



CLIMBING THE COAST

A lone rock climber puts the sport on his back, setting hundreds of outdoor climbing routes

by Patrick Maravelias
photos by Morgan Hancock

SEE CLIMBING • PAGE 6

Evan Wisheropp climbs a route he developed at Promontory Point, just north of Klamath, CA on Aug. 26, 2021.

2020 security report revisits cannabis policy

by Kris Nagel

Changing campus dynamics over the last two years have left permanent changes to many of Humboldt State’s policies and procedures. One such change came with the release of the Annual Security Report, a three-year analysis of crime statistics.

The reports are led by the Clery Compliance Team in compliance with the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act, otherwise known as the Clery Act.

In 2020, both the Clery Director and Clery Coordinator retired. Allan Ford

filled in as director and Nicki Viso acted as coordinator. In their new roles, Ford and Viso revised campus requirements to report cannabis policy infractions.

“Our understanding of what constitutes a Liquor Law referral for disciplinary action and Drug Law referral for disciplinary action evolved, which has resulted in a decrease in our statistics between 2019 and 2020. These three factors contributed the most:

- Residence halls are considered private residences once a locked door is encountered.
- Individuals who are 21+ can have

possession of up to 28.5g of cannabis.

- Individuals under 21 must have possession of a usable amount of cannabis to count as a statistic,” the Annual Security Report reads.

These new requirements allow the campus’ security report to reflect California’s cannabis restrictions as well as focus on underage use of controlled substances. In previous years, “drug law referrals” made up a majority of crimes reported. Last year’s report identified an approximate average of 133 referrals per year from 2017-2019. This year, the re-

port listed only 21.

Previously, security reports would overwhelmingly reflect drug referrals that did not violate state law. Now, the reports will more accurately reflect encounters with illicit substances or quantities, and underage possession.

The university has made it clear that possession and use of cannabis remains prohibited at Humboldt State. However, efforts made by Humboldt State administrators along with University Police allow our campus to more accurately report on student safety.

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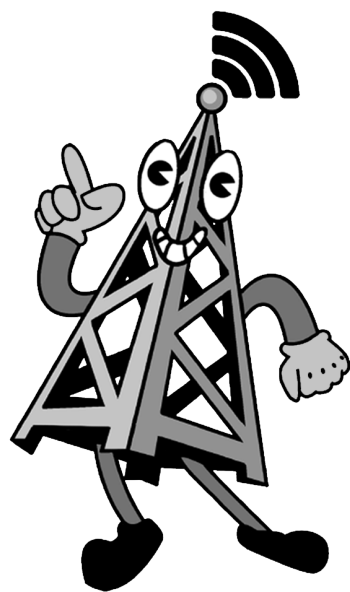


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Cleaning up our act

September is Coastal Cleanup Month

by Ruby Guillette

California’s Coastal Clean Up Month, formerly Clean Up Day, is upon us. This beloved California tradition is dedicated to cleaning up our cities and streets, as well as focusing our attention on one of our prized ecological areas, the beach.

The California Coastal Commission (CCC), established in 1972 and made permanent in the California Coastal Act of 1976, is responsible for, “the biggest, single day volunteer event on the planet” according to the Guinness Book of World Records. This momentous day has evolved from a single day to a month-long volunteer extravaganza with 74,000 volunteers collecting nearly a million pounds of garbage from our

waterways in 2019. As the movement has grown, efforts have turned inland where the majority of waste originates.

Data collection has been a central force in the decades of trash clean ups. Throughout the years, the CCC has found that up to 85% of trash collected on beaches originates on land.

Eben Schwartz is the Marine Debris Program Manager and Outreach Manager for the CCC.

“If the trash is coming from land then we should try to stop it where it starts, so we started spreading our cleanups inland. We’re now at the point where we’re cleaning just about everywhere in California,” Schwartz said.

Through data collection, the CCC has found that the worst polluter is cigarette

butts, an incredibly toxic form of plastic pollution. Don’t be fooled, although the material that makes up cigarette butts is known as cellulose acetate, this is not a plant based product. Cellulose acetate is a plastic, primarily a mixture of rayon and paper. Cigarette butts make up the largest category of collected items next to food and beverage containers.

“When you look at categories of debris that’s out there, by far the largest category is food and beverage packaging. Basically you take a convenience store and shake it upside down, and anything that falls out is what we’re finding in our environment,” Schwartz said.

Schwartz is primarily responsible for public education to get people involved in coastal stewardship, mostly through large volunteer events like Coastal Clean Up Day. Unfortunately, the pandemic has taken its toll. Data, although less robust than past years, shows that pandemic trash and single use items such as plastic bags have impacted our beaches and waterways. Since the 2014 plastic bag ban, plastic bags slowly receded down on the list of the top trash items. During the pandemic, when the ban was lifted for just two short months, bags jumped right back to the sixth position on the top ten list.

“It really did show what an impact the pandemic was having on our environment,” Schwartz said. “The other interesting tidbit was that PPE - masks and gloves, but mostly masks - came in as the twelfth most picked up item in 2020, which is shockingly high for an item that has just recently been introduced to our society.”

Along with the pandemic’s uptick in production and discard of plastic products, Schwartz points out that producers of these products need to take more responsibility for the trash they introduce to the public.

Locally, the North Coast Environmental Center (NEC) also points to producers to take more responsibility for the garbage they produce.

Ivy Munnerlyn, the Coastal Programs Coordinator for NEC said, “Preventing [trash] from being created in the first place is a lot more effective in the long run.”

NEC has worked with the city of Arcata for their single use plastic ban. Statewide, groups have been working to create extended producer responsibility bans which would tax those actually responsible for creating the waste. Caroline Griffith is co-executive director and EcoNews journalist for NEC, these extended producer responsibility acts raise the money to implement local and actual recycling programs instead of shipping plastic waste to developing nations. These bans also incentivize consumers and producers alike to utilize other products.

Statewide beach clean ups started in 1985, but the city of Arcata predated statewide efforts by over ten years with the Arcata Recycling Center, boasted as the birthplace of beach clean ups. This noble effort, unfortunately, was diverted as the nature of recycling fell to a capitalistic venture.

“Slowly, recycling became an industry. That really shifted how things worked,” Griffith said. “They wanted to recover materials versus actually making things into new materials. There’s that financial incentive that really changed it.”

Although the history and current reality of plastic is a highly complex issue, there are ways for beach lovers and climate activists alike to get involved this month. Local cleanups are scheduled every weekend in September, and people can sign up through the NEC website, www.yournec.org, to attend cleanups in their neighborhoods. September is a wonderful month to get involved but, as Griffith puts it, cleanups should be much more common practice.

“We should be doing this all the time,” Griffith said. “It’s fun to have one big event where we all do it together, but really making a habit of it and doing it regularly is the most effective.

Then you actually do see those waste patterns in your neighborhood - you know where that waste is coming from.”

Armed with information, you can go to local businesses responsible for making waste and let them know what the problem is. Hopefully, these businesses will be responsive and work with you to make changes.

CANNABIS

FROM PAGE 1

Humboldt State Chief of Police Anthony Morgan responded to these changes.

“Nothing has changed in the way we respond to [drug and alcohol] incidents on campus,” Morgan said. “One of the things I think the campus does a good job of is trying to administratively handle these incidents versus make them a law enforcement issue.”

“Nothing has changed in the way we respond to [drug and alcohol] incidents on campus.”

-Anthony Morgan, HSU Chief of Police

The annual safety report is a reflection of the security of the student body. For many prospective students and their families, this report is the best way to understand the quality of life on campus.

As Humboldt State adapts to a rapidly changing world, current and prospective students need to be informed about the safety of their community. This change in the annual security report is one more step campus administrators have taken to respond to that need.



Graphic by Poppy Cartledge

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HSU DINING SERVICES

Get thrifty

Brainwash Thrift aims to be BIPOC and queer community space

by Sabriyya Ghanizada

As social media influencers take over fast-fashion brands, those over by the Lost Coast may prefer to sift through bins to curate their closets. Thrifting, upcycling, and donating gently or rarely worn clothing and goods is one way to reduce your footprint and stick it to capitalism.

The owner of Brainwash Thrift, Kiki Angus, is building a community around fashion and inclusivity. Brainwash Thrift has been open on the corner of 40 Sunnybrae Center in Arcata since June of this year, and they are just getting started.

“Self-worth is stemmed from how you express yourself, so fashionable clothing should be accessible,” Angus said.

Psychology major Clara Lenihan found Brainwash Thrift through HSU.

“I discovered Brainwash from my sex diversity class. My professor had invited them to be a guest speaker in our class and I loved everything they stood for,” said Lenihan.

The donation-based thrift store is composed of two locations side by side and plans to open another one a few doors down for a queer-inclusive event space. If you are looking for more than a thrift store, Brainwash is here to bring

you a sense of community. As an Indigenous woman herself, Angus is aware of her role as a business owner.

“On a macro scale to me [Brainwash Thrift] is representative of my personal life philosophy,” Angus said. “The idea of challenging your perspective, decolonizing the mind, freeing yourself of these shackles inflicted on us via settler colonialism.”

Angus, a transplant from the Bay Area, says when she moved up here she was surprised by the lack of queer bars and other queer spaces. Angus hopes to bring some much needed representation into the area. The walls of Brainwash are filled with photographs Angus takes including women of color, queer motifs, and inspirational quotes.

Brainwash Thrift is currently only donation-based because Angus wants to keep the inventory accessible and size-inclusive. On top of donations, Angus also travels for inventory.

“I always make sure we have a diverse array of clothing and make sure we have plus size clothing,” said Angus.

When you donate your clothing or goods, the process becomes what Angus calls a “community trade.” In the future, the store has plans to move into a buy/sale/trade system.

But Brainwash Thrift is not only taking donations for themselves. Angus is incorporating Brainwash into the community by doing work with non-profits and local artists. Brainwash works with organizations like Queer Humboldt, Justice for Josiah, and Arcata Mutual Aid to help with donations, fundraisers, and food drives. Local artists that utilize the space to create their work, can expect a 20/80 split as opposed to the typical 40/60 split that many consignment artists are used to.

HSU students can look forward to upcoming college student promotions, skate nights, brown bags sales, and the expansion of the event space. Keep up with Brainwash Thrift on Instagram @brainwashthrift.

Angus, an Indigenous creative herself, has created a safe haven for herself that she is extending to other like-minded individuals in the area. When you enter Brainwash Thrift you can expect to feel welcomed and inspired. Her aim is to create a space where people can express themselves and love themselves.

“Those are the things we should value the most because they bring the most joy and love to our lives,” said Angus.

Cajun cheesy potatoes with sausages

by Raven Linton

Do you ever crave a meal that may remind you of home or is just very comforting? Well, this meal is it!

You can have it as a side or main dish. You can serve it with meat or not. Some really great meat suggestions are chicken and shrimp, but for the non-meat eaters, you can add broccoli and mushrooms. This savory dish is truly a statement meal and great for any occasion. Not only that, but it’s a little under 15 dollars in cost and only takes about 25 minutes to cook.

Ingredients:

- 3 red skin potatoes, sliced thickly
- 1/2 red onion, chopped
- 1/2 red bell pepper, chopped
- 1/2 green bell pepper, chopped
- 2 tbsps chopped garlic
- splash of olive oil
- 2 cups of cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 cup of parmesan cheese
- 1 tbsp paprika
- 1 tbsp garlic powder
- 1 tbsp onion powder
- 1 tbsp Old Bay seasoning
- 1 tbsp cayenne seasoning
- Louisiana’s Cajun seasoning

1 tbsp McCormick garlic and herb seasoning

Parsley flakes, for color

Salt and pepper to taste

Cooking instructions:

Add chopped potatoes, garlic, onions, and peppers to a pot of rolling hot water.

Cut the sausages however you’d like. Place them in a pan and let them brown up on each side, you could also add them to the boiling potatoes.

Add oil and a dash of salt. Add protein of your choice. Let that boil for about 15- 20 mins or until you can stick a fork through one of the potatoes smoothly. Do not overcook, potatoes should keep their shape.

Once they are fork-tender, drain a good majority of the water and add the seasonings. Fold the potatoes and the seasonings very gently.

Top with your cheeses and let it melt.

Side note: It’s totally okay to cook your meats separate from the potatoes as well as the veggies of your choice. Mushy is not pleasing.



Photo by Sabriyya Ghanizada
Brainwash Thrift owner kiki Angus in front of the store on Wednesday, Sept 1.

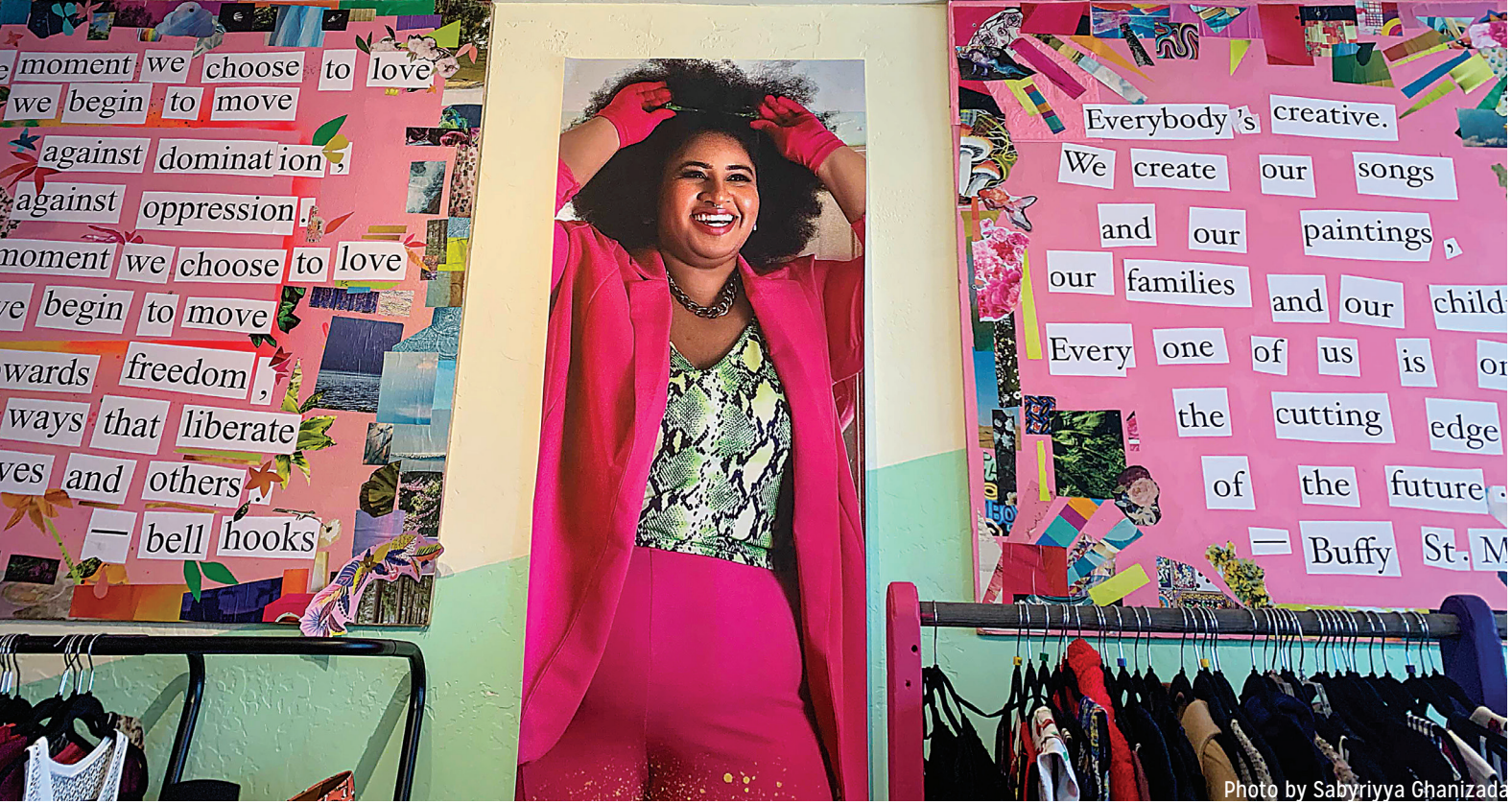


Photo by Sabriyya Ghanizada
Art and photos fill the walls of Brainwash Thrift.

IPCC climate report

by Ian Vargas

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, or IPCC, released the first installment of the Sixth Assessment Report in August that pointed towards a particular threat to Humboldt county, the disruption of ocean currents. Just off the Humboldt coast flows the California current, which brings cold water down from the North Pacific, and the Davidson current that brings warm water up from the south. The circulation of this sea water is not only the driving force behind Humboldt’s wetter weather and lower temperatures, but they also bring in zooplankton that fish and birds prey on.

Christine Cass, associate professor and chair of Humboldt State’s oceanography department, said the weakening of the California current will have an effect on the offshore salmon populations who rely on the larger and more calorie dense plankton brought down

from the north over the smaller plankton coming up from the south.

“If we have weaker CA current circulation, we are likely to see fewer of those northern plankton. This can have important implications for plankton predators, including birds and fish,” Cass said. “For instance, young salmon tend to be more successful if they enter the ocean at a time when northern zooplankton are more abundant. When we have fewer northern plankton and more of the southern plankton, the young salmon tend to have lower survival rates. In sum, changing the intensity of the CA current will impact the local plankton present, and could also impact the success of plankton predators.”

The arctic regions that the northern cold water originates from is poised to get hotter faster than most other regions, meaning that the cold water

coming south will be heating up much faster than anticipated. This will mean the salmon will have less nutrient rich food during their mating season. With higher amounts of CO2 entering the atmosphere, the sea’s ability to absorb it and absorb heat gets strained. If ocean waters reach their maximum level of captured CO2, they will begin bouncing more CO2 and heat from the sun back into the atmosphere, compounding the effects of climate change and causing its worse effects to begin faster.

According to the IPCC report in August, all of the projections for more unprecedented weather patterns hinge largely on human activity.

“The magnitude of feedback between climate change and the carbon cycle becomes larger but also more uncertain in high CO2 emissions scenarios,” the report said. “However, climate model projections show the uncertain-

ties of atmospheric CO2 concentrations by 2100 are dominated by the difference between emissions scenarios.”

The most important factor in reducing climate change is reaching net zero emissions as soon as possible. CO2 and greenhouse gas emissions are the largest contributors to the increase in unpredictable weather patterns.

According to IPCC working Group One chair Panmao Zhai in the August 9th press release, the only effective way to tackle climate change is for world leaders to reduce CO2 emissions as quickly as possible.

“Stabilizing the climate will require strong, rapid, and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and reaching net zero CO2 emissions,” Zhai said. “Limiting other greenhouse gases and air pollutants, especially methane, could have benefits both for health and the climate.”

Miraculous Mycology part 2: Foraging and cultivating gourmet and medicinal fungi

by Patrick Maravelias

Under no circumstances should anyone go and forage for wild mushrooms without learning about them extensively beforehand. Fungi can be incredibly difficult for a novice to identify and minute differences between species that cannot be perceived by the human eye could mean the difference between a delicious dinner and a very unpleasant death. Anyone looking to learn about foraging should not consume anything they find until it has been positively identified by a trained mycologist. Proceed with the utmost caution.

The role of fungi as a food source for humans can be traced to prehistoric times. Some of the oldest fossils on record have contained fungal spores. Unfortunately, for our prehistoric ancestors there was no field guide at the time on which mushrooms could safely be foraged or cultivated without causing violent illness or death.

Luckily for the modern man, language and literacy have been developed since then, along with massive field guides describing the appearance, edibility and key identifiers of thousands of fungi. A prospective mycologist can forage and cultivate mushrooms without the absolute, unimpeachable certainty of diarrhea or death, thanks in part to people like Levon Durr.

Durr is the owner of Fungaia Farm,



Photo by Patrick Maravelias

A forager displays his finds. It is important to note the mushroom portrayed was not properly identified, and was only picked because it was enormous. Proper identification of mushrooms can mean the difference between life and death, please forage responsibly.

a Eureka-based mushroom farm that provides mushroom grow kits and mycology knowledge to the community at large. Durr is also an advocate for at-home mushroom cultivation and provides easy-to-use grow kits that even students can utilize to produce healthy, climate-positive food right in their own homes.

Students living in the dorms would not be able to cultivate mushrooms and should absolutely not try to do so. Students living off-campus in close quarters with roommates, however, need not worry. Growing mushrooms can be done without sacrificing too much money or space, according to Durr, who teaches methods for growing oyster mushrooms with just a little bit of cardboard and a roll of paper towels.

“Oysters, [you can use] the actual stem you don’t even need mycelium. It just goes crazy, you know we just took a razor blade and a cutting board and sliced [the stem of the oyster mushroom] up and soaked some cardboard for three minutes and some hot water, pulled it out and just put it on there. So, it’s just fun for people, even if that’s all they do, and then they throw it away,” Durr said, illustrating the simplicity of creating “cardboard spawn” for oyster mushrooms. The spawn would then be placed into a variety of mediums, the easiest and cheapest of which according to Durr would be a roll of paper towels soaked in hot water.

Many other edible mushrooms can

be easily cultivated at home with grow kits from companies like Fungaia Farm. A cursory internet search will show hundreds of American companies with bags of grain spawn (grain inoculated with fungal mycelium) available to be shipped right to your door. All that is required of the user is to simply cut a hole in the bag at the proper time and mushrooms will grow out of that hole.

Oyster mushrooms (*Pleurotus ostreatus*), shitake (*Lentinula edodes*), and lion’s mane (*Hericium erinaceus*) can all be grown at home with easy-to-use grow kits and can provide healthy and organic food at cost for students looking to contribute to climate positivity or simply just to eat better.

Edible mushrooms can also be found growing wild around Humboldt County. Some choice favorites include chicken of the woods (*Laetiporus sulphureus*), oyster mushrooms, chanterelles, lion’s mane, several varieties of edible boletes and more.

It is important to note, however, that it is illegal to forage in state parks and the areas that do allow it commonly require permits. Private land is fair game with permission from the owner.

Word to the wise, anyone thinking they can score some “magic mushrooms,” (*Psilocybin*-containing mushrooms) from the forest floor may be playing a game of Russian Roulette with their life.

A common *psilocybin*-containing mushroom found in Humboldt Coun-

ty named *Psilocybe cyanescens* has a deadly look-a-like mushroom called *Galerina marginata*, known as the funeral bell. If that is not considered a sufficient deterrent, one must also consider it is a felony charge if you are arrested for foraging *psilocybin* mushrooms.

“One of our more toxic mushrooms are little brown mushrooms in Humboldt County and they grow right around and within sometimes some of the *psilocybes* that grow up here. To the naked eye, from just a glance they look exactly the same,” Durr said.

The illegality surrounding psychedelic mushrooms may be heading for change. *Psilocybin*-containing mushrooms have been studied extensively in recent years, most notably by Johns Hopkins University and Stanford, for their potential benefits in a myriad of mental health disorders.

Anyone interested in foraging or cultivating fungi need only ask an expert to show them how. The Humboldt Bay Mycological Society hosts regular group hikes where experts will take people through different local forests and show them all the different fungi. Fungaia Farm also hosts workshops where they will show people how to put together mushroom grow kits in bags as well as how to grow mushrooms on stacks of dead logs, which according to Durr can provide mushroom “fruits” once or twice annually for roughly up to five or six years per log.

CLIMBING

FROM PAGE 1

“I’ve exploded my femur and my hip.”

The sun rises over the horizon and begins to warm the steep mountain face of Titlow Hill, just outside of Willow Creek in the Humboldt County wilderness. Bags full of various ropes, pads, carabiners, Cliff bars and chalk bags are strewn about haphazard rest areas as rock climbers filter in to begin their day of ascension. A cursory gaze at the many different rock faces reveals bolt, after bolt, after bolt, after bolt which guide the climbers up the face to the top of the ridge, revealing a breathtaking view of the steep 2,000ish feet of decline into the valley.

None of this would be possible without route-setters. Evan Wisheropp, a 30-year-old HSU Forestry alum and local climbing enthusiast has been the stuff of local legend in recent years in recognition of the sheer magnitude of outdoor rock climbing routes painstakingly set by Wisheropp over the years. He is also in the process of publishing a comprehensive guide to the outdoor routes in Humboldt County, and in addition to that, he catalogues and describes a bulk of the outdoor routes on an app called Mountain Project.

“At least half of the bolting and developing that has taken place in Humboldt has been done by Evan,” said Joaquin Estrada, general manager at Far North Climbing Gym in Arcata. “He has given his life to climbing the redwood coast and making climbing accessible to all.”

A self-professed climbing junkie, Wisheropp does freelance photography to pay for his living expenses on the few days a week he is not climbing, but the bulk of his income is spent purchasing more bolts to create more and more routes for outdoor climbers to send. Even after a devastating injury to his femur, Wisheropp was right back climbing after 18 months of recovery time.

“I’ve exploded my femur and my hip,” Wisheropp said. “I took a big fall, slammed a ledge with my femur and it just, my entire femur was fractured and everything. It was 18 months until I could walk. I was in a wheelchair for most of that time. It was a real problem.”

Wisheropp said he has been climbing since he was nine years old, and began setting routes around the time he graduated from HSU in 2013. Since then, he estimated he has personally set around 250 routes. “Setting” a route means drilling bolts connected to a small metal ring into the rock face for carabiners to be clipped to as a climber ascends a route. Outdoor climbing is unique in that it is completely dependent on people like Wisheropp, who do it for the love of the sport rather than monetary gain.

“Climbing is a wonderful activity. It makes people happy. it’s like a therapy. It gets people out into the outdoors who otherwise might not be out in the outdoors, and when people go out into the outdoors, it makes them want to protect the outdoors,” Wisheropp said. “If you live your life in the city you might not know what out there needs to be protected. So, when people are out there being in nature more, they’re going to fight for things like slowing

“Climbing is a wonderful activity. It makes people happy. It’s like a therapy.”

-Evan Wisheropp, route setter



Evan Wisheropp builds a route at Promontory Point on Aug. 26, 2021.



HSU student Connor Karns sends a route called ‘Flight of Fancy’ AKA The Dog’s Eye (difficulty 5.12c) at Cold Springs Climbing Area on Aug. 14, 2021. Wisheropp designed the route.



Evan Wisheropp rappells and checks his work on “Full Mast,” a route at Promontory Point.

down climate change and they’re going to fight for things like access to natural spaces and clean air. I think that’s what keeps the world running.”

Wisheropp adheres to what he calls the “new wave” of route development technique. He essentially climbs up and down the rock face as many times as necessary to set the perfect route. He also pulls off loose rock to protect future climbers from sending chunks of limestone flying into the unsuspecting face of their belayer. This differs from what he referred to as the “old school” method, wherein the route setter essentially sets each bolt on the initial ascent of the rock face. Wisheropp said this method is more “badass” but typically results in routes that are not quite as safe.

“Modern route development nowadays has a strong, strong attentiveness to both technical and the artistic side,”

Wisheropp said. “Because, we want the routes to be safe, we want them to be fun and we want people to come off glowing like ‘Whoa that was wild’ instead of being terrified.”

According to Wisheropp, outdoor climbing in Humboldt County is at risk of becoming the subject of increased scrutiny from Parks departments and various land management bureaucracies because of the liability of a relatively dangerous activity happening on their land. Wisheropp has been an advocate for the climbing community in this regard, by acting as an unofficial liaison between the local climbing community and those who would impose regulations on the sport within the county lines.

Wisheropp also urged local climbers to exercise caution and learn the intricacies of outdoor climbing before attempting to do it on their own, as any

Lumberjack sports update

Soccer teams return from road trip with mixed results

by Patrick Maravelias

Men and women’s soccer had two away games each last week. The women’s team played two matches in Monmouth, Oregon and the men’s team had two in Hayward, California.

The women’s team won their first match Friday 4-1 against Central Washington University and lost their second match 0-1 versus Western Oregon University.

The men’s team won both of their matches in Hayward. They won the first match Friday 4-0 against Hawaii Pacific University and secured their second win against Holy Names University Sunday 3-0.

The men’s team will be playing at home this week, with a Friday match against Simpson University and a Saturday match against Chico State.

The women’s team will be playing a match in Atherton, California this Thursday against Menlo College and will also be playing in Hayward, California on Saturday against Holy Names University.

serious injuries sustained in these areas increase the risk of outdoor climbing being banned outright. He urged common sense and caution for the sake of the sport and for the sake of the benefit the Humboldt County economy receives from people traveling to the area for rock climbing.

“After 23 years of climbing I still learn something new every single day,” Wisheropp said. “It’s not like riding a bike where you ride a bike and then you know how to ride a bike and now you know everything you need to know about riding a bike. If you don’t learn something every single day of climbing then you’re not actively trying to improve or gain.”

Wisheropp lives in Arcata with his partner and can usually be found glued to a rock face somewhere in the trees, or at Far North Climbing Gym on 10th St in Arcata.

Big trucks and bleeding ears

Why you should give country music one last shot

By Jen Kelly

I was in the market for a gas mask last summer. I had no time to order it. There was nothing good at the Ace Hardware in Arcata. Nothing at the local auto shops or paint stores. I knew I needed to check the Ace Hardware in McKinleyville. It was unfortunate, but no matter what went on in the McKinleyville Ace, it was better than being tear-gassed.

I braved the store. I found some useful tat, but no gas mask. The man in front of me in line wore a thin-blue-line face mask, but I supposed it was better

than no mask. One of the worst songs I have ever endured assaulted me from the radio. It was a country piece about the singer’s “big black jacked up truck.” I left the hardware store with no protection against tear gas but a few new truck descriptors.

I am honestly unsure if the tear gas ended up being worse.

“I listen to everything except for country” goes the common refrain. I get it.

At a protest last September, I saw someone in a large black truck run over a protestor. Any of the protestors at the scene could have been the one hit. It was just their luck. The protestor went under the truck, but they suffered only minor injuries, largely because of how jacked the big black truck was.

I pulled into a McKinleyville gas station a few days later. I cringed as I parked by a large, lifted black truck. I left my car and eyed the back of the truck, noting a punisher symbol with a thin-blue-line worked into the skull. I bought a cup of burnt coffee from the gas station market and walked back out

toward my car. Now there were two additional large black trucks. One truck bore a small confederate battle flag sticker.

I left the gas station with a sick feeling in my stomach. I could hear the song again, exalting these ridiculous trucks. They weren’t even good at killing people.

Country music feels like tear gas. Like the thud of a body meeting black painted sheet metal. It smells like gasoline fumes and tastes like burnt coffee.

“I listen to everything except for country” makes sense. But I still listen to it.

I can’t help that country music also sounds like home. It feels like grease between my fingers and dust beneath my nails. Like the crunch of gravel beneath the tires of my dad’s old truck.

Months later, I went back to an old playlist cleverly named “I Don’t Like Country” sitting in my Spotify library. The playlist holds all the songs that used to sound like home. None of it carries overt authoritarian themes or culture-war messaging. The artists are

diverse, and the sounds range from modern americana to gospel.

Now the music sounds like everything my home is not. It sounds like a home I could have had if the people on the wrong end of a big black jacked up truck had what they wanted.

Everyone who says they “listen to everything but country” might want to try again. You don’t have to enjoy it. It’s a hard genre to navigate, but for me, it’s worth digging. Much of it describes the pain and joy of working-class experiences. It talks about the gruesome consequences of American Protestant ideology. It digs into American sickness and finds a version of America I could abide.

It feels like my home and tear gas at the same time. These days home may as well be where the tear gas is. Country music is both the weapon used against protesters and the protest song. It’s complex and deeply American. Authoritarian and populist. It’s a map of the American condition. It contains a path to a better home that I wish more people like me could see.



Photo by Carlos Holguin

Demonstrators stand in front a pick-up truck while protesting in front of the Humboldt County Courthouse in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement on September 24, 2020. The demonstrator pictured was not hit or injured however, an individual was later struck by a vehicle resulting in minor injuries.

Stop speculating on John Mulaney’s personal life

You do not know this man

by Sophia Escudero

Comedian John Mulaney has certainly been having a rough year. This past December, he was admitted to rehab after a relapse in alcoholism and cocaine use, and upon his release he announced his separation from his wife of six years, lampshade artist Annamarie Tendler. Within a week of the news going public, rumors began to circulate that Mulaney was already in a relationship with actress Olivia Munn. In his first interview of 2021, Mulaney confirmed on The Late Show with Seth Meyers that he is in a relationship with Munn and that the couple is expecting a child.

This was definitely surprising information for me to read. I’m a long-time fan of Mulaney, and some of my favorite material were the bits he did about his relationship with his wife. However, the fact remains that I do not know this man. I have never met him, and I likely never will. Although I have watched his comedy specials almost to the point of memorization, John Mulaney is not my friend and never will be. I know nothing about his life and experiences. He may have a confessional, personal style of comedy, but that does not make me anything beyond a stranger, or him anything other than a face on my screen. I only know what he tells an audience.

Many fans of Mulaney, myself included, were anxiously hanging on for news during his stint in rehab. It’s natural enough to want to know someone is doing okay, but the more personal

news coming out about him became, the stranger the fixation got, and the more concerned I was about myself and my own interest. Reading articles speculating on the nature of his relationships honestly began to feel gross, like I was looking at something that I wasn’t supposed to see. The news of Mulaney’s divorce had some on social media going so far as to compare it to the separation of their own parents. When the news came of him dating Munn so soon after the split, people quickly accused him of moving on too fast and her of being a homewrecker. From the way people talked about her, you would think Munn had seduced their actual dad.

The term “parasocial relationship” is thrown around a lot online and it is largely misunderstood. Essentially, the term refers to a psychological phenomenon where people form imaginary


friendships with media personalities. People see a person on television or social media often enough, and come to see them as a friend despite the lack of real connection. Our monkey brains are not evolved to recognize a difference between a Netflix comedian and a fellow hunter-gatherer tribesman. We have to put in mental effort to acknowledge that celebrities are just strangers we know a disproportionate amount of information about.




Please note that an interest in celebrity gossip or having a favorite celebrity is not inherently bad or parasocial. If you’re a fan of someone, that’s great! There is nothing wrong with enjoying content. Following your favorite singer or actor on social media is completely normal. However, the most important thing to keep in mind is that whatever connection you feel with your icon, this is not mutual.

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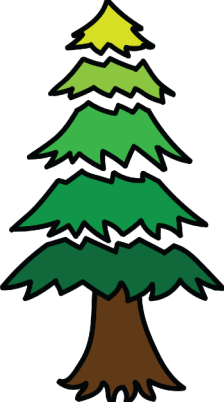




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