

CALAVERAS BIG TREES STATE PARK



School Year Student Report

Sept 2022 – June 2023

Prepared by Lillie Oravetz

State Park Interpreter I



TOTAL STUDENTS

PORTS On-Demand = 6,714

PORTS Webinars and Youtube = 2,724

In-Person Field Trips = 2,603



Picture of you or park goes here

Thanks to funding from **Calaveras Big Trees Association**, Calaveras Big Trees State Park has enough interpreters to make these programs happen.

The Association also gives money toward our Buses to Big Trees field trip program, funding the transportation costs for many 5th grade field trips.

Thanks to our docents, we can host many in-person field trips!



State Park Interpreter I Lillie Oravetz runs the PORTS program, conducting On-Demand and PORTScasts programs.

Senior Park Aid Teddie Jackson runs the in-person field trips, organizing self-guided and leading the guided tours with our docents, including Buses to Big Trees.



On-Demand Programs



Age group: K-6th

Winter Superpowers

Giant sequoias need to survive the bitter winters at Calaveras Big Trees and they aren't alone! Students will be introduced to giant sequoias and other living things that call this place home as well as their adaptations to handle the winter. This program mainly takes place inside our Visitor Center museum.

Giant Sequoia Ecology

In this program, students will be introduced to the wonders of the biggest tree in the world, the giant sequoia! We will walk around a giant sequoia grove and discuss the trees' characteristics, what they need, and how humans have impacted them.



Age group: K-12th

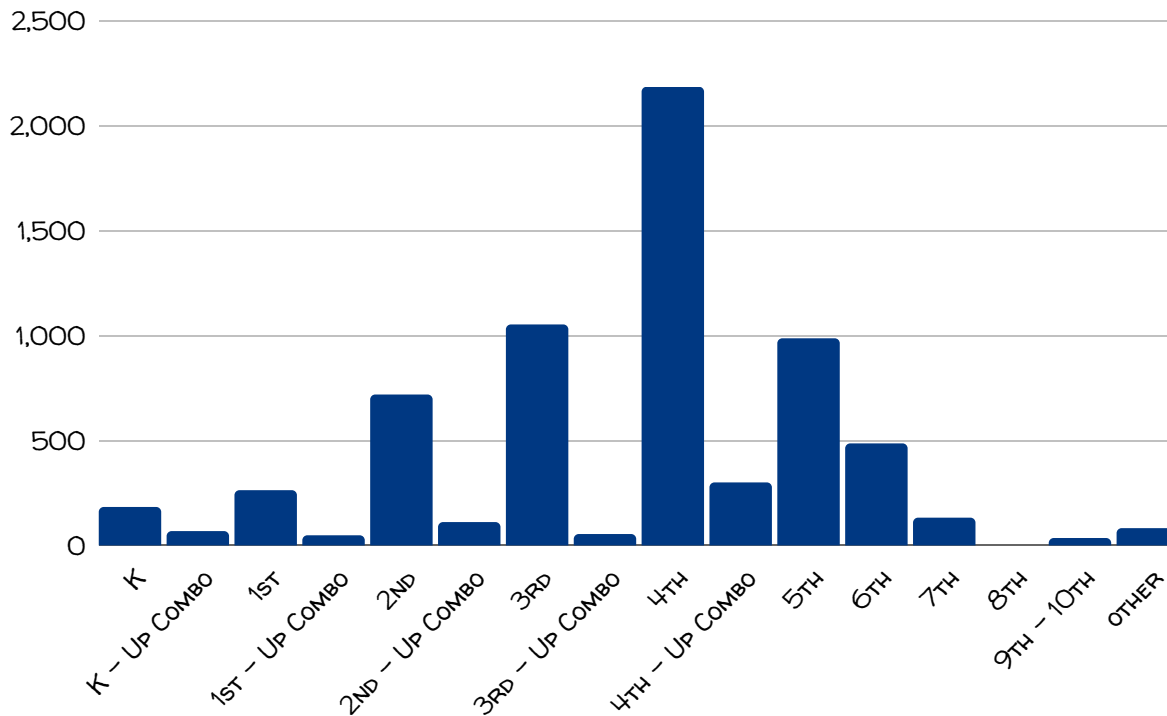
Fire Ecology

California has had many intense wildfires lately but not all fire is the same. As we walk around a giant sequoia grove, students will be introduced to the complexity of fire, how we have influenced it, and how important it is for the giant sequoia. This program is geared toward older students and can be taken with the Giant Sequoia Ecology program but does not need to be.



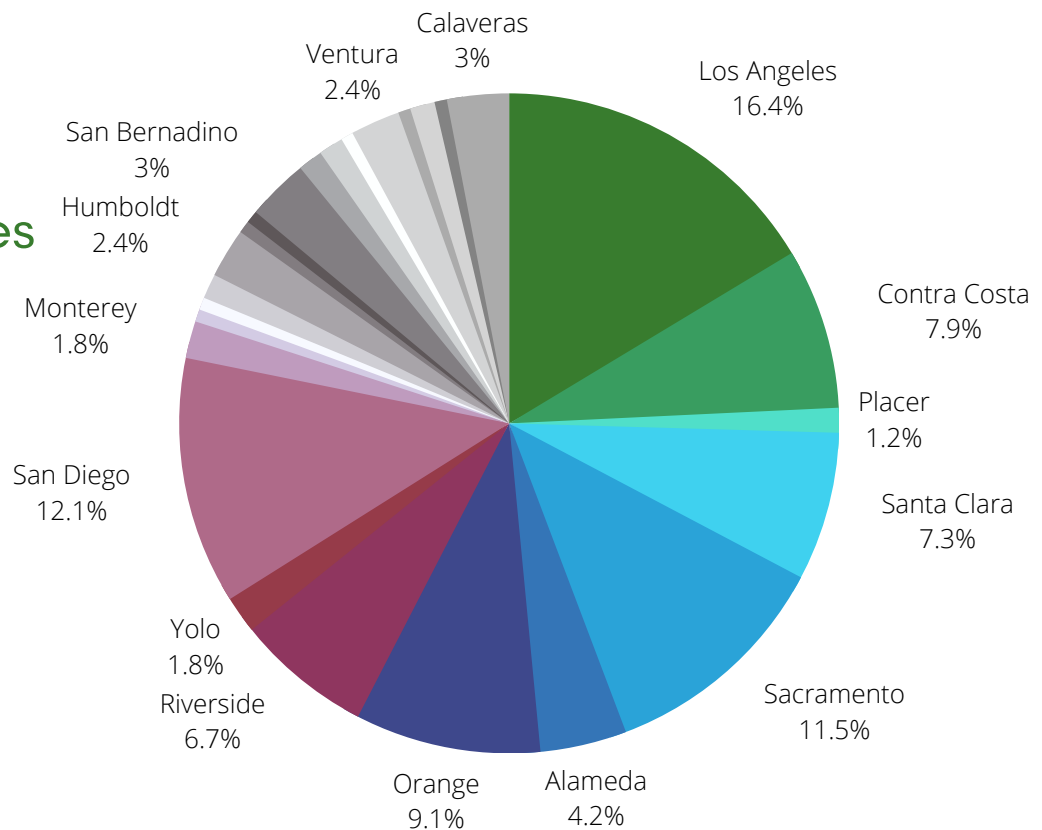
Age group: 3rd-12th

On-Demand Program Statistics



178 Programs
6,714 Students

26 California Counties
+ Out of State
+ Out of Country

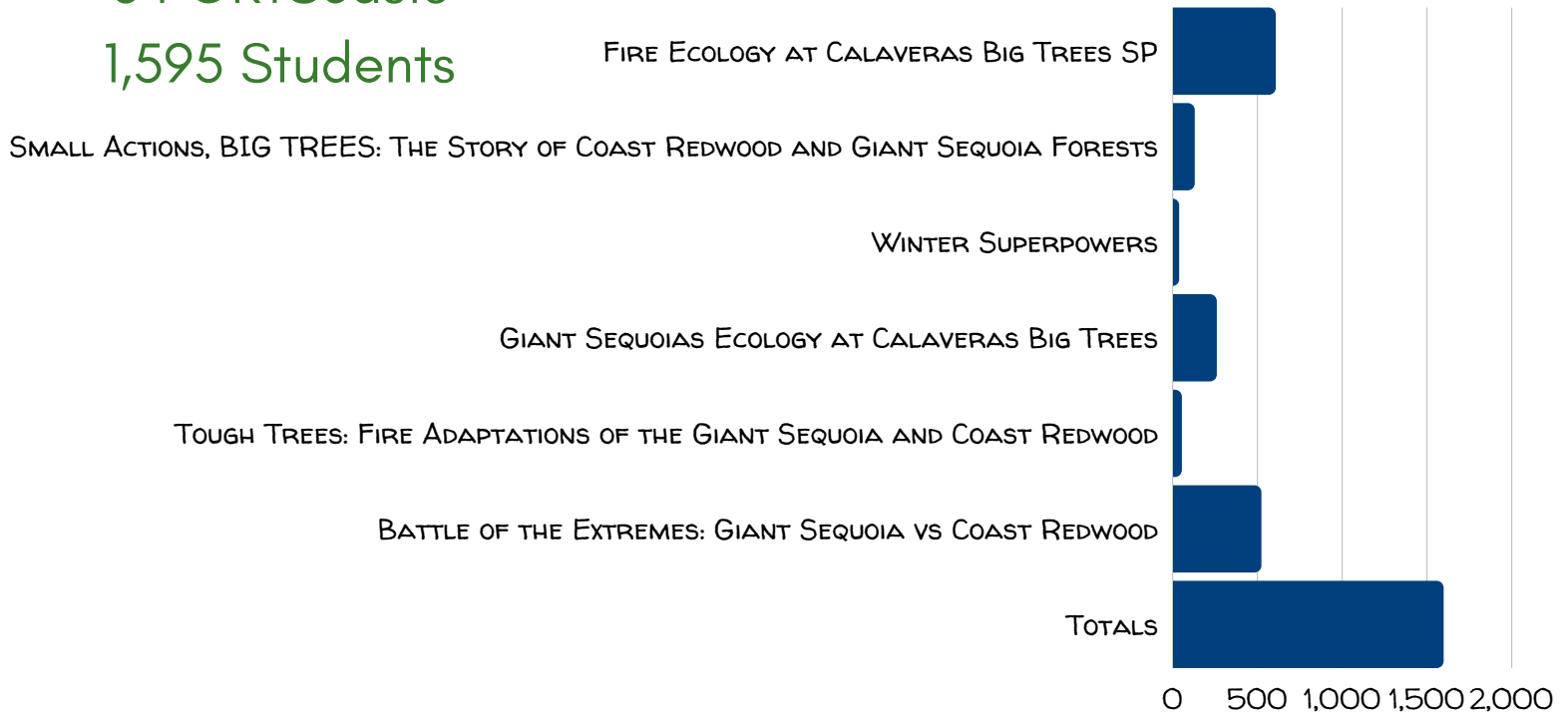


PORTSCasts (Webinars) and YouTube Views Statistics

6 PORTSCasts

1,595 Students

SMALL ACTIONS, BIG TREES: THE STORY OF COAST REDWOOD AND GIANT SEQUOIA FORESTS



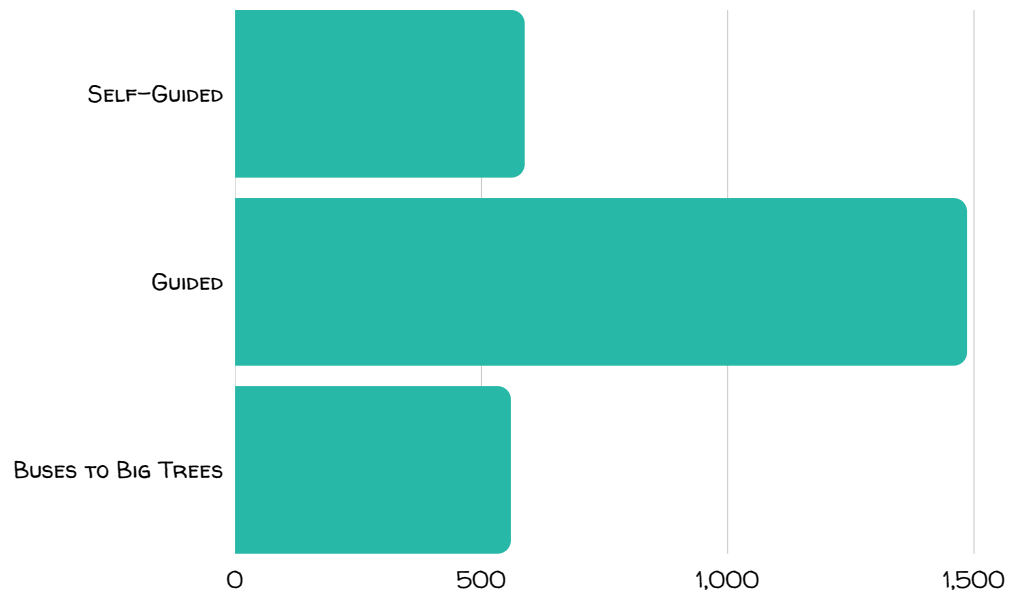
8 New YouTube Videos

1,129 Views



In-Person Field Trip Statistics

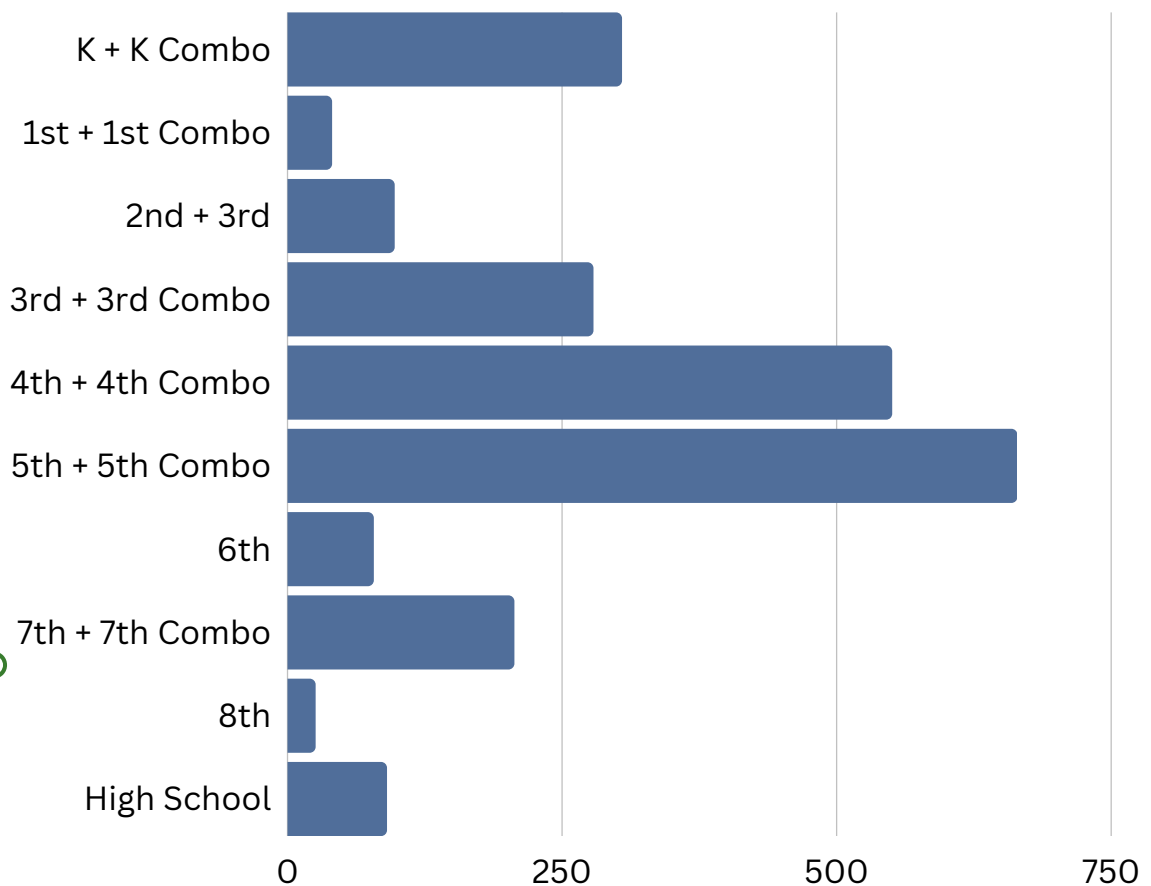
56 Field Trips
2,603 total students



Students K-11th

Majority of 5th
grade groups
were Buses
to Big Trees

1 3rd grade group
was passPORTS



Each field trip caters to state standards for each grade level, but all cover giant sequoias and park history.

Resources for Trips

Both PORTS and in-person field trips send the teachers Padlets, to better prepare the students before the trip and to provide them with resources they can dig into after.

PORTS Padlets

Giant Sequoia Ecology



Fire Ecology



Winter Superpowers



In-Person Padlets

2nd Grade



3rd Grade



4th Grade



5th Grade



6th Grade Meadow



Buses to Big Trees



Special Events

PASSPORTS

Lillie hosted a passPORTS program, in which two local 3rd grade classes tuned in to 3 different PORTS programs and then came to the park in-person to hike the North Grove trail and make their own PORTS programs!

Funders of passPORTS and coordinators of the program came to watch. They agreed to keep funding the program next year!

Lillie doesn't have any pictures of the kids, but Superintendent Danielle Gerhart snapped a shot with her and Interpreter III Mike Merritt.



EARTH DAY PORTSCAST

Calaveras Big Trees lead a collaborative PORTScast with Mount Tamalpais and Prairie Creek Redwoods State Parks all about the related redwood trees.

People from all over the world tuned in and it was a successful way to celebrate Earth Day! The program was titled: Small Actions, BIG TREES: The Story of Coast Redwood and Giant Sequoia Forests.



Feedback

PORTS Teacher Feedback

This year, PORTS sent out a survey to teachers after the program. While not many took the survey, most who did graded the programs as 5/5!

Many teacher also sent kind emails. Here are a few highlights:

"Thank you!

You were amazing and the kids (and teachers) loved learning from you! Thank you for standing outside in that weather...I can only imagine how cold you must have been.

Keep doing what you are doing because your passion shines through in your words and expressions and is truly appreciated."

"Our interpreter Lillie was AMAZING! She was so knowledgeable and engaging. She took students questions and even sent a follow up video pertaining to one of the questions. I would love to do this program every year!"

"Lillie,

Thank you so much! The students loved the tour of the Giant Sequoias! Thank you for being flexible on the technology and engaging the students. They learned so much!"



Feedback

In-Person Teacher Feedback

This year, Teddie sent out a survey to teachers after the program. While not many took the survey, most who did graded the programs as 5/5!

Here are a few highlights of the kind reviews:

"Everything was great!"

"Your docents are wonderful. They have so much information and knowledge to offer."

"I was with Linda and she was terrific. She adjusted her presentation to account for the limited attention spans of my students and I very much appreciate it."

"The students who were with Jim raved about him-- they really liked him. The students in the other class were with Frankie (some of them) and they enjoyed it."

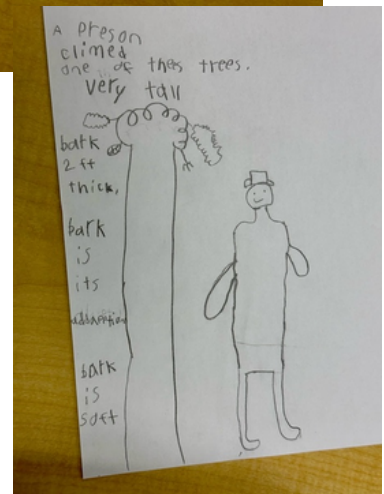
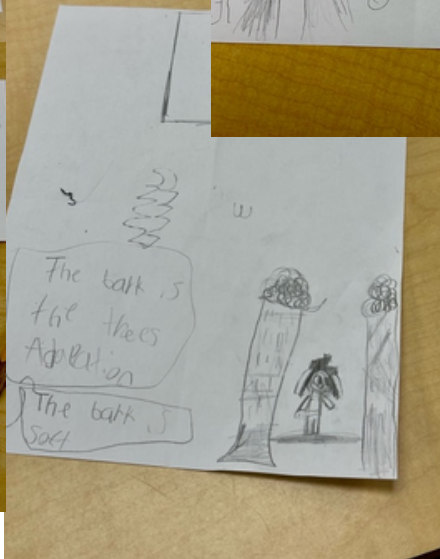
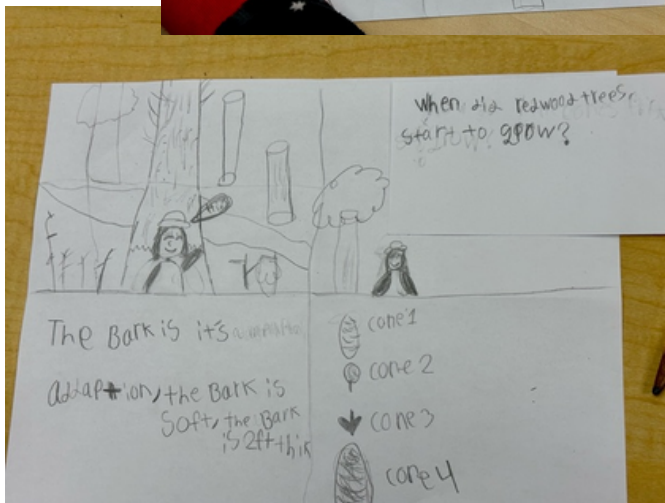
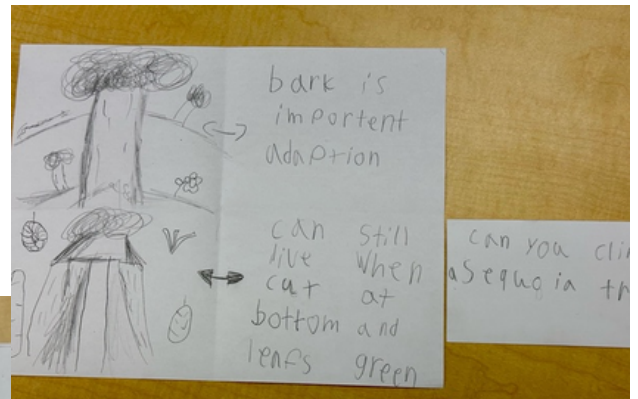
"Continue doing the awesome job you are already doing. THANKS!"



Feedback

Student Feedback

In all of our programs, kids have a fun time learning about nature. While many compliments were heard and appreciated during the trip, some were sent after.



Plus messages after a Fire Ecology PORTS program:

"Dear Mrs. Lillie, Thank you for teaching us about how fire can help trees and how it can kill them. At first I thought that little fires turn into big wildfires and kill trees. But now I know that they don't turn into big wildfires all the time ... Also I have to say thank you for showing me that tree stump. That is the biggest one I have ever seen."

"Dear Lillie, The verchool field trip was exquisite. I can't wait to do another one! You make it so fun. I was worried because normally I end up hiding under my or a desk with fire safety videos but not with you. I had a fear of fire from when my dad was cooking and nothing bad happed it just got a little big just a little. So he called the fire fighters ever since I had a fear of fire not any more ... Thank you for everything you were amazing and I don't think I will ever have a better fire safety person then you."

Celebrate Teachers

Last year, Teddie established Teacher's Open House (rebranded as Celebrate Teachers this year), in which teachers were invited to come to Calaveras Big Trees to learn about field trip opportunities in the tri-county area. This is an intra-agency event, with representatives from the Forest Service, other State Parks, State Fish and Wildlife, and local museums there to show teachers all the amazing field trip options.



While the turnout was not as high as we would've liked, the teachers who came were happy with all their newfound knowledge. Next year, we are planning to reach out to more sources to get the word out and schedule it in August instead of late June.

Looking Forward

Interpretation is going strong at Calaveras Big Trees! There is always more we can do, and we have some ideas for the future.

- 4th graders! With funding from the 4th Grade Adventure Pass, Lillie is now full-time. One of her future project with this funding is to get more 4th graders here for free, perhaps tying it in with a passPORTS field trip.
- Instagram! The paperwork template is there, we just need to fill it in. Then we'll be able to reach more people outside of Facebook.
- Celebrate Teachers! Next year, it'll be more well attended.
- Library partners! We have just made connections with the San Andreas Library- could we make a school-based program with them?



Stay tuned! We could not do all of this without support of the Calaveras Big Trees Association nor all of our docents. We appreciate it and so do our thousands of student visitors.