



Another year is in the books!

Every December I seem to spend a lot of time marveling at how busy the previous year was, and this year is no exception. After five years (!) in the job, I feel like I'm hitting my stride in term of managing the reserve, and accordingly we embarked on a lot of big projects in 2023 to replace aging and obsolete infrastructure, including several roofs, septic tanks, water tanks, and a bridge. More information on the bridge is included below. To list them, these improvements may not seem that interesting in the whole scheme of things, but they are crucial nonetheless to insuring that Hastings is able to accommodate all of our users safely, and that we are fulfilling our mission of stewardship, education, research, and public engagement.

We participated in several community events, and hosted our own K-12 programs and a fantastic Open House in June. Incidentally, our Open House schedule seems to be on an every-four-years schedule, so mark your calendars for June 2027! We are hoping that our kids day camp becomes a permanent addition to our program offerings, and we've continued to build partnerships, and expand and diversify the scope of our research users. Keep an eye out for more information in the coming months about arts and humanities research at the reserve, as well as projects focused on understudied species.

Anyone interested in our research projects, education programs, or curious about the future directions of the reserve can [join our mailing list](#) to keep updated on upcoming events and other Hastings Happenings. Below are a few highlights from the past year.

Wishing you all a restful holiday season, and a Happy New Year,

Jen Hunter, Resident Director
Hastings Natural History Reservation

A new bridge over Finch Creek

The biggest (literal) accomplishment of the year was a new vehicle bridge across Finch Creek on the west side of the reserve. If you drove down Carmel Valley Road, past Hastings, between mid-August and mid-November, you likely noticed a massive amount of heavy equipment working near the stream. You may also have seen the two gigantic excavations and the piles, and piles, and piles of rocks and soil stacked between the road and Finch Creek.



Footing excavations for the new Finch Creek bridge, image on right includes your intrepid reserve director in the center, for scale.

It took four years of working with regional and State partners to get funding and plans together. It was a long (and stressful!) process, but we are thrilled that it's finished. This new bridge replaces an old concrete ford (photo below) and will allow our threatened Central Coast steelhead to access four miles of upstream spawning habitat. Construction funding was provided by a grant from the State Coastal

Conservancy, and funding for project design and permitting was provided by a grant from the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District (MPWMD).

This project was a real group effort. We had the good fortune to hire Brough Construction, Waterways Consulting, Inc, and the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County to implement/support this project. Beverly Chaney at the MPWMD, Tim Frahm at Trout Unlimited, the Carmel River Steelhead Association, and the Esselen Tribe of Monterey County were all extremely helpful at various stages of the project. In the future, we are hoping to install instrumentation to allow researchers to monitor fish passage, and provide much needed data on stream conditions and the life history of steelhead in the Carmel River watershed.



The original stream crossing (top left) and the new Finch Creek bridge (bottom left). Jen Hunter (Hastings) and Bev Chaney (MPWMD), preparing to help move young steelhead out of the project area (right).