraging classes with Fork in the Path

This 3-hour class is all about sea urchins or uni, as you may have heard it called in a sushi restaurant. Learn where they live, what they eat, and who eats them...but more specifically, who hasn't been eating them and how that has impacted our kelp forests, and how humans eating them actually lends a helping hand to bringing our intertidal zone back into balance!

- Tues Oct 7th at 5:00pm (FULL, join the waitlist [here](#))
- Wed Oct 8th at 5:30pm (FULL, join the waitlist [here](#))
- Wed Nov 5th at 3 pm
- Thurs Dec 4th at 3 pm
- Thurs Dec 18th at 3:30 pm

Led by Ricardo Romero Gianoli and Ryn Sullivan.

[Click here for pricing, to register, and to learn more](#)





Naturalist Wildlife Seminar

Recent Changes to Our Environment

Join us at the Fort Ross Visitor Center for an afternoon with three local naturalists discussing wildlife and recent changes to our environment.

Coffee and pastries will be provided.

Parking fee at Fort Ross will be waived for attendees

Thursday October 23
1 - 4 pm
Fort Ross Visitor Center

Steve Hammerich

*Pepperwood's Wildlife
Research Coordinator*



Camera trapping, tracking, bear scat collection & DNA analysis and the work of the North Bay Bear Collaborative

Dr. Dione Deaker

*FRC's Director of the
Coastal Academy*



Signs of recovery for marine and land species at Fort Ross, what is being done to help the environment at the park, and what you can do to get involved

Matt Greene

*Registered Professional
Forester*



An overview of the diverse aspects of environmental change influencing wildlife populations



For more information, email:
melissa.bushner@coastridgeforestcouncil.org

[Click here to register](#)

SAND CRABS

TUESDAY OCTOBER 21

Homeschool & family program (maximum, 20 students)

Roger Birkhead



Marine Ecology Program

Search for the Pacific sand crab in the sand on the beach! These unassuming crustaceans are indicators of toxins, important herbivores in beach ecosystems, and food for birds, fish, and sea otters.

In this program, you will:

- Learn about sand crab biology and ecology
- Search the beach for sand crabs
- Learn how to sample sandy environments like a marine scientist using transects and clamming tubes.
- Measure sand crabs using a vernier caliper
- Do a sand crab dissection*

*This activity is subject to changes in availability

Details

Program Price:

Student = \$50 (\$10/hour)*

Adult: \$10. Adults will be encouraged to join in!

*Please let the instructor know in advance if you plan to leave early.

Day Plan

10 am - Arrive and welcome!

10:30 am* - Introduction: What are mole crabs and why are they important?

11:30 am - Lunch
(beach scavenger hunt)

12:30 pm - Search for sand crabs on the beach and measure them!

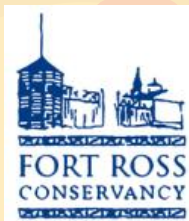
1:30 pm* - Mole crab craft, anatomy, and microscopy

3 pm - Program ends

*Families who would only like to stay for 3 hours leave at 1:30 pm

[Click here to learn more on the FRC website](#)

Email mep@fortross.org to sign up!



Open Call: Join the Fort Ross Conservancy Board of Directors

Fort Ross Conservancy (FRC) is currently seeking passionate and dedicated individuals to join our Board of Directors. This is an exciting opportunity to help steward the historic and natural legacy of Fort Ross and Salt Point State Parks, supporting our mission of education, preservation, and community engagement.

About Fort Ross Conservancy

FRC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that works in partnership with California State Parks to promote ecological and cultural stewardship of the lands and heritage associated with Fort Ross and Salt Point. We offer educational programs, community festivals, volunteer opportunities, and preservation initiatives that celebrate the rich culture and biodiversity of this unique stretch of the Northern California coast.

What We're Looking For in a board member:

- Passionate about the preservation of public lands
- Excited to collaborate with a diverse group of board members and staff
- Eager to contribute time, talent, and resources to support FRC's growth and sustainability
- Experienced in one or more of the following areas:
 - Nonprofit governance or law
 - Fundraising
 - Marketing and communications
 - Financial oversight
 - Education
 - Environmental science
 - Cultural preservation
 - Community engagement

Board Member Responsibilities Include:

- Attending quarterly board meetings (on site, weather dependent)
- Serving on at least one committee or working group
- Participating in fundraising and outreach efforts
- Acting as an ambassador for FRC in the broader community
- Contributing to strategic planning and organizational development

How to Apply

Please visit <https://www.fortross.org/frc/boardoutreach> to fill out an application. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.

Join us in protecting and sharing one of California's most treasured places.

Job Opportunities

Job Title: Coastal Naturalist

Classification: Part time, hourly

Involves occasional evening and weekend work

Fort Ross Conservancy is looking for a part-time Coastal Naturalist to join the Coastal Academy team in January 2026. The primary role of the Coastal Naturalist at Fort Ross Conservancy is to educate visitors about the diverse coastal ecosystems, wildlife, and cultural history present within the Fort Ross State Historic Park. The Coastal Naturalist serves as a knowledgeable educator and interpreter, facilitating immersive experiences that foster appreciation and understanding of the natural environment and cultural heritage of the area. In addition, the Coastal Naturalist will assist with surveys, volunteer support, and contribute to conservation initiatives within Fort Ross State Historic Park.

Key responsibilities

- Deliver interpretive programs, focusing on the coastal landscapes, plant and animal species, and geological features.
- Foster relationships with local communities, environmental organizations, and other stakeholders to promote awareness of Fort Ross Conservancy's mission and programs.
- Participate in community events, festivals, workshops, and outreach activities to build support for conservation initiatives and encourage public involvement in park stewardship.

Required:

- A valid license to drive in California
- Ability to walk up to 6 miles during programs on uneven terrain including sand, the rocky shore, and along coastal bluffs
- Flexible working schedule
- Must be able to pass a background check

Preferred qualifications

- Studying or completed a degree in environmental science, ecology, marine biology or another related field/other relevant background.
- At least 1 year of experience in environmental education, working with kids, or teaching in formal or non-formal education settings.

Other Positions:

Two marine science educators (casual, on-call)

Visit [Careers](#) on the FRC website for more information and to apply

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, teaching, interested in marine mammals, or enjoy tide pooling 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.

HARVEST FESTIVAL, OCT 18

Festival volunteers make the day possible! Volunteers assist with setting up in the morning, running festival activities, and packing away in the afternoon. Volunteers will have the opportunity to enjoy the festivities and explore the stalls. Lunch is provided. Email info@fortross.org for more information and to join our festival team!



CALL HOUSE

Join the volunteer group for the only building that truly represents the ranching era at Fort Ross! The volunteers help maintain the garden, open the Call House on the first full weekend of the month and provide free docent-led tours to the public.



MARINE MAMMAL SURVEYS

We are always looking for fresh faces to help with our seal surveys fortnightly in the spring (Weekday or weekend) or sea lion surveys once a month throughout the year (weekdays)! [Click here to learn more!](#)



Moose Henderson via Getty Images

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



WILDLIFE

SPOTTED ON THE COAST

>>> SHORT-HORNED GRASSHOPPER

July 22

There are grasshoppers all over the bluffs in the summer. Watch them spring away as you walk across the crispy, dry grass! Photographed sitting in a flower by Alex Heyman, iNaturalist at Fort Ross.



>>> LEATHER STAR

November 29, 2024

Named after their leathery skin, leather stars have an unexpected yet strong garlic smell.



Photographed in Gerstle Cove, Ted Judah, iNaturalist

PLEATED <<< GENTIAN

August 10

What a stunner! This beautiful flower was spotted near Fisk Mill by Gregg Weber, iNaturalist



SEE YOUR PHOTO HERE
Post photos taken in Salt Point or Fort Ross to iNaturalist to have the chance at being selected for the next newsletter!

>>> ANISE SWALLOWTAIL

September 13

This swallowtail caterpillar was spotted on their host-plant, Coast Angelica. These beauties can grow to ~ 2 inches long! If disturbed, they display bright orange stinkhorns that give off an unpleasant smell



Via Getty images

DONATE

PHOTOS IN THIS ISSUE BY
DIONE DEAKER UNLESS
OTHERWISE STATED

Photographed by bodegabaydaily,
iNaturalist at Fort Ross