

# BEACHCOMBER

SINCE 1946





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## Four Ingredients and the Passage of Time

*By Natalee Shean and Ted Elliott Jr.*

There is a durable bin at the horse stables with a 4-digit combination lock. On Thursdays, residents of Muir Beach retrieve special loaves of bread prepared by the neighboring Green Gulch Farm.

How many communities are afforded such a special ritual? How is this made possible?

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## Fine Feathered Friend Drops in for a Visit

*By Paul Jeschke*

An uninvited guest dropped in on a Muir Beach backyard get-together late last month and within minutes introduced himself, munched on strawberry snacks and completely captivated the guests with an amazing acrobatic display. He made friends fast.

“Everyone was amazed and delighted,” said Leigha Heydt, who was entertaining friends on the deck of her Starbuck home when the aerial interloper, a spectacularly plumed macaw named “Cali” came calling. “A very fun experience.”

*Continued on page 21*



*Cali, Samantha Melendy's macaw, responds to both visible and vocal commands. He occasionally accompanies Melendy on Muir Beach hikes.*



*Cali makes a colorful addition to Nikola Tede's car.*



*Cole Beck, Ella Brundieck, and Mike Beck.*



*Girl Scout, Cali's romantic partner, is currently sitting on three eggs.*

# Pandemic Good Deeds and Grace Notes

By Beth Begault

In a year of cascading, invisible dangers that relegated most of us to our respective bunkers, local heroes emerged to lend a hand and keep the wheels of daily life turning. To name a few, doctors and medical workers masked up and saved lives like they always do (looking at you, Nikola Tede, Bob Bowyer, and Renee Boeche!), grocery workers braved the pandemic to keep the stores open and shelves stocked, and big-hearted neighbors delivered fabulous food right to this little Muir Beach outpost and even to our doorsteps. Big time shoutout to Gabriel Leis who made Mondays cool again with Taco Joe's, Mick Sopko and his Green Gulch bakery team with their fresh-from-the-oven bread loaves, and Green Gulch Farms with an outstanding summer-fall vegetable stand on Starbuck Drive. Dare we even mention that we have doorstep delivery of international wines from wine importer and curator Simon Littler?



Since April 2020, high school senior and volunteer extraordinaire Adrianna Bender has provided the Muir Beach community with weekly home delivery of many hundreds of boxes of organic veggies from Star Route Farms--a remarkable conduit of nutrition and happiness. It's a lovely two-fer with no strings attached: she delivers at no cost the boxes that Muir Beachers order from Star Route Farms, while collecting voluntary donations for the Tam High Breast Cancer Awareness

Club that she has belonged to since freshman year and is currently the president of. As a result of her double good deeds, Muir Beach residents have been able to safely veggie "shop" from home, and Adrianna has raised over \$3,000 to date for an important cause.

The year-round nature of her deliveries means "rain or shine" in seasonal high winds and cold weather. But if you ask her about it, that's not the part she talks about. She talks about the joy of being helpful and about the opportunity she's had to connect with people and to meet neighbors she didn't know. She is sorting through multiple college offers now, but her plan is to keep spoiling us with doorstep veggie boxes until she heads out on her next big adventure in August, and who knows, she may hand the baton to another wonderful volunteer. But in the meantime, speaking as a person who has a big vat of vegetable soup on the stove at this minute, how can we thank you enough, Adrianna?

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## ON THE COVER

*Red-Tailed Hawk in Flight*

Watercolor on Canvas, 18" x 24"

Oscar Nesbitt-Schnadt

Oscar is a Junior at Marin Academy.

This work was inspired by the Red-Tailed Hawks that soar across the skies of Muir Beach.

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**Beachcomber mailbox** on mailbox row, or to [editor@muirbeachcomber.com](mailto:editor@muirbeachcomber.com).

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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# Water Element 21 April 2021

By Ernst Karel

“The value of water is about much more than its price – water has enormous and complex value for our households, food, culture, health, education, economics, and the integrity of our natural environment. If we overlook any of these values, we risk mismanaging this finite, irreplaceable resource. ... Without a comprehensive understanding of water’s true, multidimensional value, we will be unable to safeguard this critical resource for the benefit of everyone.”

– UN-Water, for World Water Day, March 22, 2021

March 22 was designated in 1993 by the United Nations General Assembly as an annual occasion to celebrate water and to raise awareness of the global water situation. The theme for World Water Day 2021 was *Valuing Water*. Locally, the Environmental Action Committee of West Marin (EAC) took the occasion of World Water Day 2021 to publish a report which had been under development for two years. Perhaps looking forward to next year’s theme, which has been announced as *Groundwater*, the report is titled *Beneath the Surface: Groundwater, a Proactive Analysis Exploring California and Marin County Water Resilience in a Changing Climate* (download a free copy at [eacmarin.org/groundwater](http://eacmarin.org/groundwater)), it brings together for the first time a wide range of available information on groundwater and water resiliency in Marin County. The background research included reviewing regulations, databases, mapping tools, case law, scientific and news articles, local water district documents, and interviews with Marin County, local water district staff, and others.

One lesson of the EAC report for our own water district is that little is known about the groundwater system our wells are tapping into. The MBCSD relies on groundwater underneath Santos Meadow. According to the report, this is unusual in Marin County, which as a whole gets only about five percent of its water from groundwater; most water elsewhere in the county is collected from rainwater, for example from the slopes of Mt Tamalpais, and collected in reservoirs. Interestingly, however, “our” groundwater basin seems not to have been studied much, and isn’t even listed among the four presently-recognized basins in Marin (Novato Valley, San Rafael Valley, Ross Valley, and

Sand Point Area). Furthermore, even those four are designated as either low or very low priority, which means they do not require much regulatory oversight, which could entail things like metering, monitoring, and local ordinances governing water use.

The biggest concern of the report is the renewed period of drought we are now in, and other potential effects of climate change. For example, we may be seeing a rise in sea level, and while the possibilities of flooding is one concern related to that which gets a lot of attention, it’s also possible that the groundwater in coastal areas could be affected by sea level rise, which could entail seawater intrusion into coastal water tables. The possibilities of saltwater intrusion in coastal aquifers is often overlooked in terms of long-term planning.

A great source of ongoing information about drought conditions is the U.S. Drought Monitor – start at [drought.gov](http://drought.gov) – where you can check out data down to the level of counties, in various forms: maps, graphs, tables, and so on. One of their graphs show 100% of the area of Marin County in level D2 (“Severe Drought”) from April 21, 2020, through January 26, 2021, at which point a little rain came and the county was moved almost completely into level D1 (“Moderate Drought”) range, at least for the moment. With this year having been the driest of the past 90 years, the drought seems sure to deepen.

And indeed, in their board meeting of April 20 which I attended, Marin Water (which is the name the MMWD is using now) formally declared a “water shortage emergency.” In the course of the presentations, it was repeatedly emphasized that the situation is serious. Not only are reservoirs at their lowest point by far in over 40 years (at only 57% of average for this time of year), but of course it’s well within the realm of possibility that we may be entering again into a multi-year drought, and so those low reserves need to be carefully protected. To do this, Marin Water have set a goal of reducing overall water usage by 40%, which would bring the average usage per meter down to 60 gallons per day. To achieve that goal, in addition to a significant outreach campaign aimed at educating residents and visitors and encouraging cooperation, they are also implementing mandatory water conservation measures, the details of which were still to be worked out, and which would

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focus mainly on reductions in outdoor usage, such as irrigation.

As we get further into drought conditions, with no end in sight, and with little known about the broader conditions of our groundwater source, there are many ways each of us can conserve water – for tips, see [marinwater.org/conserve](http://marinwater.org/conserve). We also need everyone to be vigilant and proactive about leaks, running toilets, and the like. For leak detection tips, please see our own website, [muirbeachcsd.com/water](http://muirbeachcsd.com/water). And to report any leaks, or for other (non-billing) questions or concerns, please call the MBCSD water team hotline at 415-942-2542, or email us at [water@muirbeachcsd.com](mailto:water@muirbeachcsd.com).

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## MBVFA BBQ

Sadly, but not surprising, this year's Annual Muir Beach Volunteer Firemen's Barbecue will not be held, per usual, on Memorial Weekend. Due to the ongoing, but improving, public health crisis, the State Parks is not issuing any event permits and county guidelines do not allow for the size of crowd that we would typically bring in. That may change in the summer, but for now, we are unable to make plans for an in-person event. Please stay tuned for any updates on a live event, the possibility of an online fundraising effort or even a pop-up MBVFD merchandise sale.

In the meantime, we invite you to donate to the Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department at [muirbeachfire.com](http://muirbeachfire.com) (hit the yellow **DONATE** button). All donations go directly towards keeping our volunteer firefighters well trained and equipped. With the lack of rainfall and dryer than normal conditions, fire researchers are predicting a "grim" and possibly catastrophic 2021 fire season. Your support and donations are more important than ever.

You can also support the MBVFD when/if you shop at Amazon by going to AmazonSmile and choosing Muir Beach Volunteer Firemans Association (yes, it is spelled that way) as your charity. MBVFD will receive a donation of 0.5% of your purchase. Thank you for supporting the crucial services of the Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department however you can!

– Denise Lamott

## Child of the Lights

*By David Leivick*

Who are these people who gave you your name?  
Held your hand in the forest  
Who are these people who cast you away?  
Sold your share of the harvest

Child of the lights and of the small parade  
Fife and drum against the wind  
Child of the lights and of the mountain range  
Ain't it time for you to win?

Who are these people who walk in your shoes?  
Cold eyes set on the table  
Who are these people who buried the clues?  
Facts confused by their fables

Child of the lights and of the small parade  
Fife and drum against the wind  
Child of the heights and of the mountain range  
Ain't it time for you to win?

Every saint has a day or two  
April one the day for clowns  
July fourth is independence day  
When will your day come around?

Who are these people who hide in your life?  
Needing more than they're giving  
Who are these people who cut like a knife  
Into the heart of your living?

Child of the lights and of the small parade  
Fife and drum against the wind  
Child of the heights and of the mountain range  
Ain't it time for you to win?

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*These are the lyrics to a song off my "Still Chasing the Shadows" album which can be downloaded from Spotify, Amazon, Apple Music, YouTube, and many other streaming services. Stay well!*

# The Ants Don't March No More: Letter to a Dear Love

*Dear Friend,*

Do you remember the massacre of the ants? You and I were drinking cup after cup of that muddy watered Turkish coffee, the kind with the coffee grind sludge at the bottom and so much sugar that we'd be too high to notice the grounds in our teeth? We would wave our cigarettes around our heads in hopes that the smoke would drive the flies far enough away from our ears that we didn't hear their incessant buzzing. While the flies swarmed around our torsos and the smoke settled in our hair the ants would proudly march in armies around our sandaled feet.

I don't remember what drove us to the brink of mass extermination – I cringe even using that term when talking about our time on the Kibbutz in Israel. Extermination is a loaded word no matter what you attach it to, but when talking about anything on the Kibbutz, where some of the elders still remembered the Holocaust, it is not a word I should probably be using. But mass extermination is what you and I committed against those ants because the flies were just too damned difficult to catch and kill.

I'm sure it was your idea. I can't imagine it was mine. I still can't kill anything other than a tick and that I do with no pleasure at all. But perhaps the onslaught of critters became too much even for me and I was the one who cracked and suggested we massacre thousands of tiny ants. Lord knows you and I had had our share of tiny buggers crawling under our skin. I still have nightmares about the weeks I would awaken in the middle of the night scratching my hands, arms,

breasts, and belly until they bled. I remember sneaking across the volunteer compound to the showers over by the Chicken Houses while the rest of the Kibbutzim slept their peaceful itch free slumbers. I'd stand under the scalding hot water screaming silently with pleasure and relief. There is nothing like hot water to scratch an itch. I'd book it back to my room before the itch could return and fall asleep for a few hours until it resurfaced. If only we'd had cell phones then. You could have called me from the Sudan, where you were visiting with your family for a month, to let me know that you were diagnosed with Scabies and that if I were itching at all I too should get the medication that cured it. While you were away, effortlessly getting the medical diagnosis and treatment you needed without a hitch, I was begging whomever it was in charge of the Kibbutz Volunteer's health to get me to a doctor so that I could end the torture of my itch. It was one of the longest months of my life.

When you came home, because Ga'ash was without question a place I considered home even though I was just a transitory volunteer valued by the Kibbutzniks mostly for my labor and a little bit for my availability as dating material, you diagnosed me within minutes.

"Yep," you said backing away from me just a little. "You've got it too. It's The Scabies. Contagious as hell. We probably got it from The Dog. You've got to get the medicine – it's deadly stuff but it does the trick."

The Dog you referred to was Niña a stray I'd adopted and fed on the sly with extra portions taken from the common dining hall. I knew immediately that you were right. Niña had a nasty rash on her underbelly which I never considered might be mite sized critters crawling from beneath her skin to my own, and yours.

I had to literally refuse to go to work to get the Kibbutz nurse to send me to Tel Aviv for the proper diagnosis and medication. It was my first real act of rebellion against an authority figure other than my mother. When I informed her that you'd been diagnosed with scabies and that it could be spreading as we spoke to all the volunteers and therefore, because the Kibbutzniks slept with the volunteers at every chance they got, the general population, she relented and sent me on my way.

So, our murderous plight to get the ants out from under our feet, while killing the mites beneath our skin and smoking out the flies around our heads seems almost justifiable in light of our history with the parasitic insect world. Let's assume it was you who came up with the idea. I distinctly remember sitting together on our front porch watching the ants go marching two by two – hurrah, hurrah – do they sing that song in any of the countries you have lived? Cyprus, the Sudan, or Spain? Certainly, it must be a favorite in England? In any case, I think you were drinking a glass of water while the BBC blared in the background filling our buzzing heads with news

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of the war in Lebanon. It was 1982 and the war had begun only a few months after I arrived in Israel. I was being educated in what it was to live in the Middle East, and even more to the point, how war really does destroy the lives of young men and women, families and communities. It was a hard lesson. Maybe all that talk of war was what drove us to attack the ants with first glasses of water and then the all mighty hose. It was the hose that turned our efforts to do away with the little bastards crawling at our feet from a minor sweep to a total massacre. Once the hose came out it was all over. The ants were swept up in a tidal wave of rushing water, their tiny little legs had no paddle power and were no match for the assault.

I think I recall feeling rather dirty, guilty even, after the deed was done. But I also remember hosing the little buggers off our shanty shack volunteer's porch on a rather regular basis making my feelings of guilt a rather baseless claim.

That was one of the most memorable years of my life. The Ant Massacre was minor compared to the love I had for learning Hebrew, working and living communally, and of course for you. Because truly Friend, back then, you were the love of my wicked ant killing life and I will cherish the memories of us drinking coffee, and smoking cigarettes together in puddles of dead ants on the cliffs above the Mediterranean where our Kibbutz Ga'ash was settled back in 1951.

– *Nina Vincent*

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## Monarch Butterflies

There is an excellent article in the February 15 & 22 New Yorker about the annual migration of millions of Monarch butterflies from North to South.

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/02/15/saving-the-butterfly-forest>

– *Don Cohon*

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## Introducing Klaus and Susannah

What a year to move here...

We joke that no move to Muir Beach has been this much of a Move with a capital M. Arriving just before the pandemic hit, we have REALLY BEEN here, day after day, no distractions. What a gift and what a crazy year at the same time. We have met some wonderful people, and everyone has spun tales of the legendary community social life that will one day start up again.

You might know us by the fact that we bought Victoria's cottages. Or because we walk our dog Kaya every day. Our daughter, Leah, has been in zoom school almost since we arrived. Occasionally our older sons Dylan and Julian (with Shelbi and Elisse) have joined us, too.

Susannah is sort of a San Francisco native, since she went through school in the city, graduating from Lowell and then Berkeley. But she has spent most of her adult life in the Middle East, India and Europe, so life has been colorful and foreign. Susannah is an anthropologist and creative nonfiction writer (see [susannahkennedy.com](http://susannahkennedy.com)).

Photography of this piece is quite extraordinary. We have noted a decline in the number of Monarchs at Muir Beach in the past 2 decades.



Klaus is from Dortmund (goBVB) and works in both English and German. He is a psychiatrist and now teaches and supervises as a psychoanalyst (see [drklauspoppensieker.com](http://drklauspoppensieker.com)). He is interested in the subconscious, in political and social narratives, and in good music. We met in India and married in Oxford, eventually settling in Germany where we raised our three children in a combination of city and rural life.

Serendipity brought us to Muir Beach and we are looking forward to a new sense of balance, fun and adventure.

– *Susannah Kennedy, DPhil*  
[skennedycal@gmail.com](mailto:skennedycal@gmail.com)

# Delta Study Predicts Stronger Floods and Less Water Supply

By Isaac Pearlman

Though most don't realize it, practically all Californians are linked to the Bay-Delta region via its triple function as a source of drinking water for some 27 million Californians, a critical water provider for the Golden State's hefty agricultural industry, and a rich and unique ecosystem. But for those who live in the legal Delta zone – some 630,000 people – the braided weave of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers and their maze of associated wetlands and levees provides a place of home, community, and recreation. And, as a recent study by the Delta Stewardship Council shows, climate change is tugging on the watery thread holding it all together.

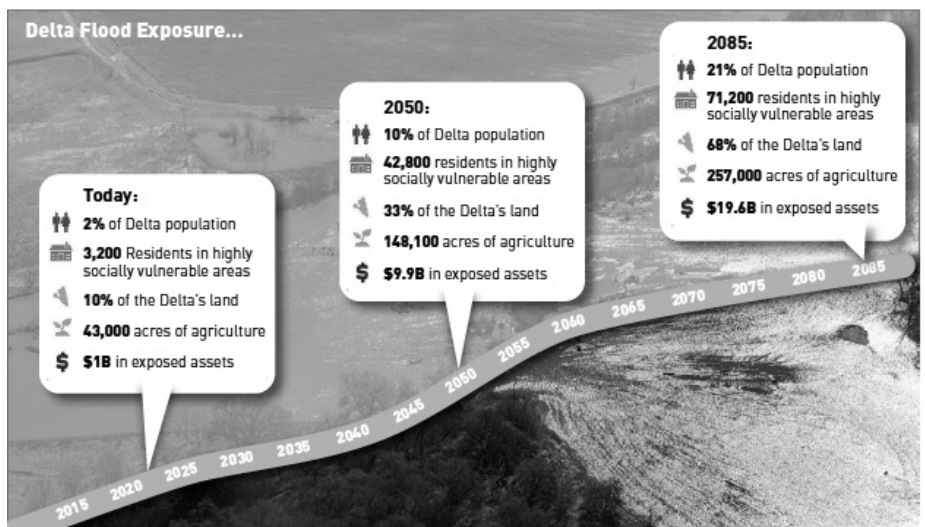
“Two-thirds of Californians get their water from here, which is why climate change in the Delta has a large effect on statewide water availability,” says Harriet Lai Ross, assistant planning director with the Delta Stewardship Council. “There are over 750 species in the Delta, and we are part of the state's three-trillion-dollar economy. [Our climate study] is the first time we've looked at all of the pieces comprehensively.”

The council's overview reveals a grim outlook for the millions of people that are tethered to the region's water: drought similar to that experienced in 2012-2016 will be five to seven times more likely by 2050. This will result in more

severe and frequent water shortages and, as the report bluntly states, “lower reliability of Delta water exports.”

Drought's wet twin, flooding, is also projected to significantly impact the region which acts as a hub where tides, sea-level rise, river inflows, and storm surge all combine to churn the Delta's muddy waters. The highest-flood-risk areas identified in the study include Suisun Marsh and its mosaic of wetlands managed by private duck clubs, the city and Port of Stockton, and subsided Delta islands.

Also at risk is a range of infrastructure including the I-5 freeway, Stockton's Dameron Hospital, historically significant sites like the Sperry Flour Mill and Isleton's Chinese and Japanese commercial districts, and — somewhat ironically, given their role in perpetuating climate change — roughly \$800 million worth of oil and gas pipelines, wells, and stations scattered around the Delta.



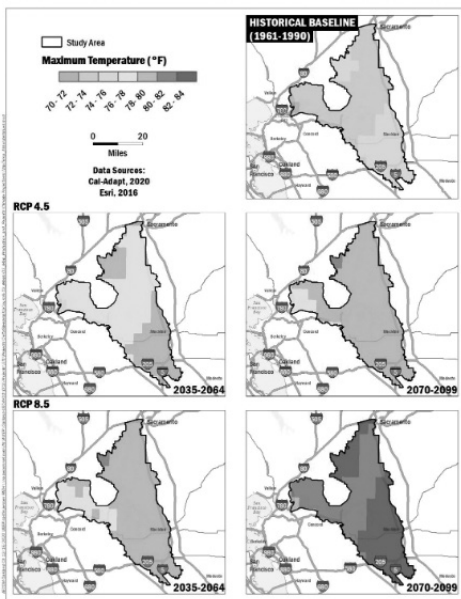
*Flood exposure indicates the Delta-wide people, assets, and resources exposed to flooding by levee overtopping during an event with a 1 annual chance of occurrence given climate conditions at each planning horizon. Graphic adapted from Delta Adapt, Delta Stewardship Council.*

But some impacts touch the Delta community in ways more significant than flooded infrastructure does. “The proliferation and increase in harmful algal blooms is a huge change,” says Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla, executive director of the nonprofit Restore the Delta. “I work with youth who are saying ‘When I grew up I used to go boating, fishing, swimming, but I don’t do that anymore,’” she says pointing out that the toxic blooms, exacerbated by warmer temperatures and reduced river flow due to drought, have altered their relationship with the Estuary. “And just think – if young adults are already saying this now, what is it going to be like for their kids?”

As we've seen with the current pandemic, impacts are not felt equally during a disaster. The study found that almost two-thirds of residents at risk of flooding in 2050 are “socially vulnerable” —

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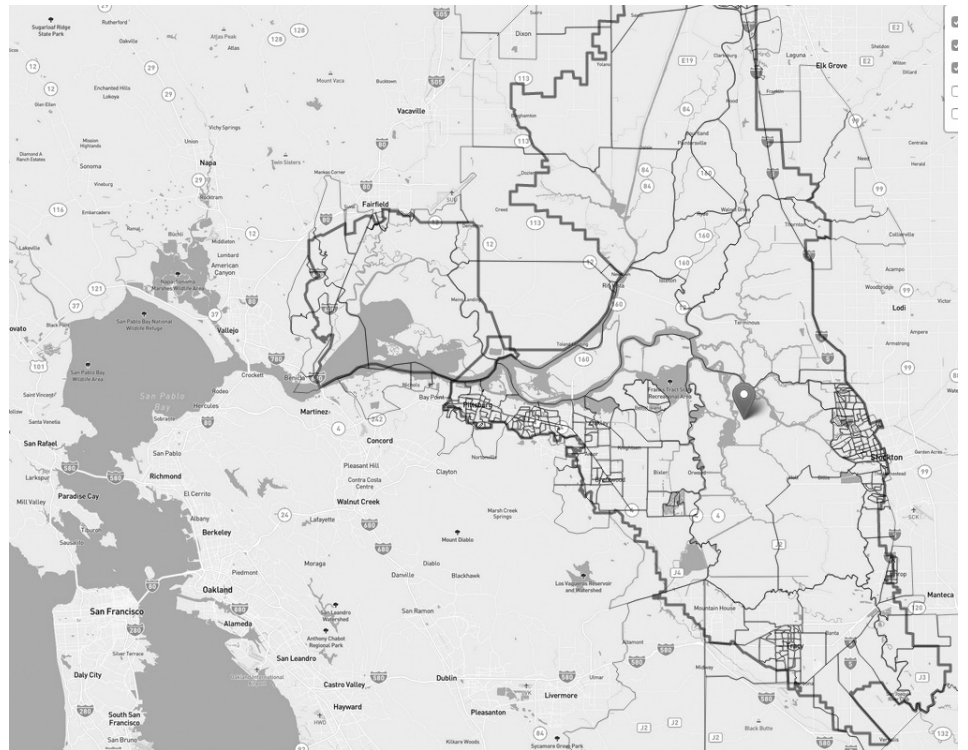




*Figure 3-4. Spatial variability of projected changes in absolute average daily maximum temperature in the Delta*

for example, those with asthma who suffer more from wildfire smoke; or families with elderly or young children who require more assistance during an evacuation. Along with minorities, renters, and low-income residents with less access to social services or air conditioning, people in these more-susceptible demographics are hit harder and take longer to recover from a flood or heat event than those in wealthier neighborhoods. The cities of Tracy and Stockton are projected to be hit particularly hard by increasing temperatures, and San Joaquin County (especially Lathrop and Stockton) by increased flooding.

After wrapping up the draft assessment period on March 16, Ross and her team were collecting public comments on the draft assessment, which will inform the next step to develop and prioritize resilience strategies for the region. According



*Screenshot from Delta social vulnerability mapping tool.*

to Ross, key challenges are the usual suspects: lack of funding, and for the Delta Stewardship Council limited authority to implement the necessary changes on the ground which are the purview of a host of agencies ranging from Caltrans to PG&E to local city and county governments.

“I think we know what the answers are,” says Ross about needed climate adaptation actions. “A combination of flood-control improvements, targeted ecosystem restoration, and helping farmers continue to farm where it makes sense to, which is the heritage and primary land use of the Delta.”

Barrigan-Parrilla, however, is more frank about the need for action. “I don’t think there is room anymore to allow this to just be a report,” she says. “If this stops at a report and

nothing changes it’s going to be hard to maintain the goodwill of the community – especially the younger generation.”

As if to punctuate the study’s findings, in the last few months the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation announced that agricultural water service contractors served by the Central Valley Project will initially receive only 5% of their allocations, and the State Water Project announced an initial estimate of just 10% of historical water deliveries to city and agricultural customers. Even with March rains, the most recent U.S. Drought Monitor report shows that 99% of California is “abnormally dry” and 30% is in “extreme” or “exceptional” drought. All of which starkly underlines the first sentence of the 200-page draft report: “The time to act is now.”

# Ocean Riders

*By Maureen Pinto*

Spring is a time of renewal and each year, we at Ocean Riders watch for our local Barn Owls to begin their families. We have been concerned because they were late this year, but happily we noticed a pair was visiting the nest box, at first just flirting in the rafters, but then nesting together and mating on a regular basis. The eggs started appearing the second week in March, first one, then another a day or two apart, until the final seventh egg was produced on March 21 and “Owlvivia” settled down to keep them warm, while Barnaby was keeping the larder well supplied with rodents.

The Golden Gate Dairy Stables has had the privilege of hosting these barn owl families for decades, thanks to the installation of the original owl box made by Muir Beach local Jim White. Over the years we’d find young owlets in the hay, sometimes needing to be taken to Wild Care for treatment, due to leaving the nest too early. We could never tell how many owlets were being raised, so never knew to look for them until sometimes it was too late.



Thanks to Bob Hemstock’s Adventure Camp, a deeper nest box was built by his campers in 2016, following Hungry Owl Project protocol. An owl cam was installed so we could record the activities of the breeding pair whom we first named Barnaby and Owlvivia. The first year seven eggs were laid but only six hatched. We’ve followed the development of the owlets ever since, naming them after the local Portuguese Dairy Farms in Frank Valley.



The parents worked around the clock to provide rodents to the owlets who grow quickly, eventually fledging to roost in the rafters where they remain for a month before finding their own territory. The dried regurgitated pellets found on the hay barn floor, when dissected, have served our youth stewardship programs, providing experiential learning activities about the cycle of life in our local watershed. Barn Owls are monogamous, and if one falls prey to a Great Horned Owl or hawk, their most prominent predator, a new couple will find each other and bond for life. We’ve never missed a year for a mated pair to raise a family. The pair who are currently raising their family may be related to those born in the barn three years ago. This year’s clutch is quite late.

This time last year we had five owlets already fledged and resting in the rafters.

Currently we’ve had four of the 7 eggs hatch, so have welcomed baby owl Nunes (former tenants of the Golden Gate Dairy); baby Lopes (previous owners), baby Bello, baby Brazil, and we hope by the time the Beachcomber goes to press, baby Souza, Dias, and Ponti will have hatched.

Please visit our live webcam: <https://oceanridersofmarin.org/programs/barn-owl-cam/> to view the owl box. If you watch long enough, Owlvivia may reposition herself so you can see the fluffy owlets she is keeping warm. And in another month you are welcome to visit the barn to see this year’s fledglings roosting in the rafters.

Ocean Riders sends a special thank you to Jim White for providing the first incentive, many years ago, that invited these magical creatures into our barn.



# MBVFD Update - April 2021

By David H. Taylor

Since the start of the year the fire department has been able to resume its more routine training activities as all of our team was fully vaccinated by mid January.

We completed our biannual CPR certification with a combined online module and practical examination.



*Annabelle Conti*

Training of course involves teaching children to use chainsaws as part of our efforts to train the next generation of firefighters. They continue to enjoy the training and also continue to have intact extremities.

As part of our effort to create yet another generation of junior firefighters Sefton and Christine Murray, the goddaughter of Walter Postle (Muir Beach resident of 40 years), gave birth to Rowan Walter Murray on 2/19/2021. Rowan carries Walter's name in loving memory. Sefton has taken some well earned time off of volunteer firefighting to welcome young Rowan and teach him how to don SCBA as quickly as he does.

David Taylor was on faux paternity leave in March after adopting a puppy. A few drills were disrupted



*Sefton, Christine and Rowan Murray*



*Cwtch Taylor*

by our newest mascot Cwtch the McNab. She will never manage to don SCBA let alone a harness.

We are very proud that Muir Beach has become a Firewise community due to the hard work of the Firewise committee (see page 12).

In advance of the coming season, the Disaster Preparedness group is getting ready. More than half of our neighborhood liaisons have registered to get certified or recertified

as part of the CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) program. This training includes light search and rescue, disaster medical operations, and fire safety. Susannah and Leah Kennedy, new members of the Disaster Preparedness team, are conducting an inventory of all disaster supplies so that we know what we have and what needs to be replaced. Finally, the neighborhood liaisons will organize to conduct a neighborhood-wide disaster drill once CERT training is complete and it is safe from a pandemic perspective to do so.

The firehouse project has been reviewed by the county and we have responded to their questions and concerns. After decades of effort it's exciting to see the project move forward so much in a short period of time.

Much of the work to set up and manage the Marin County vaccination site at the Civic Center was done by the fire service between December and April. Muir Beach Fire participated in this all hands on deck project. Chris Gove and David Taylor vaccinated hundreds of people and we are pleased to report that those folks also continue to have intact extremities.

Several Muir Beachers are working on the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority. CSD Director Paul Jeschke is on the Board, Chris Gove is on the Operations Committee and David Taylor is on the Advisory/Technical Committee. We are working with our partners in the Southern Marin Zone to come up with a core project proposal to better protect our community.

## Some news from your Muir Beach Firewise Team

Dear neighbors,

As most of you probably know by now, Muir Beach has applied to become a Firewise community. We're happy to report that our application to join Firewise was successful.

Marin County has the highest rate of Firewise communities in the country and research shows that these communities are in fact better equipped to deal with fires, are better prepared for evacuations, and have a higher chance to defend properties and lives.

Our Firewise group gathered data about Muir Beach's current level of fire safety, and our assessments clearly show that we have work to do. One issue is combustible materials - brush and plants - in the immediate, intermediate and extended zones around our houses and in the community as a whole. Insights from other communities show that the best way to start improving fire safety lies in a focused effort to clear those zones, starting directly around our houses. Many houses have attached flammable wooden decking and fences. Most houses have plant litter. Easy ways to improve this include: removing fire wood, debris, and dead trees and bushes; cleaning up gardens; keeping plants healthy as well as choosing plants that are less flammable than others. We'll share tips with you in our second Firewise flyer.

The Firewise initiative is about coming together as a community to help mitigate the overall risky zones. To that end, two additional

FIRE SMART PLANTS



*Succulents*



*Citrus*

FIRE HAZARDOUS PLANTS



*Rosemary*



*Cypress*

chipper days have been added in 2021 to help us all start clearing our properties. The dates are June 28th and September 27th.

The Firewise self-assessment revealed that many houses in Muir Beach have decks and crawl spaces under the decks that are not fenced in a fire safe way. Don't worry, we CAN have decks. We just need to ensure they are safely enclosed underneath. Also, sometimes combustible structures are attached to the houses, and vents are not built safely enough to keep out flying embers. Some house sidings and roofs are made of wood shingles that will light up very easily in case of a fire reaching Muir Beach. We won't be asking you to exchange your roof or the sidings of your house, but if you are thinking of fixing your roof and sidings you could think about using different materials.

The successful application to become a Firewise community is just the beginning of a three-year process towards full recognition. Our little group of neighbors (Don Piotter and Chris Gove are leading this, the other members are Sophie Conti,

Robin Terra, Ron Rosano and Klaus Poppensieker) will now regularly reach out to you via e-mail and via mail box flyers. The April flyer will be available soon and describes some issues around gardens and plants. We will send out a flyer with different topics and useful information once per quarter. In cooperation with the Fire Department, we will also organize other educational events and some drills regarding evacuation and disaster preparedness. Our goal is to share what we are learning about clearing of spaces, firesafe gardening and Firewise building and renovation projects so that we can improve our fire safety and try to minimize risks as a community.

The bottom line is, we can all improve and do more to make our properties and the Muir Beach community safe. Our group is happy to be available for questions. Please reach out to any one of us.

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Robin Terra  
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# Let Them Lead The Way

By Suzanne Bender-Van Spyk

With a subconscious nod to Whitney Houston, I started absentmindedly humming “Greatest Love of All” soon after being asked to gather information for the Beachcomber on our Muir Beach graduates this year. While I hadn’t heard the song in years, as a mother one of the lyrics has always resonated with me – “Teach them well and let them lead the way.”

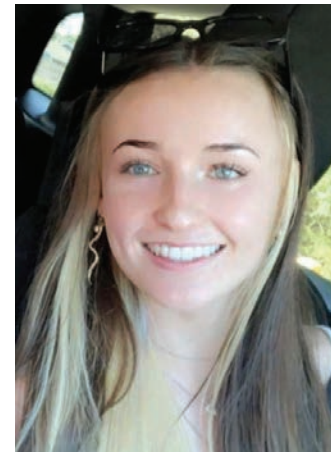
When our family moved to Muir Beach almost 20 years ago, I could count on one hand the number of children in the neighborhood. Now, listening to the sounds of children playing nearby is beautifully common. Muir Beach is a spectacular community in which to raise a family.

This year as we wave off our high school and college graduates from Muir Beach, we might nibble our nails as they start navigating their journeys into a rather uncertain political, societal, career, and environmental landscape. A few months ago, when I expressed my distress about my daughter leaving for college this year, a good friend reminded me that, as bittersweet as an empty nest may be, this farewell was exactly what I have worked so hard towards for over 17 years. My primary job as a parent, to teach her well, is changing. Her job, as a young high school graduate, is to become a leader in her own life. From what I’ve seen of my daughter and her graduating neighbors – digitally savvy, diverse, entrepreneurial, progressive, and itching to change the status quo – I know we are all in good hands. These “children” are our future leaders. Please join me in applauding them as they lead the way.

## Adrianna Bender: Tamalpais High School, Class of 2021

(written by Suzanne Bender-Van Spyk)

This June, Adrianna Bender will graduate from Tam High, with a plan to study Neuroscience at Northeastern University. She has long been interested in the business of health care, and NU offers her an incredibly flexible course of study, encouraging her to explore her interests in brain science, health care, and business. As an added benefit, she’ll get to join her brother Christian on the NU campus and explore internship opportunities, both domestically and internationally. In the meantime, she continues to keep herself busy with her many long-term activities. She is currently planning the final fundraiser as President of the Breast Cancer Awareness Club at Tam High. She continues to learn about fire safety and emergency services in her third year as a Junior Firefighter/Intern with the MBVFD. And, in a cause very dear to her heart, her “Share the Health” program is entering its second year of ensuring a healthy Muir Beach by offering free delivery of Star Route Farms organic produce boxes, for which she earned a “Spirit of Tam Unity” award. Over 350 boxes delivered and almost \$3,000 in donations to Breast Cancer raised so far! (She’s hoping to find a volunteer to take over for her when she heads off to college, so please let her know if you might be interested.)



Adrianna on her Share the Health delivery rounds.

Photo by Adrianna Bender

## Maxx Moore: University of San Francisco, Class of 2021

(written by Janet Tumpich)

We are proud to announce that Maxx Moore will be graduating with honors from University of San Francisco on May 21, 2021. His commitment has earned him a well-deserved Bachelor of Science in Communications and a Minor in Legal Studies.

During his four years at USF, Maxx has been active in his fraternity, Phi Delta Theta, and is a founding member of the Camp Kesem San Francisco chapter where he volunteers as a coordinator and counselor to provide a free week of summer camp for kids affected by a parent’s cancer. Maxx is also a member and treasurer for the USF chapter of Lambda Pi Eta honor society. *Congratulations Maxx!*



Maxx is very happy to be graduating from USF this month. Photo by Barbara Zachariassen

*Continued on next page*

**Jade Simmons-Sampson:**  
**Marin Academy, Class of 2021** *(written by Toni Simmons)*

On June 5th, Jade will graduate from high school and depart the Golden State to head northward. Jade grew up in Muir Beach and has spent the bulk of her life here. It's home. Along the way, she and her family took a six-year hiatus outside California -- three years each in Denver and Vancouver, BC. Jade returned to California at the end of her sophomore year, and attended Marin Academy the past two years (or at least did a lot of schooling from home!). In school, Jade has been most passionate about writing, though in recent years social justice has become a keen interest. Out-of-school passions span track & field (long jump and sprinting events), music (drums and piano), writing (mostly fiction), and baking. During the past, tumultuous year, she has been supplying family and locals with a wondrous array of delicious baked goods, ensuring that these community members maintain their own personal 'Covid-19.' In part to make up for this activity, Jade has also been conducting boot camp-style online workouts for family members around the country.

Perhaps unsurprisingly given her home, nature has been another predominant theme in Jade's life. Growing up, her summers invariably included nearby outdoor camps like Slide Ranch and Coastal Camp. She was one of a handful of candidates selected in her junior year for the Teen Environmental Education Mentorship (TEEM) program at Coastal Camp. And she earned her

Wilderness First Responder and Basic Life Support certifications as well. Most recently, Jade has spent multiple weeks hiking the Owl Trail to work as a junior camp counselor at Slide Ranch.

In August, Jade is on her way to Portland, Oregon, where she will attend Lewis & Clark College, a small liberal arts college immersed in a beautiful natural setting. She has yet to select a major, but English and Law are possibilities. Jade would like



*Jade in her element.*  
*Photo by Joey Benton*

to thank the Muir Beach community, humans and nonhumans alike, for their love and support.

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**Leah Kennedy: Tam High, Class of 2021**  
*(written by Susannah Kennedy)*

We are so proud of Leah, having navigated - during high school! - not only a move across the world but also a second move from Santa Cruz to Muir Beach. Here she was going to have the bonus of attending a big American high school for the first time (think football, prom, homecoming - all those things non-Americans associate with US teenage-hood) and yet she found herself after only two months at Tam in quarantine and isolated zoom school. Yikes. What a year it has been for this senior class. Leah persevered through a lot of personal challenges. As she watched the US fracturing under somber social and cultural conflicts, she developed new interests in politics and her place in the world. Her generosity and vivacity stood her well in making close friends she can trust, a gift for anyone but especially in high school. And, of course, Muir Beach has leant its raw and gentle nature to what we hope is a new meaning of home.

Leah will be attending American University in Washington, DC, studying political science. She aims to work as a political aid on the Hill or in the State Department - and to return home to Muir Beach regularly for a refresher in sanity.



*Leah enjoying the outdoors.*  
*Photo by Chloe Robinson*

*Continued on next page*



Let Them Lead the Way  
*Continued from previous page*

**Hannah Eigsti: Tam High,  
Class of 2021** *(written by Lisa Eigsti)*

Hannah Jane Eigsti will be a 2021 graduate of Tam High! Hannah's high school highlights are many and varied. She spent all four years in the Tam drama program, including Honors directing for two years, costume design, scenic and lighting design, and acting.

During the pandemic, she decided to start the Fashion and Sustainability Club, growing it rapidly to 30+ members. Hannah is also a member of the "Wise Mentoring Program," teaching her how to be a mentor for struggling underclassmen students. She has participated for three years now in the "Music Together" program which spends a few lunch times a week with Tam High's mentally disabled students. As a result, she recently received the "Spirit of Tam Unity" award presented by the special education teacher highlighting her kindness and empathy with disabled students. Hannah has continued to shine bright and carry on throughout the pandemic by both keeping her school work up and working at Proof Lab.

She will be attending FIT (Fashion Institute of Technology) in NYC, where she will be majoring in Textile Development and Marketing, emphasizing the business and the marketing side of the fashion world by focusing on fashion and sustainability. We are so very proud of the fine, compassionate, confident and capable person Hannah has become. She is beaming with sheer joy and excitement! Look out Big Apple, here comes Hannah!



*Hannah strikes a pose in front of FIT on her recent visit to her future college.*



*Hannah and sister Stella, a few years back, selling lemonade at the bridge in Muir Beach.*

*Photos by Brad Eigsti*

## Welcome Gia During the Pandemic

Waiting for the arrival of your grandchild during the pandemic has been an issue for so many families this year. Holding your breath for 9 months, praying that the family could stay safe, then not being able to be there for the birth of your grandchild made a difficult time even more difficult. We had to wait 3 months and 11 days before we could hold our Gia.

Gia arrived on December 22, at 1:40 am on the cusp of the Winter Solstice during the great conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn. Michael and I were at the MB Overlook witnessing the great conjunction with neighbors, waiting for the call that would announce the arrival of the baby. Zooming and FaceTiming with Olivia, Eli, Asa and Gia, we did not really feel like we were connecting with the family. It was really a 'virtual' experience. Our 5 senses were deprived of the normal experiences. We could see and hear her virtually but without the other senses it was a somewhat hollow experience.

When we finally got to hold Gia on April 1, I could feel the weight of all my anxieties lifting. The unique smell of a newborn, the smoothness and softness of her skin, her anxious cries of "I am wet and need a fresh diaper", or her cooing sound as she nursed, and the smile of recognition as her family responded to her needs were never more appreciated or valued. I think of all the families who are separated by this pandemic and count my many blessings that I only had to wait a few months to fall in love again with this special child. *See back page for more photos.*

*— Tayeko Kaufman*



*Gia at 3 months*

# A Whale Story

By April Randle

When we moved from Colorado to the Bay Area nearly 8 years ago, I hadn't imagined that the longest mammal migration in the world (~12,000 mile round trip) would occur just outside my front door. I knew that gray whales were migrating from their breeding grounds in Mexico to their feeding grounds in Alaska, but what I didn't fully understand was the spectacular closeness that I would experience in Muir Beach, during the Northern migration.

Gray whales typically start their journey north from Mexico in February with males and females (without offspring) departing first. Females with offspring often leave later and travel stealthily, close to shore to avoid predation by white sharks and orcas. They move deliberately to conserve energy, as they have not eaten since the previous summer and have lost body weight through pregnancy, birth, and nursing. Thus, gray whale survival and reproduction strongly depend on food availability in Arctic waters the previous spring and summer.

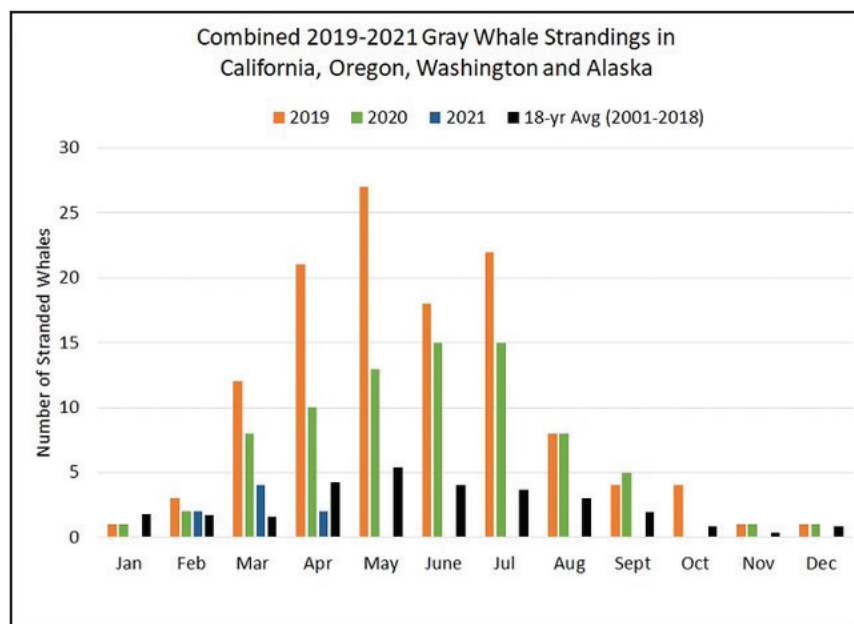


Photo from MB Overlook by April Randle

One of my first glimpses of a mama gray whale and her calf in Muir Beach was from the MB Overlook in spring of 2014. I was not looking for whales, but just gazing at the horizon when I heard a blow, and then saw a whale directly below me. I then saw a second blow! The water was calm and clear and I could see two gray bodies glide below the surface of the water. It was magical. In those first few years of living here, you would often find me at the MB overlook watching for whales in the months of April and May. There had been a gray whale baby boom, and the opportunity to see whales close to shore during migration was very good. One birthday (May 16), I saw 11 whales from the MB overlook in the span of about 2 hrs. This included gray whale moms and babies and humpback whales. It was extraordinary.

The last several years have been different. I started seeing fewer gray whales in about 2017, and have not seen any moms and babies in the last 2 years. Although gray whale populations are known to fluctuate over time, NOAA has documented increased mortality in 2019-2021, and has declared these years an Unusual Mortality Event (UME). According to the Marine Mammal Protection Act, a UME is declared when a significant die-off of any marine mammal population occurs.

*Continued on next page*



The figure at left from NOAA shows this data relative to an 18 year average. (<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/marine-life-distress/2019-2021-gray-whale-unusual-mortality-event-along-west-coast-and>).



*Continued from previous page*

*Note:* Since the story was written, there has been a 5th stranding (Fin Whale), and the 3rd death due to ship strike (not all 2021 April Stranding data included in graph below).

The recent stranding in Muir Beach of a female gray whale was one of 4 strandings that occurred in the first week of April in the Bay Area. According the Marine Mammal Center, she was 41 feet long, 20 years old, and healthy. They determined that she had “significant bruising and hemorrhaging to the muscle around the jaw and neck- vertebrate consistent with blunt force trauma due to ship strike”. Two of the 4 whales that died in the first week of April were found to have died from a ship strike.

It is estimated that less than 10% of whales killed by ship strikes wash up on beaches. This means that the mortality we document from a ship strikes is a fraction of those occurring. Strategies to reduce ship strikes include reducing shipping speed (particularly during migration), adjusting shipping lanes, and removing ships on feeding grounds.

For our whale, it is likely that she had passed by our front doors as many as 40 times before, heading north or south. It is possible that she passed close to our shore with her babies, safely ushering them past ports, crab traps, and away from predators to the rich arctic feeding grounds. Because she could have reached maturity at about 9 or 10 years of age, she may be the mother of as many as 4 or 5 offspring. Someday, through genetic analysis, those relationships may be revealed.

For many in our community, including myself, the aftermath of a necropsy can be jarring and the smell of a decaying whale can be uncomfortable. Let me offer another point of view. Within her body she holds the answer to many mysteries. She has the accumulation of 20 years worth of ocean health, along 6000 miles of coastline. Researchers are able to look at her stomach, heart and other organs, blubber, skin, and bones and assess health, food availability in the Arctic, parasites load, contaminants, and biotoxins. Scientists can collect morphometric and histological data to assess health, age, growth patterns, and genetic data to examine population structure. Beyond determining cause of death, they can ask about overall ocean health and potential risks to prevent future deaths.

Surface decay is the technical term for allowing natural degradation on a beach. There are very few beaches where one can witness the return to nature of such an incredible animal and reap the benefit of this pulse of nutrients to our beach ecosystem. In the last week I have visited the

carcass several times to find it teaming with life. I am grateful she passed by my door in life, and feel fortunate to be able to watch as she returns to earth and her bones and secrets carried within her body are revealed. I hope what we learn will prevent future deaths.

*April is currently an Assistant Professor in Environmental Science at the University of San Francisco. She has conducted fieldwork on marine mammals for Cascadia Research in a former life.*



*Photo by Robin Terra, April 8th*



*Photo by April Randle, April 21st*

# Four Ingredients and the Passage of Time *By Natalee Shean and Ted Elliott Jr.*

*Continued from page 2*

Every Saturday, Mick Sopko clicks “send” on an email with thoughtful descriptions of three bread choices. After receiving the final votes by Monday, he and apprentice Shoho choreograph the bread delivery alongside production for The Pelican Inn, Mill Valley Market, and more.

Mick has a long history with artisan bread. He worked at Tassajara Bakery in San Francisco before joining Green Gulch in 1993. In 2007, he received a grant to build a new 500 sq ft space with 3 main pieces of machinery – a mixing machine capable of handling 60 pounds of dough at a time, a walk-in refrigerator to cool the dough during fermentation, and a gas-fired hearth oven with 4 shelves, large enough to hold 40 bread loaves (or 12 pizzas)!

The 4 ingredients of bread are simple - flour, water, salt, and leaven (yeast). A fifth, understated ingredient is patience. The type of yeast that is used plays a large role in the amount of patience that is required; naturally-leavened bread is powered by diverse airborne yeast and takes 3 days, whereas commercial-yeasted bread is made from store-bought yeast and follows a 2-day process.

With naturally-leavened bread, Mick mixes flour and Green Gulch spring water, then invites wild yeast into the container. Similar to wine, leavening is based on the living process of fermentation - the yeast multiply and become more active over 2 or 3 hours. Giving local yeast and other microorganisms the chance to express themselves and impart flavor significantly improves the dough. And helps to explain why Muir Beach sourdough might taste different than San Francisco sourdough!

Then it's time to form the dough into a round shape and allow it to relax and expand in a woven “proofing” basket. These baskets define the shape of the loaves and are usually made of willow or rattan with a linen cloth inside. Green Gulch has 120 proofing baskets in a variety



of sizes and styles. One is coiled and doesn't use a linen cloth - this creates a decorative spiral of rings on top of the loaf!

Commercially-yeasted bread “proofs” or rests for an hour, while naturally-leavened bread chills in the walk-in refrigerator for 18 hours, continuing to ferment. Mick describes this as “a cast of microscopic characters becoming active, doing what they do, and producing flavorful byproducts. That's what gives sourdough its tang - the passage of time at a cool temperature.”

When the loaves are ready for heat, each rattan basket is flipped upside down onto a shovel-like tool called a ‘peel.’ What was up now faces down, and the long handle is used to slide the bread into the hearth oven. Heat is generated by propane-induced steam, which in turn runs through pipes within each of the four stone shelves. Direct contact with the 460-degree shelves imparts an active and distinct profile, and only 30-40 minutes is needed to bake the bread. Voilà! The fragrant loaves have browned to perfection.

Back at the horse stables, the Muir Beach community eagerly picks up their orders for the week. Pane Siciliano

is the #1 most popular bread, owing to the agave nectar sweetener, sesame seeds, and Durum, an unusual golden flour. It's so popular, residents can only order one! Muir Beach Sourdough ranks #2 and Sesame Levain is #3.

The breadmaking process is part of a broader narrative that Mick describes eloquently: “What we are doing here is a fundamental activity. It's personal. I know the people ordering the bread and they know the person baking it. And it's bread! This is a deep-seated, archetypal sharing. I'm not just baking for myself, and the people buying the bread are not just going to a store. Heck, nowadays they are going to a barn!”

In breadmaking, each ingredient brings rise to another; in the same way this weekly tradition brings us all closer together.



# Adventures for the Soul

By Beth Nelson

If you are looking for something special, our own Muir Beach Nicki Clark has one of the most unique outdoor adventure camps in Marin County. Nicki is a masterful, multi-skilled athlete; surfer, biker, hiker, forager and proprietress of **Marin Outdoor Adventure Camp**. Bringing mindfulness training to the outdoors through her camps and workshops, she offers options for families, individuals, corporations, pods and generously gives of herself through her pro bono work with a number of non profits.

One of my personal favorites is her all girl surf day at Bolinas which she offers on a sliding scale each year, giving girls the opportunity to surf together without pressure. She also holds an all girl surf camp and offers mother / daughter surf lessons.

I had admired Nicki from afar for years for her strength and beauty, and finally got to know her better when she moved to Starbuck a few years ago and my son began working alongside her surf camps. You can find her on the trails biking & hiking with her two children, or in the water at many of our local beaches.

If you've been thinking you might like to see what this thing "stoke" is all about, just go on line to [www.marinoutdooradventure.com](http://www.marinoutdooradventure.com)



As Nicki so eloquently has stated:

"Through the activities we offer, our mission is to bring people joy through connectivity with nature. Approaching natural spaces with awareness allows activities like hiking, surfing and mountain biking to be therapeutic, empowering and sacred experiences.

We hope to share with people of all generations how the natural world is something to be cherished and kept sacred."



Mill Valley Market Shop & Give program will donate 2% of your total receipt to the Beachcomber. Give code #7094 to the clerk at check out.

The Beachcomber thanks you for sharing all your beautiful art and articles, and supporting our neighborhood news.

# Keep them Wild to Keep them Safe

*By Samantha Melendy*

I'd be lying if I said I wasn't tempted to fetch this guy a bone and try to befriend his sweet soul. His presence welcomed me - but my presence didn't seem to phase him at all. He was so at ease, I actually questioned whether it was someone's exotic hybrid pet dog. Daily I'd spot him lackadaisically roaming the hillsides of Muir Beach, like many canines here have the luxury of doing. He'd sit and scratch in the sun without a care in the world. Several times I even woke him up from his slumber, while walking on the back deck - or as he would probably refer - atop his den.

Although many handsome coyotes have crossed my path in this life, this one had the most remarkable crystal blue eyes I'd ever seen and with them, he'd definitely mastered the puppy dog stare. However, his scruffy coat and exceptionally pointy nose & ears were all distinguishing signs of his species, his wildness and the potential threat he posed to my equally cute cats. I knew I had to resist throwing him a little snack - not only for the safety of my cats and other people's small pets - but for the safety of this beautiful, one of a kind coyote.

While many of us here in Muir Beach are well aware of the threats coyotes pose to our beloved pets and livestock, it may be less well known that there is an effective and non-lethal management strategy that works wonderfully to keep them at bay. It's known as "**hazing**" - and no, we aren't talking about forcing our local coyotes to binge drink copious amounts of beer in order to gain access to our exclusive community. Hazing, in this case, is a strategy coined by conservationists that describes the act of encouraging coyotes to be good neighbors by means of keeping them wary and wild. Another way to look at it is in terms of operant conditioning - by applying an aversive stimulus during an unwanted behavior, we can reduce the likelihood of an undesired behavior repeating in the future. Marin-based non-profit Project Coyote describes hazing simply as way of scaring a coyote away from you, your yard, or your neighborhood by reinforcing a coyote's natural instinct to avoid people (and their pets) without harming them. As increased contact with people leads coyotes to behave bolder and more aggressively, we have the power as a community to reduce these harmful confrontations. The goal is to startle and intimidate the coyote until it recognizes that its presence is not welcomed in that particular area.



Some examples of hazing you can use next time you see a coyote include banging pots and pans loudly, throwing large objects towards (not at) the coyote (I've used a log), or spraying it with a hose. Assert yourself dominantly and aggressively as coyotes are naturally a shy species and will run away when threatened. I personally chased off the one who'd gotten comfortable in the backyard by charging him until he ran off into the wilderness, even though it broke my heart to know that soon he wouldn't be back. It only took about three times until he no longer came to visit me. This requires a little bit of consistency, willpower and creativity in the beginning but in return, I think of many generations of blue eyed coyote pups thriving in the depths of Mt. Tam State Park.

If you prefer to take a more passive approach to hazing, focus on reducing desirable attractants around your home. This could mean reducing woodpiles or vegetation where their favorite prey like to dwell, or feeding your pets inside. If you've ever considered feeding a coyote, directly or indirectly, its time to reconsider. Giving them a free meal only tempts them to come closer and reduces their willingness to hunt for live prey. Coyotes play an important role as an apex predator to maintain balance within a delicate ecosystem. For every hand-fed meal they get, a whole new generation of rodents gets a chance at reproducing.

Perhaps you've seen him before, and he's charmed his way into your hearts like he did mine. Perhaps you too have been tempted to make him feel more than welcomed in your backyard. After all, this wilderness belongs to native wildlife more than anyone else. If enough of us participate in deterring them to dwell in the vicinity of our homes, the population of coyotes will re-learn to avoid close contact with humans - so we can co-exist with the coyotes in peace. Adopting an integrated management system is our responsibility as stewards of this beautiful and wild land - and hazing coyotes might be one method you consider adding to yours. For more info, visit: [www.projectcoyote.org/CoyoteHazingBrochureFieldGuide.pdf](http://www.projectcoyote.org/CoyoteHazingBrochureFieldGuide.pdf)



# Fine Feathered Friend *By Paul Jeschke*

*Continued from page 2*

The macaw, who likes to announce his arrival with loud squawks, lives at the end of Starbuck with his owner, Samantha Melendy. Cali had already caught the attention of nearby neighbor Rick Bernard and paid an unsettling visit to Nicki Clark's home at the Starbuck turnaround. "It just flew onto my roof and almost landed on my son's head. It's HUGE!!," Clark posted on the Nextdoor website. Cali's meanderings took him to a perch atop Adam Brown's shed and then to a soft landing on Nikola Tede's car.

Heydt initially thought that the brightly colored bird that soared overhead and then glided gracefully to the handrail of her deck was part of the flock made famous as "the wild parrots of Telegraph Hill." Cali, however, came from a breeder in Vallejo and has lived with owner Melendy since 2009 and has been making friends ever since.

After munching on strawberry snacks, Cali spontaneously sprung onto the shoulder of a backyard party guest, Heydt said. "Others started putting their arms and hands out to see if he would land on them," a behavior his owner does not encourage.

"He does not like to be petted or held, so I don't recommend either," Melendy advises. "If he is ever unwelcome, please feel free to shoo him away in a gentle yet assertive way." She suggests squirt guns, a water hose or simply the firm command "no." Treats like almonds, pine nuts and oranges will encourage him to stay around longer.

"I love having him come visit us every day," said Lissa Rankin who lives next door. "He and my dog are finally making friends after a period of awkward turf wars."

Cali normally gets to fly free at least once a week. Melendy studied training techniques that enable her to control the parrot with voice and gestures. The recall training is heavy on positive reinforcement, not unlike dog training. Letting him go outside for the first time, however, was traumatic, Melendy admits.

Not all outdoor experiences are positive. Cali was birdnapped by a construction worker while on a free flight in Sacramento. The sheriff had to track Cali down after the thief traded him for drugs. By contrast, when the macaw managed to open his cage and slip out a window, Melendy found him being cared for by the staff of a nearby Thai restaurant where he dined on the daily specials.

The friendly parrot has performed for "America's Got Talent," entertained at children's birthday parties and enthralled audiences at "aerial silk" performances – an acrobatic act in which Melendy wraps fabric around parts of her body and hangs from tree limbs while performing twirls, revolutions and other acrobatic feats, a sort of choreographed wall climbing with Cali perched on her outstretched arm.

Since moving to Muir Beach, however, Cali is pretty much a homebody except for his occasional neighborhood rendezvous. Cali is not intimidated by birds of prey he encounters on his Muir Beach

flights. He shows no fear of hawks and has even soared with a few. The macaw has to be home before dark, however, to avoid the risk of a dangerous encounter with a Great Horned Owl.

Cali primary motivation to return home after a free flight outing is his mate, Girl Scout, a rescue bird whose former owner had her wings surgically altered so she couldn't fly. Melendy has managed to get Girl Scout to take short flights, but she tires easily and can't go far.

"She used to be named Scout, but then we found out she was a girl, so her name changed to Girl Scout," Melendy said. "Same for Cali – we thought he was a girl, named him Cali, then found out through a blood DNA test that he was actually a boy."

When they were first introduced, Cali and Girl Scout hated each other, Melendy said. It took them five years to bond and now they are inseparable. Girl Scout laid three eggs this spring as she has for the past five years. Cali aggressively protects the nest and makes sure Girl Scout has plenty to eat. The eggs do not hatch, however, and Melendy has never purchased an incubator as she doesn't want to be a breeder.

Cali's recent tour of the Starbuck neighborhood isn't his first visit to Muir Beach. Several years ago, Melendy lived on Sunset and Cali would regularly visit Linda Gibbs and David Leivick on White Way. Cali would "perch on our railing," Gibbs said. "He would hop on David's arm. Stunning creature." Heydt agrees. "What a gift for that bird to have that freedom."

# The Critter Report: Heard but Not Seen

By Dave MacKenzie

The Spring and Summer months bring a lot of action into the critter world. Coyotes and foxes are pupping, neotropical birds are returning from Central and South America to breed, and our winter visitors are heading back north. The Golden-Crowned Sparrows slipped into their gorgeous breeding plumage just before heading back to Canada at the end of April. Beautiful, but they sure can nibble a garden of the nice food crops we have been raising!

The nesting season also starts with birds (mostly males) singing on their territories to attract females. We have some resident species, however, which sing and perform various “contact” sounds all year long. Have you ever heard a bird singing from the brush, but could never see it? How about a sound a bit like a bouncing ball of ringing notes, which moves around invisibly from bush to bush?

If so, you may be hearing our local specialty, the Wrentit. This little ball of brown feathers, with small rounded wings, a long tail, and a white eye, is a specialist of the coastal sage/scrub that dominates the wilder parts of Muir Beach and surroundings. With its sleek body shape, and quick moves through the thickest of tangles, the Wrentit makes a living seeking out spiders, insects, and some plant material. Once you know the song, you will hear them in a lot of places, both brush and gardens.

The Wrentit is a very interesting California bird, almost endemic (unique) to the state. Almost, because its range is a bit larger



*Wrentit in Poison Oak*

than California, from the Columbia River to the deserts of Baja. By the way, do you know what the only truly endemic species of bird is in California? (Hint: remember Heckel and Jeckel?).

This year I have joined the 4 year long Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas 2 project (MCBBA2), and so I was delighted to find a Wrentit carrying nesting material to a California Sage (aka Sagebrush – *Artemisia californica*) in our backyard. A specimen of this beautiful native plant with fragrant, finely divided pale green leaves, sits about four feet from our hot tub. I have seen both male and female bringing nesting material to this lush, thick, sage, but the nest is totally invisible from the outside. And yet I can tell where it is within a foot or so. I watched as these little avians (they barely fly, usually within a meter of the ground and they practically jump from branch to branch) as they stripped petite lengths of bark from a nearby Twinberry, and carried them into the sage. So now when I hear one of the birds doing its “ping-pong ball bounce song”, I can follow it across

our well-foliaged yard to the nest area. Soon they will be bringing in food items, like tasty arthropods, to the young.

Biologists have tried to determine what the Wrentit is related to, but they are apparently neither wrens nor tits (British for chickadee-type species). They are probably most closely related to the old world warblers and/or babblers, which have no other relatives in the new world. Then how did they get here? Continental drift? Glaciation? Bering land bridge? More DNA testing will eventually tell.

So with the MCBBA2 starting up this year, any nests or even just a likely nest (which you find in or around Muir Beach, or for that matter, anywhere in Marin County), is an important discovery. Please let me or Jim White know about it and we will investigate. Almost every yard has at least one breeder!

Backyard birding is Citizen Science too!

(See Jim White’s article on page 25 for our contact info.)



# Pens

*By Steven J. Moss*

One of my dominant childhood memories is of my father's constant quest to get something for nothing. He'd pile my three sisters, my mom and me into our station wagon and troll the streets for shopping center and bank openings offering free cookies, balloons, and plastic key chains. I'd eaten hundreds of those flower-shaped shortbread cookies with cherry-flavored jelly in the middle - the kind you only find at low-end receptions or bakery outlet stores - by the time I was ten.

My father's pursuits have been made possible by the incredible bounty of free things our society spits out. In the before time, every minute of every day, somewhere in the United States, someone received a complimentary cup, flashlight, calendar, or food item at a conference, "grand opening," or street festival. For a while I followed in my father's footsteps, compulsively elbowing my way to the table of free snacks at Costco or Trader Joes, downing foul-tasting samples of new beverages simply because they were gratis. At one point I had two shoe boxes packed full of tiny bottles of lotions, shampoos, and conditioners collected from various hotels I'd stayed at.

My wife, Debbie, put an end to my inherited hobby, by insisting I unload my boxes of potions and lotions, or at least get them out of the house. I resisted at first, but then decided to distribute my collection during my travels to less-wealthy countries. Whenever someone on the street asked me for money in Peru or India, I handed them a bottle of liquid soap. I'd usually get a smile in exchange, though one Nepalese woman

demanding what use conditioner would be to her.

Several years ago, I traveled to Niger, the planet's poorest country. I asked my father if he could give me some of the pens he'd been collecting to give-away, a request he took as a challenge to re-double his efforts to score freebies.

Each afternoon in Niamey, Niger's capital city, after a late-lunch of take-out food eaten in my room, I'd take a stroll around the hotel, carrying a Walgreen's canvas bag of logoed pens collected by my father over a lifetime - I recognized a pen that I'd seen as a child, carrying the name of a bank that no longer exists - and a few Halloween candies stolen from my daughter, Sara's, stash. The pens were soaked up like water in the desert: shop keepers, children, and beggars of all stripes were delighted to receive them. One 20-something woman in a cycle wheelchair, with baby strapped to her back and young girl at her side, chased me half-way down the hotel's entry-boulevard, only to beam a thousand-watt smile after receiving two plastic pens.

Everyone was happy with the pen distribution; everyone, but the street boys. These urchins, who ranged in age from perhaps seven to 10, complained if their pen was too plain, and always aggressively demanded more "bics."

One afternoon I packed my bag as usual and headed into the dusty streets. I was quickly approached by one of the more dogged boys, who'd glued himself to my side a few days previously in an attempt to score multiple pens. This time I quickly gave him a pen and a tootsie roll; after which I was immediately swarmed by a dozen boys, most

dressed in rags, jumping, grabbing, yelling for pens. I tried passing them out, but soon I was overwhelmed, said "enough," and walked away.

Followed, of course, by three of the boys. "Can I have a pen? Give me a pen? Can I have a pen? I didn't get a pen," the most aggressive pen worshiper chanted. "Just us three need a pen; we didn't get a pen," he repeated, even after one of his friends mistakenly flashed two of the pens he'd received a few moments ago. "No," I responded, "it is finished." I ducked into a pharmacy. They were there when I left. I walked into a crowded street market, hoping they wouldn't follow me. But they did. "Can I have a pen? Give me a pen? Can I have a pen? I didn't get a pen."

Finally, I could take it no more. I spotted a man, sitting in an empty market stall, fingering his prayer beads. I motioned him over to me. "Here," I said, and emptied the entire contents of the bag into his willing hands - perhaps two dozen pens of various designs, along with an equal number of candies. He looked like he'd just received a handful of gold and thanked me profusely. I dramatically shook out the bag, indicating it was completely empty, and walked away. The boys did not follow.

I felt liberated, ecstatic, and, guilty all at once. What lesson had I taught them? That they should be polite? That the penniless children weren't worth a few extra pens? And the man with the prayer beads, my own personal marabou, what of him?

I walked back to the hotel, exhausted. I lay down on the flimsy foam mattress. As I closed my eyes I saw them, there, next to my suitcase: more pens, dozens more pens.

# SALT SUN & SOIL

## SUMMER SURFING LOCAL STYLE

By Beth Nelson

How many times this year have I observed a mother or father playing on Little Beach with their child, knowing they were juggling jobs, a shut school and all the challenges this pandemic has brought to us.

Yet, **“Out of the mud blooms the lotus”**  
( Thupten Ngodrup )

“High Noon Nature Camps” has grown out of that very mud so to speak. At High Noon they believe that salt, sun and soil are essential components of a happy day and a happy life. That healthy and happy engagement practices in the natural world builds connections that can lead to a lifetime of environmental stewardship and that learning to surf builds confidence.

Jack and Erin’s High Noon Camp is specifically designed to give kids a healthy, and productive way to get their energy out after a long day of school and a long year of online pandemic life.

A first of its kind surf camp in Marin County, High Noon was born out of a love for the sea, a respect for the natural world, an awareness of environmental activism, and the desire to break down boundaries imposed on women and marginalized groups, hoping to create a more equitable environment in the outdoors. Through art, mindfulness and surfing, Jack and Erin have created a peaceful place for kids to learn about surf etiquette, surf technique, safety in the water, ocean knowledge and wave selection, and kindness in and out of the water, for a sport often known for its overriding competitiveness.

As Erin states in her online bio:

*“I found that natural spaces were my greatest comfort growing up. Through outdoor adventure, I found stability, confidence and empowerment and a deeply rooted sense of values in the natural world.”*

To this end Erin has created “All Girl Thursdays,” a day of the week just for girls to surf after school.

Jack’s bio has a similar thread. He grew up in San Francisco and began to surf with his father and his mother at age five. After a degree in Psychology, Jack studied organic farming and biodynamic farming at



UCSC, eventually running a small organic farm in Santa Barbara County. Jack has worked as a camp counselor, coach, organic gardening educator and surf instructor.

As he so beautifully says:

*“Tapping into the abundance of the natural world eases tensions, stress, anxiety and provides time away from screens, relieving pressures both socially and academically for adults and for kids.”*

If you would like to find out more about High Noon Nature Camps, just go on-line to [www.highnoonnaturecamps.com](http://www.highnoonnaturecamps.com)

Jack and Erin both reside in Bolinas and I should add that my own son Tennessee works with them as an instructor. As a mother, I couldn’t be more delighted at the creation of this new camp. I think you will be too.

**HIGH NOON** / **noun:** *The most advanced, flourishing or creative stage of period*

### OUT OF THE MUD GROWS THE LOTUS

“The lotus is the most beautiful flower, whose petals open one by one. But it will only grow in the mud. In order to grow and gain wisdom, first you must have the mud...the obstacles of life and its suffering...The mud speaks of the common ground that humans share, no matter what our stations in life...Whether we have it all or have nothing, we are all faced with the same obstacles: sadness, loss, illness, dying and death. If we are to strive as human beings, to gain more wisdom, more kindness and more compassion, we must have the intention to grow as a lotus and open each petal one by one.”

( Thupten Ngodrup )



# Have you Found a Bird Nest?

*By Jim White*

If so I'd like to know! It is for the Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas. Between April 15 and July 15, when most birds nest and raise their young, dozens of volunteers including Dave MacKenzie, our wildlife expert, and me, Jim White, block leader for Muir Beach, will try to determine all of the bird species that nest in Marin County. You can help by letting us know what you find.

This has been done before. Way back in 1982 Dave Shuford with PRBO, Point Reyes Bird Observatory, completed a seminal study and published an acclaimed book, the Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas, which has been emulated by other counties, several other states and countries around the world. He found that 157 species had the appreciation, good since and wherewithall to live in Marin. Since then there have been some notable conservation success stories. We have Peregrine Falcons again, a pair will nest again on the ocean cliffs. Marin has Bald Eagles again! Three pair at least. We have Wild Turkeys, have you seen them strutting on the Muir Woods road? We have Canada Geese. Can you believe that they all used to fly to Canada to nest and now it is so hard to walk on the greens and keep your golf shoes clean. Can you believe that in the 1980s Crows did not nest in Muir Beach while now they are noisy intruders everywhere. And we now have Barn Owls! "Barnadette", thanks to the Ocean Riders of Marin, is sitting on 7 eggs at the stables in the Barn (and on Zoom). We, The Marin Audubon Society, got the ball rolling and think that it is time to upgrade.

Some changes we suspect are not in nature's favor. You may not have noticed that Western Wood Pewees have been missing in the riparian habitat or that White-throated Swifts might not nest on the overlook cliffs anymore. Gosh I hope someone proves me wrong about that. You might not remember the dozens of Cliff swallows that built their slightly messy mud nests on the fire barn or elsewhere and flew around eating hundreds of mosquitoes, but we killed the mosquitoes, flies, ants and flying bugs.

So do call or email or text a message to me, jimwhitebbs@gmail.com, 415 388 4924 or 628 288 9266 or Jim White 170 Pacific Way, Muir Beach CA, 94965 if you find a nest in the Muir Beach area, from Slide Ranch to Pirates Cove and north to Santos Meadows and above The Zen Center.

Dave MacKenzie has 3 Blocks north of here from Slide Ranch to Steep Ravine, Santos Meadow to Pantol and east to Mill Valley. This is all nicely laid out on a GPS grid. Dave's contacts are; 28 Starbuck Drive, Muir Beach, CA, 94965, 415 380 8995, 415 203 7428 and dmackenz@alumni.caltech.edu

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## And on and on it goes ...

*By Michael Miller*

The pandemic continues to march on into infamy. I don't know if it's the ancient hunter/gatherer instinct in me, though the only thing I hunt is a bargain in the butcher shop, or just restlessness, but I find it more and more difficult to stay at home. My trips over the hill are almost daily now, though I continue to be cautious and hopefully safe. I have been vaccinated. Punishing golf balls at the driving range at McInnis Park helps to soothe the soul and provide a little exercise. Trips to the store continue to see people's wary eyes peeking over masks, which seem to have taken on a life of their own. In many cases masks have become a fashion statement, matching outfits of the wearers. Others have company or club logos, political statements, and tie dye. I suppose someday in the distant future we might see a museum exhibit of masks from the Great Pandemic of 2020. If masking continues as expected, it won't be long before some entrepreneurial jerk figures out how to sell mask ads. My favorites simply sport artistic works and expressions. Men for the most part seem to favor the Lone Ranger look. Finally, hoarding seems to be less in vogue at the grocery store, with the toilet paper wars far behind us, (pun intended) though I often still see large baskets full of groceries at the check-out stand. Sometimes when over the hill I stop at Lytton Square, grab a cup of coffee, sit in my car and take some time to watch people watching people who are watching other people who I assume are also watching me. Kids playing hacky-sack, riding bikes and skateboards, engaging in matches of Roshambo (I wonder what they're playing for), and dogs, dogs, and more dogs. Aspiring musicians playing guitar, and even a few competitive souls enjoying the warm afternoon playing chess. Cheap entertainment over a cup of coffee in downtown America. Or at least our Marin County version of it. We're lucky to live here.

# It's Time to Purchase some Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department Merchandise

*By Brenda Kohn*

Now that you are vaccinated and might be thinking about getting out and about a bit more, you need to think about freshening up your wardrobe with some new apparel. What better place to start than by supporting our Volunteer Fire Department with the purchase of a new sweatshirt or some other item containing the now world-famous doggie logo. Since the Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Association (VFA) has determined that its annual fundraising BBQ will not take place as always on Memorial Day weekend this year, that means the potential loss of revenue from the sale of its doggie logo merchandise. For almost 40 years the Fire Department has depended on monies earned from the sale of this logo merchandise to help support its operations, and the BBQ was the main source for these sales. Because last year's BBQ, as well as the annual Holiday Fair at the Community Center, were also cancelled, the VFA has an ample supply of all variety, sizes and colors of items available for sale.

VFA member Lisa Eigsti has worked hard over the past several years to carefully research and purchase interesting apparel and other items (including wine and beer cups, water bottles, dog leashes and collars, and tote bags) that might appeal to everyone young and old. Pictures of some of this current stock can be found on the MBVFD website. However, since completion of the online store has been interrupted by the pandemic, several diehard community supporters of the Fire

Department volunteered to model and display various items and colors currently available for purchase. As the pictures show, there are the ever-popular hoodies available in several attractive colors. There is also a variety of zippered style hoodie, as well as both long and short-sleeved tees. There are sweat pants, a few plaid pajama bottoms, several styles of hats, and stainless-steel drink containers. New to the inventory are baseball tees and ladies rolled cuff tees. In addition, there is a large selection of cute onesies and tees for babies and kids. Prices range from \$15 for the stainless-steel items, \$22 for caps, \$22 - \$38 for most tees, to \$46 for the hoodies.



*MBVFA President Kevin Corbit wearing a gray Hoodie.*



For Muir Beach community residents wishing to order from the present stock, or for more information, please contact VFA Board Member Brenda Kohn at 415-383-8220, or email [brendakohn@aol.com](mailto:brendakohn@aol.com). For mail orders, please contact VFA Board President Kevin Corbit at [kevinccorbit@gmail.com](mailto:kevinccorbit@gmail.com), we will be happy to assist you.

Please support our Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department and its brave and hardworking volunteer firefighters, who dedicate their time and lives to keeping our community safe. Remember that all donations go directly towards keeping our firefighters well trained and equipped. Muir Beach Fire Chief Chris Gove echoes this request when he says that "we appreciate all the support over the years and it looks like there won't be a BBQ this spring, but possibly later in the year. In the meantime, it would be great if you show your continued support of our Fire Department and community by purchasing our wonderful doggie gear. The firefighters and I thank you, and we are honored to be of service."

*Continued on next page*

*Photos by Laurie Piel, Debbie Ketchum, and Larry Lasky*



# MBVFD Merch



*Richard Kohn in Windbreaker, and Gerry Pearlman in Maroon Sweatpants and Long-Sleeved Tee*



*Laurie Piel wearing Short Sleeved Purple Tee; Dave MacKenzie holding Baseball Tee; Melissa Lasky in Beret and Apron, with Logo coffee mug*



*Zippered Hoodies in various colors. Janice Kubota in Logo Beanie; Debbie Ketchum in Beret; Bonnie MacKenzie in Ball Cap; Leighton Hills in his own bike helmet, with Logo water bottle; Buddy wearing Truckers Hat*



*Hoodies in various colors. Larry Lasky holding stainless steel Logo wine cup with Bo; Anne Jeschke in Cabby Cap; Emma and Olivia Lasky in Hoodies with Mus in Logo volunteer scarf; Charlene Modena in plaid Pajama Bottoms and Tie Dyed Tee*



## Introducing...

*MAX JOY GRANT* was born to Muir Beacher Kate Brandt and Sean Grant on September 2, 2020. Grandparents Laurie and David Brandt are overjoyed! Kate and her family live in Mill Valley and make frequent visits to the Beach.



*Max with parents Sean Grant and Kate Brandt, and Grandparents Laurie and David Brandt.*

## Newlyweds



*Tony Moore and Mary Thorsen finally tied the knot on March 11th. They were married via Zoom in true pandemic style in the comfort of their home.*

## Welcome Gia During the Pandemic



*Gia on the quilt that Tayeko made for her. See story page 15.*



*Asa, and Gia with proud parents Olivia and Eli Kaufman.*

## Fond Memories of a Good Friend



*Felix the Cat art, 2006 Mark Felix*

### Mark Felix

*September 11, 1961 - April 13, 2021*

Mark was an extraordinary artist, master carpenter, and former MBVFD fireman. His roots go back to Druid Heights, Muir Beach, and the infamous Pelican Inn which his father and mother built.