

# BEACHCOMBER

SINCE 1946





## features

Chase Away  
Covid Boredom  
*See story page 5.*



Rock Legend  
*See story page 12.*



Christmas Market  
*See story page 10.*



Red Joe  
*See story page 22.*



## Saying “YES” at Christmas in Times of Covid

*By Brenda Kohn*

Facing it's 55th year of holiday tree decorating, the owners of Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco faced the dilemma of how to continue the tradition in the COVID atmosphere of 2020. In conjunction with the Academy of Art University the concept evolved of a competition within the school for a prize to be awarded by Ghirardelli for the best tree decoration. Long-time Muir Beacher Charlene Modena, who is Director of the School of Jewelry and Metal Arts (JEM) at the University, suggested having the competition by school department.



Each department would choose a theme for its tree decoration and the representatives for Ghirardelli would jury the entries.

The project immediately ran up against the effects of the COVID pandemic. The school had no students in residence, with many sheltering in place with their families all over the world, and most taking classes online. It would be particularly difficult for Charlene's department to participate since

it's work requires a studio to make jewelry and metal arts. Because of the short deadlines and logistical challenges, Charlene at first pulled her department out of the project.

After some persuasion by her colleagues, Charlene agreed to participate and came up with this tree concept for her JEM Department:

“Jewelry has always been a very popular Christmas gift, but did you

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# Ocean Riders

Winter at the Golden Gate Dairy Stables is, as was heard recently, “Not when we look our best.” But, we all know that looks aren’t everything. Valiant efforts are made by many to ensure that the horses are well taken care of. With weather in the mid-70’s and then down to the low 40’s, extra care is required to maintain their health and wellbeing.

Even with our best efforts, we know that life is precarious for all beings. On January 8th, we had to say goodbye to “Q”, who had been lovingly cared for twice a day by our hero and MB local, Buffalo Bruce Barlow. Bruce has special powers when it comes to horses. We are most grateful that he has agreed to become employed by Ocean Riders. He will feed and medicate horses most mornings of the week. His experience of what to notice and what is needed for each of our herd members is a huge blessing for us all. Bruce’s partner in crime is our beloved Cuco. These talented two seem to take every challenge in stride. We could not appreciate them more.

Along with our wise seniors who need extra attention, we also have a few horses in rehab. Dedicated owners and others attend to their specific needs, often on a daily basis. We have told all of the horses that they need to get better by springtime. We are not certain we have that much influence but intention and hope may help.

On a bright note, we have welcomed a new beautiful horse named Nugget. We hope also to add a new Mare to our herd in the coming weeks. They are wonderful reminders that things are always changing.

We wish our community a deep, cleansing, breath as we celebrate the extending light.

– Maureen Pinto

## ON THE COVER

*Looking at Big Beach from near  
Charles Borden’s house*

Photograph, c1965 or 1966

Camera: Rolleicord

Malcolm Collier

Malcolm was born in Taos, NM in 1948. After various travels the Collier family arrived in Muir Beach in late December 1958.

Malcolm went to SF State, helped start the Asian American Studies Department in 1969 and taught in that program for many years while also being active in photography and visual anthropology. He currently lives in San Francisco.



*Malcolm Collier with grandson  
Mateo. Photo by Irene Dea Collier.  
For more of Malcolm’s photos,  
see pages 6 and 17.*

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Contribute your essays, poems, stories, photographs, artwork, announcements, reviews – anything that celebrates Muir Beach and our community. To subscribe, email [editor@muirbeachcomber.com](mailto:editor@muirbeachcomber.com).

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# “Say Yes”

*Continued from page 2*

know that December, and especially Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, are also the most popular times for an engagement proposal? There is an abundance of memorable Christmas gifts, but then there are really memorable gifts . . . yes, an engagement ring and the words ‘will you marry me?’

Christmas is a very special, joyful time filled with family traditions. It is an intergenerational time spent with grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, children and loved ones. Couples want to share this special moment, and this special gift, with those they know and love. This is a time of Christmas memories filled with smiles.

During this time of COVID, wedding plans have changed or been postponed. Flexibility has become the key word. Couples and their families have had to overcome unexpected obstacles, but couples continue to say that this challenging time has strengthened their personal relationships, and given them not only a deeper appreciation of family and loved ones, but has also given them a truer understanding of the words ‘will you marry me?’

This tree celebrates this most joyful expression of commitment.”

The name of the tree would be “Say Yes,” and its decorations would consist of rings in and out of their ring boxes, some with bows. According to the proposal, the rings would be created by laser design with on-site technicians in the school’s laser studio actually cutting the metal rings.

The concept and tree design had to be presented to and approved



*Charlene Modena with “Say Yes” tree.*

by Ghirardelli. Charlene and the other competitors presented their tree concepts and drawings via Zoom to the Ghirardelli people. Charlene recalls that “the emotional impact of COVID systemically and surprisingly found it’s way into many of the tree designs. When we did the presentations, many of the presentations were linked to a personal response to COVID. Like the student from Hawaii who missed her Christmas with family in Hawaii, and made her family tree for Ghirardelli.”

Charlene’s JEM department was among the 15 accepted entries. Immediately, COVID had a further impact. Because live trees would not be available until late November, Ghirardelli ended up using artificial trees for the decorating. Faculty, staff and student all had to participate by Zoom. With only a month to carry out her department’s decorating project, Charlene sent an email blast to her students who already knew how to do laser design from their homes. Nonetheless, the ring theme would prove both challenging and flexible, plus a huge amount of time for both Charlene and the students.

In addition to the all-different laser cut metal rings, there were ring boxes which had to be glued together, bows with plastic diamonds, and 3D icicles for the solar-lighted tree. Everything needed to be sprayed with waterproofing. Charlene recalls many hours sitting at home tying 100 mylar bows...and numerous times during the process wondered “What the heck am I doing!”

The day of the actual tree decorating was very exciting, and joyful, especially because the students, staff and teachers who participated hadn’t seen one another in person for almost a year. This short sense of normalcy made the project all absolutely worthwhile. And, while the \$1000 prize went to the Photo Department’s tree with its camera on top focused down on photos of ordinary people hugging, Charlene received many positive comments on the professionalism of her department’s ring tree with its theme of getting married or engaged at Christmas even during the COVID pandemic. Other trees shared this positive spirit, such as those of the Graphic Arts Department with its continuous ribbon in beautiful graphic type of “Fa la la” all around the tree, and the Painting Department’s paintings of families at holiday gatherings.

*To Charlene*, all of these themes, and the whole project itself, reflected the idea that, notwithstanding the life challenges and technical challenges of COVID, “I’m not going to let the pandemic steal my spirit.”

– Brenda Kohn

# Chase Away Covid Boredom

By Anne Jeschke

Here's one suggestion to make sheltering in place during the Covid crisis a little more comforting and a lot more fun. And with Valentine's Day approaching, it's a great way to share something sweet. I'm talking homemade candy and cookies, a great substitution for the standard flower bouquet and commercial candy. *Time for some Covid cooking fun.*

Grandkids and cookies - That's a favorite in our family. You can decorate cookies for any holiday, but Valentine's Day is an easy winner. As the grandkids get a bit older, we have added candy making, but only the simplest kind. A Google search brings up many complex recipes, but I like the easiest and most creative ones best. And finally, for the more mature cooks and diners, a chocolatey mousse is hard to beat. So why not try something tasty, heart shaped, red, or chocolate, with lots of decorations for a Valentines Day activity and treat?

Cookies - Make a nice big batch of your favorite rolled cookie dough, the same one you use at Christmas. Roll it out and cut into as many heart shaped cookies as you can. Bake as usual and let cool on a rack. Now it's time to work on frosting. I like to use 5X sugar, a bit of softened butter or cream cheese, and a small amount of milk to bring it to spreading consistency. Divide your frosting into three bowls. Keep one bowl white, use red food coloring in another, as bright as you like. And the third should be pink - just a little less red food coloring. You'll need to stock up on red, white, pink and chocolate sprinkles at the grocery (or on line, if you're not going into stores during the pandemic). Now you can be as creative as you like.

Chocolate candies - This is the easiest chocolate treat of all! And if you are quarantining, you might just have all the ingredients on hand. First, you'll want molds. Plastic ice cube trays work great, or you can find heart shaped molds to order on the internet. Look in your cupboard for chocolate chips, candy bars, leftover chocolate candies from Christmas. Break them into pieces, and mix them together in a microwaveable glass bowl. Start with about 2 cups, or a little more. Microwave for 20 seconds, check and stir, and then again every 20 seconds until the chocolate is melted. Using a silicone pastry brush, brush the bottom and sides of each mold with chocolate. Use enough chocolate so that you can

no longer see the ice cube tray through the chocolate. Put the tray in the freezer.

Now select some fillings for your candies. My favorites are: s'mores, honey and nuts, and pbj's. But use your imagination and check your cupboard. Who knows what treats might be hiding there? After about 15 minutes, bring your tray(s) from the freezer. For the s'mores, break up some graham crackers into small pieces, and put some in the bottom of the chocolate shells. Cut a marshmallow into tiny pieces and add those atop the crackers. Don't overfill, because next you want to add a spoonful of the remaining soft chocolate to fill each ice cube cup to the top. For the honey and nuts, break up some nice nuts (any kind will do), and drop a bit of honey on top. Don't overfill, because you have to top them off with melted chocolate. And finally mix the peanut butter and jelly together to your taste, and put a bit into each chocolate lined cup. Be sure to leave room to fill up the cup with melted chocolate. You can do all your candies the same, or vary them, and let people guess what is inside each. Put the tray in the freezer for 20 - 30 minutes.

Take the candies out of the tray by twisting the plastic ice cube tray. You may need to prod the edges with a sharp knife if they don't come out easily. But generally they will pop right out. Wrap each chocolate in a bit of plastic wrap, and put them in a box for a gift, or just on a plate for dessert.

You can find lots of great chocolate mousse recipes online. Here is a nice simple one that should make enough for 6 or more little cups. Heat one cup of heavy whipping cream until hot - but don't let it boil. Beat 1/4 cup sugar with 2 eggs for a couple of minutes while the cream heats. Then, with the mixer on, gradually add the hot cream until they are mixed together. Put the whole mixture back into the cream pan, and cook on low until thickened. Stir constantly, and don't let it boil. Take off the stove and add in 1 cup of chocolate chips, stirring until melted. Cover the pan and put it in the fridge for 2 hours. You can stir it every 30 minutes or so. After 2 hours, whip another 1 1/2 cups of heavy whipping cream until stiff. Bring the chocolate from the fridge, and fold in the whipped cream. It should be smooth and creamy. Put in separate custard cups, and sprinkle a few chocolate shavings on top if you want to be fancy.



# High Tech Fire Safety

By Paul Jeschke

When a future, fast moving wildfire threatens Muir Beach, residents are likely to be directed to safety by a highly sophisticated, cloud-based emergency evacuation system now in the planning and implementation process.

Finding a safe route now can be problematic, according to MBVFA Chief Chris Gove. "With essentially three roads out and the very real possibility that wind-whipped flames and choking smoke will make navigating extremely hazardous, it's clear that Muir Beach residents and visitors need a better method of finding a safe route away from the fire," Gove said. Narrow roads and drivers unfamiliar with local conditions can result in dangerous, even deadly traffic jams. Spot fires

and dry, highly flammable brush along evacuation routes further threaten evacuees.

To make it easier to flee fires, Marin's newest agency, the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority, has contracted with Zonehaven, a Bay Area technology company that uses satellites, terrestrial observations, computer algorithms and advanced communications to provide real time evacuation information.

"This cloud-based service takes real-time satellite and internet inputs about fire risk, population centers, traffic flow and delivers simple evacuation instructions to residents and public safety personnel on a multitude of devices," said Mark Brown, executive officer of MWPA. "As fire conditions change, dynamic, up-to-the-minute

evacuation routes can be modified quickly to allow authorities to redirect traffic, in some cases even closing roads and turning others into one-way corridors to safety."

Brown estimates it will take three months to develop the platform with input from law enforcement agencies, fire departments, public works departments, the Marin County Office of Emergency Services and the Transportation Authority of Marin. MWPA will provide a detailed description and rating of the risks that affect wildfire evacuation. Funding comes from Measure C which Marin voters approved last November.

*(Full Disclosure: Paul Jeschke is a recently appointed MWPA board member, taking the place of Leighton Hills who previously represented Muir Beach CSD on the board.)*



*Looking south from hill before Seacape development. Photo: Malcolm Collier 1963*

# Happy Birthday Stanley

Did you ever wonder how we got roped into believing that a marriage license means you are supposed to stay with the same person for your entire life? Or how declaring a major in college and then sinking tens of thousands of dollars into that choice means you will have to make good on it for the remainder of your life so that your parents' hard-earned money or your student loans were worth it? When your parents bless you with a name they lovingly chose for you like Stanley Simpleton Stockholder are you supposed to hold onto that blessed name for the rest of your days because if you were to change it to the name you really think fits you best - Stargazer Mountain Walker - you might deeply offend them?

These are the kinds of questions I ask myself on my youngest child's sixteenth birthday today. Sixteen is a milestone birthday in our culture. At sixteen your child can legally have sex with their partner. It's good to know since they've probably been engaging in some sort of erotic play for months anyways. At sixteen your child can legally get a driver's license even when they can't keep their room clean for longer than three hours or pick up the wet towels from the now water stained wood floor or focus longer than five minutes on something other than youtube. This very same child at sixteen is deemed responsible enough to get behind the wheel of a four tired wrecking ball in motion.

This is unfortunate for several reasons. Let's imagine someone like Stanley at sixteen being given a driver's license even though he's now old enough to be detained and

prosecuted in court should he maim someone while legally driving the wrecking ball around town under the influence of intoxicating adolescent hormonal surges that cloud good judgement and give the name Simpleton a bit more credence. Stanley has been deemed adult enough to get a license despite the fact he is still a glaringly unprepared child.

The good news is that at sixteen Stanley is legally allowed to change his name, something his ridiculously stupid parents, the same parents that allowed him to get his license and gave him the prophetic middle name Simpleton, will now be overjoyed to hear. Because while on the face of things Stockholder isn't the worst last name you could have, it's just not one you want others to recognize as the same last name your felon child parades around the court room and local newspapers.

Stanley the fugitive, now Stargazer Mountain Walker, will be able to

quit school at sixteen, get a full-time job to pay for his passport and a flight to somewhere else where he can marry an equally hormonally impaired teenage girl named Sunday Sleep Sack who will become Sunday Sleep Walker and live happily ever after.

My sixteen-year-old will be getting a Vans black and white checkered belt for their sixteenth birthday and four neatly wrapped gift cards for \$25 each so they can buy endless amounts of useless crap at Target and on Amazon. I have even offered to help them legally change their name from the one we so painstakingly chose to the one they prefer. I'm okay with that, really. But I have learned from Stanley Simpleton Stockholder's tale and I will not be allowing my sixteen-year-old to get behind the wheel of anything with an engine. I didn't change my name to Not-on-My watch Mama for nothing.

— Nina Vincent



The Beachcomber thanks you for sharing all your beautiful art and articles, and supporting our neighborhood news. The newsletter is published four times a year, February, May, August, and November with deadlines for submissions a few weeks before printing.

Submissions can be emailed to [editor@muirbeachcomber.com](mailto:editor@muirbeachcomber.com) and early submissions are eagerly accepted, late submissions will be saved for the next issue.

Beachcomber online archive has recently been updated! Past issues are available to view at [muirbeachcomber.com](http://muirbeachcomber.com).

Thanks again, and Happy New Year!

# Beachcomber Financial Report 2021 *By Maury Ostroff*

The Beachcomber staff and the entire community of Muir Beach would like to thank those who contributed to our membership drive this year. It is your donations that allow us to continue printing the Beachcomber.

The Beachcomber operates on a financial model similar to PBS; we rely on donations which we euphemistically call annual memberships, but we distribute a printed copy to every mailbox in Muir Beach whether they have donated or not. (Just like you can still watch or listen to Public Broadcasting without having to respond to any of their many pledge drives.)

The table below shows how much money has been raised each year starting with the year 2014, when the new Beachcomber team took over. The last row shows how much was received for the most recent appeal, The Average \$ per Donation is generally above \$25 because we have many people who give more, sometimes \$50 and even \$100. Once again, a big Thank You for everyone who has contributed not only this year but in other years as well.

Year	\$ Amount	Number of Donations	Average \$ per Donation
2014	\$3,100	83	\$37
2015	\$2,005	59	\$34
2016	\$1,850	51	\$36
2017	\$125	5	\$25
2018	\$1,655	40	\$41
2019	\$2,445	65	\$40
2020	\$2,590	67	\$39

For those who are reading the details in the data, we did not have a membership solicitation in 2017 because we missed a few issues in 2017.

Printing costs account for nearly all of the budget, as all the labor done by the Beachcomber staff is volunteer. Perhaps if we raised more money, we could print more pages in color.

There are just over 150 houses in Muir Beach, and over 160 mailboxes. As a policy we put 1 issue in each mailbox whether they donated or not. There are some cases where we put more than one when there is more than one household sharing a mailbox, which is one of the reasons why we try to print a few extra copies to handle special requests. However, there are also a fair

amount of mailboxes that do not get a copy; there are ones that are so stuffed full of junk mail and flyers that are weeks and months old and obviously weathered, so it's clear no one is actually living there. Bottom line, it's just easier to use common sense and put one in every mailbox that is obviously being used and avoid meticulous record-keeping of individual subscriptions. And it's more in keeping with community spirit to distribute to everyone.

Don't forget we also have an online archive of the Beachcomber at [www.muirbeachcomber.com](http://www.muirbeachcomber.com).

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## The Ubiquitous Hamburger

What would we do without the occasional hamburger? Or cheeseburger, if you prefer. Every once in a while we just have to have one. The all American sandwich. I don't think today's teenager would make it through the week without a visit to In 'n Out, the seemingly Holy Grail of ground meat on a bun, though Shake Shack, and Super Duper are challenging their dominance. McDonalds, A&W, Wendy's, and Burger King are out. But, McDonalds still has great fries, and the pickles at Super Duper are a treat. Years ago living in London in the 60's the only burgers to be found were at the Wimpy Bar, a chain serving the equivalent of a White Castle burger. Then a couple of Yanks opened the Great American Disaster, just off the Kings Road in Chelsea, serving real American-style burgers, milkshakes, and apple pie. This entrepreneurial adventure later morphed into the Hard Rock Café. But, real hamburgers had been introduced in Britain and quickly spread to the Continent. Last time I was in France, Parisians were eating hamburgers in cafes throughout the City - with knives and forks. A somewhat interesting sight. The minced meat which originated in Hamburg and popularized in America over a hundred years ago, soon to be eaten between slices of bread, returned to Europe as hamburgers many years later. I like mine off the grill with melted cheese, on a toasted English muffin, lettuce, onion, and a slice of tomato.

But, I'm off to Mill Valley to run some errands so I think I'll stop at Phyllis Burgers where they have great, fresh cooked onion rings to accompany an excellent cheeseburger.

— Michael Miller



# MBVFD Update - January 2021

*By David H. Taylor*

The final months of the year were quieter for the department once the rains started and the fire risk diminished. (Though new Red Flag warnings are going up as I write!) The level of tension that everyone experiences annually with wind, heat and smoke in the air along with power shutdowns takes a toll even when we were fortunate enough to avoid any fires in close proximity.

In 2020, we ran 67 calls of which 32 were in our community. We responded often to incidents on the beach (mostly illegal fires during Red Flag warnings). This likely accounts for the fact that 19% of our calls did not involve any outside agency. The crowds that we saw here this year caused a record number of calls for assistance with stranded vehicles, etc.

Chief Gove organized a COVID-19 testing program for the firefighters at the end of last year in conjunction with a countywide effort. We have been testing ourselves every week or two since early December. Starting in the third week of December Muir Beach firefighters received COVID-19 vaccinations alongside other first responders in Marin. As of this writing most of us have

received two doses so that we can do our job and train without putting each other at increased risk. We were not able to train as regularly this year (we only held 24 drills) and it is imperative that we maintain our preparedness.

At the CSD meeting in December a new design for the new firehouse was presented by our architect Laura Van Amburgh. With the unanimous support of the Board the proposal is now going through a permit process with the County and Coastal Commission.

We are working with the County Fire Marshal to maintain our ISO rating. This rating information is used to assess risk by insurance companies. Recently along with Director Hills we spent several days testing fire hydrant flow rates in the community. Other ISO measures include distance from fire house, distance from fire hydrants, etc.

MBVFD has joined with our neighbors along the coast in a grant application to upgrade our self contained breathing (SCBA) equipment.



# First European Style Christmas Market

*By Tayeko Kaufman*

Carrying on the tradition of a Holiday gathering at the Muir Beach Community Center we were going back to the future when the Quilters put on the Holiday Arts Fair. For 40 years Judith Yamamoto, Kathy Sward and Outi Onorato (and many other members of the community) worked tirelessly to gather the local artists and craftspeople, and children to show their products. It was a very simple affair with just tables and baked goods provided by the community.

Over the years, the Quilter's Fair grew more elaborate and attained a reputation so that artisans from the wider bay area wanted to participate. Steve Shaffer took over the bar assignment; and different caterers took over the task of providing the food, and Denise Lamott took over the advertisement and before we

knew it, the Quilter's Fair became the official beginning of the Holiday season at the Beach.

Six years ago, the Quilters decided to retire and Laurie Piel volunteered to take over the running of the fair, along with Suzanne Miller who blessed us with her beautiful decorations and art for the venue. After Suzanne passed away, Laurie continued the tradition in her very special and wonderful way until the Covid crises prevented any indoor fair to occur. Many residents wanted the fair to continue so the Starbuck circle was considered as a possible location. The issues were daunting so the decision to attempt a new fair on Pacific Way began. Going back to the roots of the original fair, we planned a smaller local event. The talents of our community would be on full display with a variety

of choices for all taste. But most importantly, it would be a chance for the community to come together (with all the Covid restrictions to be observed) and to celebrate how lucky we are to live in this little paradise and keep the tradition of the official beginning of the holiday season in play.

At the eleventh hour we faced an issue that having the fair on Pacific Way would invite outsiders who would be visiting the beach and parking in the big lot to come to the fair. There was no outside announcement for the fair, this was to be a smaller local event. But seeing the festivities on Pacific Way could bring many outsiders into the community. So the fair was moved up to Sunset Way, but in so doing we lost some artists who needed vertical space to display their art.



*Muir Beach Garden Club (nearly sold out).  
Photos: Joey Groneman*



*Laurie Piel and her photo notecards.*

*Continued on next page*



So Saturday, December 5 arrived on a beautiful, but cool windless day. We set up our booths and the neighbors came. The mood was festive and it was just great to see so many neighbors who we had not seen this year due to the Covid virus.

Most artists sold out before the official end of the fair so it was a very successful event. The neighbors who participated were: Laurie Piel, Janet Tumpich, Tayeko Kaufman, Joey Groneman, Paxton High, Wendy Johnson and Peter Rudnick, Alexis and Francesca and the junior



artists, Jessica Rauh and Casper and Molly Hatvany, Simon Littler and family, and Sally and Victor Li.

Thank You dear community for attending, and a very special Thank You to the neighbors who displayed their wares which enabled us to keep the tradition of the Christmas-Holiday Fair alive.

*Francesca's table featured her painted fabrics and purses. Photo: Alexis Chase*

## MUIR BEACH

# Fishing Report

*By Fishboy*



*Finn Macdonald 11, from Bolinas, with the lingcod. Finn is an avid fisherman and that was his personal best lingcod.*



*Finn with Jessica Rauh 10, and Anna Rauh 12.*

Crabbing seems to be best for us in 75 feet of water off of Stinson Beach. We found the crab abundant and the kids really enjoyed being out on the ocean! We picked up a giant lingcod on our last crab / rock fish combo trip of the year.

## PERSONAL PROFILE

# John John Sward

By Beth Nelson

### Part 1

When John John Sward came to Muir Beach to work on Jerry Cannonson's house (currently the Crawford's house on Sunset Way), little did he know his fate was sealed.

Son of a 4th generation Swedish stonemason, John John looked out over the beautiful cliffs of Little Beach and thought to himself, "I wouldn't mind living here." This was the way one could dream in 1964. He was working on a fireplace at the Cannonson's when he first realized "I just love this tiny, beautiful beach hamlet." Fireplaces and woodstoves were the norm, hippies had quietly discovered the little paradise of Muir Beach and handmade houses were being erected by the free love generation, an alternative lifestyle that could be had for a song.

Jerry, a singer with the San Francisco Opera, suggested an empty place on Pacific Way and so that interesting, slightly eccentric house that stands today on Pacific Way, much like it stood in 1964, became John John's home. You can tell interesting stories have taken place there; everything about it seems rather magical thinking, artistic, and authentic. (There was even a scene in a film named "Wildflower" shot there, but that is another story).

The Cannonson's fireplace was to become the first of at least 30 fireplaces built by John John's loving hands in Muir Beach. But first you have to picture our little shire as it was then...

Nine wooden cabins for rent on Big Beach, that flooded in winter, but still were rented just for the sheer beauty of everything here. A tavern, also on Big Beach, where bands came to play, many quite famous, and where one could buy a drink and dance under a moonlit sky. As John John unabashedly told me as we sat outside talking this week, he was a hippie. His wonderful wife Kathy, who has been an active and integral part of Muir Beach for 50 years, piped up and said "I was a hippie too!"

Their story of love is like something right out of a 1960's novel. Kathy had been travelling with a caravan of other hippies across America and into Canada. She landed in Sausalito, on an abandoned piece of land, set up camp in her caravan, and came out to Muir Beach one day with a friend to drop acid. Yes, one mustn't forget Ken Kesey and the Electric Cool-aid Acid Test had a Muir Beach moment here as well. Her friend had a convertible Porsche, and parked in front of John John's house. He came out, all six foot two of him, and the next thing she knew they were taking a tour of Muir Beach...imagine the empty hillside then, the handmade houses, those brave enough to drive over the mountain to work each day and back. This was not an easy place to reach. Somehow one thing led to another on that fateful day and Kathy too found herself in Muir Beach, married to John John the stonemason.



*Kathy and John John.*



*The fireplace that John John built in two days. Kathy said they needed heat for a party!*

It's hard to imagine now that Andre Pessis who first started his music career with the tavern bands, became a wildly famous music producer, and to this day organizes the bands for our Muir Beach Barbeque (49 years and counting).

It's hard to imagine the crowds that line Pacific Way even on a January weekend, were once non-existent. It's hard to imagine how pristine, isolated, and unique, it must have been to live here then.

*Continued on next page*

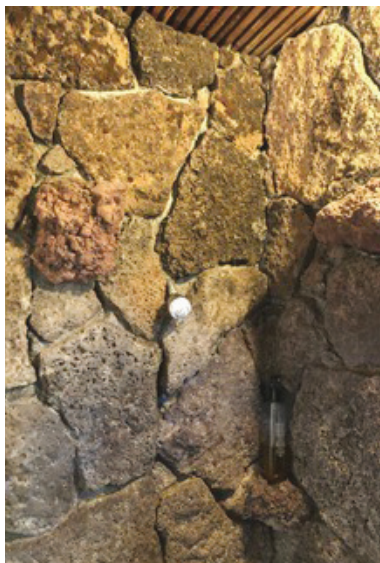


When I first came to Muir Beach, a single mom with an eight year old, John John was our fire chief. I was living in Gerry Pearlman's house while he was off travelling somewhere and could not believe how beautiful his fireplace was.

Made entirely of round beach rocks, his fireplace was built not at ground height, but at sitting height. His shower and bath – also made entirely of giant stones! Both of course, made by John John.

When we meet at the Community Center (something we are missing terribly), that big roaring fireplace was built by John John. Did you know there is a bread oven behind that enormous woodpile – an experiment that failed (it never got quite hot enough). But all this exemplifies the sort of 60's figures involved at the time, along with their ethos – “bread baking for all.” Our Community Center was built by hand – some of the original dreamers still living amongst us.

A few weeks ago I asked people in the community to send photographs of their John John fireplaces. Since then I have obtained a list of 30 houses here still boasting John John's amazing handwork. From an eight year old boy, who used to be dropped off at his father's stone yard in San Anselmo, carrying a little hammer to straighten nails and to knock off grout from bricks – to a lifetime at Muir Beach enhancing so many houses with the warmth of fireplace and hearth, John John



*(Top to bottom) Gerry Pearlman's beachstone sink, shower and fireplace.*



*Don Cohon's fireplace.*

is for me, one of our community treasures.

I am lucky enough to have a John John fireplace in my house. It reminds me of everything I love about Muir Beach when I light the fire. Growing up, I think John John was a bigger than life character to my son. He used to tell me, “When I grow up I want to be just like John John.” And I agreed. John John, our gentle giant.

I've included some photos of fireplaces built by John John that were submitted to me. In our next Beachcomber I hope to have another gallery of more. I have a list of thirty that Kathy composed and we both believe there are more.

*Continued on next page*

# John John

*Continued from page 13*

One of my favorite anecdotes told to me by Jes, John John's son (also a stonemason). The story goes that John John found a beautiful large piece of driftwood on Big Beach, and delivered it at 4 in the morning to the Conti's house. The original owner was also up at that hour and John John came in proudly carrying

the piece of wood saying "I found your mantelpiece!"

I enclose a photo of that very mantelpiece, still gracing that beautiful fireplace today. (Thank you Conti family).

If you've ever enjoyed a drink at the Pelican Inn by their gorgeous

fireplace, you can thank John John. If you've thrown the names of your beloved dead into the Community Center's roaring Day of the Dead fire, you can thank John John. If you've admired Peter Lamberts stone drive and beautiful stone garage, you can thank John John and Jes (see next page). If you've ever wondered who made your fireplace, just ring me and perhaps I will discover you are on the list I have.

We would love to see your photos and hear your stories about the fireplaces that have given you so much pleasure in your Muir Beach homes.

Please email [nelsonart@ymail.com](mailto:nelsonart@ymail.com)  
I'd love to hear from you.

— Beth Nelson



*The Conti's fireplace with the driftwood mantelpiece that was delivered at 4am.*



*The MacKenzie's 2-sided fireplace.*



*Nina and Harvey's fireplace.*



*Continued from previous page*



*Peter Lambert's driveway and stone garage.*

## Reaction to the Pandemic Colored by Reminiscence

*By Bob Jacobs*

Now that we are experiencing more deaths per day from the covid pandemic than occurred on 9/11, I can't help thinking about how differently the country reacted during that time - in deep mourning. And, along with that we are destined to experience more deaths from the pandemic than casualties from WWII - when the country mobilized from the highest levels down to the victory gardens in most backyards.

Nina and I had gotten tickets several months before 9/11 to see Winton Marsalis and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, which was scheduled about 10 days after. Theaters had been almost empty, as well as most other entertainments. We seriously discussed not going. But, when the day came, we both felt it was time to try and move on.

Before the concert started the audience was unusually quiet, even though it was a sell out crowd. The atmosphere seemed somber. After a while, Nina grabbed my hand, and we looked at each other. Inside, we were both wondering whether we should leave. Then the lights went slowly down until it was so dark we couldn't see the stage. We could hear soft movement coming from the stage, and then virtual silence - no sound anywhere except people breathing. After what seemed like several minutes, the most **rousing** performance of the Stars and Stripes Forever that I have ever heard, blasted forth. Towards the end of the piece, the lights very slowly came up as the audience literally exploded with cheers, standing and hollering like crazy. It was the big release everyone needed. At intermission everyone was smiling and talking to each other, including those they didn't even know. It was a long concert, and the orchestra could do no wrong. They were called upon to do 6 encores. We all went home knowing the country was going to be okay, and there were smiles on all our faces.

Why the difference in our national psyche from WWII and 9/11 to covid? Does it really require acts of catastrophic violence, emanating from outside our country, to bring us together in the way we see reality, and in the way we respond to it?

# New Year

By Steven J. Moss

*Twenty years in the future, 2040.*

“So, Grandpa, what was it like during the pandemonium?”

“That’s pandemic, sweetie.” Robert squinted into the iAir; his eight-year-old granddaughter’s face pixilated into a rectangle, then a triangle, until finally settling back into being recognizably Mona. “How’re things on Mars?”

“Good! Wanna see?” the view into the iAir spun past a pile of oddly shaped stuffed animals to an expansive window, refocusing on a fiery landscape. “We can’t go outside, cause of the fire storms, just like during the panda...thing.”

“Uh huh.” Robert smiled, wondering for the millionth time why his daughter and her two life partners moved to Mars with his only granddaughter. Sure, every immigrant got a new Tesla-copter. But it was almost always too hot outside to fly it. “So, Mona, your mom told me you’re doing a report on the Great 2020 Pandemic.”

“Yes,” Mona said, looking serious. “We could choose that, or the Trumpian Wars or something called the Climate Catastrophe, which sounded dumb, or the Period of New Beginnings, which mom said sounded like a female high genie product, which would’ve been cool, but mom was wrong,” Mona threw down her hands dramatically. “I choosed the pandermis.”

Robert tried not to grimace. “Kind of heavy topics for a third grader,” he said, knowing that under the Harris-Abrams protocols children living on Mars spent ages five to 10 learning about history. “What do you want to know?”

“Well,” Mona looked down at scattered iPages on the floor in front of her. “Was the Masked Singer responsible for stopping the pandemonium? Is it truth that crowds of white people, led by their leader Karen, got together to virus-shout into one another’s faces? Who was the orange guy, and why did he stick out his hands funny?”

“Those are hard questions,” Robert said. “It’s true that everyone was supposed to wear a mask when they went outside...”

“Like this kind of mask,” Mona struggled to lift-up a thick rubbered full head helmet, which had to be worn outside the shock shelter.

“Uh, no, more like putting a sock over your face.” Robert pulled off one of his socks and rubbed it across his mouth. Mona giggled.

“And we weren’t supposed to touch one another. And we only ate outside. I mean at restaurants...Oh, and we washed our hands. A lot. With alcohol. Which we also drank. A lot...”

Mona leaned over her iPages. Her tongue jutted out of her month as she concentrated on writing. “No touching. No eating inside. Alcohol in hands and tummy...” Mona shifted back to look at Robert. “Okay. This is good. One more question. What did you learn from it?”

“What did we learn?” Robert rubbed his chin. “Well, electric bikes became a thing. Some of us baked a lot of bread, or became pretty good guitarists...”

“Oh,” said Mona, her eyes brightening. “So, there was more music, which bugged people and caused the Trumpet Wars? I get extra special credit if I make connections.”

“No, no, not that.” Robert frowned. “What we learned,” he smiled, “was that it was really, really, important to be kind to one another. And to the plants and animals outside.” Robert leaned towards Mona, caught up in his now fast-coming thoughts. “That there’s a grace in quiet listening. That words, and how you say them, matter, that life is exquisitely beautiful when we, family and friends, even strangers, can be together. That the ability to smile at one another is precious...”

“Wait, wait, wait,” Mona said, writing fiercely. She paused then looked up. “Didn’t you already know this stuff?” She looked down at her iPage. “I mean, did you think you were supposed to be mean to one another? Robert hesitated, then said slowly. “Yes, I suppose that’s what we thought. Which led to the Trumpian Wars...” Mona’s eyes shined. “Perfect!” she squealed writing furiously. She looked up. “Good thing humans finally learnt that nice lesson.”

“Yes,” nodded Robert. He thought he glimpsed a spark of worry in Mona’s eyes; probably a stray pixel. “Yes, it is.”

“Thanks, Grandpa. Bye!” Mona waved.

“Bye, honey. I love you,” Robert replied.



# Water Element

*By Ernst Karel*

In the last issue of the Beachcomber, I wrote about what scientists have called a megadrought, or a decades-long period of low precipitation and soil moisture, with less frequent wet years and drier dry years, currently underway in California. At that point in November, because of very low water levels in Redwood Creek, Muir Beach had already been under a Mandatory Conservation Notice for an unusually long period. That period ended up stretching from September 9 until December 13, when rains brought Redwood Creek up to the level where there was at least continuous flow, rather than disconnected pools with oxygen levels too low to sustain aquatic life.

How did the community do in terms of conserving water during this period? According to District Manager Mary Halley, we did “a pretty good job”. The state asks for a 25% conservation and the reduction in water use in Muir Beach came quite close to that. Halley further notes, though, that creek levels are still about as low as they were in mid-to-late summer, which is well below average for this time of year and far lower than last year, and that if this trend continues, another conservation period could be imposed much earlier next season.

Indeed, rainfall in the Bay Area has been only 25% of average so far. According to the National Weather Service San Francisco Bay Area, between October 1, 2020 and January 20, 2021, San Francisco received 3.09" of rain, which ranks as the 5th driest year on record. (For same period, the driest year was 1.68" in 2014. The 2nd was 2.34" in 1918, 3rd was 2.57" in 1851, and 4th was 3.06" in 1981.) At press time, rainfall is predicted for late January which will probably take this season out of the top ten driest seasons ever. We'll take what we can get.

It is clear that relative drought conditions are not going anywhere anytime fast, and our community, like neighboring communities, would do well to continue to be conservation-minded. Stinson Beach, which like us get their water from an underground aquifer, continues to call for voluntary water conservation, and has many recommendations for how to do so available on their website ([stinson-beach-cwd.dst.ca.us](http://stinson-beach-cwd.dst.ca.us)). Inverness remains in what they call a Stage

2 Water Shortage Emergency, where Stage 4 would mean mandatory rationing. Meanwhile, because Bolinas relies on surface water for their supply, the staff of the Bolinas Community Public Utility District has actually recommended implementing mandatory water rationing immediately, which will be discussed in a February 3rd special board meeting called for that purpose.

How might we be conservation-minded? Marin Water wrote on January 22 on Twitter (@MarinWaterinfo) that “Up to 50 percent of household water consumption goes toward outdoor use, and an estimated 50 percent of that is lost to evaporation or runoff.”

So for anyone in Muir Beach who has an irrigation system, now that some rain is finally coming, the suggestion is that those should now be shut off. As Marin Water says on its website, “Seasonal rains ensure that there is plenty of soil moisture at this time of year, providing all of the water that your plants need.” And in fact, California state law implemented in 2018 prohibits irrigating at all in the 48 hours following measurable rainfall, or at least a quarter inch of rain. For further tips, see [marinwater.org](http://marinwater.org).



*Looking at Muir Beach from south 1965.  
Photo: Malcolm Collier 1965*

# WHITE SUPREMACY

*“If you can convince the lowest white man that he’s better than the best colored man, he won’t notice that you’re picking his pocket. Hell give him someone to look down on and he’ll empty his pockets for you.”\**

How is it that white supremacy in the not too distant past was considered to be the exclusive domain of the lunatic fringe. It was somehow not to be taken seriously and the number of adherents to the doctrine did not appear to be that great. Considering the amount of time the idea of white supremacy has been around why has it only come to the forefront of our consciousness at this present moment of history? Not only has it been an ugly presence in history of the United States from its founding, but the idea of it has been a presence in most of the rest of western civilization as well. It has never been acknowledged as the primary ideological fuel for genocidal campaign against Native Americans at the onset of US history. The imposition of slavery on African Americans also relied on the concept to justify its existence. But the idea goes back much further and is easily discernible in all the empires ancient and modern who use it in support of their expansionist fervor. It was especially obvious in the heyday of the European colonial period.

The acceptance of the doctrine gained ground after Darwin published the “Origin of the Species” advancing the idea of the natural selection or survival of the fittest. T.H. Huxley popularized Darwin’s ideas early on, but it was Herbert Spencer later in the 19th century who more forcefully adopted Darwinism to the social construct of white supremacy. “Social Darwinism” as expounded by Spencer laid the groundwork for linkage of Darwin’s ideas to the social and political realm making for easy adoption by the Fascist leaders during the second World War (most notably in Hitler’s adoption of the idea of a superior Aryan race).

Skin color is one of the usual marker distinguishing white supremacist ideology, but often times the idea transcended ethnicity or race. One of the most interesting examples of this type of white supremacy was the white Ashkenazim Jews prejudice against the darker skinned Sephardi Jews. Among African Americans it was clearly established that the lighter your skin color the more acceptable you were in society.

By now it is fairly well accepted that grounding white supremacy in biology has been debunked in general. So where do the white supremacist go to justify their assertion that they are better than the darker skinned human beings surrounding them. There is no scientific evidence around these days in support of the idea, but this does not seem to prevent groups from adopting the supremacist ideology. It should be obvious to such groups and everyone else that there is no evidence to support their claims yet they seem to be able to make their presence known to the media in almost all recent protest demonstrations. Formally referred to as the lunatic fringe in the not too distant past why have they achieved the respectability they have garnered today?

Does the entire population of an area like the deep south still adhere to their false claims of superiority when there is no credible evidence for such beliefs. Is there a basis for the fear that the white race will soon be overtaken by the black and brown populations crowding them out and denying them the privileges they believe to be rightfully theirs? There does not appear to be a basis for that fear and there was no basis for a stolen election fear that gripped the minds of a significant portion of the far right voting population. There is no rational basis for either one of these fears yet they remain firmly rooted in the minds that believe them. Goebbels Hitler’s propaganda chief said that if a lie is repeated often enough it soon is perceived as the truth! Obviously if the president is repeating the lies, they are perceived as truth much faster by an unsuspecting electorate. The role of the media also can not be discounted in lending the ideology a strength beyond its actual numbers. The social media being the most complicit forum, but the television and journalism branches of the media calling attention to the never ending statements of white supremacist spokesmen also contribute to the inflation of the idea beyond what it merits in reality.

*\* Lyndon B. Johnson quote from a Harper magazine article by Rana Das Gupta entitled “the Silent Majority.”*

*– Gerald Pearlman*



# Repudiating a Shameful Legacy – *Step One Mission Accomplished*

By Gary Friedman

We are pleased to report that the community effort to stand together to repudiate our racist history through restrictive covenants on many of our properties has been a great success thanks to the almost unanimous participation of those of us who had been identified as owners with the restrictive covenants. Our title searcher found deeds in the Bello Beach portion of Muir Beach which contained the following restriction: **the premises herein described shall not be used or occupied by any person except those of the Caucasian race, except that persons of other races may be employed as household servants.**

The CSD unanimously supported the effort to repudiate the covenants with the following language: “We repudiate this clause and are ashamed for our country that many once considered it acceptable, and state that we welcome with enthusiasm and without reservation neighbors of all races and ethnicities.”

This practice called “redlining” was adopted in the 30’s and 40’s not through Antonio Bello, an early developer, as we suspected, but through the Muir Beach Company, a subsequent developer acting in concert with real estate brokers and banks, in an effort to maximize the appeal of our properties with this restriction. The practice was widespread throughout Northern California as well as other places around the country after World War II, a rather stunning action to greet the returning military veterans of color on their return home. In effect, this froze out these veterans and others of color from participating the post-war real estate boom and limited the options for people of color to areas that were less in demand. The effects of all of this continue to this day as we all sit on land that has appreciated and continues to appreciate manyfold even in the time of COVID.

As we have become more aware of our racist history in the country, this repudiation serves an important first step for Muir Beach to have collectively recognized this injustice and become what we believe is the first community in Northern California to have done this collectively. On Saturday, December 5th, 52 lots in Muir Beach had the restriction legally excised, through the action of 25 current owners of those lots, who came to the Community Center in the midst of COVID, to

have their signatures notarized by Cindy Cione. Cindy is Martha de Barros’ daughter in law, and is a licensed notary who came down from Gualala to volunteer her services so that we could do this together. Our title searcher Dana Zook charged us discounted rates to go through the arduous task of checking all Muir Beach properties to identify those deeds that contained the restriction. And the Marin County recorder waived all recording fees so that the only costs incurred were for searching the titles. Once Dana identified all of the affected properties, Leighton Hills took on the time-consuming task of matching the identified deeds with Muir Beach addresses.

As it turned out, there seemed to be no discernible pattern that could be determined, as these all occurred in the 30’s, 40’s and early 50’s so many of you who expected to find the restriction in your deed were surprised that your properties were spared.

Several people in the community have raised the question that now that we have taken this important first step to do what we can to erase the stain of racism, what action can we take to concretize this important symbolic gesture? Stay tuned.

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Here kitty kitty...



*Little Bobby in our yard last week, hunting and sniffing at a gopher hole, but soon lost interest and posed for this pic.*

– Janet Tumpich

# Outbreak of Salmonella in our Backyard Songbirds

As an avid backyard bird watcher, I was distressed to see a sick bird on my birdfeeder about three weeks ago. The bird was fluffed up and would not move from my feeder even when I was just inches away from him/her. I immediately called WildCare in San Rafael and sadly learned that there has been a devastating salmonella outbreak in Marin that has been killing our song birds, especially siskins. They advised me to immediately take down my feeders for at least 2 weeks and then to call them back for an update on the status of the outbreak and whether or not it would be safe to rehang the feeders. The spread of salmonella from one sick bird can easily occur at backyard feeders because too many birds congregate at the same feeders. The following is taken directly from WildCare's website. Please go to its website for more detailed, important information on how to keep our feathered friends healthy if you choose to feed them in your backyard:

<https://www.discoverwildcare.org/advocacy/protect-songbirds-from-salmonella-poisoning/>

– Kate Somers

## How to Prevent the Spread of Salmonella in Birds

The disease *Salmonellosis* is a common cause of disease and death in wild birds. Bird feeders bring large numbers of birds into close contact with each other, which means diseases can spread quickly through multiple populations. Sick birds may be lethargic, puffed up and thin and may have swollen eyelids.

Please note: this form of *Salmonellosis* is not contagious to humans.

### WildCare discourages the feeding of any wildlife.

However, we recognize that millions of people love their birdfeeders! If you are feeding birds, you have a responsibility to the birds and local wildlife to follow the “intelligent feeding” guidelines as endorsed by WildCare, the Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology (see preventative measures below.)

### If You Have Dead or Sick Birds In Your Yard:

- Immediately REMOVE bird feeders and birdbaths.
- Disinfect feeders and baths with a bleach solution made of 9 parts water to 1 part bleach.

- Scrub well and allow to soak 10 - 20 minutes.
- Rinse very well and allow to dry.
- Do not rehang feeders or birdbaths for at least **one month** after the last sick or dead bird is seen in your yard.
- Resterilize and allow to dry before rehanging.

### If You Have Not Yet Seen Sick or Dead Birds:

Please take the following **preventative measures**. These measures should also be practiced as regularly scheduled maintenance to ensure healthy birds:

- Birdfeeders should be disinfected every two weeks regardless of disease outbreaks.
- Birdbaths should be emptied and cleaned **daily** regardless of disease outbreaks.
- **For feeders:** Do not use wood feeders. Immerse feeders in bleach solution (9 parts water to 1 part bleach.) Soak 10 minutes, scrub, rinse thoroughly and allow to dry fully before refilling (a dry feeder will deter mold growth on seeds).
- **For baths:** You can make a 9:1 bleach solution in a jug to bring outside. Scrub with a hard brush and soak for 10 – 20 minutes. Cover with board while soaking to prevent birds bathing in bleach, rinse very thoroughly, allow to dry before refilling.
- **For hummingbird feeders:** NO BLEACH! Change food often. Clean and fill with only enough to last 1-2 days (sooner if gets cloudy/moldy). Use vinegar and water in a 9:1 solution (9 parts water to 1 part vinegar) and special bottle brushes to get into small holes. Rinse thoroughly!

### Additional Tips

- Always wear gloves (latex or dishwashing) to keep bleach off your skin and a facemask to keep from accidentally ingesting feces, bleach, etc.
- Always keep a large tray under feeder to collect hulls/seed that fall. Empty discards every evening. This will prevent mold & disease for ground feeding birds and also prevent rodent infestations.
- Another suggestion to prevent wildlife problems (from rats, raccoons, skunks, etc.) is to bring feeders inside at night.



# Got Rats?

Here are some tips to prevent them without poison

Cut branches back three feet away from the roof.

Rats can enter your home through an opening the size of a dime. Seal all holes in roofs, walls, foundation, crawl spaces, and sheds. Seal openings around pipes, cables, and electrical wires that enter walls and foundations.

Cap plumbing vent stacks with hardware cloth.

Rip out ivy. Do not accumulate trash.

Use wire mesh or hardware cloth under porches that extends partially into the ground.

Provide tight-fitting covers on crawl space entrances.

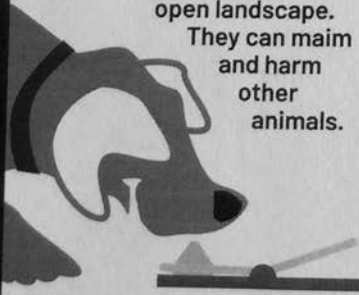
Check garage shelves and storage sheds for evidence of rats.

If you feed the birds, feed small amounts at a time and bring feeders in at night. Clean up fallen seed.

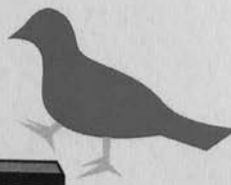
Elevate your chicken coop by 18 inches.

## DO NOT USE:

**Snap traps** in the open landscape. They can maim and harm other animals.



**Sticky traps** or glue boards. They cause horrific suffering and other animals get caught in them, including songbirds.



**Rodenticides:** Rat poison kills birds and wildlife, not just rats. When a hawk, owl, or bobcat eats a poisoned rat, they too, can become very ill or perish of secondary poisoning. Rat poison can also poison your dog or cat.



## O.K. TO USE:

**Electronic traps** (only in safe locations) like The Raticator or other rat "zapper." Sprinkle **cayenne pepper** on rat trails to deter them.



**RAPTORS ARE THE SOLUTION**

Submitted by Rick Bernard. Reprinted from [raptorsarethesolution.org](http://raptorsarethesolution.org) under the link "free outreach materials."

# The Critter Report: Red Joe

By Dave MacKenzie

With the pandemic, many Muir Beachers have been spending most of their days at home or locally walking, hiking, and biking. So encounters with the local wildlife have become more common, and the wildlife more obvious.

Sometimes a special animal gets known to our community due to it's repeated sightings. A Bobcat near the beach, a Coyote seen several times at the same highway location at night. At our house, a very large and tail-less Raccoon has been caught repeatedly on our trail cameras. So that's the thief on our deck! But in general, how can we tell if the Spotted Towhee in our yard is the same one as yesterday, or even from last spring?



Photo: Aran Moore

This fall and winter a juvenile Red-Shouldered Hawk has hunted for months around upper Muir Beach. "Red Joe" (named by me partially for my nickname for him (her?) "Red", and the neighbors nickname "Joe"), has been seen around the upper homes on Starbuck and Seacape for months. It usually hunts from rooftops, a basketball backboard, or power poles. I have seen it take a vole, several Jerusalem Crickets ("Potato Bugs"), and others have seen it take mice and gophers. Interestingly, it is taking pretty much the same prey that "our" Great Blue Heron did (where did he/she go this year?). Red Joe is a well-known neighbor and it is seen on most days. Since the bird is a juvenile ("2020 model"), it does not yet have the brick red breast or "red" shoulders of a breeding adult hawk. Shirley Nygren has reported a truly "Red-Shouldered" adult around Pacific Way, so we can at least tell these two birds apart.

How about knowing which songbird at your feeder is which? This can be hard when you have 25 White-Crowned Sparrows each day to sort through! However, there are a couple of tricks to detecting repeat visitors. The best method for me for birds is to look for leg bands. Point Blue has been banding birds along Redwood Creek for decades now, and sometimes one of these birds (or a bird banded somewhere else, say in Washington State) can be spotted. Although the small aluminum leg bands are almost impossible to read (lots of close photos can help), in most cases there is only one banded bird of a species around at a given time. We have had many banded feeder birds over the years. This winter I have seen a banded Golden-Crowned Sparrow, a White-Crowned Sparrow, a Spotted Towhee, a California Scrub Jay, and a Steller's Jay. Recently I saw a banded Song Sparrow which I had not seen in two years. I suspect it is the same individual which used to come to our feeders from about 2014-2018. An old friend, who had just moved down the block!

Many of us had Gray Fox "friends" ((typically be told apart by size) which passed suddenly due to the current distemper outbreak in Marin. One of the problems with wild friends (much like dogs and cats), is that they often have relatively short lives compared with ours. In the wild there are additional threats from disease, parasites, infection, accidents, and of course, automobiles.

Another approach to separating birds is plumage, as with Red Joe. Most species of birds have a distinct plumage until the first adult molt, usually in the early spring. At that time, many (but not all) of the feathers are replaced. A missing tail feather during molt might also give a clue. A White-Crowned Sparrow with brown head stripes is a juvenile, separating it from older birds, which have black head stripes. Sexual dimorphism (where males and females look different) also helps, but it is tough to use with many of our local land birds. (Most male and female ducks are pretty easy to separate.) For example, a female Spotted Towhee has a dark brown hood, but the male's head is jet black. But this can be hard to see in poor light.

So the next time you see a Coyote, or a hawk, see if you can spot some detail which will help you decide if the critter is really an old friend. At least they don't have to wear masks and "hide" their identities like we do!

*Continued on next page*





*Photo: Dave MacKenzie*



*Photo: Shirley Nygren*



*Photo: Matt Jeschke*



*Photo: Melissa Lasky*



# Preschool Pod Food Drive a Success

The families and children of the Muir Beach “pandemic preschool pod” in conjunction with Wendy Johnson hosted a successful holiday food drive for Native American Bay Area families deeply affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

Through the generous contributions of our Muir Beach Community we were able to provide ten families with pre-school aged children several weeks’ worth of healthy, organic non-perishable dry goods, eggs, beans, potatoes, greens and \$100 to be used towards childcare and bills. Our team worked closely with friends and colleagues from the indigenous-based Cultural Conservancy to ensure that our donations were hand delivered to those in greatest need.

The outpouring of support from our community was incredible and we sincerely thank everyone who participated! We would like to extend a special thank you to Sarah Nesbitt, Robin Terra, Janet Tumpich and Laurie Piel for their enthusiasm, encouragement and generosity that helped to make this incredibly important project even more special. We look forward to hosting more community service-based events in the future!

—Brett Sibley Groneman



*The Preschool Pod (above); Pod helpers Joey, Brett, and Charlie Groneman (left and lower left).*



## Happy 50th Birthday Buster!



*Buster is a red-eared slider turtle who was a baby when she came to David as a birthday gift in 1971. She has been with us ever since and continues to fascinate and enchant us.*

— Linda Gibbs