

John Muir once wrote: "The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness."

When we moved here 25 years ago I came to believe that Humboldt was a place *long* on natural beauty, but short on the amenities that gave access to and highlight the natural beauty. The bay front properties in Eureka were mostly in decay, and old town needed a facelift more than 75 year old movie star.

Lately, I've noticed a number of cars with bumper stickers that say, "I like Eureka!" Given the number of homeless people that had been lounging around the 101 corridor, I initially found such a statement brazen, even naïve. But with time, I'm beginning to see there are indeed parts of Eureka to like. My changed perspective is due in part to the fact that in recent years many trails have been opened that give access to the natural beauty right out our back door.

This is good news for those who like to walk or bicycle and not worry about being run over by a car. Four years ago my wife and I were about to embark on a 100 mile pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago in Spain. Realizing we needed to do some training for such a long hike we decided to look for a place to hike locally to get into shape. We discovered the Headwaters trailhead 6 miles from our back door and began hiking along that trail up Elk River and into the ~~Headwaters old growth~~ forest. It didn't take long for us to become enchanted with the river, trees, wildlife and the portal into the Universe: the old-growth Redwoods!

Here's how I discovered another local trail.

Three years ago we were installing new hardwood floors in our house and had to stay in a local motel south of the Bayshore Mall for several nights while the floors were being finished. During our stay at the motel I decided to go for a jog each morning and found a new trail right on the bay. It was freshly paved and clean. I was impressed with the beauty of the Bay, the seagulls and other water fowl: but there were not many bikers or joggers on the trail at the time. Soon after, I found out it is called the Hikshari Trail. But, at the time the homeless were living right near its north end, and I was reticent to take my wife, or grand-kids into a place that was filled with refuse and scruffy looking people.

As you may know,

~~I'm happy to report that~~ the homeless have been moved to better locations, and the trail that used to virtually end at the PALCO marsh is now extended all the way to Arcata and beyond. This creates exciting opportunities for those who love to hike, bike, bird watch, or just get closer to the Bay for a nature-fix.

Eureka and environs are not likely to become as prosperous as Marin or many other Bay Area counties. But we are rich in outdoor beauty. So get out there and explore our ~~new~~ trails—get nature's good tidings: whether it's ocean or trees, rivers or ~~butterflies~~, our county has many splendors. ~~Just~~ Taking a walk around here is a lot more than ^{just} walking. Again, ^{is close to} in the words of John Muir: "In God's wildness lies the hope of the world—the great fresh unblighted, unredeemed wilderness."

This has been Dan Price for Community Comment