

# LIFE ON THE EDGE

A newsletter concerning all inhabitants of the south coast of Oregon

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

AUGUST 26, 2022

## Page 2 :

[Visiting the Elliott \(con't\)](#)

[Kinnikinnick and its](#)

[Butterfly](#)

## Pages 3 & 4

[Butterfly photos](#)

[Elliott Forest photos](#)

[Contact info](#)

A wide assortment of ecosystems comprise this south coast of Oregon including various forest types. Each forest type has a prominent conifer species with a mix of other tree species. In the understory of these unique forests a myriad of life forms exist and thrive because the forest itself exists and thrives. These healthy habitat forests do not include plantation "timberlands" although that is most of what all of us see around us, where few plants will flourish under such a thick canopy of closely planted trees. Each month, this newsletter aims to include some news about the various habitats that are native to here. We welcome your submissions. - *Darcy Grahek*

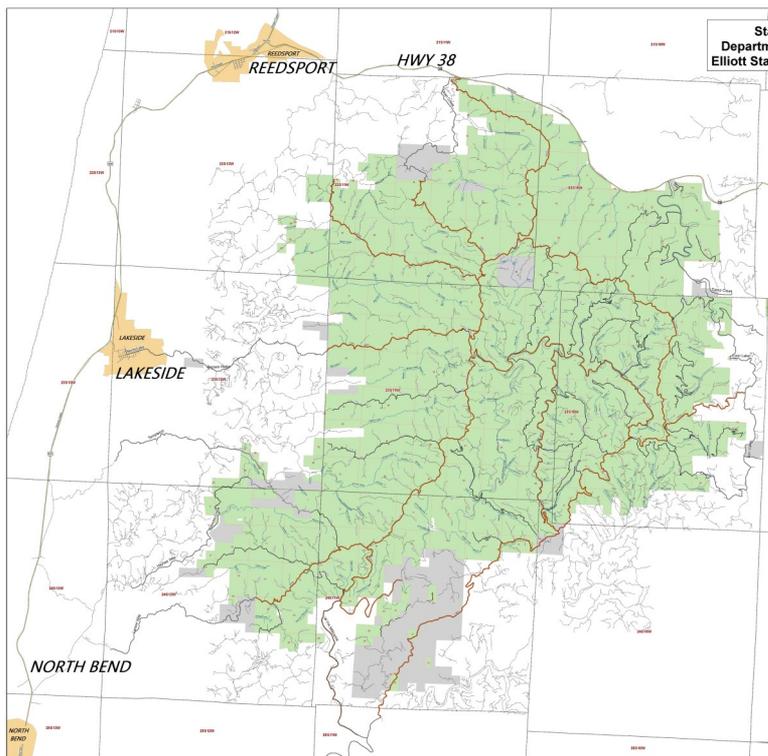
## VISITING THE ELLIOT STATE RESEARCH FOREST

*by Bonnie Joyce*

Out-of-the-way places like the Elliott State Forest represent areas where there still might endure some of the last remnants of the vast old growth forest that once covered the Pacific Northwest. It is estimated that those remnant forests are somewhere between two and five per cent of what once existed. These diverse forests of huge old trees have played a major role in making our planet a place where life thrives. All the vegetation in the forest pumps out oxygen and removes carbon dioxide from the atmosphere; provides habitat for humans and wildlife; moderates weather and temperature; improves soil and then holds it in place with root structure. Old growth forests absorb and slow rainfall to keep it from running directly off the land thereby making it possible that we have water in our creeks and rivers at the end of a long, dry summer.

The Elliott was established as a state forest in 1930 and has been commercially logged since the late 1940's. After a long battle of many years during which protesters tried to stop logging, the status of the forest has changed. It is no longer a source of logs for the timber industry and, since an alternative has been arranged, it is no longer a source of revenue for the common school fund. Today, it is known as the Elliott State Research Forest. It is still held in trust by the State of Oregon, but it will be managed under the direction of Oregon State University as a research forest. A working panel of interested parties has been meeting regularly to hammer out the details of exactly how forest management and research will proceed.

Apparently, this 93,000 acre forest consists of lots of old trees, about 43,000 acres! A big fire had swept through this area in 1868, so except for some pockets that did not burn, most of those old trees cannot be more than 154 years old. But that's old enough to qualify as young old growth. Most people who were born in Coos County or have lived here for many years are unfamiliar with this large hunk of our county because as big and close by as it is, the Elliott is still relatively inaccessible. There are many small roads that lead into the forest, but none of them are marked and there are no prominent landmarks to get one's bearing by, making it easy to get lost. In fact, getting lost in the Elliott has a rich history that will be the subject of a separate article. One day this past June, this writer and nine other folks set out in a caravan of four cars to have a look for ourselves.



cont'd next page

(Con't) We had a map. The Coast Range Forest Watch, a group of young people who played a major role in preserving this forest, had made a map that labeled the major roads and listed where we could find old growth patches and other points of interest. We drove and drove that day without seeing more than an occasional large tree, let alone a 'grove' of old growth. We had no way of knowing our exact location, so we were unable to correlate that map to the confusing maze of unmarked roads. Where was this 43,000 acres of old growth hiding?

After that frustrating day, I called on someone that I knew would be able to help. Francis Eartherington is one of the most active of forest activists in the Northwest. She had been monitoring logging sales in the Elliott for many years and blowing the whistle on violations of the Endangered Species Act. Francis agreed to go with us on our next attempt to see the old growth. With the paper map spread on Francis' lap and the app, "Avenza", which had downloaded the Coast Range Forest Watch map onto her cell phone, our exact location was shown with a blue dot, and we were lost no more. We found the Silver Creek Heritage Grove which we could not find on our previous trip. And here there were the some of the stately ancient trees that had survived the fire. Fifty acres of cool, moist, cathedral-like refuge from the hot clearcuts and plantations. A big sign there noted how this tract had been set aside for "the public's enjoyment."

Well, that's nice, I thought. But what about the Murrelets and Spotted Owls that need a place to nest? And the hundreds of other species that rely on the unique attributes of the old growth ecosystem for their survival? We need to remember that we are one of those species. There is another correction that needs to be made on this sign. The name had been recently changed from the "Silver Creek Heritage Grove" to the "Jerry Phillips Heritage Grove". Jerry Phillips worked as a manager of the Elliott for some 35 years. He wrote a book called "Caulked Boots and Cheese Sandwiches". Examining that book, I do not see that he ever put any special value on old growth forests. He appears to have spent his career functioning as a timber sale arranger. It would more accurate to make signs proclaiming "Jerry Phillips Heritage Clearcuts". So, we have a lot of exploring to do to track down more of that 43,000 acres of old growth! In a future installment, I will let you know what I find.

Feel free to visit the Elliott Forest, your GPS likely will not receive signal there so a map is very helpful. You can find a map at the Coast Range Forest Watch website and also directions on how to use the Avenza phone app. This shows your location with the little blue dot and will function on your cell phone even without connection.

<https://coastrangeforestwatch.org/elliottstate-forest/>

## **KINNIKINNICK and its' Butterfly**

by Darcy Grahek

The Seaside Hoary Elfin, *Incisalia polia maritima*, is a subspecies of the hoary elfin butterfly ("hoary" means frosted). and only found in very restricted areas of the coasts of Oregon and Washington. It has an ORBIC (2019) list rank of S1 (threatened orendangered throughout range) and is an ODFW Oregon Conservation Strategy Species This maritima (Seaside) subspecies has not been studied much but from what is known, it appears to be a specialist species. Like the Monarch needs its' milkweed on which to lay eggs, this butterfly spends its entire life in close proximity to Kinnikinnick. It uses this host plant not only to lay its eggs but also as a food source. During the winter months the plant becomes a shelter for the small (about 1 inch ) butterflies. It camouflages easily among its habitat with a mottled gray-brown body with muted orange on the underside of its' wings.

Always found close to Kinnikinnick, if this host plant is overtaken by invasives, encroaching forest or development, the butterfly will not survive. Areas with Kinnikinnick are scarce and often far apart so it is unlikely that the butterflies will fly far enough to find another patch.

Currently, an effort is underway in Curry County to restore an area of dunes in Pistol River State Park where a few populations of this butterfly have been found. It is a joint effort of cooperation between Curry Watershed Partnership, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. Let's wish them success in the restoration for the sake of this unique butterfly!

Sources - <https://www.oceanscape-aquarium.org/> US Fish & Wildlife Service



Seaside Hoary elfin & Kinnikinnick



Multi-generational Elliott forest



“Life on the Edge” is a monthly newsletter, written by local people and hosted by STILLWATER NATIVES NURSERY in Bandon, Oregon  
Contact: [Stellaray60@yahoo.com](mailto:Stellaray60@yahoo.com)  
We accept submissions of news that relates to our natural local world - cite sources as we are only dealing with real events and factual information. To unsubscribe from this newsletter just click reply and type “No”.

**ELLIOTT STATE  
RESEARCH FOREST**

**JULY 2022**

Photo credits:  
Tatiana Havill

