

July's Siskiyou Crest Festival brought attention to the importance of our wild places

BY DIANA COOGLE

More than a hundred people a day came to Pacifica Garden last July for the three-day Siskiyou Crest festival. They came from the Applegate, Ashland, the Illinois Valley, Portland, California, and even Georgia. And, as far as I could tell, they left with an uplift of excitement about the specialness of the Siskiyou Crest and a better understanding of why its public lands deserve protection.

Attendee Linda Pace, for instance, wrote to the Grants Pass *Daily Courier*: "The uniqueness and value of the Siskiyou Crest as a diverse and specialized habitat for plants, animals, and fungi came through in every panel, workshop, and keynote. Art inspired by the power of this region, including a session of original poetry... locally produced films of these mountains' and valleys' remote beauty, and music from native flute to our finest regional singer-songwriters, kept an audience fulfilled."

Such words were balm to the hard-working Siskiyou Crest Coalition (SCC), sponsors of the festival.

The hikes and field trips on the Siskiyou Crest were especially popular. SCC member Suzie Savoie had arranged for nine experts in the ecology of the crest to lead people to these amazing places. *Oregonian* journalist Janet Eastman, who went on the butterfly walk to Bigelow Lakes, led by Dana Ross and Linda Kappen, reported that Dana was "especially excited that they spotted a rare and elusive Johnson's Hairstreak" and noted that the group identified 31 butterfly species "found in this rich lepidopteran habitat." (Read her article, "Siskiyou Festival butterfly field trip," at hereisoregon.com.)

Saturday and Sunday's activities featured five panels of scientists well-known for their knowledge of the Siskiyou Crest. It was Suzie (again) who asked these experts to join the festival, organized their talks, and saw to the technical aspects of their presentations. I personally loved hearing about the teeming wildlife in Oregon Caves (who knew?), but the panelist I heard most often referred to with delight was the lichens guy, Scot Loring.

One person thought the best thing about the festival was that it brought together scientists who specialize in the Siskiyou Crest.

Another person said the best thing was "rallying the community who cares about the Siskiyou! Very nice energy."

Another person said, "The indigenous fire knowledge of [keynote speaker] Joe Scott was particularly impactful for me."

Sunday's keynote speaker, David Rains Wallace, talked about the importance of protections for the Siskiyou Crest—he has long advocated a national park in the Klamath-Siskiyou—but maybe the most delightful part of his talk was the sudden appearance of his hand puppet, Batty the bat, who, through the ventriloquism of his manipulator, countered and commented on points David made.

Those festival attendees who came just to hear the poetry got the point of the beauty and importance of the Siskiyou Crest because that was what the poetry was all about. The people who came just to shake loose with some good dancing to the music of Alice DiMichele or Windsong couldn't have missed that point, either, as they were dancing right in front of paintings inspired by the wild nature of the Siskiyou Crest.

In fact, the art show was doing its job throughout the weekend. There was never a time when I looked across the room that someone wasn't contemplating a picture or walking past the panels with heads turned or reading the displayed poems. The art show was a silent and constant witness to the beauty of the places we were talking about.

As festival organizer I am especially grateful to Peg Prag and Pacifica Garden—the perfect hosts—and for the work of Siskiyou Crest Coalition members Suzie Savoie, Rose Gerstner, Jeanette LeTourneau, Liza Crosse, and Cheryl Bruner. Other hard-working committee members were Marion Hadden, John MacKenzie, and Luke Ruediger.

Two after-the-festival comments were especially gratifying. One was from Matt Dybala, a hike leader who stayed for the whole weekend: "Honestly, the Siskiyou Crest Festival has probably been my most favorite community event since moving to southern Oregon over 20 years ago."

The other comment was from my sister Sharon, who came from Georgia to attend the festival and who said, afterward, "Now I understand why you love this place so much."

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David Rains Wallace, letting Batty address the crowd during his keynote speech.



■ CUB SCOUTS

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even submitted some of their creative projects at the Josephine County Fair, where they earned a first-place ribbon. Says Rachael, "These are all skills and activities that we wanted to do with our kids while they are growing up and might not have found time for if it wasn't for Cub Scouts."

"I participated in scouting as a kid. If I could wish for anything for my kids, it's to have a pack of friends to grow up with like I had in scouts," adds Rachael.

"There are so many more things that we want our kids to learn, so if you have a skill to share, a volunteer opportunity, or are interested in joining our pack," please reach out to Rachael at 480-540-4486.



Voices of the Applegate

BY DAVID FRANKLIN

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