

Alice the otter arrived at the Eureka Library on June 21, 2021. Rosalie Thomson created and named Alice to honor her mother Alice Faye Thomson, a woman who gave her children a love of nature in Humboldt and admired women who worked to conserve natural resources. Alice has images of four women who during the 20th century worked in different ways to conserve nature. As society changed, the nature of advocacy altered from community organizer to professional, but all women were unique in preserving unique pieces of nature locally and nationally. The four women span over a century of conservation actions which continue today driven by others. They also span a variety of issues, areas and approaches to nature across eras when women were not considered capable of such activities.

Rosalie Thomson, the local portrait artist, wrote: "My Otter Art is honoring four women that paved the way for environmentalists today, but also remembering my mother ... Being a portrait artist, I thought deeper and wanted to pay tribute with their forms and display their names so anyone can look up all the amazing work these women accomplished in the field." Each woman is surrounded by her known conservation area of focus: Mollie Beattie, water, Rosalie Edge, bird feathers, Margaret "Mardy" Murie, landscape, and Laura Mahan, the redwoods of the Redwood highway. The Otter takes the name of Rosalie's mother, Alice Faye Thomson, who loved outdoors, beautiful trees, and especially all animals.

Looking at the women and going back in time we begin with Beattie, Murie, Edge to Mahan.

Mollie Beattie [1947-1996] studied forestry then joined the Vermont Forest Service after graduating from Harvard in the 1970s. She rose to national prominence in government and conservancy service. Bill Clinton named her the first female head of the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the refuges. Her accomplishments included increasing wildlife refuges, adding hunting/fishing programs to build support for refuges, advocacy of the Endangered Species act and reintroduction of the gray wolf to the Rockies. She released a rehabilitated bald eagle to celebrate the species moving from endangered to threatened and called it a career highlight.

Margaret (Mardy) Murie (1902-2003) was a naturalist, conservationist and writer who brought about the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska. As she was one of the earliest women living, studying and writing about conservation she was known as the "grandmother of the conservation movement".

Mardy grew up in Alaska. She was the first female to graduate from the Alaska Agricultural College and Mines School. She married in 1922 and went with her husband on an eight-month camping expedition to study caribou in Alaska. They moved to Jackson Hole Wyoming to study elk in 1927. There they raised a family and purchased a ranch which became the long-term conservation center and family home. The couple spoke, wrote and campaigned in conservation efforts with the Wilderness Society. Their efforts led to the 1960 establishment of the Arctic National Wildlife Range. In 1962 she published a memoir Two in the Far North. After her husband's death she continued her

advocacy and interest in setting aside refuge space in Alaska until her death in 2003.

Rosalie Edge [1877-1962] was a wealthy New Yorker who became interested in bird conservation while campaigning for women's suffrage. She criticized conservation organizations that were not brave enough to challenge inadequate protections for wildlife. In the late 1920s she bought and set up Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Pennsylvania, the world's first preserve for birds of prey. Rachel Carson's study at this preserve showed evidence of the negative impact of DDT exposure on bird reproduction. A book discussing her work is Rosalie Edge, Hawk of Mercy: The Activist Who Saved Nature from the Conservationists by Dyana Furmanskyy.

In 1920, Edge's interest in bird watching in Central Park and experience in gaining voting rights for women led her to advocate for the protection of species before endangerment. In 1929, she founded the Emergency Conservation Committee (ECC) to highlight and lobby for urgent needs. She told the National Audubon Society to adopt more aggressive conservation stances. She wrote of a need "...to protect all species while they were common so that they did not become rare." In a 1948 New Yorker profile, Edge's friend and collaborator Willard Van Name described her as "the only honest, unselfish, indomitable hellcat in the history of conservation."

Laura Perrott Mahan, a wealthy Humboldt native, was an organizer of local women's groups who built local support for saving redwoods in an area dependent on the forest economy. Work was centered around the old Redwood highway from San Francisco north. Mahan was a keen organizer and fundraiser. Long before the creation of the Save the Redwoods League in 1918, she and her fellow women's club members enlisted Eureka City businessmen to designate local redwood groves as city parks, attracting tourists and protecting the trees from logging. She organized the influential Women's Save the Redwoods League in 1919 to expand conservation advocacy and activism.

In 1923 the Save the Redwoods League (SRL) was slowly purchasing land adjacent to the Redwood Highway. However local women's groups had already spearheaded Humboldt efforts. Mrs. Mahan of the Eureka Women's Club and the California Federation brought the Federation yearly meeting to Eureka to highlight local issues. Eureka women announced plans to save the grove they were standing in. A dollar from each member in California would raise enough with state matches. The campaign worked, the grove was saved, and Julia Morgan was chosen to design the Hearststone monument commemorating the women's work which can be seen today.

In 1924 the Save the Redwoods planned with State legislators to save a grove near Dyerville. The League had an agreement with Pacific Lumber to temporarily pause logging on the land until funds were in place. Laura got word that logging had resumed so she and her husband raced to the woods. Pacific Lumber Company had cut trees to put in a railroad spur to access the forest. Laura, well known locally, stood in front of the logging equipment and stopped the loggers in their tracks. Her husband sped to Eureka, to file a formal injunction against further logging. The community rallied and the grove

was eventually saved. On the site of Laura's protest, about a half mile into the woods from the Founder's Grove plaque, there is a plaque commemorating the event alongside a few redwood stumps of the trees that fell before Laura's arrived.

Laura & James Wasserman, *Who Saved the Redwoods: The Unsung Heroines of the 1920s Who Fought for Our Redwood Forests*