

Famed naturalist John Muir once wrote: "Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul."

Well, according to the Washington Post, Humboldt County ranks right up there with beauty, ranked second ~~to~~ ^{to} only ^{to} Ventura County in all of California. 2nd to, Ventura County: Really? Well, to H... ~~Gehenna Fire~~ ^{again example} with the Post, we who live here already know we live in a pretty place. ~~Speaking of beauty~~ the other day my wife and I put on our bike helmets and pedaled up the trail to the Headwaters Forest. We left our bikes at the bridge 3 miles in, and hiked the remaining distance to the Old Growth forest, which sits on top of a ridge overlooking Elk River to the north and the Eel River basin to the south. I confess, I've only visited the Old Growth a couple of times even though I hike the Headwaters Trail about twice a week.

The trees and flowers and ~~all~~ ^{Forest} are beautiful all the way ^{along} up Elk River, especially in the spring and ~~early~~ summer. But when you make the extra effort to hike up all the way to the ancient trees, effort is well rewarded. When we arrived at the loop that allowed us to enter the Old Growth forest, something magical happened. Gradually, the trees increased in size from big to gianormous. The height and girth and sheer majesty of the old trees almost took our breath away. They are primeval and daunting-- those aged trees. The thought that they could have been cut down for financial gain is almost sacrilegious. We stood and watched and reveled in the silence that surrounds these ancient living giants. It almost felt like a brontosaurus or some such creature could rise up over the horizon.

I understand, from reading the front page Times Standard article by Will Houston that there are plans under review to thin the newer growth in order to promote the more rapid growth of the trees that are not cut. It seems ironic to engage in cutting in order to return the old growth, or old-growth appearance ~~at least~~, when cutting is what destroyed the old growth in the first place. I am not a forester or botanist, so I'll leave those decisions to those who are.

But I do want to urge you all to get out and see the redwoods this summer. Whether it is the Headwaters, the Lady Bird Johnson grove, Rockefeller, Richardson or Tall Trees grove. Our local forests are a living and rare legacy that remind ^{us} of eons gone by when Redwoods were in abundance in many areas of North America. Today, they are found only along a few special coastal strips in California and southern Oregon. I am not sure why, but I am sure glad that I got out to see them earlier this week and urge others to do the same. Because everybody needs beauty as well as bread.

This has been Dan Price for community Comment