

DARLINGTONIA from page 1A

It is not endangered but it does have very small populations, so any problem with the population is magnified because of those small numbers.”

Pollut added that the biggest challenge facing the rare plant is caused by humans.

“The biggest danger *Darlingtonia* faces is from loss of habitat. Typically, they grow in places with lots of bugs and standing water. When we start building in these places, we tend to drain things like bogs and move that water away from where we want to have our houses and buildings and roads,” Pollut said. “And we start installing things like septic systems, wells and things along those lines that pull water away from the area,

endangering the plant.”

Darlingtonia is rarely observed in a dormant state and, while visually compelling throughout the fall, it is most spectacular earlier in the year. The plant tends to grow in clusters with hundreds of individuals plants grouped together to form an impressive collection of long, semi-translucent hoods with dark green or red stripes on the outer leaves. The physical make-up of the plant is considered critical to the attraction and trapping of food by the carnivorous plant.

“*Darlingtonia* flowers in the late spring and early summer. They are a beautiful deep red color and they do flower upside down, which is thought to help protect the plant’s pollen. Rain is not good for pollen, so this is an important protection method for the



MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

A wooden footpath makes the Darlingtonia State Natural Site accessible while keeping people out of the delicate habitat of the *Darlingtonia Californica*.

plant,” Pollut said. “The fish tail leaves kind of act like as a lure. It is actually a part of the flower that produces nectar, just like the flower does. It’s there to try and attract flies or bees or whatever is flying around,

because it doesn’t really care what it eats.”

Because of the way that *Darlingtonia* attracts food, it has little control of what is caught in the pitcher that contains the chemicals that breakdown the flesh of the

bugs caught, allowing the exoskeleton of the creature to sink to the bottom of the pitcher and eventually be absorbed into the plant’s flesh.

One of the mysteries that Pollut is hoping to solve,

along with many others, is the manner in which *Darlingtonia* propagates. There have been numerous studies done to attempt to determine which pollinators are involved in propagating the plant and to this point there has been no definitive answer to the question.

“How *Darlingtonia* is pollinated is unclear,” Pollut continued. “One study has suggested that there is one type of bee that is responsible for pollination, but that data has not been confirmed. Spiders may be playing some part in the process, but at this time we really aren’t sure of how *Darlingtonia* is pollinated.”

The Darlingtonia State Natural Site is located at 5400 Mercer Lake Road and is open to the public 24 hours a day. There is no fee required at the site.

IMPACT from page 1A

Working with The Ford Family Foundation and consultants from Dialogues in Action, the Siuslaw Vision initiated the evaluation process in 2018, ultimately instructing 13 community members on how to conduct qualitative interviews. “Dialogues in Action works on measuring things that are difficult to measure, education or groups who have a bigger impact on the community than just the numbers,” Sarles said.

The impact team met with Dialogues in Action for four hours each month as they learned about the evaluation process. The team was made up of a diverse population from the Siuslaw region, with members from Upriver, businesses, nonprofits, governments and those who work with schools.

“We had two goals,” Sarles said. “One was to introduce the community to an alternative method of evaluation that might get more to the heart of what nonprofits are doing, and two, to evaluate the Vision’s impact on education in the region.”

Tomaro added, “We wanted to know if the Vision was impacting people’s ability to continue lifelong learning, and the community’s ability to support lifelong learning. Measuring things like that is not easy. You can’t just count numbers.”

While the project did include a 116-response quantitative survey, Dialogues in Action led the Vision in a qualitative evaluation, looking for people’s personal connections to education, learning and the Siuslaw region itself.

“Basically, we’re trying to get to what people really believe about themselves and education deep down,” Sarles said. “It’s more than ‘How many classes did you participate in last year?’ and more like ‘How has education changed who you are as a person?’ It’s much deeper than your typical evaluation.”

The 13 team members conducted three to four interviews, each about an hour long, to get the information. Respondents were made up of people from different income levels, job history, time in the region, gender and age. A total of 37 respondents were included.

Tomaro said the in-depth interviews sought “to get past the surface and into the deeper layers” of people’s beliefs. Some respondents were emotional, and all talked about a value for education.

“In general,” Sarles said, “we discovered that our Siuslaw residents love and value learning and what it provides for them. They believe education is the key to whatever they want.”

Once the interviews

were complete, the Project Impact team went over the findings and grouped them into 11 components: 1. Education is the Key, 2. Choose Your Own Learning Adventure, 3. RSVP to Learn, 4. Everybody Needs a Learning Buddy, 5. The Early Bird Gets the Learn, 6. It’s Not Just the Money, 7. We’re All in This Together, 8. You, As a Teacher, 9. You Don’t Know What You Don’t Know, 10. The Awareness-Engagement Feedback Loop and 11. Connecting the Dots. They grouped these into three main branches: what inspires people to learn, what keeps people from learning and Ideas for engaging learners now and into the future.

“In the survey, there was a big focus on people finding what will be useful in their lives right now, whether its dietary for a health issue, or a home or car repair, but something they can use right away,” Tomaro said. “People feel that learning new things is the key to getting what they want out of life. We’re talking lifelong learning, so not always classroom settings, but any way that they can learn a new skill or find knowledge they can use.”

The full results, “The Impact of Education in the Siuslaw Region” were published in April 2019 and are now available for the community to read at www.rivercal.org/educationreport. In addition, Siuslaw Vision team members are taking the presentation to more community groups, including Mapleton School District next week.

There is a further take-away for the Vision, especially as it looks at barriers people have to learning or even attending events.

“Most people like to have a personal invitation — when someone personally reaches out to them and says, ‘Hey, I’m going to this event. You

want to come with me?’ That increases their comfort level,” Sarles said. “It also helps them learn from within their group of peers.”

The survey also showed continued interest in a community center for all ages. It would help generate more family-friendly events, raise kids in the understanding that learning can be a lifelong process and continue to unite people across multiple demographics.

“The more aware that people are of opportunities, and the more they go to them, the more likely they are to continue going to community events and learning opportunities,” Tomaro said. “Community connections that are built at these learning opportunities continue to build positive relationships and really build the fabric of the community.”

Increased social connectivity is important, Sarles

suggested, because the Siuslaw region has such a great resource in its people. From native populations to pioneer families, to retirees and newcomers and kids who were born here, the people in the region remain the greatest untapped resource of knowledge.

“Community connections are very important,” she said.

And what’s next for Siuslaw Vision, besides finishing a strategic plan and solidifying its new vision?

“We’re trying to figure out how we can best serve the community,” Sarles said. “We’re looking at taking a more convening, connecting role. ... As a team, we decided that the Vision’s purpose is ‘Building a Better Siuslaw Community Together.’ We wanted to make sure what we are doing is outward facing. Here’s what our community is doing.”

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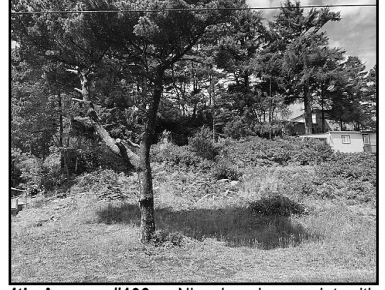
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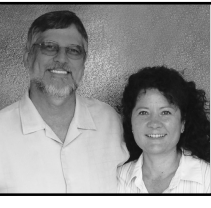
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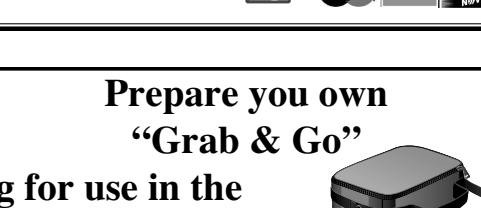
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