

SEQUOIA PARK ZOO



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SEQUOIA PARK ZOO'S FREE, UPCOMING CONSERVATION LECTURE

EUREKA, Calif. (Dec. 4, 2025) –

The Sequoia Park Zoo's fifteenth Conservation Lecture Series continues **Wednesday, December 10, 2025, at 7PM PST**, hosted by the Sequoia Park Zoo Advisory Group's Conservation Council. Cal Poly Humboldt faculty Drs. David Sinn, Rafael Cuevas Uribe, and Sean Craig discuss their mission to save the critically endangered sunflower sea star and how students play an important role in their conservation efforts in their talk entitled "Saving the Sunflower Seastar: Students Making Waves in Conservation."

In 2013, sea star wasting syndrome (SSWS) began devastating sea star populations along the west coast of the Americas. This syndrome impacted sunflower stars, a keystone predator in rocky reefs - which are now considered functionally extinct. Since then, many incredibly biodiverse and productive kelp ecosystems have become low biodiversity ecosystems dominated by purple sea urchins. Restoring sunflower stars along the west coast of North America is a critical component of the restoration of kelp forests in these same areas, since sunflower stars serve as keystone predators, protecting kelp forests from overgrazing by urchins. Restoration requires knowledge of life history and aquaculture, since any wild reintroductions will have to come from captive individuals. Their research began when two undergraduate students in Cuevas Uribe's mariculture course asked what it would take to do research with sunflower sea stars. With funding from the Sequoia Park Zoo Conservation Grant, they were able to design and construct an echinoderm nursery system at the Telonicher Marine Lab. This system has since been used to rear larvae of sea urchins, sea cucumbers, and sea stars. In 2024, they received six juvenile sunflower sea stars from Moss Landing Marine Labs, and in September 2025, they acquired an additional 15 sea stars from the California Academy of Sciences. In this talk, they will detail the idea and implementation of an 'insurance population' of sea stars in Humboldt, give the latest information on SSWS, and outline the prospects for future restoration of sea stars along local coastlines.

Dr David Sinn obtained his BSc in Marine Biology from Texas A&M University at Galveston in 1994, his MSc in Biology from Portland State University in 2000, and his PhD from the University of Tasmania in 2006. Throughout his graduate studies, Dr Sinn combined his passion for marine life and behavioral ecology through research on octopus and squid. After his PhD, Dr Sinn worked as a research fellow on several research projects involving skinks, lizards, and native rats in Australia before the opportunity arose to apply his interests in behavioral ecology to critical conservation issues, including devil facial tumor disease in Tasmanian devils and chytrid fungus in Tasmanian tree frogs. After a brief stint for the US federal government assisting

with behavioral modifications of TSA working dogs, Dr Sinn again ended up working on a 3-year intensive field project in the Australian desert involving sleepy lizards and their parasitic ticks. More recently, Dr Sinn began a serious descent into pedagogy, and for the past 7 years has worked as a full-time educator in the Wildlife Department at Cal Poly Humboldt. While his focus has shifted towards teaching, he continues to publish regularly, and in addition to the work he helped initiate with California sunflower seastars, he has also begun to design undergraduate research opportunities at Cal Poly Humboldt involving disease dynamics and our local salamander species.

Dr. Rafael Cuevas Uribe's career in aquaculture started in 2001 when he worked in a fish hatchery in Mexico. He has a master's degree in aquaculture from Kentucky State University and a PhD in Wildlife and Fisheries from Louisiana State University. Rafael did his post-doctorate at Kentucky State University, working with paddlefish and reclaimed water aquaculture. He has been at Humboldt for 11 years, where some of his research has been on integrated multi-trophic aquaculture systems, seaweed farming, and studying techniques to remove the pikeminnow from the Eel River. He teaches 7 courses at Cal Poly Humboldt and currently has 4 graduate students. He is an associate professor at the Department of Fisheries Biology.

Dr. Sean Craig is a professor of Zoology and Marine Biology at Cal Poly Humboldt. He is interested in marine community ecology and works on Marine Protected Areas in rocky intertidal, sandy beach, and subtidal kelp bed habitats to help promote conservation of important nearshore marine habitats.

The 2025-2026 Conservation Lecture Series will be held in-person and remotely through Zoom. The in-person lecture is located at the Sequoia Park Zoo's Flamingo Room at 3414 W Street in Eureka. Attendees can enter the Zoo through Gate C, located to the left of the main gate at the W Street crosswalk.

The event begins with refreshments and a Zoo update slideshow at 6:45 PM. The lecture starts promptly at 7:00 PM. Attendees are encouraged to ask the speaker questions after the presentation.

Virtual attendees can watch on Zoom (where a free, registered Zoom account is required). A link will be available at redwoodzoo.org and on the Zoo's social media channels on the day of the lecture.

Zoom Meeting: <https://zoom.us/join>

Meeting ID: 816 8377 5123

Passcode: 187432

Join the Zoom Meeting by Phone: +1 669 444 9171

ABOUT SEQUOIA PARK ZOO

Founded in 1907, the City of Eureka's Sequoia Park Zoo is the oldest zoo in California and is proudly accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA). Sequoia Park Zoo is home to over 150 animals representing more than 50 diverse species and includes the award-winning Redwood Sky Walk and the tallest urban forest on the planet. Visit redwoodzoo.org and redwoodskywalk.com for more information.

Sequoia Park Zoo inspires conservation of the natural world by instilling wonder, respect, and passion for wildlife and wild places.

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Photo Attached: David Sinn (left), Rafael Cuevas Uribe (middle, pictured in the lab with a sunflower sea star), and Sean Craig (right), courtesy of David Sinn, Rafael Cuevas Uribe, and Sean Craig.